

Change

Now there is a 6-letter word that strikes fear in the hearts of many.

Change is often unsettling because we are creatures of habit; and we like the known over the unknown. Change requires not only an outward, but most importantly, an inward transformation.

Change is hard. And the question we put before God today, "Why Should I Change," is a reflection of how hard it is to really change.

In many ways I can reflect how my life has been a whole series of changes:

Family life- death of my father when I was 3, a step-father who changed the dynamics of our family, getting married, moving frequently (in the first 5 years of marriage we lived in 5 different homes), having children, experiencing the ups and downs of parenting, transitioning to an empty nest

Church- if I look at the books on my shelf, the conferences I've attended; I've been taught to lead change, manage change, understand change, and the list goes on. I've even had to change my understanding of ministry over the last 25 years. I commented to Rita the other day about how ministry has changed dramatically from my early days of ministry to today.

We could talk about how the world has changed exponentially in our lifetime...we even have a phrase for it; we long for the 'good' old days. Really what we are saying is it would be nice if time had not changed the world and most importantly, changed us.

Everything is constantly changing around us! We want something to remain unchanged and so we ask God, Why Should I Change?

Simply put; because God needs you and I to become someone he can use to continue his work.

Look at two stories today. The first is from the Old Testament story of Gideon. (Judges 6) Many people know Gideon as the guy who sought a sign from God by laying out a 'fleece' before God. To confirm that Gideon had heard from God, Gideon asked God to make the fleece dry while the ground all around it was wet with dew. The next morning Gideon asked God to do just the opposite.

Gideon is also known for taking on a larger army with 300 men chosen simply by how they drank water from a brook. Now that story may lead you to think that Gideon was a warrior, which is true; but the status of warrior isn't where we are introduced to Gideon.

Judges 6:11-15

Gideon was a coward when the angel of God appeared and said to him, "the Lord is with you, mighty warrior!" Gideon was hiding out from the armies that were ravaging the countryside at the time. He thought of himself as the least of the least, so he questioned why someone would greet him as a 'mighty warrior.'

But God needed Gideon. And for Gideon to become the mighty warrior that God knew him to be; Gideon had to change.

The other story comes from the New Testament. In the book of Acts we find a story about the Apostle Peter. (Acts 10) The story takes place following the resurrection when the early church was still primarily made up of Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah.

In Acts 10 we are introduced to Cornelius, a Gentile who worshipped God. Now it is important to know Cornelius is a Gentile because that sets up a potentially confrontational meeting between these two men.

To make a long story short God spoke to Cornelius and told him to send for Peter so that Peter could share the message of Jesus with him. As the messengers from Cornelius were on their way to find Peter, Peter was having his own visitation from God.

In Peter's vision he saw a sheet lowered from heaven and filled with all the animals Jews were forbidden to eat. That is when a voice from heaven told Peter to get up and kill the animals and eat them.

Read Acts 10:14-17

God needed Peter to radically alter the path that the early church was taking and open the doors to the Gentiles; but it couldn't happen unless Peter changed.

You see the reason we need to change is because God needs us. God needs people like you and I to change so that God's work can be accomplished right where God has planted you.

I know many of you could say, but I can't change. But the reality is God is in the change business.

In Mark 10, Jesus was explaining to the disciples how difficult it is for a rich man to enter heaven. The disciples were taken aback and wondered if anyone could be saved. That is when Jesus said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." (10:27)

God's plan is to change the world, one life at a time; and often the life that God changes first is ours.

So, Why should I change? Simple, because for God to change the world, he needs to begin the change in you.