



MESSAGE

Change with Vision

"If you're yearning for the good old days, just turn off the air conditioning." - Griff Niblack,

REFLECTION

Why change at all? I think change is necessary to enable us to reach the desired destination. What we need to be clear about is that we are valuing the desired destination, over and above the actual change that needs to take place. You may have been in a meeting where there were lots of good ideas flying around the room, and then a wise and reflective leader asks the question "What are we trying to achieve?" or "Why are we changing this or doing that?" The answer to these questions is what should determine the amount and rate of change that occurs.

Marlene Wilson ("How to Recruit Today's Volunteers," 1991) says, "The only people who like change are babies with bad diapers. Effective leadership recognizes the natural tendency to resist change and strives to make every transition as palatable as possible." It is our task to make change as gentle as possible which occurs when we make sure the reasons for the change are clearly and repeatedly explained and justified. Changing one thing, whether it be a ministry, a person, a role, a tradition, a strategy, a method, etc, means that other partners (or members or aspects) in and of the body will be directly affected by it. Those other partners need to not only to be considered in the decision making, but also should be a part of the change process. If this does not occur then the vision will be jeopardised because one part of what is needed to reach the destination is seen as more valuable than an equally important other part.

When something changes, people's response will be to say "But I like it how it was, what's wrong with that?" Our task is to clearly, honestly and concisely articulate the reason for the change! If this cannot be done, then change should not take place. We need to be clear on why something should change long before we get to the how, or when, or pace of the change!

So how do we, our people and the organisation or ministry we are leading survive change? We survive change by holding onto the vision. Because change is not occurring for change sake, or to upset people, or for a difference in the way things are done, or for some variety. Change is occurring because without it the vision would never have a chance of being fulfilled.

CHALLENGE

What is your desired destination? What is the vision God has given you? Can you clearly articulate it? Are you secure in that vision? Or would you prefer to stay where you are? How can you help others find security in God's vision for themselves?

John Kotter, in his book "Leading Change", 1996, writes of an eight-stage process for change:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency
2. Creating the Guiding Coalition
3. Developing a Vision and Strategy
4. Communicating the Change Vision
5. Empowering workers for broad based action
6. Generating Short term wins
7. Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change
8. Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture.

If you are able to gradually develop a culture of change, where change to aid achievement of the vision is occurring within everything all the time, people begin to find security in God's vision and not in the current situation.