

Motivation For Transition
Pastor Joe Oakley
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What motivates people to change? Turns out that there are different motivators for different people. We are in a series called Transitions for Growth and today I am preaching on Motivation for Transition.

I worked in business for many years before going into ministry. I've been around lots of successful people (inside and outside of church) and lots of unsuccessful people and I've noticed that:

Successful people embrace change – unsuccessful people resist change.
Successful people know the areas they need to change – unsuccessful people don't think they need to change.
Successful people take responsibility to change themselves - unsuccessful people blame everyone else for their lack of change.
Successful people are motivated to change - unsuccessful people are not motivated to change.

Every successful person I know, whether in business or in ministry or in family or in finances – knows their own strengths and weakness and they have an improvement plan to change for the better. Every unsuccessful person I know is in one of two extremes – either they think they are beyond hope and can never change – or they don't even see the need for change.

Where do you need to change? What's your plan for change? If you don't know where you need to change or if you have no plan for change, you will stay like you are.

Many people want changes to happen in their lives – especially in their circumstances or their spouse – but they don't want to do the hard work of changing.

If where you are is where God wants you to be in life – that's great. If not – you've got some changing to do. Here's some truth for you: the choices you've made and the actions you've taken in life have worked perfectly to get you to the place in life you are right now.

You are a product of your past choices and actions. I know we cannot control what happens to us, but we can control our response. We can't go through life blaming circumstances or other people. Well – we can – but if we do we will never change!.

If where you are is not where you want to be, you need to make different choices and take different actions.

As Einstein said, the definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over again expecting different results. In other words, if you always do what you've always done you'll always get what you've always got.

And if you have experienced some success in life, remember this:
 What got you here is not going to get you somewhere else.
 If you want to go farther than you've gone, you must make changes.
 If you want to go higher than you've gone, you must make changes.
 If you want to do more than you've done, you must make changes.

Let me clue you into a universal truth: nothing is going to get better on its own.
 Your marriage will not just magically get better.
 Your finances will not just magically get better.
 Your job will not just magically get better.
 Your grades at school will not just magically get better.

We must make changes in ourselves if we are going to change our marriages, jobs, finances and future. Today, I want to help you by teaching you and motivating you to make the changes that are needed to get you to the place in life you want to be and where God wants you to be.

Here's the main thing I want you to see: with God's help you can change! God will help you be what He wants you to be. God will help you achieve what He wants you to achieve. A big key to change is knowing what God wants for us. The Amplified Version of 2 Corinthians 9:8 says:

God is able to make all grace (every favor and earthly blessing) come to you in abundance, so that you may always and under all circumstances and whatever the need be self-sufficient (possessing enough to require no aid or support and furnished in abundance for every good work and charitable donation).

God wants you to be blessed.
 God wants you to succeed.
 God wants you to have enough to meet your needs and give to others.
 God wants you to reach your full potential in life.

But, it's not going to just automatically happen. "Hope so" is not a strategy for change. What causes true change? As I said, with God's help, you can change. He uses lots of things to help us change: the Word, preaching, worship, other people, circumstances, the 5-fold ministry.

But before they change, people must be motivated to change. What motivates people to change? What is the turning point? What I want to propose to you today is this: with God's help, you can choose change.

I once heard leadership expert John Maxwell make this statement:
 People change when they learn enough that they want to change,

or when they receive enough that they are able to change,
or when they hurt enough that they have to change.

Now you can choose which motivation you respond to. You can change by revelation - you can change by impartation. Or you can change by devastation. You get to choose.

Some people choose to learn the hard way. They refuse to change until they hurt so bad they have to. They wait until their life is falling apart – their marriage is falling apart – their family is falling apart – their health is falling apart. They wait until they hit bottom – until there's no other option – until there's no way out except through change.

They don't eat right or exercise until they have a heart attack and the doctor says change or die.

They don't study until their grade point average is so low the school says change or you'll be expelled.

They don't give their best at work until they are on their final warning and the boss says change or you're fired.

They don't try to make their marriage work until their spouse says change or goodbye.

Unfortunately – many wait too long and the change comes too late to save the marriage or the family or the job. I would rather learn enough to want to change and receive enough that I'm able to change without having to hit bottom first.

I can't tell you how many times a man has come into my office for counsel. I ask, "Why are you here?" And he responds, "I need to make some changes in my life." I say "Great, what led you to make this decision?" And he responds, "My wife left me."

Let me tell you from experience – at that point it's usually too late to make changes. The wife no longer cares. You've lost her and it's hard to win her back.

I want to ask, "Where were you a month ago or a year ago? Why did you wait until everything fell apart? Why didn't you believe her when she said things were bad? Why didn't you come for marriage counseling when she begged you to?"

Now, I have seen God perform some miracles at this point, but it never should have gotten close to this point. This man – either through pride or selfishness – didn't want to change. He wanted her to do all the changing.

As I said earlier – every single one of us has areas that need changing. Fortunately, we serve a God who specializes in change!

