

Change

Discussion Materials

CHANGE

Chapter 1 - "Who Moved My Cheese"

"Who Moved My Cheese" by Johnson and Blanchard has four imaginary characters that live together in a maze. Two mice "Sniff" and "Scurry" and two little people "Hem" and "Haw". These characters live in "Cheese Station C", where they have an ample supply of cheese. One day they awake to discover, change - that the cheese has gone.

The mice "sniff" out change early and "scurry" into action to find a new supply of cheese. The little people "Hem" and "Haw" stay put in "Cheese Station C" in hope that the cheese will return. The little people fear change and believe that it will lead to something worse. "Haw" eventually adapts and moves on in search of new cheese and experiences change that leads him to something better. "Hem" remains in "Cheese Station C", convinced change is not good for him.

Assuming we are the characters and the cheese is what makes us happy and or meets our needs:

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What cheese of yours has been moved in the past?
Which of the above four characters reminds you of your response to change?
- 2) What changes are you facing today? How are you dealing with them? Robert Burns 1759 -1796 said "The best laid plans of mice and men go astray." Have you found this to be true in your own life? If yes, how so?
- 3) In 900 B.C King Solomon of Israel wrote, "Where there is no vision (plan) the people perish." (The Bible) Where do you look to find your vision (plan)?
- 4) King Solomon also wrote "We should make plans – counting on God to direct us." (The Bible) How would such an arrangement between God and man work from your prospective?
- 5) As you look into the future, what changes do you see coming? As you visualize a plan for these changes, how will you know what will be the right " New Cheese Station" for you?

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Chapter 2 - "I am the master of my fate..."

Change can be brought about in our personal life through self-discipline. We can lose weight by applying discipline for our eating and/or exercise habits. Financial stability can come out of the self-discipline to spend less than we earn. Change is often directly related to our ability to govern our personal habits and maintain the new behavior by self-will. Along these lines, William Ernest Henley (1849-1903) wrote, "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

Some people have the self-control to master almost any needed change. Many of us find we are unable to make needed changes as we age and lose important battles with our self-will.

For example, Kenneth battled a weight problem for years. His fear of being overweight, his looks, and health caused him to try all kinds of diet solutions. Some worked better than others, but in the end, Kenneth's ability to maintain these new habits and behavior have failed. He is in his early 30's and weighs over 300 lbs. He talks of diet, but no longer makes the needed effort to lose weight.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is your perspective and experience with the statement "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul." Why is it that some people have the self-control to master almost any needed change?
- 2) Can you relate to Kenneth's struggle with the ability to maintain new habits and behavior?
- 3) Can you think of a situation in your life where change was/is needed, and you have not been able to self-will the change?
- 4) In 61 AD Paul a Roman citizen wrote, "I can do everything through Him (God) who gives me strength." (The Bible) From your perspective, does this mean that God influences our self-will or that we are in control?
- 5) Paul also wrote, "Now to Him (God) who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to His power at work within us," (The Bible)] What is your take on this statement? Is it an indication of weakness to seek help from God in areas where we need change?
- 6) Is a person's control over himself a natural gift or something that can be developed?

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Chapter 3 - “The Unexamined Life”

Life is filled with change. We are born and the process of change begins. We change from a baby to: child, adolescent, young adult, mid life adult, mature adult. Each stage of life offers the opportunity to learn new things and develop a life strategy to get the “cheese”(What makes us happy and or satisfies our needs).

A baby or child has parents to give him direction. The adolescent follows its peer group. Young adults choose role models or mentors. We reach mid-life and the results of our choices become apparent. Henry David Thoreau said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Examining our life can be an intellectual process that involves selecting the source of truth we choose to follow as we change.

Philip C. McGraw, Ph.D. in his book “Life Strategies” offers the following list to examine our life by.

You are:

- Stuck in a rut and not getting what you want
- Bored with yourself
- Silently enduring an emotionally barren life or marriage
- Trudging zombie-like through a dead and unchallenging career
- Just “going through the motions” of your life with no passion, no plan, and no goal
- Living in a comfort zone that yields too little challenge and too little of what you do want, and too much of what you don’t want
- Living a lonely existence with little hope for change
- Suffering financial burdens you can’t handle, or
- Living with lingering guilt, frustration, or depression

