Change Versus Transformation

Change versus transformation: though the words have very similar meanings, I would like to propose that they are indeed quite different. Most often in the English language, usage of the word *change* refers to a temporary state of being. For example, "I will change my clothes for work, then again for the party, and finally for bed." "I changed my mind on which job I was going to take. If it does not work out, I can always change it back." "My feelings have changed and I no longer want to be with you." and so on. Though change can be quite valuable at times, there is an implied loophole, or way out, if that change does not suit us as we had hoped, we can always choose something else. When it comes to life, change is built upon the old, broken and unstable past untruths: I will change to a loving person because I previously was unloving and harsh. This type of thinking is built upon a cracked foundation and will eventually crumble in destruction, often reverting back to the former undesirable behavior; creating a vicious cycle of destructive behavioral patterns.

Transformation, on the other hand, is vastly different in the connotations that it carries. When something is transformed, it is no longer the same, but an entirely different being with no way of returning to its former state. For example, the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly, a tadpole into a frog, someone separated from God to a forgiven soul who will spend eternity with Him. The Bible calls us to transform, not change, our character. Transformation builds upon the solid unshakeable truth of identity: I am loving, therefore all behavior shall reflect love.

> *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2*

> *But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:16-18*

With this distinction, we are now faced with a call to action, but before we get into that, we need to make one more semantic differentiation. Is there a difference between choosing something and making a decision about something? Although they are quite similar in meaning, I propose yes, once again, based on the weight each word and definition carries. Here is an example: if I have made a decision to get healthier, I will make the choice to eat a salad over a bag of potato chips. If I have decided to follow Jesus, I will make the choice to forgive my neighbor and conform my actions to those which are pleasing to Him. Decisions drive the choices we make. If I decide to forgive the one who hurt me in my past, my choices must then reflect that decision; I choose not to dwell on malicious thoughts and continually reenact the awful events which I am trying to free myself from, because I made a decision to forgive. My choices should align with the decisions I make. What is our call to action then if we have made a decision to be transformed? We must daily, sometimes minute by minute, refresh and renew our thoughts to reflect the transformation which we desire by holding our thoughts captive and only allowing those which align with our decisions to remain.

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. Philippians 4:8

It goes without saying that these are personal decisions, however, what many often ignore is that accountability for the success or failure of the execution of your decisions rests solely with you. There is no pointing fingers or trying to lay the blame on someone else; you and you alone are responsible.

Here is a story which illustrates our responsibility to guard over the transformation process, which begins as a seed, and what can happen if we fail to progress.

How many times have you heard a great teaching with words that stirred your very soul, leaving you to think you could never forget the message because of the purity of truth and the depth of impact they had on you? How quickly do those words of life, hope, love, encouragement, with needed character development, slip away from the very place we assured ourselves they were confidently imprinted? I cannot count how many times I have sat in Sunday morning teachings or huge motivational events, shedding tears of affirmation as the speakers touched my heart and moved my soul. I have volumes of notes, reflections, valuable quotes and sayings, must-remembers and I will-never-forgets, yet when I revisit them, it is like I am seeing them for the very first time. Is my brain that dense? Perhaps, I am too shallow? Or maybe, just maybe, there is in another reason? Please indulge me as I liken each pearl of wisdom to a seed.

The seed you have been given is a precious gem which you are honored to have received. You hold it in your hand and intently examine its color, shape and size. Joy lights up your face as you realize the value of the treasure you are holding. Carefully, you place it in a protective container and set it on the counter, away from anything that might damage your precious seed. True to its cruel nature, time moves on and the demands of the day tear you away from the new life waiting on the counter. As you go, you make a glib promise to come right back and tend to the seed properly, quite content that it is safely hidden out of harm's way.

The second hand, though a tiny moment, trudges on, piling up into hours, days, months and years. Sometime later, in a spring cleaning madness, you find your precious seed. Although at one point it meant so much, you do not even recognize it now. Curiously, trying to figure it out, fuzzy remembrances begin to focus in on a picture of where the seed came from and why you kept it. You recall the truths in the teaching and begin experiencing the feelings of how that moment ignited hope within you, just as they had originally. You reminisce with your old dear friend, the seed, and admonish yourself for forgetting it there in the corner. A distant sound pulls your string, forcing you to put the seed back on the counter in its all too familiar fortress of protection. As you go, you tell yourself you will take care of the seed just as soon as you take care of the task at hand. Smiling, you walk away and shift your thoughts to the demand which pulled you away.

A week later, at your neighbor's house, you cannot help but notice a beautiful tree filled with fruit growing in his backyard. The neighbor, delighted in your admiration, explains how he had been given a seed some time back. It was a special seed, so he planted it right away and committed to taking care of it as it should be. He recalled the diligence, dedication and

determination used in caring for something so precious. His sacrifice and faithfulness plucked a string in your heart. He went on to share how the young sapling began to grow and the priority he placed on it to ensure its survival at such a tender and vulnerable stage. Twang. And now, after all his hard work, here stands his beautiful seed- a mature tree providing good fruit for any who would like some. You shake his hand and thank him, excuse yourself and head straight for the dark, safe, forgotten place on your counter.

