

Introduction:

A. Tell the story of Mary and Sally

- 1 Both same height 10 years old.
2. One day Mary noticed that Sally was getting taller.
3. Sally said, I can't wear my favorite shoes any more. My body is changing and I am scared about it,"
4. Mary said, "If you think that is scary, I'm not growing a bit, and that is scary! What if all your friends are growing bigger and taller and you are not changing a bit!"
5. One was afraid because she was changing and the other was afraid because she wasn't changing. They both agreed, Change is frightening. Neither one wanted to leave elementary school for middle-school.
6. Both girls agreed. "We'll just have to pray and ask God to help us deal with these changes." And so they did pray and ask God for help.
7. The young girls grew up into young women. They grew bigger and taller. They became pretty young women.
8. Mary and Sally have taught us something important today. You cannot stay the same. Change is always happening! Even if we stay the same, things change around us.

B. You may not like it if your hair falls out—if your waist line grows. You may try to put the proverbial book on top of your children's head to keep them from growing, but we must realize change happens!

I. Let's begin by looking at some of the foolish statements that people have made. People who didn't understand that things are always changing. It is foolish to deny the possibility of change.

- A. **"Everything that can be invented has been invented."**
Charles H. Duell, U.S. Patent Office director, 1899.
- B. **"Who ... wants to hear actors talk?"**
H. M. Warner, Warner Bros. Pictures, c. 1927

- C. **“Sensible and responsible women do not want to vote.”**
Grover Cleveland, 1905
- D. **“There is no likelihood man can ever tap the power of the atom.”**
Robert Millikan, Nobel prize winner in physics, 1923
- E. **“Heavier than air flying machines are impossible.”**
Lord Kelvin, president, Royal Society, c. 1895
- F. **“Ruth [Babe Ruth] made a big mistake when he gave up pitching.”**
Tris Speaker, 1927
- G. **“The horse is here to stay, but the automobile is only a novelty.”**
The Michigan banker who advised Henry Ford's lawyer not to invest in the new motor car company
- H. **“Gone with the Wind is going to be the biggest flop in Hollywood history. I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling flat on his face and not me.”**
---Gary Cooper

II. Let's take a little quiz.

- A. Does your car have a carburetor? If so, it is probably pretty old. Most cars today have fuel injection.
- B. Do you stop at a drive through window? Drive through windows have been around for quite a while, but only in recent years have restaurants begun doing as much as a third of their business for breakfast, and much of it at the drive through window.
- C. Do you have a credit card? I'm dating myself, but I can remember when no one had a credit card. Now credit cards are taken at almost all restaurants and everywhere else including some churches.
- D. Central heat or wood burner? You may have a wood burner, but you likely have central heat as well. “Plastics my boy, the future is in plastics.” Plastics are an invention that has revolutionized the world almost as much as computers.
- E. You may resist change, but it is going on all about us, whether we like it or not!
- F. The only person who likes change is a wet baby—quipped Mark Twain.
- G. Most of us don't like change. One person said, “I like change just fine—as long as things stay the same!”

III. Change is frightening, It is disturbing. If you don't think so, the next time we change something around the church, we'll give out your number as the person to call to complain! Just sit in "someone's pew." and notice the disturbance. It was good enough for all those years, why change now!

A. Here is a good rule to deal with change. Positive change keeps the best of the old, but improves and adapts. The following story tells a great story of change. Positive change holds onto the eternal and the abiding. It stays with the ultimate values and purposes of God, but it may change in form or outward manifestation.

B. Some forms of next century's church may be remarkably familiar.

1. A McDonald's restaurant in Chicago has a 1950s decor, including a classic 1954 white Corvette convertible inside. There are ads, posters, records, and juke boxes from the 1950s. The lines are long as customers come to step back in time. It appeals to the traditional, reflecting a time when life was supposed to be simpler and more stable.
2. And yet, that McDonald's has some very modern features and services: a drive-through window; home-delivery service (the delivery vehicle is a 1955 Chevy station wagon painted red); you can charge souvenirs on your Visa Card; there is an automatic teller machine for cash withdrawals before you order your food; and there is a larger variety on the menu than other McDonald's restaurants.
3. Could that McDonald's serve as a model for the traditional church in the twenty-first century--doing yesterday better than it has ever been done before.

C. There is a push with in the church today to more nontraditional methods, contemporary styles, change in music, etc.

1. Yet many, traditional churches are growing.
2. Those who track such things are keenly aware of what is happening--people are reacting to change, frightened by losing control, and worried about the future. The way it used to be is generating lots of interest.
3. Do not underestimate the power of this phenomenon. Traditional churches with flavors and styles from the mid-twentieth century have a significant future.