Of course, the ultimate change is when we turn our lives over to Him. This happens when we are saved, or born again. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Change starts there, but God has us in a lifelong process of change. Our job is to respond correctly at the turning points in life. If we do, we tap into the power of God. Isaiah 41:18 says God can

I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.

Isaiah 42:16 says God can

I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth.

Jeremiah 31:13 says God can

I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.

My point is – when we respond to a turning point God’s way, He can make a way where there seems no way.

- He can turn darkness into light-
- Deserts into an ocean-
- Sadness into gladness.

Sometimes those turning points are when we face hard times.

- Joseph had a turning point in a prison cell.
- Jonah had a turning point in a fish.
- David had a turning point when he faced a giant.
- Saul had a turning point when God knocked him off a donkey.

Some people change by revelation.

- The woman at the well changed when she had a revelation of Jesus.
- Isaiah changed when he had a revelation of the Lord filling the temple.

Some people change by impartation.

- The disciples changed from fear to faith when they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Some people change by revelation or impartation, but some don’t change until the point of devastation. I’ve seen many interviews with people who refused who evacuate before a hurricane came ashore. They had been told by authorities to evacuate before the hurricane, but they chose to stay. They survived the storm, but now there is no water, no food, no electricity, no phone. Now they are anxious to leave.

The revelation that the storm was coming did not move them.

The impartation of the government offer to help them leave did not move them. What caused change? Total devastation got their attention and now they're ready to move. And I've seen so many people totally destroy their lives before they changed. And unfortunately, the destruction impacts other innocent people.

One of the greatest Bible stories of someone coming to a turning point by hitting bottom is the story of the Prodigal Son. Luke 15:11-24 tell this story of a son who asked his father for his inheritance and then went out and blew every penny of it.

The younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

The prodigal son chose to learn the hard way.

He did not change by revelation – he saw the goodness of his father and still did not change.

He did not change by impartation – he received money from his father and still did not change.

He did not change until the point of devastation – desperation – he had to hit bottom.

When he hit bottom – he came to his senses. He had a change of mind. He had a change of heart. And it changed his behavior.

This is called repentance: a change of heart that results in a change of mind that results in a changed life.

The Prodigal son did 3 things when he hit bottom. He repented – renewed his mind – and replaced his wrong attitudes, wrong thinking and wrong behavior with right attitudes, right thinking and right behavior.

Those 3 things are the key to change.

- Repenting – which is a heart issue
- Renewing – which is a head issue – it has to do with thinking
- Replacing – which is a hands issue – it has to do with action

Change starts in the heart. If you want to change, it has to start from the inside out.

If you try to change your behavior without a change of heart – that change will not last. That’s why “Just say No” does not work. You must first “Just say Yes” to God.

But true change goes beyond the heart – it affects our head and hands – our thinking and actions. Life is not changed by good intentions, but by action. The Prodigal Son had to go beyond good intentions. He had to get up, get out, and get on down the road. He had to do something different.

The 2 things we must do to change are to renew our minds with God’s word and replace wrong behavior with right behavior.

For us to really change behavior, we need to understand the biblical concept of Putting Off / Putting On. Ephesians 4:22-32 says:

Regarding your former way of life, put off the old self which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self which was created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, put away lying and speak truthfully with your neighbor, for we are members of one another. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him work, doing something useful with his hands, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only what is good for building others up according to their needs, that it may impart grace to the hearers. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

This passage shows us the key to changing our behavior: Put off/ Put on

- Quit lying – start telling the truth
- Quit stealing – start working
- Quit cutting people down – start building people up
- Quit being angry and mean – start being nice and kind

The point here is this: Just say NO is not good enough; you must have something to say YES to.

Without a positive replacement, the No is much harder.

You can see this replacement principle all through the Bible.

Colossians 3:9-10 says:

You have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

With God's help, we can change. Change requires repentance – renewing our minds – and replacing the old man with the new.

When we are born again, the Bible says we are a new creation, the old person we were is dead and we are now a new creation.

However, the old man's ways are ingrained in us, we have habits and ways of doing things that must be put off. New habits must be put on.

Many of you are at a turning point today. With God's help, you can change. Some of you have hit bottom. Like the Prodigal Son – you're a long way off from the Father. With God's help, you can change.

Satan always tries to put as much distance between you and God as he can. He tells you lies like:

You've gone too far; the Father will never take you back.

You've done too much to be forgiven.

You're too dirty – try to clean yourself up first.

Has Satan told you these lies? Has Satan told you that you have gone too far? Has he told you the Father won't receive you? Has he told you that you must clean yourself up before you come to Jesus?

If he has, remember the father of the Prodigal Son represents Father God. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

You may be a great way off from God today. But if you will turn toward Him, the Father will come to meet you. He will meet you right where you are.

I know you have had good intentions. I know you have resolved to change things many times, but the Lord is calling you to Himself today.

He is saying: "I can help you. I can change you. I can clean you up."

With God's help you can change.

Right now you can change your intentions into actions.

You can take the first step to changing your life.

Come home. It's not as far as Satan has told you.

Come home and the Father will receive you.

With His help, you can change.

This is a turning point.

Choose wisely.