

Laurie's Message for Friday May 29, 2020



Hello Apostles Family and Friends!

Woo-Hoo! Today is the day that Franklin County moves from Red to Yellow Status! Thank you, Lord, for seeing us safely through the Red Phase of the COVID 19 Pandemic. I pray that the number of COVID cases continues to decline so that we don't linger in the Yellow phase too long and we can move on to the Green Phase.

I don't know about you, but I am both thrilled and a little apprehensive at the same time about moving into the Yellow phase and beginning the reopening process of Franklin County. I am absolutely thrilled that many businesses are reopening their doors today and that we can begin on-site worship services by June 14th! With any luck, we will be able to visit with our children and friends in person, have dinner in a restaurant and visit a barber shop or hair salon by the end of June! FaceTime and Zoom are great alternatives, but there is nothing like seeing family and friends in person!

However, I feel a bit of apprehension mixed in with the joy of reopening our community (and world) as the reopening is laden with restrictions, limits, and vast changes to what we knew as "the norm". I liked "the norm." I found comfort in many of the procedures and traditions. The new normal of the foreseeable future will include wearing face masks in public establishments and maintaining a 6-foot distance from other individuals (even in the Green phase.) Occupancy or throughput in establishments, stores and restaurants is reduced, standards have been altered requiring a vast number of processes and procedures that we knew to either cease or to be changed. (Such as passing of the collection plate or communion sacraments.) And, if I am totally honest with myself, I have just adapted to some of the sacrifices and restrictions of the Red Phase and found a new normal staying close to home. And now I will have to adapt to another new normal at each location as it reopens. Adapting to so many changes at the same time can be overwhelming! I have decided to ask, "What are the rules here?" when I go out to a reopened establishment for the first time. I do not want to make a mistake!

I believe it was the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who said, "The only constant in life is change." How true! Change is inevitable in life and it is all around us. Since March, the sheer volume and speed of changes affecting our everyday life has been unprecedented! As you can probably tell from my opening paragraphs, I have a love/hate relationship with Change. Change is not

welcomed when it is thrust upon me or is seemingly made for no known reason. But change is very welcome when I find myself in an undesirable situation or bogged down with a tedious task.

I experienced many changes during my career as a senior manager in a few Department of Defense organizations. Looking back, it seems like something was always changing. Usually it was the policies and procedures that governed our work. Sometimes it was the computer systems that produced our work. The most drastic changes involved organizational restructuring that affected who did the work. People feared organizational changes the most because they could represent a loss of jobs. I have learned that no matter what change is presented, how an individual embraces the change will affect how quickly they are able to adapt to the change. And I have learned that all changes, positive or negative, were met with some level of resistance. It is just human nature.

The following are some of the highlights of information I relied on in the past and I offer the information to you on the off chance some nugget is helpful to you as you navigate through the changes that life brings your way.

All individuals must process change regardless of whether it is a small and insignificant, or it is an exceptionally large change and great dichotomy from the norm. And, everyone goes through the processes of change at their own pace. Change can be emotionally challenging and facing an unknown when you liked the current state is particularly daunting. Things are out of your control, and people like to have control. The important aspect here is that change is a process and must be processed at an individual level.

Generally, there are four (4) stages of change.

- 1) The first stage is Denial. You deny the change has arrived – even if you see it unfold before you. Denial is often unconscious and could even put you at risk without you realizing it. How many of us had a sense of denial that COVID 19 would be seen in Franklin County? Or denial about the need to wear a facemask in public or during worship service since it is assumed that if someone were ill, they wouldn't be attending worship? Denial can express itself through your lack of participation in discussions on the topic (avoidance) or undertaking activities and decisions that will undermine the change.
- 2) Second is the Resistance Stage. The resistance stage is where you have accepted the change is happening, but you are rejecting it. Denial is subconscious, but in the resistance stage you actively know you do not want the change to happen and will try to switch back to the old way of doing things. You are comfortable doing things that way and it worked perfectly fine for years. "Church is my haven, a house of worship. I am not wearing a facemask. God will protect me. I am among friends and family, the risk of me getting sick is minimal."
- 3) Next comes the Exploration Stage. After unsuccessfully stopping the change through resistance, you start exploring alternatives. Resistance you see makes you