D. Two necessary ingredients must be added to the mix:

1. Successful traditional churches will need to incorporate many contemporary elements, including services to consumers and meeting modern needs.
2. Successful traditional churches will need to do the traditional with a high level of excellence. Many people remember the past better than it actually was; younger adults who weren't part of the past idealize it to be far better than reality.
3. Yesterday must be even better than today if it is to have a place for tomorrow. -- Leith Anderson
4. We are interested in “restoring” the church of the first century. I think that is a very worthwhile goal, provided that we understand it correctly. The Restoration Movement must take the gospel of the first century and live it in the 21st century.
5. Alexander Campbell thought we need to be more interested in “being the church” --that is fulfilling the purpose that God intended for the church--- than “restoring” the church.
6. The Restoration Movement has an inherent backward look. It is constantly looking backward to the first century—and that has much to commend it. The first century church is our model and the cross in our motivation. However, we must take that vision and bring it into the 21st century!
7. We must ask how we apply the gospel to a society that has 100 channels of cable TV. A society where people live in huge cities, where world wide travel is common place. We must make the gospel meaningful to our lives today.

E. It is an established fact. We must be renewed or die! If we are not growing, we are not growing and changing we are going backwards.

1. **In Charles Schulz's "Peanuts" comic strip, Lucy asks Linus, "Do you think people ever really change?"** “Sure,” replies Linus, “I feel I’ve changed a lot this past year.” Lucy says, “I mean for the better.”
2. We must believe that people can change and that they can change for the better.
3. We must understand that renewal comes from God.

F. Let’s look quickly at some verses that assure us that God is interested in renewal.

1. When David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, he pled with God for cleansing and renewal. He prayed, "Create in me a pure heart, O God and renew a steadfast spirit within me." Psalm 51:10

2. **Isaiah 40:31**

3. **Lamentations 5:21**

4. **Habakkuk 3:2**

5. **Romans 12:2**

6. **2 Corinthians 4:16**

7. **Colossians 3:9**

8. **Titus 3:5** This passage also talks about the new birth. Baptism is a new birth. A new person comes forth from a watery grave. We are "born-again" Christians! The Holy Spirit is the agent that empowers us to become new people.

G. I envy school teachers. Sometimes I would like to swap my congregation for a new one each year. A new chance to begin again with new faces. Another chance to be a better teacher.

H. I love this quote and I'm sure it will stay with me for a long time. It talks about the new beginnings we have in Christ Jesus. "I suppose when we wake on January 1 the world will look the same. But there is a reminder of the Resurrection at the start of each new year, each new decade. That's why I also like sunrises, Mondays, and new seasons. God seems to be saying, "With me you can always start afresh." Ada Lum

IV. There are at least three specific areas that need renewals.

A. First of all, we must renew ourselves. Will you be any better one year from now? Are you willing to grow and change as a person? Will you be more holy, more dedicated, more pure, or more active in God's service? Are there bad habits to give up and good ones to acquire? We must be renewed as individuals.

B. Second, our congregation must continually work at renewal. If we do not continue to strive for improvement, we will fall behind. We cannot depend on the same people who carried the load five years ago. Some have moved, some have died, some are no longer active. We must have new people who will step forward and shoulder the load for Christ. Programs that used to be successful must continually be re-evaluated. If they are still viable—keep on keeping on. If they need to be modified, then change them. If they no longer work—then discard them and take a new approach!

C. Third, we must not change the facts of the gospel, but we must adapt the presentation of the gospel. You can complain all day about the hair styles and cloths today's kids wear. That will not change anything. Until we can sit across the table and explain the gospel in plain terms with a straight face, our mission efforts are doomed.

D. Consider this quote.....The gospel must be preached afresh and told in new ways to every generation, since every generation has its own unique questions. The gospel must constantly be forwarded to a new address, Because the recipient is repeatedly changing his place of residence. -- Helmut Thielicke, Leadership, Vol. 9, no. 3.

Conclusion:

A. Let me remind you. Baptism is a re-birth. Christians are “born-again”. If you want a new start in life—to be renewed and remade in the image of God, baptism is for you.

B. If you have already been baptized and yet you have made some mistakes, confession and prayer allows for a continual new start for the Christian.

C. What would it take for you to change? Dynamite? Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power (dunamis) of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

D. Are you willing to repent and try to do better?

E. The question for today—Will you grow, change, and be renewed, or will you die? If you need to respond to the invitation of Christ, please do so.