

Navigating Change
As Presented by Lisa Bishop
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Day One

We all experience change. If we didn't we would not be growing, life would be stagnant. When I think about change there are two categories that come to mind. Change that we initiate or change that we experience being thrust upon us that isn't necessarily welcomed.

I know quite a few people who are in the midst of a career change. Some friends have lost their jobs, while others have decided to leave their current job for something new. Change can be exciting. It can also be scary. Change can feel liberating, it can also be anxiety producing, regardless of whether or not you initiated it.

In the course of life, one thing is true...change is inevitable. So, the question is, what do we do when change feels overwhelming?

One thing is to follow the old saying, "Take it one day at a time." While it is important to have vision for the future, and an overall direction for where our next phase of life or career is headed, it can oftentimes feel overwhelming when we just focus on the big picture. We can feel flustered, frustrated, and even a little bit paralyzed.

As you experience life change, ask yourself, "What can I do today to move me towards my vision and goals? What action step can I take now that will propel me in the direction of what is next?"

For example, if you are in the midst of a job search and find yourself panicking about the future, what are the steps you can take today? Maybe it's getting help writing your resume or applying for five jobs online. Perhaps it's taking a course that will help you to be marketable or reaching out to friends to help you make connections in your field of interest. Maybe it's going to a networking function. When the future feels overwhelming, daunting, and even impossible, approach it by taking on just a little at a time.

And if you are currently in a space of fear, anxiety and overwhelmed, remember to anchor yourself in Jesus. While your circumstances may be changing and uncertain, remind yourself of this truth from Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." While the future may feel uncertain in the midst of change, Jesus never changes. He is faithful and trustworthy. He is a reliable companion in the midst of life altering change. Jesus is with you and will help you. The Holy Spirit will give you wisdom when you ask him.

Day Two

Are you in a season of change? Are you embracing it or is this season inducing some anxiety or fear?

We all experience change. Sometimes we initiate it and other times we find ourselves in an unwelcome and unanticipated season of uncertainty.

Whether invited or unwelcomed...change can induce worry and anxiety. I don't know about you, but I tend to be a bit of a control freak. Comfort and certainty can be idols for me, so when I am in the midst of change and I am uncertain about the future, I can often feel out of control, and I don't like it! Instead of leaning into God I can tend to settle in to worry

When we worry we feel fear and concern because something unpleasant is happening and we don't know when or how it will end.

Or we think that something bad could happen, and the "what if's" kick in. Your mind gets into a negative spin cycle of worst-case scenarios and you try to be a predictor of the future. The thing about worry is that it is always fearing what could happen. We conjure up all of these scenarios in our minds, most of which never come true. In fact a recent study says that 91.4% of what we worry about never comes to fruition. When we worry, in some way we falsely believe that our worry can change our circumstances. We know that worry is a waste of emotional energy, yet we are all prone to it. The fact is worry cannot change outcomes.

So what do we do when change induces fear, worry, and anxiety to rear their ugly heads? We can look to the gospel of Matthew to refocus our thoughts and remember the words of Jesus.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear....Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?....Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:25, 27-28, 33-34).

What is an area of your life that you are lending too much mental and emotional energy to by worrying? What current or impending change is causing concern?

Bring your cares to Jesus and remember, worrying won't add a moment to your life. When you experience concern for the future, turn it into prayer and praise that Jesus sees you and knows your needs. Discipline your mind and heart to look to Jesus where your help comes from. He is your ever-present help in times of change.

Day Three

Have you ever heard the saying, "Change happens when the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of change."

In other words, sometimes the pain of staying stuck in the same old place needs to be greater than the temporary suffering the change itself may induce.

Maybe you have been thinking of making a career change, taking better care of yourself physically and mentally, or giving up unhealthy or ungodly habits that no longer serve you or honor God. But up until now you have not been willing to lean into what will be required to change. Because let's face it, change, even positive change, can cause a degree of suffering, and who likes suffering?

That's something we try to avoid in life. Often with change comes suffering because it requires some type of sacrifice. We need to give something up to invite the new in. Such as giving up comfort, time, being right, being liked, a feeling of security. Change often demands reordering of priorities.

