

INTRODUCTION

Do you need a change of YOU? If you thought I said, “change of VIEW” you misunderstood me. Most people are looking for a change of scenery in 2008, but what they really need is a change of self. This series is all about embracing change. Today we’re going to talk about “Ride the Change Wave.”

On my first visit to Hawaii many years ago, we visited the north side of Oahu during January, and I was amazed at size of the waves rolling in at Turtle Bay—they had to be 20 or 30 feet high. But what amazed me more was the guys surfing those giant waves. While just the sight of the waves made me tremble, there were others out there having fun on them! This morning I want you to think of change as a giant wave—the waves of change are getting larger than ever before in history, and the interlude between each major change wave is getting shorter. As Christians in a changing world we can either run from the wave—fear change; or we can fight the wave—resist change; or we can ride the wave and let it propel us to fulfill the Great Commission.

Many people resist change and refer to the popular proverb: “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” Well, we’re not dogs and we aren’t talking about tricks! Speaking of popular proverbs, someone sent me an email that contained some popular proverbs that were completed by first grade students. The students were given the first half of a popular proverb and asked to complete it. The results were pretty funny:

- (1) Don’t change horses ... until they stop running.
- (2) Strike while the ... bug is close.
- (3) A bird in the hand ... is going to poop on you.
- (4) Don’t bite the hand that ... looks dirty.
- (5) A miss is as good as a ... mister.
- (6) A penny saved is ... not much.
- (7) If at first you don’t succeed ... try new batteries. And finally,
- (8) Laugh and the world laughs with you, cry and ... you have to blow your nose.

The thesis of this series is to help you better understand change that you won’t fear it, and instead, you will come to a point where you can embrace positive changes in your life and in your world. As we think about riding the change wave there are three main points I want to share with you:

1. PREPARE YOURSELF FOR FUTURE CHANGES!

2008 is going to be a year of more changes than 2007 simply because the rate of change is accelerating in our world. What is our world going to look like in three years? Five years? Ten years?

In the past, a lot of predictions about the future never happened. For instance, in 1968 Stanley Kubrick directed the movie “2001: A Space Odyssey” about space travel and a dangerous computer named HAL 9000 (Heuristically programmed ALgorithmic computer). Remember, during the decade of the 1960s the frantic space race took our nation from putting a man in space

to putting men on the moon. The writers projected the same rate of development over the next thirty years and expected we would be sending humans deep into space by 2001. We know differently, today. But probably the biggest bust that was predicted were all the doom and gloom forecasts about Y2K. For all you kids, Y2K was the prediction that as computers rolled over from 1999 to the year 2000 that there would be a massive computer crash that would wreck most of our national infrastructure, but of course it never happened.

It's hard to be specific about future changes, but we know that technology will continue to change our lives. This past week Bill Gates addressed the opening address at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. He said that in the next decade, access to the internet and computing will be much more pervasive. Before long you can toss your old mouse and keyboard because all the screens will be touch screens like the iPhone. Computers will be on tabletops in restaurants and you will input your meal choice and browse the internet as you're waiting for your food. Internet access will go far beyond Wifi and you'll be able to access the internet in your car, or on your phone where ever you are—at speeds that will make today's connection speeds seem like the old dial-up.

Instead of having one computer terminal in your home, there will be several. For instance, there's already a high-tech refrigerator with a computer screen built into the door. You can use it to order food from the local grocery, store recipes (if you cook), or even program it, so when you open the freezer door it says, "You really shouldn't eat another bowl of Blue Bell. Each bite has 80 calories and 15 fat grams."

Do you have any drawers full of old tapes from your VCR? Do you have a lot of DVDs? Well, DVDs are going the way of VCR tapes. DVD sales and rentals are already starting to decline. In the next few years when you want to see a movie, you'll just download it to your computer and watch it on your iPod or your big screen (the quality and sound will be better than DVD) it won't stick or skip!

In terms of cars, we will have more alternative fuel vehicles, and the technology is in place for cars to be controlled by GPS—in other words you may be able to not just put your car on cruise control, but on auto-driver. GM Chairman Rick Wagoner told the audience at the Consumer Electric Show in Las Vegas this week, "Autonomous driving means that, someday, you could do your e-mail, eat breakfast, apply your makeup, read the newspaper, watch a video...all while commuting to work. In other words, you could do all the things you do right now while commuting to work, except you could do it safely." Wow, talk about cruise control!

