South Africa – March 2015

**How People Change**

Duane K. Kelderman

Over the years I’ve been interested in this subject of change,

and particularly in the question,

When people change, what happened?

I’m interested in a *descriptive* picture of

what happens to explain why people finally changed.

(For this presentation, I’m assuming we’re talking about positive change,

desirable change.)

OVERVIEW

To give you an overview of my presentation this morning, I will argue that there are five factors that usually accompany significant change; put another way, if a person or institution actually experiences deep change, these five things usually will have been true in their situation:

1. The status quo isn’t working anymore.

2. I get a vision of a better future.

3. An emotional relationship is formed. (social)

4. The first steps of change are clear. (behavioral)

5. I reframe my situation. (cognitive)

And then I will offer some theological considerations to how this descriptive analysis of change relates to the Spirit’s work in change, change and prayer, etc.

A cross section of literature on the subject of change indicates

five factors that are usually present in deep change

**1. The status quo isn’t working any more.**

Change is difficult for all of us. We all want equilibrium.

Even if the equilibrium we have is

dysfunctional, counterproductive, and

making everyone unhappy including us,

it’s equilibrium.

At some level, it’s working for us.

If nothing else, it’s all we know.

We don’t just give up this equilibrium voluntarily.

In fact, usually we don’t give up this equilibrium even

by persuasion.

We usually give it up because we have to.

There’s no choice.

* Our church is sliding toward death.

We’ve done 2 baptisms and 12 funerals a year for 4 years.

We’re starting to combine grades in our SS program

because there aren’t enough students or teachers

to have separate classes for each grade.

* Our spouse has announced that she or he is leaving. “I’ve had it.” She’s threatened it hundreds of times,

but now you know she’s means it.

It’s time to call AA.

* Our seminary prided itself in requiring

not just Greek and Hebrew but Latin and German or French.

But students are

voting with their feet and

going to other seminaries.

We know that if we’re going to survive as a school,

we’re going to have to lighten up on those prerequisites.

But we only do it when we have to.

The present simply isn’t working any more.

Change threatens equilibrium and causes at least two emotional responses: fear and loss.

* We fear the unknown.

The way we know is the *only* way we know.

It’s scary to think about giving that up.

* And then, there’s loss involved in change.

Ronald Heifetz says that

leaders often confuse people resisting change with resisting loss.

Our world is getting changed. It makes us sad, nostalgic.

This insight into change as loss

changes how we see people who resist change.

(And by the way, all of us as leaders also resist change for these

reasons.)

Perhaps people are not first of all

lazy, selfish, and stubborn.

What if we chose

a more sympathetic and generous interpretation:

These are people who are afraid, or sad.

Pushing for change without taking into account people’s fears and loss

usually will be counter-productive.

(“Taking into account” is different than

explicitly addressing them, though that may be appropriate.)

In any case, the leader must at least be cognizant of people’s fears and loss

as they develop strategies for change.)

Now, I can hear a couple of responses at this point.

First, “Duane, it’s nice of you to

be generous and

attribute a resistance to change to fear and loss,

but isn’t it true that sometimes

the best category for understanding resistance to change is SIN—

whether it’s power or pride or

some people just not being happy unless they not happy.”

My answer to that is Yes, very much so.

Once we’ve named that though, the question still remains,

Why are people

so power hungry, and prideful and stuck in their own unhappiness?

And I would maintain that

one of the most helpful ways to get ahold of that is to get ahold of our fears.

What are people afraid of?

So I think we cover sin when we talk about fear.

My other hesitation

in too quickly calling resistance to change a matter of sin

is that this has a way of then setting things up

so that it’s me and God against you.

If God is on the side of change

and anyone who opposed this change is sinning and opposing God,

it really shuts down dialogue.

What else is there to say?

I don’t want to oppose God.

Now, a question always comes up at this point:

So do we as leaders just have to wait

for things to get worse and worse

until people finally change?

Well, on a bad day,

a leader might very well say Yes.

But this is where we talk about leaders

creating a sense of urgency.

We don’t have to wait for the school to go bankrupt

before we make some painful, culture altering, identity shaking changes.

Creating a sense of urgency

is both necessary and very tricky.

It’s very easy for leaders

“creating a sense of urgency”

to devolve into sheer manipulation

which people will immediately feel.

