

HOW TO MAKE CHANGES WITHOUT BLOWING UP THE PLACE – presented by Tom Burgess, February 27, at the Oregon Christian Convention Elder-Pastor Retreat

The following are notes taken by Gary Tiffin following the outline template supplied by Tom Burgess to all who attended.

Some Biblical orientation

- Peter didn't likely fully understand what God meant in his first sermon (Acts 2:38, with focus on Jews) so God had to remind him in Acts 10 (gospel is also for gentiles) which moved Peter well "beyond his comfort zone".
- In Acts 6, deacons were chosen (delegated) to accomplish certain tasks. Delegating is key.
- In Acts 15 (Jerusalem Conf) the issue centered upon what is necessary vs. what is opinion. Key distinction that must always be considered.

Some beginning thoughts

- Work to avoid pitting people against each other in times of change and transition
- Congregations tend to focus on "us" rather on those we want to impact, or should be reaching (inner vs. outer)
- The early church was not perfect – so copy only the good features

Signs of stagnation

- we have never done it that way
- we have always done it that way
- this isn't the time
- we tried it once and it did not work
- that is not our responsibility
- it costs too much
- we have been doing alright for years
- people are going to leave
- "so and so" says we shouldn't do it

What we need to know about human nature

- personality
- people do not like change (scary stuff)
- want to know if it is Biblical – but need to distinguish between scriptural(Biblical command/precedent)
anti-scriptural(against the Bible)
unscriptural(Bible is neutral/silent)

Earning the right to lead in change

- serve (rather than rule) people – relate to them
- takes time to earn trust
- rules without relationship breeds rebellion, but change without relationship also breeds rebellion
- need “credits in your pocket” in the sense that people will give you the benefit of the doubt, based on past and current trust building

Do's and Don'ts about reflecting on the past

- see Eccl 7:10 (the good old days that never were)
- honor but do not worship it (you can never go home)
- what go us here may not get us there

Set priorities: if you create, say, 10 of them – work very hard on the top 2 first, because the bottom 8 will be the easiest, but will tire you out before you get to the top 2.

Do your homework – assessment is key

How to communicate change

- early and often
- you do not even announce some changes, be wise about this – depends upon the change and circumstance
- be smart: do not create unnecessary resistance
- do not slip something in – you will get deserved pushback
- be ready to deal with fear: people fear what they do not know or have not ever experienced

- be careful not to believe that “nothing can change unless everyone approves” – a few will likely disapprove. You cannot please everyone.
- While you might lose people if you do change, you are just as likely to lose people if you do not change: you will have to decide who you are willing to lose.
- Sometimes change means “stop” doing something, not just start doing something

BREAK FOR LUNCH

Afternoon beginning thoughts

- Silence is golden, but sometimes it is yellow!!
- Beware of dissenters whose real goal is to divide and work against the group: it is a matter of spirit and attitude, not that they dissent. How people disagree is the issue. We want independent thinkers, not a independent spirit. There may be a need for church “discipline” (rare these days).
- Matching roles for members with their spiritual gift(s) helps avoid conflict: but do not copy others and their gift (if you do not have it) since it is highly likely that you will merely display the downside of that gift.
- Recommend the use of spiritual gift inventories and a new tool (used by many organizations) called StrengthsFinder, developed by Clifton and the Gallop Poll. Either Google the name or go to www.StrengthsFinder.com
- God never wastes a hurt – so negatives become positives
- Consensus: everyone has a say, nobody gets their way

Use the word “experiment” when introducing difficult change

- you blunt the idea that this is God’s will – which if used, can create unnecessary resistance
- field test the change – with an announced time limit
- this approach helps people accept a trial run – and you can change your mind (without having to disclaim it was God’s will)

Manifest integrity

- no hidden agendas – explain what you are really up to

- this builds “credits in your pocket” so people will give you the benefit of the doubt when they are uncertain or scared

Define the benefits of the change

- people change when the joy of the change is so compelling that it overcomes the price of the change
- people will resist change until the pain of remaining the same is greater than the pain of the change
- this helps overcome the inevitable negatives

Gradually or immediately?

- it depends.....
- do not make everything an emergency
- build credits in your pocket
- immediately should be the exception not the norm

Use humor effectively: there is a difference between laughing at people and laughing with people. Even poke fun at yourself sometimes.

Make changes for purpose (mission) not change for change's sake

Love the people you want to change: it is all about relationships

Develop emotional intelligence

- learn to read fear, anxiety, anger, bitterness in people
- work on yourself understanding too
- EQ (emotional intelligence) is as important as IQ

Influence the influencers

- common sense, not manipulation
- target those whom others defer to

Even I may need to change!!