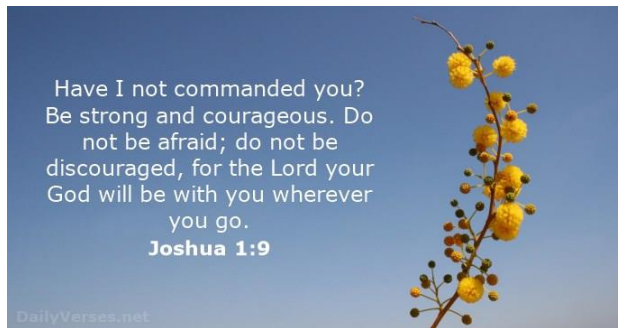
- retain some skepticism that this change is going to work. You may even teeter back and forth between resistance and exploration. “This is nuts. It is not worth wearing a hot and uncomfortable mask for an hour to attend church. I won’t be able to sing or talk to people.” Or, “Well, I don’t have to put a mask on until I reach the door to the church, and I can take it off the second I leave the building. Everyone else there will have one on. It won’t be that bad, and I do want to be respectful of others. Maybe I can find a lighter weight mask that won’t be so hot and fog up my glasses when I exhale. I will give on-site church a try.”
- 4) The final stage is the Acceptance/Commitment Stage. Although acceptance may be the final stage, you don’t always get there willingly. Commitment is brought about by accepting the change instead of fighting it. Through acceptance and commitment, your self-esteem returns and overall morale increases. This results in relationships and teams getting stronger, and you feel free to offer constructive input for further changes! “I so enjoy seeing everyone back at church. I’ve gotten used to wearing the mask inside establishments and hardly think twice about it anymore. We are lucky to have the space in the sanctuary to spread out so that we don’t have to restrict attendance or be required to hold two services to accommodate the entire congregation like some churches to stay within the guidelines.”

So, what can we do to help ourselves go through the stages of change more rapidly and adapt to the new situations and circumstances? Here are some tips from Bob Miglani, author of *Embrace the Chaos*.

- 1) Try not to dwell on the past (how things used to be). We tend to hang on to what our brain or subconscious remembers and how “good” it was. By doing so, it can hold us back from learning to adapt to the new. It can harbor grief, ill feelings, and frustration – even if unwarranted. Let it go and see what opportunities unfold with change and new processes!
- 2) Change happens all the time. It is constant. Accept this fact – that we are never in a static mode. By learning to accept that change is natural law of life, we can begin to adapt more quickly as it creeps around us. Acceptance can give our minds certainty that we often crave during times of turbulence.
- 3) Think in Yes’s instead of No’s. People want to grow, improve, and move forward. By saying yes, we are helping everyone involved to move forward with change. No matter what the outcome, it is the feeling of moving forward that gives us great hope for the future.
- 4) Focus on controlling your own actions. Stress and anxiety often arise from uncertain situations (change) because we feel as though we have no control. Pick just one aspect or impact of the change that you can control and do so. Our actions create our new future!
- 5) Communicate! When trying to navigate changing waters, you can feel isolated. One powerful way to avoid this is to discuss the change that is occurring and why it is necessary. Or talk to a friend about the change you are experiencing, and you might

be surprised to learn that they have encountered the same change and are happier with the new process! Speaking with others allows us to break negative patterns in our heads.

In closing, I want to state the obvious. We are all in this together, and I know we will work through the changes necessary to reopen our church together. Although we may need to sit a little farther apart, wear masks, and cease actions like passing offering or communion plates, our purpose for gathering for worship has not changed. God has not changed, the scriptures and lessons haven't changed, our beautiful church and the calming presence of the sanctuary hasn't changed, and if anything, our faith has increased through this time of turmoil.



Dear Lord. Thank you for being with us during this time of fast paced and continual change. You are our rock, our constant in this time of turmoil. Please be with us and encourage us to be able to take in a broad range of information from many perspectives, to be open to alternatives not previously considered and to adapt to the aspects of reopening our community and church that are outside of our

comfort zone. Please remind us that we are never truly alone and together we can work through the challenges and hurdles presented. Amen.

I wish you all a wonderful weekend. I look forward to seeing you very soon! Stay tuned to your email for further information concerning on-site worship! Weather permitting, we can have an outside service without wearing masks!

Blessings,
Laurie

P.S. We had a new visitor on our deck yesterday. I was quite surprised when he waddled up and peeked in the window of the sliding glass door! I am not sure if this is a good sign or a bad sign...

