

20141231 CHANGE 2015

Intro.

During the past 2 years we have together ventured on the journey to be a greater church unit through Greater Worship, Greater Teaching, Greater Fellowship and a Greater Desire for God. We continue to do so...

This year 2014 we emphasised 4 areas: love, develop, serve, connect that we decided to simultaneously encourage one another to develop as the Smyrna International DNA.

I celebrate this evening with you that we have done a pretty good job in some of these areas. Well done. Thank you for your engagement and investment both with your life and giftings and also your resources.

Without you we wouldn't be where we are. But it's not over yet...

This morning my wife and I decided to conclude our 2014 with our last work-out of the year. As I trained, I also watched a programme on the screen with an interview about New Year promises. Some examples that people told of were promises to stop smoking, exercise more, eat less sweets etc.

Some succeeded, most failed.

In English instead of saying New Year's promise we use the better word: Resolution. I looked it up in the dictionary and this is what it means.

Resolution is more than a shallow promise: a mentally well thought-through decision, a deliberate change or adjustment.

So this year that we soon will be welcoming, I want us as individuals and as a church to allow the word Change to be our key-word.

A Change we need and are called to.

Paul said in Romans 12:2 "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will."

We often think God has assigned us to change the world around us when in reality He is interested in first and foremost changing you and me in order to make each of us even more usable. The Bible says "If you stay away from sin you will be like one of these dishes made of purest gold-the very best in the house-so that Christ himself can use you for his higher purposes." (2 Tim. 2:21). God often uses the most unlikely people in the most unlikely places to teach us some of life's most difficult lessons. And just when we think we've arrived, He is instructing us further.

Change is going to happen whether you like it or not, so I want to encourage us this year to focus on the type of change in our personal lives and as a church that will create the best conditions for us to be even more what God calls us to be.

Change is something we all need. It is an ongoing process of life. With life's demands and continual adjustments in our schedules and plans.

Essentially, change is the new norm.

But people's spiritual lives call for more than slight changes to the calendar. Our lives are in need of resolution, change, transformation. Paul wrote, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come" (2 Cor.5:17).

The very heart of the Christian faith revolves around change, but it is not turning over a new leaf - it is living out a new life. The marks of a transformed life are merely the signs of Christ's presence in us. They are the witness of the Spirit's work in our lives. When we see these marks, it is because God keeps His covenant to conform us to the image of His Son.

Therefore to live differently, we must think differently, to think differently, we must have a right information, understanding and purpose to change and it does not easily happen, we must make deliberate choice daily.

The new information in a mind can cause it to change the way it reacts or responds to a situation or a crisis. How you handle a situation is based upon what is in your mind that you have acquired. All information will cause you to change, either for the negative or the positive. It's up to the individual to accept or reject the information based on the source.

Bible shows us how to change and improve our selves to become what God wants. Jesus said the same thing to John, "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). The only way to replace the error of the world's way of thinking is to replace it with God's truth, and the only infallible source of God's truth is found in his revealed word, the Bible. There are no shortcuts. There is no magic formula for renewing our minds. We must fill our minds with God.

When change comes, we must realize that it doesn't come over night. Transformation comes through a period of time and there will be "setbacks". Be patient and allow it to run its course. Nothing worth having comes easy, but the rewards are worth the effort.

In order for us to grow in maturity and in character, we must first gather new information from the right source to reach the level we have set for ourselves. Like everything else, we have to learn how to filter this information that comes into our minds. This is why seeking and knowing God is the most powerful source which we can use to change the world. The best changes often start as single, simple thoughts of God.

This is the beginning of change. Peter said in 1 Peter 1:13 "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Amen.