

# Go Take a Flying Leap!

John 14:15, 23

The phrase, "Go take a flying leap," is a way of telling people that you are very unimpressed with whatever it might be they are promoting. It indicates we are thoroughly convinced that they have nothing worthwhile to offer and we have no time to waste on what they are peddling. Unfortunately, however, we may often fall victim to really bad advice simply because we do not stop evaluate its value.

When it comes to effecting significant, sustained change, for instance, we don't always listen to the only advice that really matters, the word of God. We can easily fall to worldly, unproductive strategies and fail to reach our full Christian potential. Consider the following and think about what needs to take a flying leap and what needs to gain our undivided attention.

## Five Myths Concerning Change

An article by Alan Deutchman in "Health" magazine highlighted a clinical study regarding why people with heart disease won't change their diets to improve their health. He gave five myths or assumptions people make when it comes to change. Let's have a look and see what we might learn about sustained spiritual change.

1. Myth #1 CRISIS is a powerful impetus for change.
  - a. Having a heart attack or having surgery is not proven to affect sustained changed eating habits, even though a life is at stake.
  - b. The reality is, crisis more often than not destroys growth rather than stimulates it.
  - c. Just because there is a crisis going on in your life does not necessarily or even commonly mean you will be drawn closer to God to serve Him better in a sustained manner.
2. Myth #2 Change is motivated by FEAR.
  - a. It's too easy for people to go into denial of the bad things that MIGHT happen to them. "If you don't eat right you're going to die!" (Foxhole syndrome).
  - b. A threat might scare someone into superficial change, but when the storm is over; he or she tends to revert back into the same old habits.
  - c. Hearing a sermon on hell might motivate a congregation to service for a week or so, but everyone soon forgets.
  - d. So we can see that fear causes us to do 'sprints for Jesus,' but not run marathons.
3. Myth #3 The FACTS will set us free.
  - a. High cholesterol will raise the rate for a potential heart attack. Failure to exercise will lead to clogged arteries. Yada, yada is about all we hear.
  - b. Religiously speaking, people are not motivated by mere facts—most religious people know much more than they bother to obey.
4. Myth #4 SMALL GRADUAL CHANGES are always easier to make and sustain for long-term growth.
  - a. For most, step down approaches do not work in the long-term.

- b. Although one does not become a “mature Christian” the moment he is baptized, the best way to become holy is passionately to set out to become holy.
  - c. The best way to cut off procrastination is to get busy.
- 5. Myth #5 We can't change because our brains were HARDWIRED early in life.
  - a. We don't think in terms like this when we get the pink slip from work—we look for different types of work.
  - b. An auto mechanic would never keep employment if he did not constantly improve his skills.
  - c. Necessity is the mother of invention.
- 6. The CONCLUSION of Dr. Deutchman's synopsis, as we would apply it to Christianity:
  - a. Crisis situations are not the most effective ways of producing individual or church growth—they are particularly hard on the weak (Matt. 24:22; I Tim. 2:1-4).
  - b. Fear is not a long lasting motivation, neither can it contribute much to the positive side of the Christian equation (I Jn. 4:18).
  - c. Facts, while a necessary part of the growth equation, cannot in themselves bring sustained growth (Jn. 5:39).
  - d. While one step at a time is part of the picture of growth, there must be overriding motivations and overarching commitments to sustain a continued succession of next steps (II Cor. 5:14-15; Acts 2:36-37).
  - e. Anyone can change, no matter how much they are set in their ways (I Tim. 1:15; Acts 9:1-2).

### **What, Then Do We Need to Bring Significant, Sustained Change?**

#### ENTHUSIASM for Something Bigger than the Things that Hinder Us

1. In 1907, Frank Bettger played baseball for a Tri-state League in Pennsylvania. He was fired one day by the manager. When he asked why, his manager said, "Because you are lazy." He continued, "You drag yourself around like a veteran of 20 years. Why do you act that way if you are not lazy?" Frank responded, "Well, I'm so nervous and scared, that I want to hide my fear from the crowd... I hope that by taking it easy I'd get rid of my nervousness."
2. The manager said, "Frank, that will never work. When you leave here, for heaven sakes, wake yourself up, and put some life and enthusiasm into your work." Frank went from \$175.00 month to \$25.00 a month.
3. Though he didn't feel very enthusiastic, he began to ACT enthusiastic. In three days an old ball player asked him, "What in the world are you doing in a rank bush-league like this?"
4. Because Frank began to ACT enthusiastic and changed his role in life.
  - a. He got moved from that low rate team to a better league.
  - b. There he allowed his nervousness work for him.
  - c. His enthusiasm affected the other players and they too became enthusiastic.
  - d. During games of extreme heat or despite the score he played enthusiastically and left the field knowing he had done his very best that day.

- e. The local newspapers started calling him "Pep" Bettger, the life of the team. In 10 days he went from \$25.00 to \$185.00 a month not because he could hit any better, throw better or had any more ability than his peers. He simply became enthusiastic about what he was doing!
- a. Not long after that he was playing for a pro team, the Saint Louis Cardinals.

### **What Will Motivate us to Serve More Enthusiastically?**

1. The same thing that prompted Peter – “Do you love Me” (Jn. 21:15-19)?
  - a. He didn't ask Peter, "Do you love people?" Service does not begin with a love for people. It begins with a love for God and that love overflows to people.
    - i. If we serve only out of a humanistic love for people we will be people-pleasers rather than a God-pleaser. When we only have a humanistic love we will not help them nor serve the purposes of God.
    - ii. But if everything begins with a holy love toward the Lord, we will love people and we will serve their best interest-not always their whims and desires, but always their best interests (II Cor. 5:14-15; Matt. 7:12 noting the context).
  - b. Neither did he ask Peter, "Do you want a lot of rewards when you get to heaven? Do you want to be a real success in life?" Even closer to the issue, "Do you want to find your real destiny and be everything you were designed to be?" He simply asked - Do you love me?
    - i. That should be all the motivation in life he needed to be happy and help him serve effectively.
    - ii. If that, Love, is our motivational factor for change in behavior and service, then we have a good foundation out of which to minister. Without love and devotion all the training, and skills, and natural talents mean nothing. (1 Cor. 13:1-3).
  - c. Here is the encouraging thing. Anybody can love the Lord. You don't have to have a great, charismatic personality. You don't have to have a high IQ or even be good looking. Everybody can qualify on this most important issue of all.
2. Oh, by the way, remember Alan Deutchman, the man who exposed the Five Myths about sustained change? He did give the key to sustained change.
  - a. Embracing an overarching value is, he said, the key.
  - b. That would be Jesus (Jn. 14:15).
  - c. If knowing Him does not motivate us, it is simply because we are unimpressed with Him.
  - d. Either we are or we are not appreciative of His nature and character.
  - e. There are no alternative overarching values to rival Jesus.
3. We will either tell the world to take a flying leap because it does not offer us what we truly want or we will bid Jesus to move on so we can embrace the something else we prefer.
4. Whatever overarching value we choose, it will sustain our movement in its direction—it will conform us to its image.