

Melva's Corner

CHANGE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE UNSETTLING!

August 14, 2006

(Hebrews 13:8-9)

Central Truth: We can approach life as an adventure!

As school terms swing into high gear this fall, there are more and more reports of colleges — and even some high schools — including laptop computers in the cost of the semester's tuition. Now it seems, every educated person must be computer literate. Research is done online rather than with printed texts for the simple reason that physical books cannot be kept up to date. By the time certain materials can be typeset, edited, printed, and bound, they are no longer the latest findings.

One university distributed iPods to every incoming freshman. The small electronic devices allow easy review of lectures and will be invaluable for the study of languages. There will be the additional benefit (or distraction) of music via the same device. Blackberrys, cell phones, technologies galore — all these electronic breakthroughs have changed the face of education.

I'm not so sure that makes education different from any other part of life on Planet Earth. There has been abundant change in the past century. This is not the world of your grandparents. It's not even the world of your parents. Hey, it's not the world you remember from high school or college several years ago!

Most of us, however, seem to prefer a life with minimal change. We don't like to be disturbed. So we carve out routines.

Of course you know that dull man or woman, who hasn't entertained a new thought in a decade, don't you? She is critical of practically all for the simple reason that things are not as they used to be. He doesn't just reminisce but positively pines for the past. No, he lets his memory make the past far

more glamorous than it ever was and lets it be known that he resents that things have changed.

It may be as trivial as technology or as monumental as the nature of morality. When people long for the "good old days" of their youth, I sometimes ask — depending on their generation — if they would really prefer life before penicillin or power steering, telephones or computers, air conditioning or air travel. More seriously, I may ask if they truly want to return to a time when women couldn't vote, segregation kept all schools and churches monolithic, and children had precious few legal protections against abuse.

Change is always a challenge and can be positively unsettling. But, it is also opportunity. It offers the chance to learn new things. It introduces us to new people. It forces us to make decisions and choices at a conscious level.

Whether individuals or families, corporations or churches, **people who set their feet (or minds) in concrete are hiding from reality.** They are even being untrue to their divine calling. God calls us to live in confidence and hope, not fear. He asks us to believe — as did Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the Israelites, Paul and Barnabas — that He is already present in the places that are new and untested for us. He is faithful to His people. We are on a journey with God.

You get an unwelcome diagnosis. The company transfers you. Some key person to your life dies. Someone disappoints you terribly. The temporary and passing nature of reality confronts you directly.

Imagine you are in camp with Moses. The call to strike the tents has been given. It is time to move ahead with joy that God is already where you are going.

He wants us to experience genuine spiritual transformation. **(II Corinthians 3:18)** This transformation takes place because of His grace and power that are at work within us. **(Ephesians 3:20-21)** He is busy growing and maturing us. We respond to His power and grace by intentionally surrendering our will to His will and passionately pursuing His upward call in our lives. **(Philippians 3:7-15)** His work in us takes shapes in noticeable and glorious ways. **(Ephesians 2:10)**

Our world seems to stay the same ol' way of change.

Most of us see this as difficult because it often involves unwanted and unexpected things—illness, job transfers, financial downturns, marital complexities, unexpected accidents, job demands, difficult coworkers, our own aging. These issues make life stressful and change feared and unwanted. Add in the incredible rapid rate of technological advancement and our changing world can be overwhelming and intimidating.

As believers, however, we have great advantages as we face these changes. With Christ to help us, we can face them with curiosity rather than fear! We can approach life as an adventure, becoming partners with the Lord in His work of transformation in our lives.

You see, when we were baptized into Christ, we were filled with the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**). Ever since, the Spirit has been at work transforming us to be more like Jesus (**II Corinthians 3:18**). Through the Spirit, God uses the changes in our lives to draw us closer to Him as we seek to understand them through prayer, Scripture, and the wise counsel of those who have faced similar challenges before us.

Through change, God is at work in us to help us want to do His will (**Philippians 2:12**) and to work for our best good (**Romans 8:28**). We can approach change with confidence, knowing God will work His will in our lives through these changes, even if Satan has brought them to harm us. In faith, we can then approach these changes as adventures in faith, rather than merely submitting to them like victims of some cruel fate.

Change will ultimately lead us to victory in Jesus. We will ultimately be like Him (**I John 3:1-3**) and triumph with Him (**Colossians 3:1-4**). Jesus has the last word on the final and ultimate change in our lives, so we can rest secure that no matter how bad things might be, our last change will be our best one (**I Corinthians 15**).

We will all face difficult changes in our lives. We will have little control over many of them. But we do decide how we will react to them and how we will perceive them. We can offer every change to God to be redeemed into a tool to conform us to His will and bring us into His blessings. This kind of change is

transformational and incarnationational — it changes us dramatically for the better and helps bring Jesus to life in our lives.

As people of faith, we know our destination is glory and change is just another season in life's great adventure on our way home. So the more things are the crazy hectic same, the more we can not only "stay the course" but we learn to also "stay the change!"

Scriptural References:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. (Hebrews 13:8-9)