

Change Points

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Introduction:

In our lives there are numerous points of change. We can identify these points as we travel through life because they transition us from something into something else. How many of you remember the first day of school or maybe "Kinda." What did you feel? Was there just a little fear of the unknown? How apprehensive were you when you saw the other kids crying not wanting to let go of their mother's skirts?...unprepared for this thing called school! What fear of the unknown did that engender in you? What about the transition from primary school to secondary school? You had heard that the kids at the big school were mean to those who were in the first year right? Suddenly you had to move from being the top doggy to the underdog in the school.

Then there were other changes as well. You heard that you had to have all these books and keep them in your locker and move from class to class during the day. It was weird and not quite what you were expecting secondary school to be and it turned out to be weirder if you didn't have a big brother or sister to look out for you and settle you in and keep you from the initiation rights of a good dunking in the school trough.

The came Tech or Uni and then work or maybe work before Tech. Those first days were terrible, trying to find your way around. You found yourself terribly self conscious. This is a part of life, a part of growing up. Other change points include, marriage, having children, the death of a partner, a loved one, a job, a financial crisis...etc.

In the same way that we have change points in our natural lives so we have change points in our spiritual lives. When we go through spiritual change points there is normally a dealing of God, an encounter point I call it, which transitions us toward transformation and change. I want us to examine some Bible characters today and see just what it is that God does when we come to these points of change in God.

1. Saul's call a point of change:

Saul from the tribe of Benjamin and the son of Kish was just an ordinary person going about his father's business. On the day the donkeys escaped Saul went looking for them and was eventually referred to Samuel the prophet. God chooses Saul as the first King of Israel and the prophet anoints him to be king

1 Sam.10:1...And Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head.....the Lord has anointed you commander over His inheritance...

This is so unexpected that God confirms Saul's call by giving him three signs as an encouragement...

- i) the sign of the two men by Rachel's tomb **V2**
- ii) the sing of the three men going up to God at Bethel carrying three goats, three loaves of breads and a skin of wine **V3**
- iii) a group of prophets coming down from a high place carrying musical instruments prophesying **V5**

The result was that he would do something that he had never done before and that would be to prophesy with them and be turned into another man **V6**.

Was this a change point in his life? It was. It began looking for donkeys, running into a prophet, being unexpectedly anointed as a ruler over the people of God then God

confirming the word of God to him, not once, but three times and the third being accompanied by an overflow of the prophetic anointing. But that day God gave him another heart!

1 Sam.10:9 So it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day.

God has promised in his word that out of the mouths of two or three witnesses every word will be established **2 Cor.13:1**. God established His word and secured Saul's future that day as a King to be over His people. It wasn't something that he was seeking but it came all the same and there was no doubt associated with it. He was just about his father's business.

You have to have another heart if you are to fully serve God. This was Saul's change point. We read of the Spirit of God coming upon him and of him prophesying (**1 Sam.10:10**); of his selection as King and then God adding to him valiant men who God had touched (**10:26**).

Given all of the above when it comes to Samuel going before the people to select a King he draws lots from the tribes and the choice is Saul! Where is Saul to be found but hiding among the equipment (**10:22**).

Despite all the troubles that Saul had later with obeying the Lord he was chosen as King. He was God's choice and God prepared him by giving him another heart then by confirming His word to him. This was a private matter long before it became public. God deals with his people both privately and publicly as he effects change in their lives. Don't ever run from or disdain the dealings of God!

2. Saul of the Pharisees:

In another time and in another era there was another Saul who was a persecutor of the newly formed infant church. He had been a member of the Sanhedrin and was on a mission to destroy the saints of God in Damascus. He had letters to the synagogues of Damascus so that he could arrest anyone that had become a follower of "the Way." He was about to enter a point of change in his life completely unplanned and enormously public.

Acts 9:3-5 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

He knew what he was about. He had direction in life and was a persecutor of the Way. He had been present at the stoning of Stephen the church's first martyr and was a man on a mission.

Note his reaction....*trembling and astonished!***V6**. Sometimes when we are under a dealing of God our world comes apart; it can become a very raw time for us. God puts us in a position where we can't escape! The Greek text suggests more than fear but a trembling from sheer terror rendering one immovable. [Gk tremor; trans' tremble but especially associated with fear.] [Gk thambeo; trans' "astonishment" rendered immovable through terror.]

What an encounter! Do you think Saul was changed at that moment? How would you react? What would you say? Would you start to argue with God and tell him what a good

person you were....paying your tithes...keeping the Sabbath...keeping the Law regarding cleanliness ...killing off this false Jesus sect...justifying your actions... think about it! In a situation like this there is only one response...

V6...*what do, you want me to do?"*

We all know the outcome but this was not the only change point in the life of Saul. There were many more to come where God had to deal with him, bringing a change point, sometimes privately sometimes publicly. The Damascus Road experience was very public- Saul's whole entourage heard the voice...they saw him struck blind and had to lead him to the house of Judas in the street called Straight **V.8,11**, where he was blind for a whole three days until God spoke to Ananias to go there and baptise him with the Holy Spirit and heal him. This was a public humiliation of the worst kind; the persecutor being prayed for by the persecuted for healing from blindness which had come upon him in a very public way. Better than with Miriam, I guess, who was struck with leprosy! (**Num.12:1-10**)

What do we learn?

Sometimes in God our weaknesses are on a very public display in our transitional and transformational moments of change. At other times they are private. It is just God and you! It is later that they become more evident in the public realm.

Whatever we go through we need to understand that God is in control of our lives ever trying to perfect His image and likeness in us. Thank God that life isn't one all consuming point of change, transition and transformation.

What amazes me is that Saul's associates on the Damascus Road didn't leave him there. Given the teachings of the day they would have seen his blindness as a judgement of God upon him and yet they continued to walk with him taking him to Judas's home. We need to position ourselves so that we walk with people as they transition through life especially the rough times of God's dealings, the change points which may be a dealing of God and not walk away!

Questions

1. What other change points on life can you identify?
2. What can we expect God do with us as we transition these points of change in our life?
3. What was the effect of Saul's encounter with the prophet Samuel? How did it change him?
4. Before God can give us public office He needs to deal with us privately- What went wrong with King Saul?
5. Saul was immoveable from terror on the Damascus Road. Why was his point of change so public? How did his entourage behave?
6. What was so humiliating about Saul's change point?
7. How should we respond to people at their points of change?