But does all this technological change have a downside? Some say yes. The rate of change is accelerating exponentially. We live our lives following a linear time scale, meaning tomorrow I'll be one day older than today, and in one year, I'll be one year older. Technology is expanding by doubling at an accelerating rate. If we aged the way technology is growing, it would be like me being two days older tomorrow, and four days older the next day, and eight days older the next day. Many scientists and futurists predict the time will come when the rate of change will explode beyond our human ability to manage it. This time has been given a name by Raymond Kurzweil—the Singularity. "The Singularity" (also known as "the Technorapture") "is a future time when exponential societal, scientific and economic change is so fast humans can't manage

it, so artificial intelligence will be given that task.” There’s already a company called Cyberdyne Systems working on it—it’s in California—the president of the company is currently out of the country, but he issued a statement saying, “I’ll be back.”

Of course, I’m kidding about Cyberdyne, that’s from the Terminator movies. But scientists are serious about the time when technology grows beyond our ability to manage it. At the current rate of change, they predict the singularity will occur as early as 2021 or as late as 2030. If you want to waste a couple of hours just Google “the singularity” to learn more!

So be ready for lots and lots of changes and new things in the future. But if you’re okay with change, you aren’t going to be upset. In fact, it will help you deal with change if you:

2. REMEMBER THAT GOD ENJOYS DOING NEW THINGS!

We may not like new things, but according to the Bible, God enjoys new things. When my girls were little they loved the Christian group DC Talk, so we’d listen to it together. DC Talk’s second album was named “Nu Thang” and the title cut was based upon our focus verse in Isaiah. It was called “God is Doin’ a Nu Thang.” One verse said: Christ is the reason for DC Talk; He’s the focus of our daily walk, ya’ll; Without Him we ain’t nothin’ but names, but through God, we’re doing brand nu thangs; God is doin’ a nu thang; He’s doin’ a new thang.” They got that idea right out of the Bible.

The Bible says in Isaiah 43:16-19, “This is what the Lord says—he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: ‘Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.’” There is a tremendous spiritual application here. Simply put, God is saying, “Stop living in the past and start looking for and anticipating the new things I’m doing in the world and in your life.” One of the greatest events in Jewish history was when Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt. God made a pathway through the Red Sea for His people. And when Pharaoh and his army chased Moses into the Sea, the waves crashed down on them and destroyed the greatest army of the ancient world—talk about a change wave! But God was saying, “Sure I did that in the past, but forget the former things, don’t dwell on it. I’m doing a new thing, can’t you see it?”

Sometimes people say, “Oh, I wish we’d sing the old songs more in church!” Well, what old songs are you talking about? “A mighty fortress is our God?” (1527-29); or “Abide with Me” (1861); or old songs like “Shout to the Lord” (1993) or even the old song “How Great is Our God? (2005)? While we talk about our love for the “old songs” the Bible says, “Sing to the Lord a new song!”

Some people think Christianity is the “old time religion” but it’s really the new time faith! At the last supper Jesus announced a *new* covenant through His blood. We read about it in a *New* Testament, we enter it through a *new* birth, we become a *new* creation in Christ, and when we’re baptized, we’re raised to walk in *newness* of life. The Bible says one day there will be a *new*

heaven and a *new* earth. And on the last page of your Bible in Revelation 21:5 Jesus proclaims, "Behold, I make all things new!" God enjoys doing new things, so we shouldn't be afraid of change!

3. LET'S USE CHANGE TO SHARE GOD'S MESSAGE!

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ must change the way we share God's message. Notice, I didn't say we need to change the message; I said we need to change the *way* we share God's message. There's a saying: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Well, the way we're sharing the gospel must be broke, because it's not working as well as it once did. We need to wake up to the sobering fact that we aren't doing a very good job of reaching people in our own nation.

