

*THE PROCESS
OF
LIFE CHANGE*

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A FRESH NEW CONCEPT ABOUT
CONGREGATION! (PART 10)

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PROLOGUE

Once we have decided for ourselves what congregation and discipleship is, we are well on our way to make things clear and certain. These are very important issues, which each one has to sort out for himself. There is one more subject that forms part of discipleship, which we have to discuss. There was not enough room for it in the previous chapter. It is the question: How do people change? Through which process as human being do you have to go in order to have constant change in your life?

We agreed that discipleship is about discipline in your life. The life of believers has to change so that they will live like their Master. Gandhi said that he liked the Christian message, but not the Christians! What use is it if we talk one thing and live something totally different? A disciple is a follower of Jesus and his life will shine with the realities of his Master's life. *Reproduction is the only measure for success.* If we do not live the way Jesus lived, we will have missed the whole purpose of being a congregation. The Gospel was never meant to be something which you potentially speak over yourself, but never living it. There is *position and conduct*, but the purpose of the Gospel is that we *walk/conduct* ourselves according to the standard of our *position*. Our lives must reflect who we are in ourselves. The revelation of our identity in Christ gives us all the potential and energy to live it. As believers we have no excuse not to live like Jesus. 1 John 2:7 clearly says that he who says that he lives in Him, ought also to walk/conduct himself like Him. It is absolutely essential to understand how life change works, otherwise we are going to be disappointed in ourselves and the Gospel!

THE PROCESS OF LIFE CHANGE

To kick off this chapter we will first have a look at a few principles regarding life and life change. We cannot understand the process if we don't understand the principles relating to the matter. These are probably one of the most ignored matters in congregation life, because we all want to see miracles happen in lives, but we use the wrong means and way to get there! We preach to people until they are worn out, give repeated invitations, do prayers, get them to make commitments, make them sign letters, threaten them with the law and even with fear! All this is religion and it tires people and disappoints them. The biggest illness I have seen in my 24 years of ministering to people is disappointment. People are not experiencing the abundant glory and pure abundance which the Word and preaching talks about. They become tired in their striving of always hoping that the next day shall be different and that day never arrives!

Let us remind ourselves again that the only instruction given to believers was to go out and disciples all the nations on the earth! The instruction was given for a time like this in which we are living now, and this instruction can be followed through in the time we are living now. We are not only called to reach the nations, but to bring about a total transformation in lives! The believers will become disciples in their own lives by going out and discipling the unbelievers. Thus it is possible that people's lives can change totally irrespective of their past! If God orders something to happen, it is because He has already made full provision for this and because it is attainable. Let us rush into the Kingdom until we reach total life transformation and see it happen in everyone's lives around us.

10.1) IT IS ALL ABOUT THE HEART OR SPIRIT!

We have already mentioned that the uniqueness of the human being is that he was created in the image and likeness of God the Father. This means that human beings are in their nature spirit beings with a soul and a body. Human beings are on the earth, but their origin is not from the earth, but from the spirit! Humans have a heart and everything flows from this heart. Proverbs 4:23 says "Guard your heart above all else, for it is the wellspring of life." God is spirit and you can only stand in relationship to Him through your spirit! Everything that is not born from the spirit is from the flesh and cannot please God. There may be many beautiful things from the flesh, but there is no permanence from the flesh. Constant life change comes from the spirit and from nowhere else. There is only one way to transform a nation and that is to start with the spirit of man. Anything else shall not work or shall only be temporary! Anything else is pure humanism, human reformation and civilization!

God builds His Kingdom on the condition of man's heart!
Any other process will keep you busy for a time but it will disappoint you. Luke 17:21 says the Kingdom of God is in you! A Kingdom life can only be lived from the spirit of man. We talk about discipleship and discipline, but a true disciple is not only someone with a lot of external disciplines forced onto his life. That is nothing other than religion and legalism. Discipleship is to live the discipline that is already built into your spirit and to release it with the working of the Holy Spirit into your soul and body. Frustrating religion is to enforce a bunch of rules from outside onto people, because it is expected that good people will live like that! God does not expect us to live good lives, but godly lives!

