

Change

Change is difficult and seems to increase with difficulty as the years pass. The more natural something is, the more difficult it is to change. Breathing & running are two examples. Try changing how you do these things, and you'll soon discover how hard change can be. Muscle memory. That's why this type of change is so difficult. Our brains and our muscles can do so many things with minimal mental effort on our parts. However, just because we do something automatically and naturally does not mean we do it correctly. Research actually shows that we often do activities such as breathing and running incorrectly or at least not as ideally as we could or should. When we work to correct or improve in these areas, we discover a healthier and stronger life in the process.

Recently, I've started working to change the way that I run. I'm hoping to increase efficiency, run faster, decrease injury and become more consistent. This sort of change requires deliberateness and intentionality. A person's body and mind will resist the change, and changing too much at once produces greater resistance. For now, I am working on how I swing my arms when I run so as to not use as much energy with that part of my body that could be used in another part (my legs, for instance). Because changing an "automatic" activity is so difficult, this type of change must happen in baby steps and gradually over time if possible. Of course, not all change can happen that way and is often thrust upon us; however, where we can manage the change, we should attempt to do so.

Whatever items, habits or behaviors need changed must first be broken down into steps or bites that we can stomach rather than trying to eat the entire elephant in one bite, which is impossible and will ultimately make us sick or kill us. Setting long-term along with short-term goals to help us achieve the long-term goal is essential in making lasting change.

The Bible speaks of this concept of change in several ways. First, Romans 12:2 says, *"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect His will really is."* The idea of "letting" and not resisting the change helps produce clarity of focus and purpose. A mind change is usually what is needed for any other type of change to take place. For example, if I didn't understand why I needed to change the way I run and the benefit it could bring me, I probably wouldn't bother trying to change it at all.

Second, we have the description by Jesus of the Holy Spirit guiding us through the revelations that the Lord has for believers. John 16:12-15 says, *"Oh, there is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not be presenting His own ideas; He will be telling you what He has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me [Jesus] glory by revealing to you whatever He receives from Me. All the Father has is Mine; this is what I mean when I say that the Spirit will reveal to you whatever He receives from Me."* This portion of scripture certainly presents the idea that we must take major change (in this case the learning about ultimate truth) gradually and that we need guidance on our way through that change.

Change is rarely easy, and most of us fail to change much unless we are forced to do so (lose a job, poor health hits, etc.), or it happens so gradually over time we don't realize it's happening (relationship grows

apart, weight gain, etc.). Taking stock of what needs changed in one's life and then managing that change will not necessarily make change easier, but it will allow a person to live more deliberately and to have some control over how and what he/she changes. Our scripture in Romans and John provide the guidance needed for undergoing the painful process of change in a way that will lead to honoring God not just in one instance but over a lifetime.

First, don't copy the customs of the world. Be your own person and do what you know God wants you to do. Second, let God transform you by renewing your mind. He does this through time spent with Him in prayer and Bible study as well as through praise and worship and fellowship with other believers. Finally, involve the Holy Spirit as you are being renewed and change. He is your guide to all that God wants and desires. No part of our lives is exempt from being renewed by our Heavenly Father.

A final note about change that provides much-needed stability in an ever-changing world is the fact that God never changes. While everything about you may seem like it's changing and while you may be holding a list of habits you want to change within yourself, you can know for certain that God never changes. God is immutable. James 1:17 tells us *that "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadows."* As you read and study His word, you can be guaranteed that what He was thousands of years ago, he still is today. So move forward in this ever-changing world with your goals and let your mind be renewed by the Perfect One who never changes and who is the solid rock in an unstable world.