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***Navigating Change Personally
and Professionally***

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Introduction:

- *The foundation for all Christian leadership and ministry – for all that we are and all that we do – is Jesus Christ!*
- *Upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word, effective Christian leadership expresses itself in five interdependent components: Character, Competency, Chemistry, Context, and Cohesiveness.*

- In order to create the best opportunity for vibrant growth and maximum fruitfulness in a garden, the gardener must give careful attention to five essential factors: air, water, soil, seed, and husbandry.
- In order to create the best opportunity for vibrant growth and maximum fruitfulness in a local church the leader(s) must give attention to five essential factors: *character, competency, chemistry, context, and cohesiveness.*

- Character is about heart. Competency is about skill. Chemistry is about personality. Cohesiveness is about oversight. Context is about ministry environment.
- *All of the elements of leadership are affected by change. Effective 21st Shepherds must maintain an alertness to the impact of change both personally and professionally.*

Personal Background

- First-born (of 4 children.)
- Rural (5th generation farmer)
- Minnesotan (Born and raised at Appleton)
- "Boomer" (Born in 1954, Graduated high school 1972)
- Married 44 years - Marcia (high-school sweet heart)
- 4 children (Anna, Sarah, Rachel, David)
- 9 grandchildren, 2 step grandchildren

Change is always personal

Change has an inescapable personal dimension for individuals and for groups.

Identity influences how I (we) perceive change, how I (we) evaluate change and how I (we) react to change.

Change is about people

- All people evaluate change **subjectively**.
 - "Good change" or a "change for the good" is change that lessens our dissatisfaction or increases our satisfaction.
 - “Bad change” or a “change for the bad" is a change that increases our dissatisfaction or decreases our satisfaction.

Varied perceptions complicate the dynamics of change

- Within an organization, **perceptions** of the value of change may **vary widely**.
 - i.e. What is "good change" to someone, may be "bad change" to someone else.

Change is stressful!

- All change is **stressful!**
 - Both “good” change and “bad” change is stressful!
- The stress of change is **cumulative.**
- There is a **limit** to how much change any individual (and/or organization) can **tolerate** at one time.

"Margin" (as defined by best-selling author Dr. Richard Swenson) *is the difference between personal load and personal limit.*

When margin is exhausted people will resist additional load whether good, or bad!

The Challenge

- No generation in history has faced the scope and pace of change being faced by this generation.

A Tsunami of Choices

- 30,000 products in a fully stocked grocery store
- 55,000 configurations of coffee at Starbucks

A Tsunami of Information

- 1948 Physicians Desk Reference, 300 pages
- 2012 Physicians Desk Reference 3,300 pages.
- More video uploaded on YouTube in 60 days than all 3 networks created in 60 yrs.
- 1 billion references on the World-Cat search engine
- 1 trillion URL (resources) on the Web
- Information is currently increasing at a rate of 60 % per year.

A Tsunami of Communication/ Distractions

- Cell phones are now accessed by over $\frac{1}{2}$ of the world's population
- Average American
 - 10 hours of media / day
 - 34 hours/week television

- Every generation in our culture grieves (in some measure) the loss of the familiar.

Key issue:

- Under the stress of cumulative change people will tend to **guard and protect** one or more arenas against change as a **matter of psychological (or even physical) survival.**
- **For Christians, the arena most protected against change will likely be their church and/or ministry.**
 - i.e. *“Here is the one place we can go in our stressed out lives, where we don't have to face constant change. Here is the dimension of my life most closely linked to the unchanging God! Here is a place of ‘Sanctuary.’”*

Change is about motivation

- The most important question concerning any change (whether we advocate it, or resist it, whether we are the initiator or the responder) is "*Why?*"
- It follows that answering this question is foundational for both accepting and facilitating change!

Change is about Culture

- *"Culture, in its broadest sense, is what makes you a stranger when you are away from home."*

(Philip Bock and Edward Hall, Culture Shock, Light and Life Press, 1983, p47)

- *"Most people are not even aware that culture exists in their environment. If they have been exposed to only one culture, they believe that the only way to do things is the way that they have always done them."*

(Myron Loss, Culture Shock, Light and Life Press, 1983, p48)

Key insight:

**The more counter-cultural a change is perceived to be, the more difficult that change is to accept!*

Change is about the work of God in the lives of men.

*Christian leaders facilitate change, and Christians wrestle with change at the point of convergence – the “*fault line*” - where an unchanging Word collides with an ever changing world.

- There has always been great pressure at this point of convergence!
“He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.” (John 1:11)
- With one foot on each side of the "fault-line" we must discern the difference between biblical function and temporal form - the difference between that which must never change, and that which must often change.

Discerning Constructive Change

Change is about You

(as a leader)

- **Be honest** with yourself, about yourself.
 - Who are you?
 - What "baggage" do you bring to the change equation?
 - What are your personal strengths as a change agent?
 - What are your personal weaknesses?

Change is about people

(Within your ministry and your community)

- **Be humble and teachable.**
 - Are you aware of the presence or absence of "margin" in your life?
 - What changes are you currently coping with?
 - Are those changes within your control or beyond your control?

Change is about motivation

- Be honest **and transparent**.
 - Answer the key question "Why?"
 - Is this change biblical?
 - Is this change necessary?
 - Are there alternative solutions?
 - Does it relate to survival?
 - Does it relate to achievement?
 - What will this change cost?
 - In all currencies – time, effort, money, etc.
 - Who will bear the cost?

Change is about culture

- The most acceptable change initiatives are **contextually sensitive and biblically based.**
 - The criteria for change in your ministry must take culture into account, but be directed by biblical truth.
 - *“I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”
(I Corinthians 9:22b-23)*

Change is a work of God in the lives of men.

