



## **MONTH 9**

### **EMBRACING CHANGE: WHERE IS GOD INSPIRING CHANGE?**

#### **OBSERVE**

When we think of change, especially organizational change, we often think of resistance to change.

What would you list as the top three reasons people resist change?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Daniel Kahneman, a psychologist who studies judgment and decision-making, says that the typical person experiences pain from losses about twice as keenly as he or she feels pleasure from gains.<sup>1</sup>

How has this statement proven to be true or false in your experience?

People tend to change under one of three conditions, which we'll call *change factors*. People change when they:

- **hurt enough they have to change,**
- **learn enough they want to change, or**
- **receive enough they are able to change.**

The first factor is often referred to as *hitting bottom* or *bottoming out*. It can be seen in the life of an alcoholic who is forced to change because the pain is too great—either physically or emotionally.

The second factor comes from education. We learn that change is possible and that it could be in our best interest. This learning gives the impetus for us to make a change.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Advances in Prospect Theory: Cumulative Representation of Uncertainty," *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 5, no. 4 (1992): 297-323.

The third factor is the strength to change. For followers of Christ, this strength comes from the power of the Holy Spirit. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, the Spirit gives us the capacity to make the changes we need to make and to be transformed.

When did you experience change in your life? Which of the three change factors do you think motivated that change?

What have been two of the most difficult changes you have had to navigate in your life?

What have been the top three changes you have had to lead? Did they leave you scarred or strengthened as a leader?

What differences do you see between change that is personal and change that is organizational?

## **IDENTIFY**

Most leaders experienced change that did not go well. These experiences may even have brought hurt and pain that left a lasting residue or impact.

In his book *Leading Change*, John Kotter has identified **eight common errors** that leaders make in instituting change.<sup>2</sup>

- **Allowing too much complacency**
- **Failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition**
- **Underestimating the power of vision**
- **Under communicating the vision by a factor of 10 (or 100 or even 1,000)**
- **Permitting obstacles to block the new vision**
- **Failing to create short-term wins**
- **Declaring victory too soon**
- **Neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture**

As you reflect on this list, where have you made some missteps or found barriers in the change processes that you have led?

Consider how you have led changes in churches or organizations. Is there any need for...

- **confession,**
- **forgiveness,**
- **amends,**
- **grace-giving,**

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<sup>2</sup> John Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 16.

- **or some other form of resolution or restoration?**

How might God be prompting you to resolve an issue before going forward?

As you deal with change in the future, what new learnings or commitments will you bring to the process? How will it be different for you as a leader and for your church?

## **APPLY**

Embracing change is essential for healthy leadership and community. Carol Roth, New York times bestselling author, business advisor and investor, says that change is both a survival skill and success skill.

She offers four ways that we can learn to be comfortable with the challenge of change and use it to help create transformation for ourselves as leaders and for our community.

1. **Take small action steps:** You cannot affect change overnight, so just find one small thing to do at a time... then another.... and another.
2. **Be willing to go back in order to move forward.** Success is not linear, so be prepared to have times when you must go backwards to take a big leap forward.
3. **Check your ego.** Typically, the biggest roadblock to change is you. To counter this, stay humble, find your humor, and keep your faith.
4. **Fail correctly.** Most of us were never taught to fail. Yet, it is required for taking risk, and it is a part of life and leadership. Try to learn from your mistakes, forgive yourself, and rebound quickly.

Which of these suggestions are most challenging for you? Which are the easiest? How can you start using them in your leadership as you support your community to better embrace change?

## **NEXT STEPS**

### **Hebrews 13:8 (ESV)**

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

### **Isaiah 40:8 (ESV)**

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

### **James 1:17 (NIV)**

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

### **Lamentations 3:22-23 (NRSV)**

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
God's mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness."

### **Revelation 22:13 (NRSV)**

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Discuss the following questions with your accountability partner or someone in your own local church.

Consider the doctrine of the immutability of God, the fact that God does not change. How does that impact our view of change, our fear of change, and our faith in the midst of change?

How have you integrated the changelessness of God with the need for the church to be always transforming, or ever-changing, according to the Word of God?

How can the constancy of God comfort church leaders' anxiety about the state of the church in today's world?

### **REFLECT**

#### **Harriet Tubman**

*Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.*

#### **Tony Campolo**

*I believe that the past influences us. I do not believe that the past determines who we are... as important as your past may have been, it's not as important as the future. It's the future that matters... Because I am here to tell you that people are more influenced by their dreams and their visions than anything that has happened in their yesterdays.*

#### **Sheryl Sandberg**

*Option A is not available. So let's kick the sh\*\* out of option B.*

#### **Margaret Mead**

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*