10.2) ONLY JESUS CAN LIVE IT!

God expects from us a perfect life of love towards Him and towards our fellow human beings. Adam was created to live this life from his spirit, but he could only do it as long as he did it in the presence of his Creator. With the Fall Adam's relationship with God was ruined and he could not live that life anymore, because he lost connection with the Source of that life. Jesus came to earth to prove that this perfect life of love can be lived on earth by a human being. With the cross and resurrection Jesus paid for everything that counted as negative against man and which kept his spirit in darkness. Now man can again hear God, understand Him and be in relationship with Him. If man now repents and believes, he receives the Holy Spirit in him, which is nothing other than the Spirit of Christ. Not only do we again come in relationship with God as source, but the Source itself comes to live in us! We do not have to produce anything from ourselves, because the perfect life lives in us and has become our life. All we have to do now is to see it and to give expression to it in a disciplined way!

Man cannot in his own effort and on his own live the life that can be described as the life of a true disciple. But God asks from us to live it fully, because through His Word and His Holy Spirit He now empowers us to do it! The godly life is impossible if we live it out of ourselves, but an absolute reality through the Word and Holy Spirit! The life of perfect love is impossible out of ourselves, but the love of God is poured out into our hearts by the in living of the Holy Spirit – Rom 5:5. Everything we need is in the spirit. We only need discipline in the soul and body, so that it can flow out to others! The discipline in discipleship is not to reproduce the product, but to bring the flesh under control of the spirit.

10.3) MOTIVATION

To change is for most people a radical occurrence, because they now have to start living something that is the opposite to what they were used to. Motivation is very important in change and there are basically only three reasons for change:

- Punishment
- Reward
- Inner motivation

At times it is appropriate to use punishment and reward to motivate people, especially in rearing children, but in the adult and spiritual world only inner motivation from within the spirit will be successful. If something does not enter and drive you from the inside, you will not stay motivated for change and above all you will not stay with it! The working of the Holy Spirit in man is the only constant motivation that is always there and which is enough for any situation! Therefore we see that the **three most important factors** in change so far, are:

- the Word (Jesus Christ)
- the Holy Spirit
- the spirit of man!

Successful discipleship clearly has to have these three ingredients in order to result in successful life change! God's process of life change is not as difficult, complicated and impossible as most people tend to think!

10.4) MIRROR FELLOWSHIP

When it comes to life change, there is one verse in the Bible that is very clear about it. II Cor. 3:18, "And all of us,

as with *unveiled face*, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a *mirror* the glory of the Lord, are constantly being *transfigured* into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] *the Spirit*.” It is of utmost importance that we understand this Scripture correctly; otherwise constant life change will evade us all the time! I see the following:

There was an Old Testament where man was veiled and did not see the grace of God. The death of Jesus Christ paid so that we can now see without a veil into the mysteries of the Word. When we read the Word, it is as if looking into a mirror, because Jesus is the Word of God which reveals the face of the Father. When we are able to look into the mirror of the Word and see the glory of the Father in the mirror, an automatic change takes place in practice to the same glory by the working of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is our brother and we have become like Him. When you look into the mirror of the Word, you see the glory of the Father, and then life change starts taking place.

In other words, you can say that change in the flesh (soul and body) starts taking place when with unveiled face you can see yourself in the image of Jesus. Change starts when you start seeing your own identity which is established in your spirit! Everything is in the spirit, but you can only experience it once you have seen it in your spirit! Here we see again only the important aspects of the Word, the Holy Spirit and the spirit of man which has to come into interaction with one another. My presumption is also that the person concerned be willing to allow the change that is flowing from within his spirit to spill over into the rest of his soul and body. God has already worked everything in our spirit, but we have to work it out in our soul and body. – Phil. 2:12-13.