- **The Lord Jesus Christ is the arbiter of all eternal change.**
- **Our responsibility is to discover and cooperate with His plan for changing His church and its various ministries.**
 - *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." (Prov. 3:5-7 NIV)*

Lyle Schaller – insights on change

(The Change Agent, Abingdon, Nashville, 1972)

- *"One of the major risks of innovation is that it will succeed."* (54)
- *"Power often appears to be greater in the mind of the beholder than it is in the hands of the holder."* (141)
- *"A principle obstacle to change in our culture is not the concentration of power, but the diffusion of power with the resultant complexity and much greater veto power."* (154-156)
- *"Controversy and conflict are unavoidable... While conflict appears to be over the immediate issue, in larger terms it is over change and the anticipated consequences of change."* (160,161)

Key insight:

**The more counter-cultural a change is perceived to be, the more difficult that change is to accept!*

Change is Essential

- Our Christ is unchanging
- Our context is ever changing

- Our Message is unchanging
- Our methods are ever changing

- Our Mission is unchanging
- Our “mission field” is ever changing

- Warning: refusal to adapt (change) our methods to effectively share our unchanging message with an ever changing mission field is sin – an act of rebellion against God.

Six guidelines for initiating, coping with, and adjusting to change

- Whenever possible, choose friendship over confrontation.
- Use local ceremony, technology and personnel in the introduction of change as often as possible.
- Introduce change in such a way that it does not violate the patterns and roles of people with vested interest, and in a way which does not exalt yourself.

- Build upon what is known and practiced.
- Ensure that sustaining the change does not depend upon the presence of the outsider.
- Keep central the role of the Holy Spirit.

Duane Elmer, Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 61.

Spiritual & Cultural Steps in Initiating Change

- **1. Prayer**

- * The most important and most biblical changes are those that will attract the greatest spiritual opposition. (Eph. 6:10-19)
- * The more fundamental the change, the greater the stress and psychological opposition.

- **2. Preparatory Preaching, Teaching, and study of the Word**

- * Go to the Word of God for examples of significant decisions leading to change.

Ex. Acts 15

- **3. Building Loving Relationships**

- * The greater the love in relationships the greater the capacity to maintain fellowship in the face of change.

- **4. One-to-One Communication with Decision Makers**

- * Maintain the highest integrity.

- The goal is biblical persuasion, not fleshly manipulation.

- * Remember that the likelihood of embracing the “destination” is proportionate to understanding the “route.”

- **5. Rely on Key Persuaders and Diplomats**

- * Maintain the highest integrity. The goal is biblical persuasion, not fleshly manipulation.

- * Remember that key persuaders and diplomats may or may not occupy formal positions of authority.

- **6. Identify Similar Innovators**

- * Learn as much as you can from those who have traveled your contemplated route.

- **7. Use History and Tradition**

- * How has God worked in the biblical past?

- * How has God worked in your ministry's history?

- **8. Sample the Change**

- * Make use of opinion polls, trial periods, pilot programs, etc.

- **9. Evaluate**

- * Success builds momentum.

- * Honest acknowledgment of failure builds credibility – a “deposit” toward future change initiatives.

- **10. Allow Time for God to Work**

* The more fundamental the change category, the more dependent we are on the intervention of God.

- ex.
- Cosmetics – easy to change
 - Infrastructure – more difficult
 - Human behavior – very difficult
 - Human values – extremely difficult
 - Culture (shared values) – God alone, over time.

- **11. Draw inspiration and encouragement from those who have faced greater change and succeeded!**
 - Just as you and I “*have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood*” in our striving against sin, so too we follow examples of the faithful who have faced vastly more change than we ever will face!

Top Four All time Greatest “*Change-Facers.*”

- #4 – Moses –
 - Loss of family
 - Exile
 - Call
 - The Exodus
 - No Promised Land

- #3 - Noah

- Pre-flood to Post flood – an entire new world (an entirely new external world)

- #2 – Adam & Eve

- Pre-Fall perfection to Post-Fall deprivation and degradation (an entirely new internal and external world)

- #1 – All time greatest “Change-Facer” – Jesus!

- *“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:1-11)*

Questions?

Addendum #1 – Understanding Generational Differences

- **20's, 30's (Depression era);**
 - key word - Survival
 - key issue - "How do we hang on?"
- **30's, 40's (Builder)**
 - key word - Suspicion, security
 - key issue – “How do we preserve our cohesiveness?”
 - Sincere anxiety about relationships

- **40's, 50's, 60's (Boomer)**
- key word - Self Identity
- key issue – "How do I make a mark in the world **and** achieve personal prosperity at the same time?"

- **60's, 70's, 80's (Gen X, Becomers)**

- key word - Self Indulgence

- key issue – “How do I avoid boredom and constricting responsibility?
Freedom of expression, options, the assumption that someone else will take responsibility (provide my options).

- **80's, 90's (Millennial Generation, Bridgers)**

- key word - Self Expression

- key issues_ “How do I avoid being labeled?”

- Fragmentation (Don't categorize me.)
- Demanding - an endless list of options is assumed
- Highly interactive
- Extreme

Addendum #2 – The Matter of Motive

Before God can bless our ministry we must be willing to proceed from a Kingdom motive!

We must also examine our motives and expectations in the light of the reality of our current ministry context!

Quotes to for further reflection

- "Understand that commitment to a major change is always expensive, and that you either pay for achieving it or pay for not having it." (338)
- "Whenever a discrepancy exists between the current culture and the objectives of your change, the culture always wins." (339)

Preconceived notions can block creative problem solving

- "In the nineteenth century... bright uniforms and antiquated tactics cost (British troops) five hundred men in a matter of minutes against the Gatling gun. The last battlefield communique from the field commander ... `How are we going to get another five hundred men?'"
(339)