

## Removing Obstacles to Change

Message 02 of the series "Changing for the Better"

### I. Change is a natural part of life.

"For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest... God has made everything beautiful for its own time."

Ecclesiastes 3:1,8 (NLT)

### II. Christians embrace change because we believe total life change is necessary for everyone and made possible through Jesus.

"...through (Christ) God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault." Colossians 1:20-22 (NLT)

"This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace." Colossians 1:6 (NLT)

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

Romans 12:2 (NLT)

### III. We need to identify and remove the obstacles that keep us from making the changes Christ wants us to make.

#### a. Self-reliance.

This is what the LORD says: "Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans, who rely on human strength and turn their hearts away from the LORD. They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future. They will live in the barren wilderness, in an uninhabited salty land. But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green and they never stop producing fruit." Jeremiah 17:5-8 (NLT)

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." James 5:16 (NLT)

#### b. Blaming God, others, circumstances, etc.

Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked." "Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?" The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it." Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?" "The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it." Genesis 3:9-13 (NLT)

"And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, 'God is tempting me.' God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death." James 1:13-15 (NLT)

#### c. Fear.

Then Saul admitted to Samuel, "Yes, I have sinned. I have disobeyed your instructions and the LORD's command, for I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded." 1 Samuel 15:24 (NLT)

Say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." Isaiah 35:4 (NLT)

#### d. Hiding our sin.

"God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants."

John 3:19-21 (NLT)

“People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.” Proverbs 28:13 (NLT)

*Life Application:* God wants us to repent of our sins and surrender our lives to Him.

“Each of you must repent of your sins, turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to show that you have received forgiveness for your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38 (NLT)

*Note:* Repentance is more than being sad we got caught.

“For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.”

2 Corinthians 7:10 (NLT)

*Note:* Repentance is a life-long activity of turning back to God.

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.” Colossians 3:5-8 (NIV)

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### **Connect Group Discussion Questions:**

1. How well do you handle change?
2. What is the most difficult change you’ve faced recently?
3. Read Proverbs 16:2 and 1 Samuel 16:7. When it comes to change, why are our motives important to God?
4. When we are going through changes, why is sometimes difficult to trust God?
5. Read Ezekiel 33:11 and 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. What does it mean to repent of our sins? Why is this important? How do you know when to repent?
6. Discuss the following four obstacles to making necessary changes in our lives:
  - Self-reliance (Jeremiah 17:5-8)
  - Blaming God, others, circumstances, etc. (James 1:13-15)
  - Fear (1 Samuel 15:24)
  - Hiding our sin (Proverbs 28:13)

Which of these obstacles have you faced when making important changes in your life? How did you overcome them?

Quotations to consider:

“When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat... Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, ‘I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.’ And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.” - David in Psalm 32

“Sin arises because we desire something more than God. Overcoming sin begins by reversing this process; desiring God more than other things.” - Tim Chester

“Yes—if we fear God and repent of our sins.”- John Adams when asked if the colonists would prevail over Great Britain.

“This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”- God speaking to Joshua when he succeeded Moses.