



ALL THINGS NEW

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Week 5: Initiating Change

QUESTION 1

This is the final week of our sermon series, called All Things New. In this series, we looked at how Jesus wants to transform lives by making everything new. Jesus offers fresh starts and new beginnings. But sometimes, when we decide to change, the hardest part is taking that first step. Starting a change can be more difficult than keeping it going. The first step is tough, because it involves overcoming resistance to the unknown, fear of failure, and confronting stubborn routines. That's why many people know they need or want a big life change, but still put it off. Have you ever experienced this? Have you ever known that God wanted something in your life to change, but you resisted and held back? Take a moment as a group to answer the questions above and reflect on why taking the first step is often the hardest.

QUESTION 2

The Bible gives several examples of people who needed something to spark change. The story of Jacob shows this well. Jacob's major life change started with a dream. He deceived his brother Esau out of his birthright and ran from his brother's angry revenge. At the most unexpected moment, God gave Jacob a dream— a vision of the future. The dream showed a staircase from heaven to earth, indicating that God wanted to be directly involved in Jacob's life. **Genesis 28:16-17 When Jacob woke up from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."** That dream changed Jacob's life. It gave him a new vision for the future. Sometimes we also change by having a dream, a new vision of what's ahead. Often our change starts as God shows us what the future might be like, giving us a new dream. Have you ever been influenced by a dream, a new vision for what's coming? Discuss with your group some of your visions for the future and how you think God might want you to change.

QUESTION 3

Another person in the Bible who desperately needed to change was Esther. Esther understood from her uncle Mordecai that the Jewish people exiled to Babylon were in danger. To rescue her people, she was forced to have a difficult conversation with her husband, the king. Speaking to the king without being invited was a death sentence. Esther's response is recorded in **Esther 4:15-16** **Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish."** So Esther decided to fast, pray, and have the hard conversation with her husband. In anyone's life, change—especially in relationships—begins with a hard or difficult conversation. Such conversations with an employer, a teacher, a husband or wife, a boyfriend or girlfriend, a parent or child can bring about change, especially when we pray and approach them seeking God's wisdom and guidance. Have you ever had a hard conversation that began change? Do you need to have a difficult conversation now to initiate a change? Discuss this with your group.

QUESTION 4

Another Bible character shows a different way to start change. One of my heroes in the Bible is a woman named Hannah. We meet her in **1 Samuel chapter 1**. When we meet Hannah, she is heartbroken. She's heartbroken for two very different reasons. The first reason is because she cannot have the child she longs for. The second is because her husband's other wife mercilessly mocks her for her infertility. So, to initiate the change she needs, she brings all of herself to God. In fact, she prays so deeply to God that the priest thinks she is drunk. When he confronts her, she says, **1 Samuel 1:15-16** **"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."** To bring about the change she needs, Hannah, in her grief, poured out her pain to God. Sometimes we're stuck because we have not grieved the losses in our lives. What we need to do is pour out our soul, and our pain to the God who loves us. Can you see how pouring out your pain to God would be helpful? Have you ever in a time of grief and sadness stopped everything and poured out your soul to God? What was the result? Did this in anyway initiate change for you?

QUESTION 5

One very familiar Bible character demonstrates another way to start change: Jonah. God commands Jonah, his prophet, to go to Nineveh, but Jonah runs in the opposite direction. Eventually, as Jonah runs away from God, he finds himself lost in the ocean and swallowed by a huge fish. Inside that belly of the fish, Jonah initiates massive change in his life by repenting. **Jonah 2:7-9** says, **"When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. But I... will sacrifice to you... Salvation comes from the Lord."** Millions of people have initiated change in their lives by repenting. Repentance involves recognizing that you are living in a way that is displeasing to God and making a turn—changing both your thoughts and actions—to a lifestyle that pleases Him. Sometimes, as in Jonah's case, repentance is a massive change; other times, it takes a more subtle form as followers of Jesus submit more of their lives into His care and control. Share a story of a time you repented and how your life changed. What are some ways you continue that process of surrendering your life to the care and control of Jesus?