If you say to your congregation

“If we don’t make these changes in our worship,

people under 25 will never come to this church”

some will believe you,

others will interpret your prediction

as an overstatement,

as a scare tactic, even a threat,

as manipulation,

and they will react against it.

Having said all of that, leaders do need to create a sense of urgency in as authentically and honestly as possible.

**2. I get a vision of a better future.**

I see new possibilities, a better way. I gain hope! I believe or we believe life can be better.

My brother was addicted

to prescription pain medication for 30 years.

On April 1, 2009, six years ago,

he took his last narcotic for pain.

He has a very particular disease process,

and he got hooked up with an online support group for Aracnoiditis.

He called me on a Sunday morning and

told me about a post he got from the leader of the support group. He said,

“Finally someone understands my pain, and she believes I can have a better life. And for the first time, I believe I can have a better life too.”

He had gained hope.

My daughter, Lynn, entered college

with absolutely no confidence that she could succeed academically.

She had ADD

which was not diagnosed until she was into college.

At about that same time,

she really felt a call to go into nursing,

but the prospect of taking all those science courses

was overwhelming to her.

We said, why don’t you try just one course.

The chemistry course taught by Larry Louters.

Larry has been awarded teacher of the year honors at Calvin College

by the Faculty Senate *and* by students.

What makes Larry and anyone a great teacher is

competence and care—

they’re competent as a teacher—

they know their subject matter and

they know how to teach, and

they care about their students.

Larry Louters changed Lynn’s life.

He gave her the confidence that she could do chemistry.

And she did it.

The first half of the course she said,

“Oh, Professor Louters is just giving me high grades

because he and Mary Jo are friends of my parents.”

It took her a long time to actually believe

that she was mastering chemistry.

Once she believed it,

her nursing education took off.

She’s a nurse in Chicago today and

has certification in two demanding subspecialties.

All because she gained hope.

She believed she could change from being

a mediocre student to a very good one.

That leads to the third factor present in significant change.

**3. An emotional relationship is formed**

—the social relational dimension of change

Alan Deutschman argues that in significant change,

*a new emotional relationship is formed.*

Another *person* inspires us to change, believes in us.

(Both my brother Leon and my daughter Lynn

are examples of this third point too.)

Here’s a fascinating quote from Deutschman:

“Change is inspired by personal relationships,

not created automatically by processes,

even processes that have been tested and refined

over decades of experience.” (p. 209)

Some examples:

1. A police officer has a close friend

who was abused by her father in her childhood, and

the father killed her mother at work in a classic case of domestic abuse.

This friend is now 45 years old,

and 30 years later, she still sleeps with her lights on all night.

The police officer’s relationship with this person,

not a training video,

fundamentally changes the police officer’s attitudes

on domestic abuse calls.

2. In another part of my life,

I work a lot with Latinos.

I challenge anyone

who has a very hard line perspective on immigration

to get to know and love five Latino families,

to hear their story, and then,

to see whether the way they see the immigration problem

undergoes a fundamental change.

3. An example of this emotional relationship from business:

Years ago Microsoft was trying to get their programmers

to be more sensitive to the end user.

They actually made programmers

watch videos of people working with their software.

Many programmers felt bad;

they felt sorry for these people

when they saw how frustrated and angry they became

using their bad software products.

There is virtually always some relational, social dimension to change.

It’s true of my brother and my daughter.

It may be Bishop Tutu who inspires you.

At a personal level, a dynamic theory of change says that

*I am much more likely to change*

*if I feel unconditionally accepted and understood and safe*

*in a relationship or nest of relationships*

This is the key dynamic, of course, in all support groups.

In a support group, I feel understood

because someone else has been where I am.

I feel unconditionally accepted,

not judged or condemned.

And I feel safe.

I trust the group to be for me, not against me.

I repeat:

A dynamic theory of change says that

*I am much more likely to change*

*if I feel unconditionally accepted and understood and safe*

*in a relationship or nest of relationships*

At this point it’s important to observe

that we all operate with some theory of change.

Every preacher has a theory of change

(whether it’s stated or unstated, assumed or explicit).

If you are a preacher,

what is your theory of change?

If you’re not a preacher,

think about your preacher’s sermons and

reflect on his or her theory of change.

