

Growing through Change

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As a student, teacher, facilitator, and manager of change you would think that I would be well equipped to be on the receiving end of change. Far from it. I find change threatening. I like to know what is coming. And when I am not in control I feel insecure, anxious and stressed. But I do know that I have learnt important lessons from the painful process of organizational change. Over my 24 years with World Vision I have observed and been a part of at least four major organizational “change processes”. None of these were easy. I was laid off once, resigned once and “stormed out once”. But as I look back, even when they were handled poorly, I have grown and benefited in ways I don’t think I would have otherwise. Perhaps I learnt most from the time I stormed out because in my anger God spoke to me.

After coming back from a trip I was sat down without warning and told that my job was being changed. It wasn’t clear if I would have a job in future. After having moved my family half way around the world for this work I could not believe what I was hearing and became so angry I charged out of the building. I found myself out walking the crowded streets arguing with God. How could He allow this to happen to me – again? What had I done to deserve this kind of treatment? But in the middle of a street full of people, I suddenly felt the physical presence of God as He put His arm around my shoulder and shared the following thoughts with me. As I have pondered them and meditated on Psalm 37, I see five principles for growing through change:

Don’t take things too personally

“Your faith about the future needs to be in me not in an organization, do not fret it only leads to evil”

This was the fourth reorganization where I felt like the rug had been pulled out from under me, without warning. But the Lord was clear: “These things have nothing to do with you. They are not directed at you or your fault. You’re OK – don’t put yourself down. I the LORD am still in control here. I brought you here for a reason. I am the one who has a plan for you - not any organization. Your responsibility is to be faithful and obedient to me.” I argued: ‘But Lord I feel like I am losing control – I don’t know what is coming’ I felt him reply: ‘It is not about you being in control, it is about you trusting me’. This echoes Psalm 37:1-9.

View things in light of Eternity from His perspective

“Take the long view. This is only a blip on the screen in the light of eternity. This will

work to your benefit – hang in there. Keep this experience in view from an eternal perspective.”

Your organization or even church will not be in the kingdom no matter how wonderful it is. Only you and I will be in the kingdom. As I walked God asked me: “What is most important, most valuable?” It was clear that it was my relationship with God and others. As Galatians 5:2 says ‘The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love’. Again I found Psalm 37: 18-19,26 a comfort.

Focus on your call to ministry not your career

What can you learn that will help you better serve others and realize my call in your life? How might this prepare you for the next stage of your growth - ministry?

“Your purpose in life is not a job but to serve me. Wait before the Lord and see what He will do. Focus on drawing closer to me – growing spiritually - through this experience. Our identity and value is in Christ not in our job or vocation.” You and I are responsible not “the organization.”

Psalm 37: 4-11; 27-28.

You are responsible for how you respond

“The Lord is laughing at those who plot against the godly. Don’t allow this to get you down. Don’t become angry and resentful or look for blame. That will only do you harm and start a downward spiral. Find something to laugh about and keep a sense of humor”.

I realized that how I responded to the situation was my responsibility. Psalm 37:12-13; 126:2; Job 8:21. I was also reminded of the need to retain a sense of humor in the midst of everything. As Proverbs 15:13 says: “A happy heart makes the face cheerful and laughter brings healing to the soul.”

Know that God will never forget nor forsake you

As I walked God reminded me of a day we were about to leave on a trip and my seven year old daughter, Jessica was saying good bye to her cat “Socks”. “Be good while mommy is gone” she said, “and I will bring you something back”. I asked “Aren’t you worried that Socks will forget you and won’t remember who you are when we come back”. “Dad” she said, “children don’t forget their mommies”.

This reminded me of the verses from Isaiah 49:15-16 “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved (tattooed with indelible ink) your name on the

palms of my hands. It is echoed again in Psalm 37: 34, 37, 39.

It is important to remember when we feel like we are victims of change that God's care and love for us is much closer than we imagine. Know that He is with you even during these troubled and insecure times.

Questions for Reflection

How are you responding to change? Is your response a spiritual one seeking God's point of view in all that is happening?

Which of these principles speaks to you – how – what do you need to do?

What will you do to allow this change experience to draw you closer to God and grow your faith in Him and His love for you?