

A CHANGE IN STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever worked really hard at something and just not come right? It's frustrating, isn't it?

But this is human nature! We are creatures of habit. We repeat the same mistakes over and over. There are many examples in the Bible of repetitive rebellion toward God and repeated consequence.

God warned and warned and warned, the people didn't listen, so He allowed other nations to defeat them and carry them off into exile.

Nehemiah came to Jerusalem with a mission from God to rebuild the walls. God helped them to do it miraculously in 52 days, Nehemiah then helped them get temple worship back in place and then he returned to Babylon. In time he returned and he found that the people had fallen back into the same old ways and neglected the temple worship, tithing and the Levites. He must have been so frustrated.

Today we will briefly speak about Biblical examples of the lack of change, as well as Biblical examples of change in strategy and the results so that we can apply these changes to our own lives.

MESSAGE

SOME PEOPLE NEVER LEARN

The stand-out example in the Bible of someone who never learned from his mistakes must be Samson. Delilah must have been incredibly beautiful because time and again, she betrayed Samson, but every time, he went back to her.

Judges 16:6-20 (NKJV) So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you."
 7 And Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man."
 8 So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.
 10 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with."
 11 So he said to her, "If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

12 Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And men were lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

13 Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom"— 14 So she wove it tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom. 15 Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies." 16 And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, 17 that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man." 18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. 19 Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.

- Samson trusted Delilah over and over and the result was the same over and over – every time she betrayed him. How could he have been so undiscerning and frankly, foolish.
- The devil loves doing the same thing over and over, he snares people with the same trick over and over. Delilah nagged and nagged until she wore Samson down.
- He could have left her, he could have changed strategy and got himself and Israelite wife who would have truly loved and honoured him, but he kept doing the same thing, messing with the Philistine women.
- The Bible likens this kind of behaviour to a dog going back to it's own vomit!

Have you been trusting God for some change in your life but been unwilling to change your strategy?

- ***If you want to stop drinking alcohol, stop going to the pub!***
- ***If you want to stop lustful behavior, stop looking at the wrong things.***
- ***If you want a better marriage, stop focusing on the negatives about your spouse!***

CHANGE YOUR VISION!

When the Israelites were fleeing Egypt and arrived at the Red Sea, they thought it was all over. They could see no way out! There was water in front of them and a Pharaoh's army was behind them. They cried out to Moses, "Why have you brought us here to the wilderness to die".

- **They were limited in their vision**; they knew it would take many boats to get across that water or surrender to the Egyptians and return to slavery.
- **But God had a different strategy in mind**. He wasn't going to take them back to Egypt, around, or over the Red Sea, He was going to take them through it, and once through, He would use that same sea to destroy the Egyptian army!

Have you possibly got stuck, seeing no way out of your unemployment, illness or marriage challenge? Could it be that God has a better plan for you? Could He possibly want to open the waters up for you so that you can safely pass right through your situation.

- **Sometimes we need to go through stuff instead of avoid it, the victory may be waiting on the other side!**
- **Sometimes we need to accept a different job instead of what we are trained to do.**
- **Sometimes, to resolve conflict in a marriage, we need to have self-control and discuss a situation, resolving it in a way that both us and our spouse are happy, instead of having an all-out blow-up, and then not speaking to one another for days and weeks on end.**
- **Is it time to change your vision?**

A CHANGED STRATEGY

John 21:3-6 (NKJV) 3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. 4 But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." 6 **And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some."** So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

Us men are stubborn, don't tell us to do something when we KNOW it won't work. That's just looking for trouble...

But sometimes its exactly what we need to do, we need to listen for the voice of Jesus, then we need to obey in humble faith. **The other side of the boat may not even be far away, it may require just a small change, but a changed strategy will normally result in a different outcome.**

Where is Jesus telling you to cast your net this morning? Have you been trying and trying and coming up empty? Go on, seek His face, listen for His voice, He will show you what to do!

IS A RADICAL STRATEGY ADJUSTMENT REQUIRED?

Strategy change can, and probably should be gradual. **It's not impossible to get things even more wrong**, but some situations require a radical choice.

There's the story of the man who worked a lifting bridge across a canal. He was the controller, if he pulled the lever, the bridge would lift, and the ship could sail through, if he pushed it, the bridge would lower, and trains could cross the river on the bridge. One day, he took his young son to work with him. As he got busy, the little boy slipped out and started climbing on the raised bridge structure. A train was coming rumbling down the track, he had to lower the bridge, but as he looked at the bridge structure, there was his son on it. **He had decide, lower the bridge and save the train and the passengers on it, or save his son and allow the train to plunge into the sea.** With a broken heart, he chose to lower the bridge and watch his own son die so that those on the train could live.

Jesus gave some radical advice: **Matthew 5:29-30** (NKJV) If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

- Pluck out your eye or cut off your hand... that's pretty radical.
- But there is a choice to be made – is it worth going to hell so that you can keep those members which are going to perish in the long run anyway?

Are there some radical choices we must make to change the outcomes in our own lives? Maybe it's not as simple as casting the net on the other side of the boat? Maybe it's ending a friendship that's not good for you? Maybe it's choosing not to drink with the boys' club at work even though it may cost you a promotion? Maybe it's accepting a job that is lower than what you are qualified for? Maybe it's giving up on luxuries so that your month ends before your money does?

CONCLUSION

Most people don't easily embrace change, but change is occurring all around us all the time. Change is a constant of life. God wants us to live victorious, successful lives. Sometimes that requires a change of strategy.

- Today is a day to start learning from our past mistakes.
- Today we need to be willing to change our vision – how we see things.
- Are we willing to change the way we do things – cast the net on the other side?
- And are we willing to make radical decisions, sacrificing for our own greater good?

Let us heed Jesus words today: "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish.

May the Lord grant us all the grace to make the required changes and live victorious lives.