

---

# ***Christian Leadership in Time of Change***

**Allan Davis**

---

# Introduction

Change occurs all around us – continually. In fact, nothing ever stays the same – except God.

How we process change, as Christians (and as leaders), can make an enormous difference in how we grow individually, relate to others and move on in life.

The following material (in dot point form, for brevity – do with it what you will) has been prepared from a Christian perspective, drawing on personal experience, including mistakes made along the way. Some of it may echo thinking I have picked up over time from the broader community, but that is not the key driver.

As the community of Christ we must think about the issues involved, so that we can respond appropriately to what is going on in our lives, and those of men, women and young people whom we inevitably touch.

Leadership is a privilege. With God's help and guidance, let's be agents for the kind of change for good that He wants to bring about in our world.

# Changes that Create Turbulence

- leadership churn, often at short notice
- leadership changes that give rise to new relationship styles and “coalitions”
- new / adjusted organisational structures
- new governance arrangements
- strategic changes – new directions
- established programs come to an end and are not renewed
- new emphases, eg worship formats, missions, social involvement, finances
- doctrinal change / discovery / correction
- inter-generational change and transfer of functions / authority
- cultural change, eg church make-up and profile in the community
- external pressures, eg political, legal, financial, time stresses
- social trends
- moves of the Holy Spirit that up-end cherished processes
- church building programs
- changed personal circumstances (eg marriage and family status, relocation, health, work or financial crises)
- economic volatility, technological change, revolutions in ideas

---

*Change is inevitable; it is a fact of life.*

# Recent Change – Personal Reflection

Recall a recent change or event that involved you personally...

- did you understand what was happening?
- who was involved? what was your role?
- what worked?
- what did not work?
- how did you feel?
- how did you respond to the situation (internally / externally)?
- what did you sense God was saying?
- what happened in your relationships with others?
  - are there unresolved issues?
  - do you have an effective strategy for moving forward?
- what lessons were learned?
  - how do you *know*?
- looking back, how do you think you managed yourself?
- what would you do differently next time?

---

*It can be hard to be objective when we are subjectively<sub>4</sub>involved.*

# Objections to Change

- *“We have always done it this way”,* eg structures, worship styles, language, programs
  - *“If it is not broken, don’t fix it. I like things the way they are.”*
  - *“I don’t like the new direction. I don’t know where we are going.”* (fear)
  - *“I am confused.” No one consulted me.”*
  - *“It will all go away if I put my head in the sand.”*
  - *“It did not work last time.”* (cynicism, disappointment, frustration, lack of trust)
- vested interest (authority, influence, emotional investment, financial stake)
- perceptions leaders are seeking to entrench themselves, friends, “hobby horses”
- suspicions of external models & adoption of “blue prints” that “work elsewhere”
- allowing cliques to develop (at the cost of minority groups, who end up feeling disenfranchised or excluded)
- momentum “out of control”
  - the temptation is to walk out (Psalm 55:6, 7)
- lack of discussion, consultation, trust, openness, accountability
- change fatigue – *“Not more change!” “The old is better.”* (Luke 5:39)
- burn-out (Job 17:11-16)
- new ideas are seen as *impositions* on the existing culture / behaviours or threaten to undermine values *“We have everything we need; we have all truth.”*
- the change environment threatens to offend / hurt / cast away “good” people
- fear of compromise with non-Christian thinking

***Response to change is often shaped by the prevailing culture.***

# Poor Management of Change

- *“My way or the highway”* – may lead to abuse of spiritual authority
- *“My way is God’s way”* – assumptions of infallibility, hierarchy, or exclusive revelation
- *“Don’t touch the Lord’s anointed”* (1 Samuel 24:6, 10) - such leaders easily become remote, unaccountable
- lack of effective leadership and follow-through – *“Who is in charge?”*
- hasty introduction of new models, staff (existing people feel “left behind / shut out”)
- invalidation of the “old” a threat to those involved (feel “obsolete”, cf 2 Samuel 17:23)
- people feel disempowered (especially those who believe they are, or should be, part of the established decision making process)
- change is approached by “formula”, cf needs to be relationship-based, linked to trust
- misunderstanding of the local church culture and history by the “new broom”
- misunderstanding of Biblical teaching
- competing values and priorities not addressed
- inflexibility on all “sides” as change is rolled out – question of “loss of control”
- isolation and insensitivity on the part of senior leadership
- change is allowed to be externally-driven; “others” are blamed for creating uncertainty
- lack of planning (crisis management), leading to reactive (“knee-jerk”) responses
- resistance, hostility or impassivity dismissed without understanding / evaluation
- lack of communication, timely information, feedback
- misinformation not corrected quickly

