



Change: Let It Begin With Me

“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”

(Acts 9:6).

What would you like to accomplish in your lifetime? What are you doing today to make it happen?

David McNally suggests for you to ask yourself two simple questions every night before you go to sleep.

1. Did I today, in some way, grow as a person?
2. Did I today, in some way, make the world a better place in which to live?

It could be added:

3. Did I today, in some way, make progress toward what I want to achieve in my lifetime?
4. Did I help make the church a better place for souls and for the future generations?

You may have heard the song, “Lord, send a revival, and let it start in me.” When it comes to change, it needs to start in me (and you). People say, “Prayer changes things,” but most of the time they should be admitting, “Prayer changes me!”

In an effective organization the first to be changed should be the leader. Once the leader realizes how difficult it is to make changes in his life, he will know how hard it is for others. It has commonly been said, “A leader that leads, precedes.” He sets the example and implements the changes in his life first. John Maxwell claims, “Change the leader; change the organization.”

Howard Hendricks in *Teaching to Change Lives* claims, “The more you change, the more you become an instrument of change in the lives of others.”

Moving to the Next Level

In order to move to the next level of church growth and evangelism, we must be willing to accept change. Change is required for success.

John Maxwell quotes a story found in Paul Wharton’s book called *Stories and Parables for Preachers and Teachers*.

“I was a revolutionary when I was young and all my prayer to God was: ‘Lord, give me the energy to change the world.’ As I approached middle age and realized that my life was half gone without my changing a single soul, I changed my prayer to: ‘Lord, give me the grace to change all those who come into contact with me, just my family and friends, and I shall be satisfied.’ Now that I am an old man and my days are numbered, I have begun to see how foolish I have been. My one prayer now is: ‘Lord, give me the grace to change myself.’ If I had prayed for this right from the start, I would not have wasted my life.”

Think about it. How much time do you spend thinking or talking about how others could improve and/or change? A much better investment of time and energy could be directed at changing yourself.

From Saul to Paul

“Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers” (Galatians 1:14).

Saul was a prime candidate for potential change. Not only was he zealous for tradition, he was bound by it.

Saul’s story begins with “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1) and “persecuting . . . unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women” (Acts 22:4).

Through his actions he hoped to turn the Christians back toward Jewish tradition. Little did he know that he was in for a

change—a big change.

From there, his story dramatically changed to being knocked down, trembling, astonished, blinded, and helplessly waiting on Straight Street. (It is unfortunate that some people need to be knocked down before their eyes are opened.)

When Saul encountered the Lord, he asked, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). It could be said that he asked, “Lord, how do you want me to change?”

Conversion on the road to Damascus brought Saul to a street called “Straight” and into a journey called “Change.”

Once Saul was changed, he was better equipped to assist others in the change process.

On the Day of Pentecost those assembled inquired, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). These people recognized that they needed a change. They were pricked in their heart. They basically asked, “How can we be changed?”

We All Need to Change

None of us are perfect. Areas of our lives constantly need to be changed as we strive for perfection.

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Philippians 3:12-15).

Moving Forward

H. S. Vigeveno claims, “Dr. Elton Trueblood says that the church must either advance or decay. Any group that ceases to grow and spread is already dying. Standing still is stagnation and sure death.”

You need to ask yourself two questions. That’s right; don’t ask others, but ask yourself.

& What could be done to move the church forward?

& What am I personally going to do to help achieve this?

“To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.”

(Winston Churchill)

To be effective in a changing world, we have to keep learning. We need to keep advancing.

One of the best ways to motivate change is to create an environment of quality. “To begin the process of quality improvement, do what you can to improve what you can, where you can, when you can.” (*The Five Star Church* by Stan Toler and Alan Nelson)

Stephen Covey offers sound advice when he tells us we have two options. We can focus on things that are within our scope of control or focus on things that are outside of our scope of control. When we focus on things within our control, we tend to make progress and accomplish our goals. However, when we focus on those things beyond our control, we usually cannot do anything about it and end up complaining and blaming others.

When you look at the church, you can see a lot of things that need to be changed. It does not take a special gift to find these areas. It does take a special discernment to know what to do to solve these problems. One man said, “Don’t come to me telling me of the problem if you can’t at the same time tell me the solution.”

One Bite at a Time

Change in the church must start with you and me. The next step in bringing about change is to find an area of the church requiring change that we are able to tackle and work on. You cannot bring about change in the entire church at one time, but you can work on an area until it is changed. This will improve you, life in the church, and inspire others to be involved in change.

“Devoting a little of yourself to everything means committing a great deal of yourself to nothing.”

(Michael LeBoef)

How do you eat an elephant? You do it one bite at a time. The longest journey starts with a single step. The first step is to

begin. It is not possible to implement all necessary changes at once.

Quotes on Change

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” (Elmer Towns)

In an earlier lesson it was mentioned, “Right things done repeatedly over time compound success.” In order for us to be our best and reach our highest potential, we must be intentional and perpetual. We cannot give up! We must work at change every day—consistently.

Someone has aptly said, “Today’s preparations determine tomorrow’s achievements.”

“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no one can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.”

(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

To form new habits (changes) Donna Fisher in her book, *People Power*, suggests:

& Have an awareness of the need to change and a desire to change.

& Choose new actions, attitudes, and behaviors.

& Focus on and implement the new habits.

Study Questions

1. What two questions does David McNally suggest we should ask each night?

2. Which person in the organization should be changed first?

3. Relate the story of the revolutionary who wanted to change the world.

4. What is the second question Saul asked on the Damascus Road?

5. In Acts 2:37 why did the people ask, “What shall we do”?

6. To move the church forward, what two questions should be asked?

7. Since it is impossible to bring about all change needed at one time, what should be done?

8. What is one of the best ways to motivate change?

9. What happens when a person devotes a little of himself to everything?

10. Stephen Covey suggests that we have two options. What are they? Which one is best?
