

TRUSTING GOD FOR A CHANGE

Part One

“The Defining Moment”

I. Introduction of Series

A. A Universal Craving

1. Change is a hot topic these days.
 - a. The presidential campaigns-a call for change
 - b. Global warming-a change in earth’s temperature
 - c. Culture shifts-a change in American value-systems
2. But “change” has always been with us, a universal reality, affecting us all.
3. All of us would like to change something about our lives:
 - a. Lose weight
 - b. Get married
 - c. Find a better job
 - d. Get out of debt
 - e. Overcome a bad habit
4. In this series, we’re going to talk about deeper change.

B. Radical versus Superficial Change

1. For the next few weeks, we’re going to be talking about CHANGE.
 - a. Not simple, day-to-day change, but deep, inner change, the kind of change that occurs from the inside out.
 - b. Not superficial change, but radical change, change “pertaining to, or proceeding from the root” (Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition)

Check out the artwork for the series: an apple with an orange inside, an image representing a “metamorphosis”, a radical change of nature.

2. The need behind the need:
 - a. Do we have a weight problem or a discipline problem?
 - b. Do we need a better job or the desire to DO a better job?
 - c. Do we have a money problem or a character issue?

- d. To get out of debt is one thing; but to obtain the wisdom on how to handle money is better.
- e. To read my Bible is great...but to WANT to read my Bible is better.
- f. To refuse to commit adultery is good; but to be free of lust after the opposite sex is better. That's REAL change.

II. Imperfect Change Mechanisms: Common Ways of Seeking Superior Lives*

**We submit that all of these means are useful and not, of themselves, evil or wrong. But we do say that none of these methodologies will, of themselves, produce the deep, inner, lasting change we crave.*

A. Self-Determination

Self-determination, or “willpower”, is usually the first resource we trust for change. To “just make up your mind” about something has its place, but it will NOT produce lasting change.

- 1. When an outboard motor stalls your boat, pushing against the bow won't get the boat moving.
- 2. If you're drowning, pulling up the hair on your head won't save you.
- 3. You can no more bring permanent change through self-determination than you can pick up a chair off the floor while you're sitting in it!

B. Pruning Evil

- 1. We try to identify what's wrong with us and work on that one thing until we've “pruned” it out of our lives. Then we can work on the next problem.
- 2. In religion, this can be an expression of legalism, whereby we believe that gaining victory over one area means we have victory.
- 3. The problem is that we have many things wrong with us, and life is too short to deal with them one at a time.

- a. We don't “trim” the weeds in our garden...we must pull them out by the roots.
- b. One particular great evil in our lives can take us years to overcome.

C. The “Copy” Method*

- 1. We try to change our lives by imitating someone else.
- 2. While there is a biblical instruction about “imitating” godly leaders and being “Christ-like”, this method fails because lasting behaviors come from the character formed within us, not the character existing in others.

**The WWJD bracelets are good reminders of the Golden Rule...but transformational Christianity is more about BEING than it is about DOING.*

3. I can *mimic* someone else and temporarily change my behavior, but I can't have permanent change unless my heart has been transformed.

D. The "Learner" Method

1. We live in a culture that tends to think if we've "learned" about a thing, we've arrived.
2. There is value in reading, listening, learning, journaling and gathering knowledge, but deep, inner change won't come by dependence in this alone.

TRUSTING ANY HUMAN-CENTERED DEVICE OR METHODOLOGY FOR HEART-CHANGE WILL BE SHORT-LIVED AND FRUSTRATING!

III. Trusting God for a Change

A. So Where Do We Begin?

1. The deep, inner change we seek and need only comes through the *supernatural* power of God in our lives!
2. God's help begins when human help comes to an end.
3. There is a place for every single "change mechanism" above...but it's not here in the beginning!
4. Our TRUST for CHANGE through other means must DIE so that we can TRUST GOD for a change!
5. God's supernatural power BEGINS where human power ENDS.

B. This Change Begins at the CROSS

1. The Cross is more than an emblem or something to wear around your neck.
2. The Cross symbolizes the DEATH of man's ability to please God or to change our lives so we please God.
3. The "Great Divide" is the continental shelf running across a continent that determines the direction of "runoff" for all rainfall. In the same way, the Cross is the "stake" in the ground that divides death from life, man-power from God-power, human ability from supernatural ability.
4. Human effort to change ourselves always falls short of permanent, deep, inner change because only supernatural power can transform us at the heart level!

C. Have You Had Your "Defining Moment" at the Cross?

1. The first call of Christ is "Repent!" We can't move ahead without this!
2. There must be a defining moment where we "change our minds" about change!
3. It may take you a lifetime to forsake self-effort, willpower and false systems of true change...and some never do.

4. Yet this is God's first requirement, coming to the Cross, dying to self-effort, forsaking our own fleshy attempts at righteousness. This is the defining moment out of which all true change emanates.

D. Our Basic Text for this Series

Here is one of the greatest bible verses on "change":

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed* into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

2 Corinthians 3:18 KJV

**"changed" in the original Greek, is from the root word "metamorphoo", from which we get the word "metamorphosis", symbolizing a (radical) change of nature! The newer translations use the word "transformation."*

If you've come to the cross, but slipped away, come back. Repent. There's another chance to change.