

MESSAGE 1: MAKING HARD CHANGES IN ME

Parts 1-2

"As God's Spirit works within us, we are being transformed to become more like Christ. This change, from one degree of glory to another, comes from the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18

EPHESIANS 4:11-32 – 6 Elements God Uses

WHY ARE PERSONAL DEFECTS SO HARD TO CHANGE?

- BECAUSE _____
- BECAUSE _____
- BECAUSE _____
- BECAUSE _____

WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR REAL CHANGE TO HAPPEN?

1. REAL CHANGE _____

"There must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes." Ephesians 4:23 (NLT)

"Don't keep living as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused in their thinking. Their closed minds are full of darkness; they're far away from the LIFE God gives because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him. They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they've indulged themselves in all kinds of immorality, evil thinking, and the constant desire for more." Ephesians 4:17-19

"Do not conform to the values and opinions of this world. Instead let God transform you by teaching you the right and true way to think." Romans 12:2

"Let the Spirit change your way of thinking." Ephesians 4:23 (CEV)

2. REAL CHANGE REQUIRES _____

Jesus: *"Use the truth to make them complete. Your Word is truth." John 17:17*

"Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or made a lie sound like the TRUTH. Instead, we will HOLD TO THE TRUTH in love, becoming more and more like Christ, who is the head of his Body, the church." Ephesians 4:14-15 (NLT)

"Since you have heard all about Him, you have LEARNED THE TRUTH THAT IS IN JESUS..." Ephesians 4:21

3. REAL CHANGE REQUIRES _____

"So get rid of your old self, which made you live as you used to —the old self that was being destroyed by its deceitful desires." Ephesians 4:22 (TEV)

"We must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially any sin that distracts us, so we can run the race that lies ahead of us!" Hebrews 12:1 (GW)

4. REAL CHANGE REQUIRES _____

"No more pretense! Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ's Body we're all connected to each other. So if you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself." Ephesians 4:25 (MSG)

"Be kind and loving to each other, forgiving each other just as God forgave you in Christ." Ephesians 4:32

"Never use harmful words but speak only what's helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." Ephesians 4:29

SMALL GROUP GROUND RULES

1. *What is said in the group stays in the group!*
2. *Don't minimize other's pain*
3. *Don't try to "fix" people. Just listen!*
4. *Focus on my own changes*

5. FASTER CHANGE REQUIRES _____

"Christ gifted some of us to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, so that his people would learn to serve and his Body would grow strong. This will continue until we're united by our faith and understanding of the Son of God. Then we will be mature, just as Christ is, and we will be completely like him." Ephesians 4:11-13 (CEV)

6. REAL CHANGE REQUIRES _____

"Now, by his mighty power at work within us, God is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of – infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes." Ephesians 3:20 (LB)

"I can do all things through Christ who empowers me. I am ready for anything through Him who infuses inner strength into me!" Philippians 4:13 (Amp)

Jesus: "According to your faith will it be done to you." Matthew 9:29

MESSAGE 2: HOW GOD TESTS YOUR FAITH

Parts 1-3

“Whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your FAITH IS TESTED, your endurance has a chance to grow. So LET IT GROW, for when it is fully developed you will be STRONG IN CHARACTER and ready for anything!” James 1:2-4 (NLT)

6 WAYS GOD TESTS YOUR FAITH TO BUILD YOUR CHARACTER

1ST TEST: _____ (WHAT Lord?)

“It was by faith that Noah built an ark to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about something that had never happened before.” Hebrews 11:7 (NLT)

- **FAITH IS _____ WITHOUT KNOWING**

“WHAT?”

“Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain OF WHAT we do not see.” Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

2ND TEST: _____ (WHERE Lord?)

“It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went WITHOUT KNOWING WHERE HE WAS GOING.” Hebrews 11:8-10 (NLT)

- **FAITH IS _____ WITHOUT KNOWING**

“WHERE?”

3RD TEST: _____ (WHEN Lord?)

“Even after Abraham reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, LIVING IN A TENT AND SO DID ISAAC AND JACOB, to whom God gave the SAME PROMISE. Abraham did this because he was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.” Hebrews 11:8-10 (NLT)

- **FAITH IS _____ WITHOUT KNOWING**

“WHEN?”