And often, in order to embrace change, we also need to be willing to embrace discomfort and a letting go.

When I think of life as a follower of Jesus it is a life where we are constantly growing and changing. Once we are "in Christ," everything changes. Our ideas change. Our perspective changes. Our values and actions change to line up with God's Word. As the Holy Spirit works within us we find, as 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "the old has gone, the new is here!" And we are commanded to walk in the newness of life. The Christian life is an ongoing series of changes as we grow in knowledge, faith, and holiness. As we grow in Christ, growth requires change.

What change have you felt a nudge towards making in your life? Where do you sense God calling you to let go of the old to walk in the new? Remember that God will never contradict his Word so whatever change you are feeling led to, know that God will not ask you to do something that goes against holiness, righteousness, and the truth and instruction of the Bible.

Where is God calling you out of your comfort zone and into trusting him? What pain of change are you willing to endure to experience growth and transformation?

Take some time to get quiet with God. Seek his Holy Spirit for wisdom and courage, ask Jesus to help you as you say "yes" to the change he is calling you to.

Day Four

For some of us change is invigorating and for others it can feel intimidating. For some change feels adventurous, and for others, well, we like what feels safe, comfortable and predictable. What is your reaction when you experience change?

When I think about change, I think about the story of Moses in the book of Exodus. As a bit of a refresher, when Moses is shepherding his father-in-law's flock in the far side of the wilderness, he comes to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the Lord appears to him in a bush that is burning but not consumed by the fire. God calls out to Moses from the bush, tells him that he has observed his people enduring suffering and oppression from the Egyptians and tells Moses that he is the one God will use to free the Israelites from Egypt and bring them into the promised land. Reacting out of fear Moses says, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" God responds, "I will certainly be with you" (Exodus 3:11-12).

Needless to say, from this point on, Moses's life is altered, the course of his life is changed forever.

As the story unfolds and as Moses's fear of future confrontations with Pharaoh builds, his faith also waivers. He mutters, "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." God's rebuttal is strong and he says, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (Exodus 4:10-12). Even with this strong assurance from the Lord, Moses still pleads for God to pass him over and use someone else for the challenge ahead.

You may be asking, "What does this have to do with navigating change in my life?" I am glad you asked. You see, there may be times in life when you are called to make a course correction or when God calls you to make a change in life that provokes fear, a sense of inadequacy, or downright resistance. Moses's story reminds us that in the midst of change, God is near. In fact, in the midst of Moses's fear and flailing faith in the face of change, from shepherd to deliverer, twice God tells Moses, "I will be with you."

Is there an area of your life that you need that same reminder? That whatever you are facing, God sees you?

When you face uncertainty, you can be tempted to default to fear rather than lean into faith. So let this be a reminder to you today that whatever your circumstances, whenever life throws you a curveball, God says, "I will be with you."

Day Five

Having trustworthy companions is essential, and especially important when you find yourself charting change and new territory in your career, a relationship, with family, and in life.

It can be so easy to pull the plug on community and to hide when life gets hard and feels uncertain. But it is ever so important to phone a friend, someone who you can confide in, count on to listen, trust to keep confidentiality, and encourage you with truth.

Our minds can tend to ruminate on negative thoughts when uncertainty looms. To counter the tendency to fall down a rabbit's hole and take a mental tailspin, it is important to stay grounded in God's Word, be ever present in prayer and rely on your friends to help pull you up when all you can think about is worst case scenarios.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 gives us a great reminder about the importance of community:

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

These verses highlight the importance of Christian friendships. Companions that put God at the center of their lives will help you navigate life and change in a godly way, keeping you focused on truth, and that is the best and most fruitful way. When life is hard it can be so easy to forget God's faithfulness. We need our friends as faithful guides.

Who is a friend you can rely on when you feel the road ahead is a blur? Reach out to them, ask them if they will listen. Tell them you need their help to encourage you in truth and pray for you as you navigate change. And if you know someone who is currently in a tough season, who can you be a friend and encouragement to?

You will have to stay flexible, faithful, and hopeful. It can be easy to get discouraged and fearful. This is the time to, as the Apostle Paul says in Romans 12:12, be faithful...be persistent in prayer. Rather than staring at your circumstances, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.