An article in the January 9, 2008 issue of "USA Today" reports the percentage of Americans who *don't* attend church is growing. The interesting thing is these people often believe in God and want to know more about the Bible, they just don't like the church. The article reports, "A new survey of U.S. adults who don't go to church, even on holidays, finds 72% say "God, a higher or supreme being actually exists." But just as many (72%) also say the church is "full of hypocrites." (My response to that is: Actually, we're not full, we have room for a few more hypocrites.) Indeed, 44% agree with the statement "Christians get on my nerves." The article reported, "More than one in five (22%) of Americans say they never go to church, the highest ever recorded by the General Social Survey, conducted every two years by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. In 2004, the percentage was 17%." But this study also found "78% of the unchurched said they would be willing to listen to someone tell what he or she believes about Christianity. These people already know Christians, because 89% of the unchurched reported they have at least one close friend who is a Christian, and 71% of them agreed that believing in Jesus makes a positive difference in a person's life." ("USA Today", 1/9/08, p. 4D). If we're going to do a better job of sharing the good news we would be wise to learn new ways to do church.

In 1970, a prophetic book entitled "*Future Shock*" was written by Alvin Toffler. In it he predicted: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." The church must *unlearn* how we used to do church, and *learn* new ways to share the good news. There is an online magazine called *Futurecast*, and what they predict about business also applies to the church: "The world will be dominated by the flexible, the opportunistic, the entrepreneurial. Accelerating rates of change means a rising flood of new opportunities. It doesn't matter if opportunities are missed—ten more just as good are already rolling in with the tide." (*Futurecast Magazine* online) Opportunities are rolling in on the waves of change, we just simply need to do a better job of riding the change wave! Let me give you four ways the church can ride the change wave to do a better job of sharing the good news:

(1) Use technology to share the gospel in new ways

Technology doesn't have to be our enemy, it can be our friend. Green Acres has broadcast a weekly service in the East Texas region for several decades. A few years ago, we launched Discover Life and started providing a national broadcast on Daystar Network and now on Family

Net. Last year we started broadcasting on Sirius satellite radio all across America on Sunday mornings.

Green Acres is ahead of most churches in terms of using technology, but we're only scratching the surface. We need some of you who think outside the box and possess an entrepreneurial mindset to let us know how we can do *more* to use technological advances to share the good news of Jesus Christ. I want to hear how you think we can ride this wave for God's glory!

(2) Offer stability amid the stress that comes with change

We live in the most stressful time in history. We have more time-saving devices than ever before, but it seems we still have less and less time to enjoy life. Computers were designed to save time, but they end up demanding more and more of it! Just last week, my computer decided to totally crash, and I devoted the next three hours to trying to reboot it, until I finally gave up and called computer 911! Computers and other tech gadgets don't ease stress, they create stress! And change is one of the leading causes of stress. Alvin Toffler wrote: "Future shock is the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time." (*Future Shock*, p.4) If that was true in 1970, it's a hundred times more so now.

I believe there's never been a better time to be a part of the church of the Lord Jesus, because in the midst of massive changes, we have the message of hope, strength, and stability to share with stressed out people. Microsoft or Apple can't promise you security and strength, but Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are burdened [stressed-out] and I will give you REST." (Matthew 11:28)

It's like the two shoe salesmen. The first one was sent to Africa to sell shoes and he called the home office and said, "Bring me home, these people over here don't wear shoes." The second salesman went to Africa and called his office and said, "Send me all the shoes you've got, I've never seen so many prospects!" I'm like that second guy. I'm excited about the church because there's never been a time in history when our message of hope has been more needed. Change causes stress, so let's ride the change wave and offer the message of hope and peace!

(3) Be more high-touch in a high-tech culture

Our changing culture has created islands of isolation where people live alone in a crowded city. A person can sit at their computer and chat with other people, watch videos, and even interact with people, but what's missing is the human touch. You can even have a "church experience" all alone in front of your computer. You can download praise songs and even sing along. You can read the Bible online and read or listen to thousands of messages—but the one thing you'd be missing is the high-touch that a local church offers to you. People are starving for a loving, friendly touch—a handshake or a hug. The church is a place where handshakes and hugs are passed out freely.

In 2004, a guy stood in a mall in Sydney, Australia holding up a sign that said, "FREE HUGS." At first people were reluctant to accept his offer, but the first to accept a hug was a lady in her

eighties. Then more people decided to accept the hugs. After a while the mall security force kicked him out because he didn't have a permit. The guy began gathering signatures to allow him to offer free hugs in the mall and after 10,000 people signed the petition he kept offering his free hugs. That event started what is called the Free Hug Movement, and thousands of people have been offering free hugs to strangers as a part of random acts of kindness. It's nothing new, because the first free hug movement started with the early church where the Believers would always greet each other with a holy kiss. Today, we pass out free hugs and handshakes every time we gather. As the change wave grows larger and faster, we can ride it by proclaiming that church is the place where you can find love, friendship, and acceptance.