What does your preacher believe

causes people to change?

* The screaming preacher believes that

fear is what causes people to change.

* The guilt-inducing preacher believes that

if you make people feel guilty enough, they’ll change.

* The moralistic preacher believes that

people just need to be told what to do and they they’ll do it.

I would suggest those are all defective theories of change,

And I would suggest

that preachers need to reflect upon this dynamic theory of change

as that applies to their sermons.

This dynamic theory of change,

the belief that change is deeply bound up

with our emotions and relationships and

with addressing people’s fears

is critical in shaping how we lead.

Finally, on this third factor, consider

these three people and

how their words reflect

their deep understanding of a dynamic theory of change:

1. The apostle John says, “Perfect love casts out fear.”

This has huge implications for how leaders lead and how preachers preach.

2. One of Martin Luther King’s famous lines was,

“Those whom you would change, you must first love.”

People are not

bludgeoned or guilted or manipulated into deep change.

They are loved into it.

3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Life Together says,

One of the biggest destroyers of the community of the church is

leaders

who love their own wish dream for the church

more than

they love the church.

I find this last one to be

very convicting.

When I went to the seminary

I went there because I had

a vision for what I thought the seminary should be,

what Boenhoeffer calls a “wish dream.”

And that vision involved

nothing less than a transformation of faculty culture.

And there were many times

I loved my wish dream for the faculty

more than I loved the faculty.

And they knew it.

And they resisted.

I was

ignoring Boenhoffer’s words and

operating with a defective theory of change.

The emotional, relational, social component to change.

“Those whom we would change, we must first love.”

**4. The first steps of change are clear.**

This is the behavioral component to change.

We actually start doing something differently.

There is more and more consensus that

we practice our way into change more than

we think our way into change.

We often think of change as

starting in our head and then

manifesting itself in our behavior.

A cognitive theory of change.

And the cognitive theory of change has a lot going for it.

But sometimes we behave our way into change.

And the point here is the importance of

kick-starting actual changes in behavior, even very small ones.

In turn, new practices (new behaviors)

result in new ways of thinking and seeing and imagining.

Once again, it’s not either/or.

There’s a reciprocal relationship between new thinking and new behaving.

I broke my ankle a couple of years ago.

As part of my rehabilitation,

I was subjected to a nutrition Nazi

who tried her best to create a sense of urgency in me.

She would have had me believe that

if I don’t eat more fruit and vegetables,

in 20 years, I will be 3 inches tall, a mere pile of bone dust . . . or worse.

Her attempts to create a sense of urgency failed.

My wife had a better approach.

Duane, you never drink anything but coffee.

You like water.

Why don’t you just start by drinking three big glasses of water a day, then six? Then add something into your diet

that you like and that’s good for you.

I think that can work.

It actually did.

We usually behave our way into change

more than we think our way into change.

In worship most people

don’t like new songs, new worship practices right away.

They practice new ways,

and in time something changes inside.

This is the behavioral component to change.

We identify the change we want

and get a clear grasp of what we must do first.

We *actually do something differently.*

And out of that we gradually develop

new skills, new practices.

**Resistance or Lack of Clarity?**

Many theorists make a very important point on this matter of

new behaviors,

new first steps in change,

a point that is very important for us as leaders.

Namely, that

**what often looks like resistance**

**is simply confusion and lack of clarity**.

A lot of times leaders call for change,

but it’s not at all clear what the change is,

and what the first steps in that change are.

Heath says, **“Clarity dissolves resistance.”**

**Some examples:**

1. Your church knows it’s in trouble.

The present isn’t working anymore.

Your church believes there is a better way.

And it involves a journey into, we’ll say, cross-cultural ministry.

Now, you can preach from Rev. 5 and tell your church

that the church is from every tongue and tribe and people and nation.

That’s fine.

But people need help is figuring out,

What does that actually mean for *my behavior*, our behavior,

after church this Sunday morning.

There are all kinds of

cross cultural **competencies, behaviors**, that we can teach people.

2. Any addiction program includes some

very specific, practical behavioral changes.

Start doing this and this.

New friends, new places, new routines.

Don’t do that or that.

3. I do some consulting and

one of my biggest clients a couple of years ago was a hospital

that is going through the massive change to Electronic Medical Records.

