

He sat instinctively at the head of my table and said grace. I was expectant, as I usually am, for the precious pearls within the conversation that would follow. I wanted to know what one of the crucial lessons they have learned thus far as a newly married couple was. He responded first.

He pointed out that, in these short few months of marriage, he'd learned that *change is not optional*. His words hung like precious pearls around the rest of the afternoon, and I could not wait to unpack the weightiness and eternal significance of each one of them.

My unpacking circled around the fact that his learning aroused the instinctive conviction that change is not optional within the covenant of marriage. My second question charged the enquiry to my own heart and life: if this is the case, how does this truth help me understand my most important covenant relationship of all, namely my covenant relationship with Jesus? Do I carry the same instinctive conviction that, within my relationship with Jesus, *change is not optional*?

However, I'm aware that there lies a potential danger embedded within this conviction. The danger is this: if we are unable to clearly define what this change should look like, we are potentially open to be changed into something that is based on false and ungodly expectations. We may end up looking and acting like the latest "influencer" in our work life arena. They might have some godly characteristics to emulate, but no man can be the standard by which we live and change. I've learned that man makes a very poor and inconsistent mirror.

So, if this is true, is there a godly standard for our change? I've come to learn that there's a standard of change that's vital for our continuing covenant relationship with God. Hebrews 12:14 says, "Pursue peace with all, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

Knowing that holiness is our standard for change, it is imperative that we know what holiness looks like. I'm learning that true change is biblical. The word of God is the only word that's alive and active, able to transform one's soul, spirit, mind, heart and flesh, and therefore should be the only "influencer" in how we are changing, (Hebrews 4:12-13). It is his personal tutoring in righteousness that changes us to be holy, as he is holy, (Galatians 3:24). His tutoring and our changing is our destiny. Romans 8:29 puts it this way: "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son". Therefore, our covenant relationship carries the inherent markers of change.

If this is the verdict – that our lives are marked for change – then why do we seem to shrink away from the Potter's hands of change upon our lives, especially in our work life? Essentially, we are shrinking away from our ultimate destiny as followers of Christ, which is to be changed to look more like Him.

The intentions of Christ have been made known: He's coming back for a bride without blemish, spot and one who's holy (Ephesians 5:27). Without this understanding of change, we will not see, nor be embraced by our promised Bridegroom. My prayer is that we would increasingly come to a more biblically informed and settled place in our hearts and lives, where we are signing up again and again to be changed in order to see Him. I've signed up, have you?