4TH TEST: _____ (HOW Lord?)

“It was by faith that Sarah together with Abraham was ABLE TO HAVE A CHILD, even though they were too old and Sarah was barren. Abraham believed that God would keep his promise. And so a whole nation came from this one man, Abraham, who was too old to have any children—a nation with so many people that they’d be like the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore.” Hebrews 11:11-12 (NLT)

- **FAITH IS _____ WITHOUT KNOWING**
“HOW?”

5TH TEST: _____ (WHY Lord?)

“It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was READY TO SACRIFICE his only son, Isaac, even though God had promised him, ‘Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted.’” Hebrews 11:17-18 (NLT)

“Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death!” Hebrews 11:19 (NIV)

- **FAITH IS _____ WITHOUT KNOWING**
“WHY?”

6TH TEST: _____ (HOW LONG Lord?)

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Instead HE CHOSE TO SUFFER with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was LOOKING AHEAD to his reward.” Hebrews 11:24-26 (NIV)

- **FAITH IS _____ WITHOUT KNOWING**
“HOW LONG?”

“It was by faith that Moses left Egypt unafraid of Pharaoh’s anger; Moses held to his purpose because he could SEE HIM who is invisible.” Hebrews 11:27

THE PATTERN OF TESTING

1. **God promises you an OPPORTUNITY**
2. **God allows OBSTACLE or OPPONENT**
3. **You go through an ORDEAL. A season of tests.**

MESSAGE 3: BUILDING CHARACTER AT WORK

Parts 1-3

My Job is a Place

- ... to develop & use the talents God gave me (My Ministry)
- ... to honor God by giving him my best (My Worship)
- ... to show & tell others about God's love for them (My Mission)
- ... to grow in Christlike character (My Maturity)

"...real maturity is that measure of development which is meant by 'the fullness of Christ.'" Ephesians 4:13 (Ph)

HOW GOD USES MY WORK TO BUILD MY CHARACTER

1. GOD USES PRESSURE TO TEACH ME _____

"Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as people who do not know the meaning of life, but as those who do." Ephesians 5:15 (Ph)

Ways to Develop Responsibility:

- **BY** _____
"(God blesses the one) ...who always does what he promises, no matter how much it may cost." Psalms 15:4

- **BY** _____
"One who is slack in his work is a brother to the one who destroys." Proverbs 18:9

- **BY** _____
"Don't work hard only when your master is watching...work hard all the time, as though working for Christ."
Ephesians 6:6-7 (LB)

"Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won't be faithful in large ones. If you cheat even a little, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities." Luke 16:10 (NLT)

- **BY** _____
"If you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth who will trust you with the true riches of Heaven? And if you are not faithful with other people's money, why should you be entrusted with money of our own?"
Luke 16:11-12 (LB)

2. GOD USES PROBLEMS TO TEACH ME _____

"We can rejoice when we run into problems and trials, for we know they are good for us - they help us learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character..." Romans 5:3-4 (LB)

“Remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13

“I think you ought to know about the hard time WE went through in Asia. WE were really crushed and overwhelmed, and feared WE would never live through it... WE saw how powerless WE were to help ourselves, but that was good, for then WE put everything into the hands of God who alone could save US. And He did help US...” 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (LB)

3. GOD USES PEOPLE TO TEACH ME _____

“Do all your work in love.” 1 Corinthians 16:14 (GN)

“We remember before God how you put your faith into practice, and how your love makes you work so hard...” 1 Thessalonians 1:3 (TEV)

Types of Difficult People

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” Romans 12:18 (NIV)

“Work happily together. Treat everyone with equal kindness. Don’t become set in your opinions. Never pay back evil for evil. Do all you can to live at peace with everyone.” Romans 12:16-18

“One day the quality of each person’s work will be clearly seen when the Day of Christ inspects it. On that day, everyone’s work will be tested by fire to show the character and quality of what each of us has done.” 1 Corinthians 3:13

“God is always fair. He will not forget how hard you have worked and the love you have demonstrated for his name...” Hebrews 6:10