Doctors can no longer just tell some floor clerk

to enter orders and prescriptions into the computer

Doctors have to do it.

Well, this hospital did a terrible job of getting ready for the change.

The technology didn’t work right.

Doctors would figure out a work-around to avoid the snags in the system.

And then IT would fix the snags during the night,

so the next day, the work-around didn’t work for the doctors.

It’s hard enough for doctors to change behaviors,

especially when the change means

they have to spend 15 minutes doing what used to take them 2 minutes.

It’s absolutely essential to be as clear as a cloudless moon about

what the changes are.

The administration said,

these doctors are egocentric and arrogant and stubborn.

For some of them that was true,

but for most of them, they were simply confused.

Nothing worked.

They had a system that had worked for them for years.

They’re incredibly busy.

“If they don’t respect us enough to give us a system that works,

I’m not going to change.”

The administration confused resistance to change

with confusion about what the exact change was and how to do it.

Clarity dissolves resistance.

A huge implication of this fourth factor (The first steps of change are clear) is that when you introduce changes in the church, *you must do it well*. I think this is the biggest take away from today’s webinar.

Recently I worked with a church

that is going through some big challenges in worship.

The church had two services –

a traditional service and a contemporary service

Church membership and worship attendance have been declining,

so they decide to combine the services into one blended service

I attended some of the first of these new blended services.

They were awful in terms of execution.

They were poorly planned and poorly executed.

It’s hard enough to expect people to accept changes in worship.

It’s imperative that the new worship you want people to embrace

is well planned, well executed,

moves the heart, is compelling!

People there were rejecting blended worship

not because they were against blended worship,

they were against shoddy, sloppy, lazy worship.

To reiterate this sub-point here,

Don’t confuse resistance to change

with confusion and lack of clarity about exactly

what the change is and

what the next steps are

and with lack of excellence in implementing the change.

By the way, this is why it’s also so important

to have everyone at the table when you’re planning change.

If you’re going to go

from a single morning worship service

followed by a single morning Church Education hour,

to two morning services with an education hour in between,

you’d better have everyone at the table—

from musicians to education people, to parking lot people,

to building people, to people who run the IT and sound during worship.

Change is hard.

But it can be helped, immensely, by

clear preparation, clear direction,

clear expectations and outcomes, clear communication, etc.

That leads to the last factor present in significant change**—**

**5. I reframe my situation.** This is the cognitive dimension to change.

Something changes in the way we frame our situation.

This is usually the last factor present in significant change.

Most of us don’t

wake up in the morning and

start reframing how we think about

a Protestant marrying a Catholic

a situation where there are obviously some conflicting beliefs.

Rather, what happens is,

our daughter starts dating a Roman Catholic,

and we like this guy.

And he’s not just a great guy,

and great for your daughter,

he’s a great Christian.

In fact, you realize

he values his relationship with God and to the church

more than you do.

He’s deeply spiritual.

Well, you find yourself

accepting him, including him, looking forward to being with him,

clear behaviors of acceptance.

And something deep inside of us

tells us that this man is meant for our daughter.

We love him.

Long after these emotional change and the behavioral change,

we start thinking cognitively about this Roman Catholic thing.

Where exactly are the points of conflict?

Are there ways to

maintain one’s own theological integrity and

embrace someone’s

who’s theology is clearly different, even dissonant, at certain points?

Can a marriage be theologically pluralistic?

Again, none of us wake up in the morning asking those questions.

They are questions that come

after some other deep emotional/relational and behavioral changes.

Cognitive reframing of our situation

is usually the last thing that happens in deep change.

Duetschman tells the dramatic story of

the Delancy Street program,

a program that

takes hardened criminals into a 24-7 community

that gives them an entirely new community and new culture.

The goal of the program is to help these hardened criminals

quit thinking, feeling and acting

like criminals and

start thinking feeling and acting

like law-abiding, hard working, responsible citizens.

It involves changing

how people dress, talk, communicate (behavioral).

It involves “acting as if”

they care about someone else (behavioral)

before they actually begin caring (emotional).

They put these things into action before they feel it,

much less before they begin *thinking of themselves* (reframing)

in a new way.

Eventually, after a long time, years sometimes,

they reframe their life.