10.5) THE 4 PHASES OF MENTORING

In the process of mentoring we distinguish 4 phases in order to bring people to successful reproduction:

- I do it and you watch;
- I do it and you help;
- You do it and I help;
- You do it and I watch!

This is very simple and it talks about what we are discussing now. There is only one way to successfully raise up people, so that they can do what you are doing, and that is practical training. They have to be exposed to what you do, start helping you to do it, do it on their own and eventually take it all over from you! I don't think we have organized our congregations in such a way that this process could happen with ease. In traditional congregations leaders bury themselves in such positions and roles as if they are going to be in those roles for life. Success is reproduction and that means there are many people who can take over from you and it must happen as quickly as possible!

10.5) THE 4 PHASES OF MENTORING

A further important concept in the process of life change is values. People don't necessarily live their lives based on sermons, speeches or even principles. They live it based on their values! According to John 1:1-2, I believe that a value is established by the following:

- it is heard (principles)
- it is seen (example)
- it is experienced (experience)

- it is handled (responsibility)

The home is the best place where values are established, because there they talked to you about what you have to do, you saw how other people did it, you experienced it yourself and later on you took up the responsibility to see that it was done. Values are not only formed through hearing and seeing, but by experiencing it as well as taking up responsibility for these values. People often know exactly what is right, but if a wrong value was established it will turn the moral conviction to the wrong value. The way people learned over the years to deal with stress by using food, cigarettes, drugs and aggression are deeply rooted patterns, which by doing over and over again have become values. You don't even think about it anymore, because everything in you has been programmed to do it in a certain way.

These principles are further confirmation that the only effective training is practical training, where people are *exposed* to the actual case at hand and where they are expected to take *responsibility* for the matter. Life change does not take place in classrooms or in theoretic teaching situations! Even if it is difficult to acknowledge, it remains the truth. This applies to sermons as well. The fact that the teaching comes from the Bible does not suddenly make this ineffective way effective. Preaching has its place to call up people to come into a relationship with the Father, but it is not effective in changing lives.

10.7) THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION:

HEART	THOUGHTS	DECISIONS	ACTIONS
	LIFESTYLE	VALUES	HABITS

The process of life change or transformation happens as mentioned above. The whole process must be followed in order to achieve life change.

- Everything starts in the heart or spirit of man when the Word of God wakes up the **spirit** of man and God the Father's voice clearly communicates in his spirit. Everything starts when the Father reveals Himself through the Word in the spirit of man. Without this everything remains human processes and efforts.
- Then the Father's voice registers in you mind and you have to adjust your **thoughts** to God's thoughts. This is where Romans 12:2 says that we are changed by the renewing of our mind! Change starts where we bring our thoughts in obedience under the thoughts of the Word. This is however not the end of the process.
- When you have clarity in your mind about the Father's heart and will for your life, you have to follow it up with certain specific **decisions** about what you are going to do. Without making decisions you are only going to end up with new insights and no progress.
- Five little birds are sitting on the fence and three decide to fly away. How many birds remain on the fence? Not two, but five, because they have only decided to fly away, they have not yet done it! It is very important that people make decisions, but on its own it is still not the end of the process unless it is followed up with specific **actions of obedience!** This is where most people go astray, because it is easy to talk about things, and even to make decisions, but we never take action. People conveniently skip this phase because it asks for active cooperation of your will. It is easier just to do as your emotions direct you, instead of activating

yourself, submitting your will to God's will and doing what He asks you to do!

- You can even go as far as doing what you have decided to do, but if you don't do it continuously, it will never transform into a **habit**. Research tells us that you have to do something at least 40 times over before it becomes a habit. The best way to form a habit is to do that which you believe in continually and especially for other people. You have to break out of your own world into the presence of other people and start serving them with what you believe in.
- When we cherish a habit in our lives, it eventually becomes a **value**. Values are fixed habits that are so internalized that they become second nature to you. A value is not a secret lifestyle, but a public lifestyle that is lived in front of and above all *for other people*. Only at this point can we start talking about an established lifestyle. The greatest factor in lifestyles is 'love'. That which you love will motivate you to live for it and you will adapt your life to it. People will make an effort for that which they love. That is why the Word says in 2 John 6 that love consists of this: that we live and walk in accordance with His commandments!