(4) Remind people that God is in control!

Whatever may change or happen in 2008, you need to know God is still in control, and we need to shout it from the rooftops: OUR GOD REIGNS! There's a chorus we sing entitled, "Our God reigns." I heard about a church bulletin that listed that song, but there was a misprint and they added the letter "s" in the middle of the word "reigns" so that the song title appeared as, "Our God resigns!" My friend, don't worry because God hasn't resigned, and He will never resign, instead HE REIGNS!

As we go through amazing changes over the next few years, people are going to be searching for something solid to hang onto. It's our job to keep reminding folks that God has always been in control, and whatever happens, God is still in control. Humanity may presume that we will evolve to the point where we no longer need God—some people think they are there now. But as we rush around faster and faster, inventing more and more toys, do you know how God reacts to it all? He laughs. That's right. One of my favorite scriptures is Psalm 2. Here's the message paraphrase: "Why the big noise, nations? Why the mean plots, people? Earth-leaders push for position, demagogues and delegates meet for summit talks; the God-deniers, the Messiah-defiers, 'Let's get free from God!'...Heaven-throned God breaks out laughing." (Psalm 2:1-2 *The Message*) We think we've advanced so far, but compared to the power and wisdom of God, we're like a few ants struggling to build a low-tech ant bed. Compared to the wisdom of God, we're like toddlers trying to learn our ABCs.

Another of my favorite songs is "God is in control" written and sung by Twila Paris. Consider these powerful words: History marches on, / There is a bottom line drawn / across the ages. / Culture can make its plan, / Oh, but the line never changes. / No matter how the deception may fly, / There is one thing that has always been true; / It will be true forever! God is in control! / We believe that His children will not be forsaken. / God is in control! / We will choose to remember and never be shaken. / There is no power above or beside Him, we know God is in control, oh God is in control!

CONCLUSION

Not only is God in control, but He loves you and you can trust Him. Once, Mrs. Albert Einstein was interviewed by a reporter. She was asked if she believed the theory of relativity, to which she replied, "Of course." The reporter then asked her if she understood the theory of relativity.

She replied, “No I don’t need to understand it, because I know Albert and I know he can be trusted.”

My friend, you don’t have to understand everything about God. You simply need to know Him, and when you know Him, you’ll know He can be trusted with your today and with all your tomorrows!

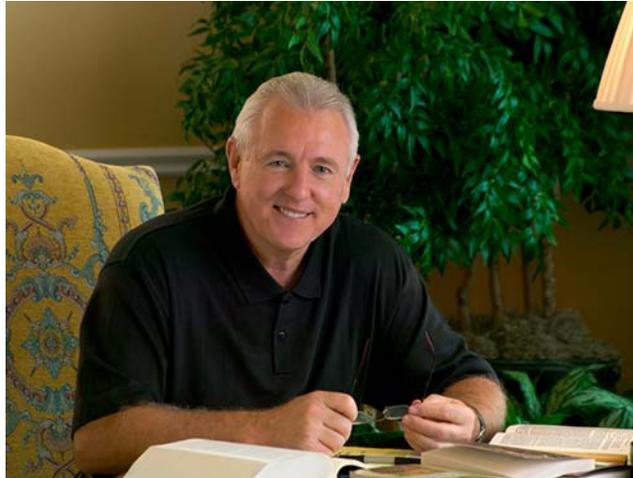
Look! The change wave is moving toward us! Are you ready? “Surf’s up, Dude, let’s ride the change wave!”

OUTLINE

1. PREPARE YOURSELF FOR FUTURE CHANGES!
2. REMEMBER THAT GOD ENJOYS DOING NEW THINGS!
3. LET'S USE CHANGE TO SHARE GOD'S MESSAGE!

How?

- (1) Use technology to share the gospel in new ways
- (2) Offer stability amid the stress that comes with change
- (3) Be more high-touch in a high-tech culture
- (4) Remind people that God is in control!



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes