

☞ IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE

I believe God has some “new wine” he wants to pour into the Church today. We must be willing to stretch with the new wine of His presence. We need to be made new.

Previously:

☞ **You need a whole new experience for a whole new day.**

Get a fresh revelation of Jesus by reading the Word spending time with him.

Get a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit by worshiping and praying, asking God to anoint you and make you flexible and useful again.

☞ **Be renewed by expectantly waiting on the Lord, patiently serving him.**

Get a better picture of God. He's in charge and he holds you close to his heart.

All of these things will require change, and *that can be a dreaded word. For some, just the thought of it is frightening. We all tend to find our comfort zones, and then we like to stay there. Like Mark Twain said, “Nobody likes change except a wet baby.” However, change can be good. In fact, Jesus calls us all to change. In Matthew 18:3 he said, “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

Do you know how some define insanity? “Doing the same thing over and over while expecting different results.” Too often, we behave in this way. We keep doing the same things, we ask God for help with whatever situation we're in, perhaps even asking Him to change someone or something, but we're not willing to make any changes ourselves.

People often feel like they are stuck in a rut. It's interesting to think about ruts. The U.S. standard railroad gauge (distance between rails) is four feet, eight-and-one-half inches. Why such an odd number? Legend says that it's because that's the way they built them in England. Why did the English adopt that particular gauge? Because the people who built the pre-railroad tramways used that gauge. They in turn were locked into that gauge because the people who built tramways used the same standards and tools they had used for building wagons, which were set on a gauge of four feet, eight-and-one-half inches. “Why were wagons built to that scale? Because with any other size, the wheels did not match the old wheel ruts on the roads. “So who built these old rutted roads? The ruts were first made by Roman war chariots. Four feet, eight-and-one-half inches was the width a chariot needed to be in order to accommodate the rear ends of two war horses.” Sometimes when we're stuck in a rut it's because of some rear ends in our past that we need to let go of.

I often ask people who are struggling with some issue, “how's that working for you?” In

☞ other words, **“If what you're doing isn't working maybe you should change something!”** If you're having trouble with parenting, then change something! Marriage troubles? Maybe some attitudes and behaviors need to change. Struggling with sin?

Change something! Need to be made new again? Change! But change can be hard, so how can we actually change?

☞ John 5:1-9, 14

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. **2** Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. **3** Here a great number of disabled people used to lie — the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. **(— and they waited for the moving of the waters. 4 From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease he had.)* **5** One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. **6** When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" **7** "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." **8** Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." **9** At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

1. ☞ **Decide If You Want to Change. (v. 6)**

"When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" This seems a strange question to ask a man who has been sick and an invalid for nearly forty years. He was asking a very serious question because it is entirely possible that he does not "really" want to be changed.

In the past thirty-eight years this man has been a beggar who lived by the pity of others; if he's healed he would lose all of this. In Bible times a person who was healed would lose a decent living. For some today, a miraculous healing would mean giving up welfare and ☞ getting a job. So to decide for change, you must **count the cost**.

Even with bad conditions in their lives, some people still just don't want change. For some, change is more frightening than the awful conditions they're living in! But, the bottom line is that we all continue to need change. Even after we are saved, there are things that need to be changed, like bitterness, unresolved conflicts and things that lie ☞ hidden within us. The question is, **"Do you really want change?"** So this "silly" question that Jesus asked the paralyzed man was relevant for him and for us!

Some will say right away that they definitely want change in their lives, but they don't think that change will be required of them. "Yes, I want my situation to change! Uh, wait, you mean, I will have to change something?"

☞ Joshua 24:15

if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then **choose for yourselves this day** whom you will serve...

There's a story about Ronald Reagan in his youth was taken by his aunt to buy a new pair of custom made shoes from a cobbler. The cobbler asked if he wanted square toes or round toes. Reagan couldn't make up his mind. So when he went to get his new shoes there was one square toed and one round toed. It taught him to never let someone else decide for you.

So there's a decision to be made. Do you really want to change?

Decide If You Want To Change, and...