Where does the enemy come to interrupt this process of life change so that people do not reach the full experience thereof? The process is interrupted at the first four elements. Either there is no revelation of the Word in the spirit; or our thoughts are kept so busy with worldly things that the revelation does not register in our spirits – we don't renew our minds; or we don't make definite decisions and we don't complete it with definite actions in obedience!

10.8) DAVID FABRICIUS' WORDS:

David Fabricius was a tramp on the streets of Durban and in his own words said that he could not even succeed in living the life of a tramp. So he decided if you can live this badly, you can just as well try and live well, and he made the decision to stand up in life. When I met him seven years later, he was very rich and training the best bankers and CEO's in the world. Nothing is impossible for him who is willing to walk through this process of life change. Google him on his website to find out more about him. His motto is as follows:

The three steps to success:

- The hands that you shake (people that give input)
- The decisions that you make and
- The actions that you take!

10.9) OBEDIENCE LEADS TO GROWTH!

The manifestation of success and life change usually fails at the stage of decisions and the activation thereof by taking action! In previous chapters we already mentioned that true spirituality comes from within the spirit, but in practice it is measured by the will of man or the measure in which obedience has already been activated. Most people are very adamant about the principles in which they believe and which they have sorted out with their **minds/reasoning**, and they are even willing to fight for it. However, very few people are willing to submit their **will** in humbleness, to obey the Father and just start living the principles instead of having arguments about them! Obedience has a price, namely to lay yourself down and to put other people first. I have never heard people fighting to be the first one to be obedient. The tragedy in practice is

that most people do not live from their mind or will, but from their **emotions!** People don't mainly live from obedience to the Word, but according to whether something is enjoyable or not. The emotion is the most influencing factor in the soul and it is constantly pulling you towards those things that are entertaining, enjoyable and comforting! Believers do things that are totally wrong for the simple reason that they find it enjoyable!

The Lord does not want the will, mind or emotions. He wants the discipling of all three. But it will only happen if the will takes full control of the process and brings everything in line with full discipling. Only the will can give opportunity to the full revelation in the spirit to submit the soul and body. Discipling does not happen by accident. It is a purposed, definite process with a clear outcome! People don't accidentally become discipled. *Therefore obedience is an important key to growth and change in people's lives!* Without obedience the revelation in the spirit will have no outflow, will change no lives, no new values will be established and no life will be changed in the long run! The Word is also not unclear about the matter.

- 1 Sam 15:22 – But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in *obeying the voice of the Lord?* To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”
- Matthew 7:21-23 – Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but *he that doeth the will of my Father* which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

- 2 Cor 2:9 - For this was my purpose in writing you, to test your attitude and see if you would stand the test, whether you are obedient and altogether agreeable [to following my orders] *in everything*.
- Phil 2:5-8 - Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:] Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, but stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being. And after He had appeared in human form, *He abased and humbled Himself* [still further] *and carried His obedience to the extreme of death*, even the death of the cross!
- 2 Cor. 10:4-6 - For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, [Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and *we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ* (the Messiah, the Anointed One), *being in readiness to punish every insubordinate for his disobedience, when your own submission and obedience [as a church] are fully secured and complete*.
- 1 Peter 1:22 - Since by your *obedience to the Truth* through the *Holy Spirit* you have *purified your hearts (souls)* for the sincere affection of the brethren, [see that you] love one another fervently from a pure heart. (In this Scripture the purifying of our souls, pure hearts and fervent love are directly linked with 'obedience to the Truth').

Obedience is not the most popular subject in congregation life today, but according to these texts it seems to me that it is one of the essential elements in spiritual growth and congregation life. If we take it away, we strip the congregation of its whole purpose to exist, because without obedience we will definitely not carry out the great commission! There may be different ways to handle obedience and how we work with people regarding obedience, but the point remains: obedience is one of the primary elements of the Gospel! Obedience has become a legalistic matter, because we as humans have forced it onto others, but when obedience is approached out of grace, it becomes obedience in faith and it has a totally different character! – Rom 1:5. (Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.)