---

***“Comfort zones” become dead zones without the Holy Spirit’s leadership and results.***

---

# The Role of Christian Leadership

1. An effective Christian leader is an authentic and consistent follower of Christ, having an obvious relationship with (and dependence on) God
2. Leadership worth following demonstrates high standards of personal integrity
3. The genuine Christian leader sees ministry as a call, to “service”, a developed life, not a vocation / position / job / personal possession
4. The leader is focused and knows which way to go
5. Having done well, the genuine Christian leader seeks to excel
6. Effective Christian leadership functions through team relationship
7. Good leaders genuinely like people
8. Leaders have followers – by definition – and must look after them
9. Good leaders are made by trials and tests that cleanse and shape them
10. Christian leaders of influence know what is “going on”

---

***Leading change is one of the ultimate tests of spiritual leadership.***

# Christian Attitudes to Change

- change *will* occur – the Holy Spirit can help us see it as “positive”, not “negative”
  - change can be refreshing and reinvigorating, if we are prepared to let things go
- everyone has hopes, aspirations, trials, disappointments, break-throughs
- we need to value what is of God, what He wishes to continue, or is permitting to die
- as Christians we have different perspectives about change – we believe in God’s love for His church, His goodness, claims over our lives, creative power, sovereignty
- we believe God does not introduce change to harm us
- changes can “work” for us, according to God’s purposes (Romans 8:28)
- God does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8) – He can be our rock
- we have access to the strength, leading and wisdom of the Holy Spirit (James 1:5)
- God has promised to be with us in fire, flood, personal adversity (Isaiah 43:2)
- God can change our direction at any time (eg Acts 13:1-4, 16:6-10)
- God can touch and use *all* people, regardless of age, gender or status (Joel 2:28-29)
- we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13)
- the Holy Spirit can unify people undergoing change, to move forward in His plan
- our equipping and open / closed doors come from God (Revelation 3:8)
- we need to keep an eye on God’s larger plans and His ultimate objective of investing for eternity, not just for the moment (Matthew 6:33)
  - it is all about *Him*, not us (Isaiah 42:8)
- when all is said and done, the greatest “change” is lives re-shaped like Jesus Christ



# Positive Management of Change

- accept that change is a normal part of growth; nothing living stays the same
  - some people are “change junkies”, thriving on constant churn; others find it threatening and destabilizing
  - people respond to change in different ways (Ezra 3:12, 13)
  - the role of the leader is to help the team face up to what needs to change and help facilitate it with resilience, grace and confidence in God (Nehemiah)
- retain a strong spiritual focus and Christ-centredness (Philippians 3:13, 14)
- actively *listen* to the Holy Spirit
  - Christians prefer to follow leaders who “hear from God”
- maintain the right attitudes
- share the vision - articulate it in simple words (Habakkuk 2:2)
  - in the context of the “big picture”
  - share the rationale for the change, ie not change for its own sake
- “walk the talk”, ie *lead* by example, with integrity
- recognise the perspective, input and validity of others
- recognise threats, barriers and opportunities implicit in change
- recognise that some people feel vulnerable and are motivated by “WIIFM?”
- keep “talking” to people; dialogue often prevents misunderstanding and builds trust
- keep the team involved and affirmed, so all understand their responsibilities / roles
- celebrate positive outcomes along the way

---

***People will embrace change if they believe it is valid.***

# Holy Spirit-Led Change

- verify: is the change *really* necessary?
- share the vision and get “buy-in” from men and women who hear from God
- be receptive to new ideas – they *may* be coming from God (but test them)
- be flexible, innovative, open to new things / people
- lead change in a “Christian” way, not just by secular management modelling
- lead change through prayer - for wisdom to know what to do & how to do it; ideas; solutions; discernment; skills; anointing; unity; resources; partners; tangible results
- listen to God – don’t get in front of Him, or lag behind; boldly obey the Holy Spirit
- be open to God’s correction and the wisdom / insight of others, whom you trust
- look for the *gifts* and *fruit* of the Spirit being extinguished or operating
- get everyone involved to think creatively, “outside the box” – be open yourself
- clarify confusion that emerges, on the basis of encouragement (not judgement)
- pray for relationships with like-minded people who will introduce the changes with you
- keep a compassionate “servant heart”; build up rather than tear down
- if some people will not adapt, move forward with God’s grace nevertheless
- use your positional authority with humility – provide Holy Spirit-based leadership
- *plan* the work ... then work the plan, to full implementation

***Godly men and women, with God’s opportunities and anointing, will lead change His way.***

---

## More Information

For further information and contact details  
check out:

*[www.Relevant\\_Christianity.com](http://www.Relevant_Christianity.com)*