



Why People Resist Change

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye”
(Acts 7:51).

Repeatedly, in the Gospels and Acts the Pharisees resisted change. They refused to leave their traditions. Actually, the Pharisees were not alone. People throughout time have resisted change. Why?

Thom and Joani Schultz suggested in their book, *Why Nobody Learns Much Of Anything At Church: And How To Fix It*, that there are several reasons why people resist change. They include:

- & They are content. They are happy where they are and have grown accustomed to it. They are satisfied.
 - & They lack understanding. They do not understand the problems or the solutions. They don’t understand how the suggested changes will work.
 - & They are not willing to pay the price. They may understand the need for change but do not believe it is worthy of the investment of time or trouble.
 - & They are tradition-bound. Their theme song, “That is the way we have always done it!”
 - & The fear of loss. What will they lose if the new change is implemented?
- John Maxwell in his book, *Developing the Leader Within You*, added the following to this list:
- & The change is not self-started. People will reject the change because they do not have ownership of it. People normally will reject what they have not had a part in deciding (even if the change is a good one).
 - & Routine is interrupted. Change threatens habits that are formed.
 - & The change creates a fear of the unknown.
 - & The purpose of the change is unclear.
 - & Change creates a fear of failure. People think that they cannot do it or that it will fail.
 - & The rewards for change do not match the effort that change requires.
 - & Change will not happen when people engage in negative thinking.
 - & Change may be resisted because the followers do not have a trust and respect for the leader that is making the change.
 - & Change requires more commitment. People may not feel that they have the time it takes to implement the change.

Plan for Change Agents

Thom and Joani Schultz also suggested a plan for change agents. This plan includes:

- & Explain the need. People are content with their old habits and ways. They will need to understand the problem.
- & Focus on the gains that will be received with the necessary change. Most people think of what they have to lose by the new change. You must help them focus on what they have to gain instead.
- & Understand that not everyone will be happy with the change. You cannot please everyone. All progress is made with—and in spite of—people opposing.
- & Do not try to implement all changes at the same time. Guide your people through the change process one step at a time.
- & It could also be added: Give the people ownership of the change. Show the people how the change will benefit them.

Change Is Necessary

Rev. J. R. Richardson said, “If we, as a church, will rise to the next level, there must be a change. We must be willing to change.”
It has been said, “The road to the next level is always uphill.”
Change is not easy. Our attitude should reflect a willingness to change in order to achieve success in church growth and world evangelism.
Where do we begin change? The first step is simply—begin. Action is needed. Start today. Tomorrow is too late.

Study Questions

1. List ten reasons why people resist change.

2. What plan could change agents follow to bring about change?

3. Where (or how) do we begin change?
