

Change in a Changing World

Life is radically different compared to just two years ago. We didn't have a choice in the changes we needed to make to adjust to live through the pandemic safely. We shop differently than we did before. We avoid crowds whenever possible. Many of us still wear masks at the grocery store and at church. Treating our spouse for a restaurant meal is often through the "take-out" line. Working from home is now a common practice. For the longest time, we shied away from attending major sporting events, movies, and live theater. Although we are beginning to make plans again, an uptick of new infections is causing many games to be canceled again. We saw that in bowl games and at the start of the basketball season. It is human nature to want to revert to the "way things used to be" in our pre-pandemic life.



Jesus came to earth to change our world. Roman rulers and religious leaders rejected the message of change that Jesus taught. They also wanted things just the way they used to be. Jesus preached to replace flawed worldly wisdom with perfect divine wisdom. His teachings resonated with those who had an open mind to God's way. His Word is preserved for us in the Bible.

Change is difficult to accept for us, too. We push for a return of life as we knew it before the pandemic. While we know we have personal habits that need changing, that requires difficult lifestyle changes. Our health – what we eat, drink, and the amount of exercise – quickly come to mind. We may also be aware that we need to change priorities in our lives. The correct priorities of God, family, and work are skewed by the human desire for power, wealth, and the quest to be in control of our lives. Making changes is not an easy fix.

We have one tool that is widely accepted at this time of year. That tool is the calendar. Our culture accepts the idea of New Year's Resolutions, although the expectation is that very few succeed. Nevertheless, the New Year is a time of self-reflection. Most people, consciously or unconsciously, make resolutions at the beginning of the New Year. A conscious resolution comes with accountability. Because a low percentage of resolutions last more than a month, many people resist making formal resolutions.

It could be said that a resolution is an acknowledgment of the need for change. It is like the confession of our sins before taking communion. We understand that the need for change is critical to any possibility of success. The next step to success is devising a plan – amending our ways. How are we going to accomplish our goals? A goal without an action plan will not be achieved. We have spent our whole life getting to this point, so altering the course will not be easy. So, ask God for help. Commit to God the intent to change and then be accountable to Him. He will assist and guide our steps. God wants us to succeed, and a thoughtful resolution may put us on the path He desires for our lives. As the Bible says, *For I know the plans I have for you,* declares the LORD, *plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11)*. We need help from God to achieve meaningful changes. In Proverbs, we read, *In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps (Proverbs 16:9)*. Invite Him to walk alongside you as you seek to amend your life.

Life's journey is taking us through the pandemic, with all its twists and turns. We long for a return to "normal" – how things used to be. Yet, if you think back to pre-pandemic days, life wasn't all that good. So, when the time comes that we can shed the mask and social distancing is no longer required, we still need to make changes to our lives. If you were not happy with life in 2021, don't follow the same path in 2022. Deep down, even the secular world realizes the need for change. As people of faith, we have the power of God to help us be more like Jesus. Jesus came to earth to inspire the changes we need to make. Take some time in prayer today, tomorrow, and every day to dialogue with God on steps for a changed life, to be more like Jesus.

Question: What changes in your life do you think God wants you to make? Ask God to guide you.

Closing Prayer: Loving Heavenly Father. You desire for us to be like Jesus. Jesus came to model that behavior in how we live our lives. Open our minds to seek to be like Jesus. Guide us as we seek to be changed people of God. Amen.