They replace a frame work of determinism

with a framework of choice

(I can make better decisions that determine my destiny),

They replace a frame work of self destruction

with a framework of self-respect, and self-control.

After a long time,

they actually begin to understand

concepts like family, work, being part of a capitalist society.

But the reframing, the cognitive,

is usually the last thing to change.

Another example:

In leadership theory we talk about

the difference between a theory X or theory Y belief system

regarding work.

Theory X says employees

are naturally lazy and dishonest, hate work, and

cannot be trusted and must be punished or bribed into work.

Theory Y says

that, if properly motivated, people like work,

that work can be as natural as play,

that workers can be trusted if they are first

treated with respect,

encouraged to think independently,

allowed to make decisions and

made to feel like an important part of the effort.

That is a different way of seeing the world—a dramatic case of cognitive reframing.

But someone doesn’t just change overnight from being a theory X leader to being a theory Y leader.

(Status Quo) 1. Maybe after getting fired three times,

(Hope) 2. and after actually seeing theory Y work

and believing maybe there is another way

(gaining hope a new way is possible), and

(Emotional) 3. having a coach who walks with him,

and creates the safe space for him to take a

risk, (the emotional relational)

(Behavioral) 4. trying some new practices to test Theory Y

and experiencing some wins, (the behavioral)

(Cognitive ) 5**. . . . .** maybe over the course of five years,

someone actually changes

what she fundamentally believes about

people and work (the cognitive).

That reframing is usually the end of a huge process of change.

**Christ and the Spirit in Change**

Finally, I know many of you by now are thinking to yourself,

He hasn’t talked at all about the role of God and the Holy Spirit in change.

To be sure, God is sovereign.

God can do and does do what God pleases.

The wind blows where it will.

And God doesn’t need our five steps to change someone.

But fortunately we don’t have to choose between

an exclusively spiritual explanation of change and

the more descriptive view of change I’ve been offering today.

My brother’s transformation 4 years ago was totally, I believe, a

gift of God’s grace, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

*And* these five factors were all present in his change.

As with most things, it’s not either-or. It’s both-and.

One other thing to mention here

on this matter of the role of the Spirit in change,

I think we have to acknowledge deep mystery in change.

Mystery in

the timing of change,

the nature of the change,

the path of the change.

“The wind blows where it will.”

We don’t control the Spirit.

In this sense I think it’s very important for us to see deep change as

not only achievement but also gift.

In fact, usually, it’s more gift than achievement.

Every person I’ve every known

who went into alcohol recovery

would say that their sobriety is more gift than achievement.

There is a confluence,

a coming together of things,

that only the Spirit controls.

That doesn’t make us passive.

We are always asking,

“What attitudes and actions and ways of doing things

are most hospitable to the work of the Holy Spirit?”

But we don’t control the Spirit.

I end with a quote from John Maxwell

that doesn’t exactly line up with these five elements,

but it’s close, and it’s pithy.

And I think it’s particular apt for Christians

who understand the Spirit’s work in change:

"People change when they

hurt enough that they have to change;

learn enough that they want to change;

receive enough that they are able to change."

When Do People Change?

Duane Kelderman

The literature on leadership would argue that there are five factors that usually accompany significant change; put another way, if a person or institution actually experiences deep change, these five things usually will have been true:

1. The status quo isn’t working anymore.

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3. An emotional relationship is formed. (social)

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5. I reframe my situation. (cognitive)

Some theological considerations to how this descriptive analysis of change relates to the Spirit’s work in change, change and prayer, the mystery of change.

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| Key resources that lie behind this presentation:   * Alan Deutschman, *Change or Die: The Three Keys to Change at Work and in Life* (Harper Collins, 2007) * Gail T. Fairhurst and Robert A. Sarr, *The Art of Framing: Managing the Language of Leadership* (Jossey-Bass1996) * Tim Hartford, *Adapt: Why Success Always Starts with Failure* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011) * Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* (Broadway Books, 2010   This presentation in very abbreviated form:   * Duane Kelderman, *When People Change,* Advocate: The Association of Presbyterian Church Educators Journal, Spring 2014 [http://advocate.apcenet.org/article/when-people-change](http://advocate.apcenet.org/article/when-people-change" \t "_blank) |