2. 🛑 Stop Making Excuses. (v. 7)

"The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

Notice that he did not answer Jesus' question. He didn't say that he wanted to be well. He dismissed the question and merely complained about his condition. He tells how unfortunate he is. He lists his troubles. To be sure, he has plenty to complain about. But he whines about life instead of answering Jesus' question about whether he really wants to be well. In today's language we would say that he sees himself as a victim.

Are you a perpetual victim? This is when a person always sees themselves as a casualty of society, of circumstances, or of their upbringing. They are people who continue to see themselves as having been dealt a lousy hand of cards in life.

- 🛑 • **Victims endlessly repeat how they have been mistreated.**
- **Victims live by the childish notion that life should always be fair.**
- **Victims find it difficult to forgive others because they see forgiveness as weakness.**
- **Victims have difficulty maintaining close relationships because they can't trust others.**
- **The cry of the perpetual victim is, "It's not my fault!"**

There are some things we should note: We all make more excuses than we would like to admit. Change is never possible until we quit with the excuses and admit that we have a problem. Listen to these excuses...

Genesis 3:12-13

The man said, "The woman... you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." **13** Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent... deceived me, and I ate."

In Exodus 4 when God was calling Moses to go back to Egypt and rescue the Israelites, he said, "O 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... "O Lord, please send someone else..."

In Exodus 32 when confronted about the idolatrous golden calf, Aaron responded, "they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

Now, hear God's response...

☞ **Deuteronomy 30:11**

Now what I am commanding you today **is not too difficult for you** or beyond your reach.

Stop Making Excuses, and...

3. ☞ **Take Action. (vv. 8-9)**

"Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." (9) And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked."

When Jesus said, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk," the man had a choice. He could listen and ignore, listen and hope, or he could listen and obey. Don't we all have that choice?

In his words "to take up his bed" the Lord is telling him something very important... **do** ☞ **not make any provision to go back**. Many people fail right here. Burn your bridges. Cut off any possibility of going back.

Acts 19:18-19

Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. **19** A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. (drachma = a day's wage)

v. 14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."

Why was he told to stop sinning? Whether or not this man's original condition was due to his sins, Jesus was warning that he shouldn't take his healing for granted. He is telling him to turn away from old choices.

When you make a decision for God, take action and do something about it...

- ☞ **If you have struggled with a hidden sin, find a confidant, confess it, and make yourself accountable.**

- **If you have resolved to avoid lustful images, then get an internet filter, turn off your TV, or maybe even cancel your cable subscription.**
- **If you have unforgiveness towards someone, find a way bless them.**
- **If a relationship is troubled, do something different! Don't wait for the other person; you change and do something different!**
- **☞ If you have committed to a stronger prayer life, then set your alarm clock earlier.**
- **If you want to be renewed, do something different. Read the word, pray for a new anointing, worship wholeheartedly, serve God as you wait expectantly.**

1 Kings 18:21

Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

So are you ready to be changed? You can be if you truly want to be.

- ☞ • **Decide if you really want to change.**
- **Stop making excuses.**
- **Take action.**

Did you ever hear the story of Larry Walters, a man who decided he wanted to see his neighborhood from a new perspective? He went down to the local army surplus store and bought forty-five used weather balloons. That afternoon he strapped himself into a lawn chair, to which several of his friends tied the now helium-filled balloons. He took along a BB gun, figuring he could shoot the balloons one at a time when he was ready to land. Walters, who assumed the balloons would lift him about 100 feet in the air, was caught off guard when the chair soared more than 11,000 feet into the sky -- smack into the middle of the air traffic pattern at Los Angeles International Airport. Too frightened to shoot any of the balloons, he stayed airborne for more than two hours, forcing the airport to shut down its runways for much of the afternoon. Soon after he was safely grounded and cited by the police, reporters asked him three questions: "Were you scared?" "Yes." "Would you do it again?" "No." "Why did you do it?" "Because," he said, "you can't just sit there."

☞ **You can't just sit there. It's time for a change.** Stop making excuses and start taking action. **Be renewed!**