

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday May 26, 2019. "Transitions/Changes: How does change happen?"

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B. Recap.

There is SO much to recap. Let me just say we did review last Sunday's notes in this Sunday's message. But if you want to review those points, just go back and read last week's devotional. This week we jumped back into the conversation around handling transitions and changes, and we continued following the lives of Abram and Sarai.

We did start the message with these two questions, so give them some thought.

What do you use to measure whether you're on track or not?

How do you know where you're heading is where you need to go?

I know these are mostly philosophical questions, which means you probably really can't find specific metrics, things to mention, that can answer them. But if we want our life to have direction, some sort of purpose, there has to be some intentional self-awareness.

What are the things in your life, that are helping you know how you're handling transitions and change and you're going in the direction you need to go?

We reiterated the general truth that real, lasting change happens slowly and then suddenly. There are countless little, almost unseen, incremental moves, that almost go unnoticed. And then there are milestone, tipping point moments, where you finally experience or notice all of that cumulative change at once.

Have you experienced change or transitions this way. Slowly then all of a sudden?

What did you notice about this truth in your own life?

C. Sunday.

We hopped around in several chapters in Genesis, but most of the scripture used was found in **Genesis chapters 16, 17**. Go ahead and read these two chapters, it won't take long at all. Then we'll pull some of the truths out of them that can help us in our own transitions and change.

We see that even though God made these incredible promises to Abram and Sarai, they still didn't trust that those things would happen. They just got discouraged, lost hope in the minutia of the day to day, and couldn't see the promised future, the big change at the end. And this was because of all the little incremental changes that had to happen along the way first.

Abram and Sarai tried to rush things, get a child, an heir, thru their own methods, rather than trusting the word and work of God. The struggle with incremental, little changes, is that impatient people, (ALL of us if we are honest with ourselves), try to rush things, force God's hand, rather than let the work of God just play out in his own time. This isn't being lazy and doing nothing. It's simply not compromising what we know are the values of God.

We all know the jokes about praying for patience. That's just an unwise move. Because patience isn't downloaded like some program in The Matrix. Patience is grown and cultivated thru reflected upon experiences, and surviving our own struggles.

How does this happen? How do we lose sight, hope, in the bigger truths we know about God? What is it about the day to day little things that makes us lose hope?

D. Challenge.

Rather than just including the points for this week's message only, we'll include all the lessons we learned about handling transition and change well from the lives of Abraham and Sarah. So the first four points are from last week, and points 5-9 are from this Sunday.

What we learned from the lives of Abraham and Sarah. (From both Sundays).

1. Are you willing for movement, (literally or figuratively), ... without question?

Abram and Sarai were willing to be open to continual movement. There was no 'all done' or 'finished'. To handle transition and change well, there must be a willingness for that continual change.

2. Surface and acknowledge fears.

Being in a new place, facing change, can be disorienting and often scary. There's not much you can do to avoid that. But you can own, and admit, those fears, and then find strength, courage, and wisdom to understand and manage and be guided thru those fears.

3. Separate from people and things who will hold you back.

As with Abram and Lot, here are some people in your life who are not headed in the same direction as you are. They may not be bad people, even may be close friends, but just with different values and direction. Sometimes, for a season, you may have to create some space and boundaries from those people.

4. Commitment to 'end result' of changes.

The day to day grind of getting thru transitions and change can often be discouraging. Sometimes you have to have that 'out there' vision you focus on as you move thru the smaller changes. That thing you want to accomplish or the person you want to become. If you can keep that in front of you, you can better handle the little things.

5. Constantly get your bearings and adjusting your course.

We all have a tendency to drift. As with the first questions we asked, we have to have metrics in our life to let us know when we're not headed where we want to go. Again this requires the ability to be self-aware, and put things in place that can help us know when our lives begin to go in a different direction than we want.

6. Do self care.

A positive understanding and healthy lifestyle of time and energy management are a must to navigate change. We must build in moments of rest and recovery, not only as a measurement of the time given to change requires, but there must be activities that pour energy back into our minds, spirits, emotions, and souls. We have to be involved in, and incorporate things, that refuel us and restore our soul.

7. Practice balance.

We unfortunately define balance as an equal amount of time and energy given to everything we do. This is not true, practical, or doable. We all are living in seasons of life that require us to devote more time and energy to some things than to others. If we're raising young children, caring for aging parents, in school, or any other temporary responsibility, for a season we have to overly focus on those things. Balance means we realize, understand this, and build in the amount of energy those things require, and still make sure we give attention to those other less pressing or demanding but still important things in our life.

8. Find joy in the growth and journey.

Sometimes that 'out there' goal, or end, is waaaaaaay out there. We may not get to that place for awhile. And if we wait until we get there to celebrate or find joy, then we're going to grind ourselves down into a useless stump. We have to create milestones and markers along the way were we can celebrate even the minor victories.

"YAY!! I went two days without smoking". "I read scripture for one whole day in a row!"

9. This story is unfinished...aren't they all?

And finally, we have to constantly remind ourselves that there is no 'end' to our story, and all the changes and transitions we'll face. Or at least we hope that our life doesn't slide into some same 'ole boring existence before the end. So we have to acknowledge, accept AND embrace, that there is always more and new out there that God has for us. And we can with excitement and curiosity wonder what God has for us around the corner.

Just like Abraham and Sarah, once you understand and embrace these truths, you can begin to move from being a person who is at the whim of everything around you, and become a person who takes control of your own life. This isn't so you can run crazy, and unrestrained. But rather to understand this great life God wants for us, to know that life will hand us constant changes, and transitions, and God can equip us with all we need to navigate those changes like a champ.

Yes, change and transitions can be disorienting, even scary at times. But a life when you get to the end of it, will be one you can look back on, smile, and know that **you gave it everything you had.**