Obedience that comes from faith is born from the revelation of the Father's faith in us because of the work of the cross and resurrection. You can force legalistic obedience from someone's soul or you can allow a conviction to flow into the spirit of man which will stir in him the desire to obey the Father!

Obedience to the voice of the Father is a primary matter in the Word; you can either do it legalistic or within the spirit of grace. In the next chapter I will show you how you can make absolute obedience happen alongside absolute accountability amongst people, without ever letting it become a legalistic point of argument!

10.10) GIVING YOUR TESTIMONY AND PLAIN GIVING BRINGS GROWTH!

After all we have said, we are now at the last point in this chapter. Growth comes by taking up responsibility and through obedience, but there is exponential growth to those who give out to others. Sometimes the Lord cannot give you more until you have first given away what you have. This is the principle of *sowing and reaping!* The more you give away in life, the more comes back to you again. But we are living in a *consumer world* where people are taught only to receive and to spend on themselves. Everything is just about me and my needs and how much I can gather for myself. The truth is that he who looks after the needs of others will also have his needs met!

The simplest way of giving is to share *your testimony* with people. Just start on a daily basis to talk to people and tell them what the Lord means to you. Give that which is in you to others. Give people hope, life, support, encouragement, guidance, food, clothes, money, time, your gifts and anything else that you might have. The Kingdom is a place of abundance and believers are supposed to be people of abundance who give out to others in abundance. Experience has taught me that the most mature people are definitely those who always give what they have to those in need around them. Believers are meant to be the sources of life and provision in the communities, but to get there we will have to learn to give every day to the needs around us. We all know the principle that all living beings have to give out and take in, breathe in and breathe out, take in energy and also give out energy. Nothing can be healthy by just taking in.

We can summarize by saying that change takes place by:

- Stimulation through the Word (Jesus Christ)
- Worked by the Holy Spirit
- Being revealed in the spirit of man
- Obedience in relationships
- and giving out to others!

This is a mouthful, but the challenge is now to put all these principles into a congregation model which will produce this in practice. It is this challenge that we are going to discuss in the next chapter.

SUMMARY

- 1) It is of no use if we have become all in Christ, but we are unable to live it!
- 2) Reproduction is the only measure for success!
- 3) The biggest symptom of our church problem is disappointment in the lives of believers. People don't experience that which is preached!
- 4) God builds His Kingdom on the condition of the human heart!
- 5) Only Jesus so far has been able to live the full Kingdom life on earth! We can only live it if we allow Him to live it through us.
- 6) Man cannot live successfully spiritually outside a relationship with God. God the Father is the only atmosphere wherein man will prosper!
- 7) Motivation can be stirred in three ways:
 - Punishment
 - Reward
 - Inner motivation
- 8) Change takes place in that it is:
 - Stimulated by the Word (Jesus Christ)
 - Worked by the Holy Spirit,
 - Revealed in the spirit of man,
 - Obeyed in relationships and
 - Given out to others!
- 9) Change starts where you discover your own identity in the mirror of the Word!

10) We only have to work out the salvation which God worked in our spirit.

11) In the process of mentoring we distinguish 4 phases which will bring people to successful reproduction:

- I do it and you watch;
- I do it and you help;
- You do it and I help;
- You do it and I watch!

12) Values are established by:

- hearing (principles)
- seeing (example)
- experiencing (experience)
- handling (responsibility)

13) The process of transformation is as follows:

HEART	THOUGHTS	DECISIONS	ACTIONS
	LIFESTYLE	VALUES	HABITS

14) Three steps to success:

- The hands that you shake (people that give input)
- The decisions that you make and
- The actions that you take!

15) Obedience is a very important key to growth and change in people's lives!

16) People who don't give out what they have stagnate in themselves and do not grow any further.