Which areas of your life do you need transformation in?

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Having a daily action plan, such as a calendar or phone reminders, is a great way to keep you moving toward the desired transformation. Some days you will not feel like doing anything, but if you stick to your action plan, you will be amazed at how quickly the process becomes second nature. It will not be long before others begin to look at you as that transformed being, rather than see you as you once were, as you continue to fight daily to live out your transformed life.

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Timothy 6:12

Personal growth and development is a key component to the transformation process. Though there are numerous great teachings and teachers, John Maxwell has dedicated his life to helping others move through this very process. He challenges his readers with this question: *How can I grow more to give more?* We cannot give to others what we do not have. If we want to be hope for others, we must have a better hope to give. If we desire to help those who are grieving, we must possess the necessary skills which will walk them successfully through that process. We then should challenge ourselves daily with that very question: Today, how can I grow more to give more? Adding this to your daily action plan will keep the concept fresh and new every day.

Law of Regret

We all have events we would like to change in our past. Specific moments which haunt us and keep us whispering, “If only I would have….” We often torment ourselves to the point of distraction as we relive those events over and over, wishing for a different action on our part. The law of regret is born out fear, which keeps us from taking action. How would the events have changed or lives been impacted if we were not paralyzed by fear and seized the opportunity or stood up for what was right in the face of ridicule and shame? Who would have been impacted for the better, inspired, blessed or transformed?

How many opportunities were missed and how would your life be different today if you would have taken the chance? The law of regret is a heavy burden to carry. Learn from your mistakes, lay them at the feet of Jesus, glean the wisdom provided and do not let fear keep you in a constant state of regret.

Participant or Observer

Too many of us sit on the sidelines of life and watch it pass by rather than being an active participant. How often have we entertained the notion that there is plenty of time for this or that, only to experience the fleetingness of time as it flashes by in what seemed to be a mere moment? In order to be all who God has created us to be, we must seize every moment, appreciate the time given us, and actively pursue what has been placed in our hearts and on our minds to accomplish and fulfill in our lifetime. Time is but a whisper and if we are not listening, we will miss it entirely.

> *As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer. Psalm 103:15-16*

Mel Robbins, a renowned life coach, challenges us with the question, *"What do I need to do to make this the best year of my life?"* Introspection, prayer and meditation are key elements in answering this question. It goes without saying that there is a huge difference between knowing and acting, therefore, action is an essential requirement in keeping us focused and from having missed opportunities. Procrastination, for even a few minutes, will delay our growth significantly. God gives us a sound mind and when thoughts for our good enter in, immediately act upon them, they were put there for our transformation, growth and prosperity. Obediently submitting to these thoughts and immediately acting upon them will methodically move us toward our goals, to which we will inevitably live out the best year of our life. The potential for greatness is limited only by our failure to act when the opportunity tugs on our heart or presents itself in our mind.

When we fail to act, taking on an observer role within our own life, we merely exist rather than operate in the role of a conqueror and territory taker, as the Lord has called us to be. Likewise, when we allow our past mistakes or the opinions and criticisms of others to dictate our mindset and movements, we give our power over to the enemy and forfeit our destiny by no longer actively pursuing that which we have been called to do. You have been given a specific set of skills, talents and giftings, which were meant to be used in a purposeful manner to bring glory to the Lord here upon the earth. In order for that to be accomplished, it is vital that you <u>daily</u> pursue the calling which you have heard.

> *Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13-14*

A participant is fully and wholly engaged in the task at hand and, when operating in the fullness of who they are, unstoppable. When we are in daily prayer, daily growth and daily action, we are a holy force to be reckoned with. The enemy will come at us in one direction, but flee from us in seven (Deuteronomy

28:7). We become more than conquerors and take back dominion over the lost and abandoned territory of the Kingdom; we bring the Kingdom of God back into the land. This is where our hearts long to reside, but too often and too quickly, we grow weary, begin to reason our way out of active participation, falling headlong back into an observer role. We allow our excuses to stop our forward progression as a participant and let ourselves be soothed into a state of apathy and existing as the opportunities for victorious living slip right through our fingers. So often we come to be content with focusing on salvation alone and forget the command to take dominion.

> *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Genesis 1:26*
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> *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20*

We must live intentionally with a battle mindset, never willing to give up our conquering life to that of a hostage subject to the control of passiveness and timidity.

Based on what the Lord has placed upon your heart: What do you need to do to make this the best year of your life?

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Which areas in your life have you been an observer rather than a participant?

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What actions will you take to get back into the role of a participant in your own life?

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