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Do you relate to any of the above? If so, explain.
- 2) Winston Churchill said, “The price of greatness is responsibility.” How are you doing with taking responsibility for how your life is working out?
- 3) “I was set on a great journey to find myself. What I found was I was not lost at all. I was simply looking in the wrong places. Look in the right places and what you find will amaze you.” (Dr. Gary Jackson) Are you looking to find yourself? Where?
- 4) Solomon (970 B.C.), the third king of the nation of Israel, wrote, “We can make our plans, but the final outcome is in God’s hands.” (The Bible)
- 5) From your prospective how might one deal with this possible truth?
- 6) Two thousand years ago Jesus Christ claimed about himself; “I am the way, the truth and the life”. (The Bible) From your perspective could a person be the truth? Why? What is your source of truth? Possible options might be: science, media, parents, religion, what works, friends, or other

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Chapter 4 - Truth and Relativism

Change usually involves new directions for our lives. Most everyone has experienced the consequences of using incorrect travel directions and not arriving at a destination on time. If my directions are not accurate (true), I must suffer the consequences. As we journey through life, we find that decisions based on truth yield good results and decisions based on non-truths yield failure or bad results.

Mankind had always faced the question; is truth absolute, or is truth relative?

Relativism is the philosophical position that all points of view are equally valid and that all truth is relative to the individual. This would mean that there is no objective standard of truth - that all morals are relative to the social group within which they are constructed. That ethics (right or wrong) depend upon the situation.

Absolute truth on the other hand, would mean that there is a source of absolute truth- that there is a right and a wrong way to do things and live your life.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) The 1960's produced the "if it feels good, do it" generation. Can you relate to this philosophy of life?
- 2) Frank Sinatra sang "I did it my way." What observation would you have about this philosophy of life?
- 3) Today the tolerance movement believes; if one speaks out against the "anything goes" philosophy of relativism, it labels him an intolerant bigot. What are your thoughts on the tolerance movement?
- 4) It has been stated that logic stops being logic when it becomes relative. If there is no logic, we can not draw conclusions about anything. If this is a true statement, how does it make you feel?
- 5) Relativism concludes those all moral positions, religious systems, all art forms, and all political movements, etc. are truths that are relative to the individual. Put another way, I have my truth and you have yours, there is no absolute truth. Can you think of examples?
- 6) The Bible claims to be the source of absolute truth. Oswald Chambers wrote, "There is only one reality – our Lord Jesus Christ, and only one book that brings light". How do you feel about the credibility of the Bible?

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Chapter 5 - "Stuck in a Rut"

A sign on the Alaska Highway reads "Choose your rut carefully- you'll be in it the next 200 miles". Stuck in a rut; a thought provoking possibility when you apply it to major decisions in life, i.e. choosing a career, a spouse, a doctrine to live by, friends, neighborhoods, an employer, etc.

The "cheese book" suggests this formula when stuck and faced with the need to change your circumstances, (1) change your behavior, (2) adapt quickly- the quicker you let go of the old cheese, the sooner you can enjoy new cheese. (Who Moved My Cheese?)

An unknown author claims "life and time are our only real possessions". Bottom line, it's your choice how you live your life. The "gray dogs' wisdom" Life Strategies sums it up:

Fact: "There ain't no Santa Clause, there ain't no pony, and Elvis is way dead. If your life is going to get better around here, it will be because you make it better. Pray to God, but row for the shore."

Fact: "Before your life can go in the right direction, you have to pull your head out and stop going in the wrong direction."

Fact: "You don't have to stick your hand in your blender to know that it is not the best idea to put hands in blenders."

Fact: "Make a plan and work the plan. Life is not a dress rehearsal."

Fact: "They will use you if you let them. When they come around thinning the herd, or taking people's lunch money, get a really serious look on your face, and dig in."

Fact: "Life is a competition. They are keeping score, and there is a time clock."

The following are examples of people who need to make a change because they feel like they are stuck in a rut:

Mary has indulged herself with illegal drugs for 25 years.

Sandy's only friend is bitter, angry, sarcastic, and critical.

Rex's wife spends everything he makes.

Jim's corporate job is sucking the life out of him at age 35.

Dick's wife hates his mother and refuses to let his kids see her.

Joe bet the farm on a new business, and now he hates what he is doing.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Regarding ruts are you in one? If so, what rut are you in?
- 2) Who are the “gray dogs” in your life that keeps you in touch with reality? How so?
- 3) For he knows we are dust, and that our days are few and brief, like grass, like a flower, blown by the wind and gone forever” (The Bible) So it’s your life and your time, how much longer do you have to start making changes? What’s holding you back?
- 4) The “gray dog” says, “Make a plan and work the plan. Life is not a dress rehearsal”. Jesus said, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough troubles of its own.” (The Bible) Which philosophy do you follow? Why?
- 5) “By some act of grace, as far back as I can remember, I had worshipped the truth. I didn’t always know what the truth was, but I cared so deeply about it that I instinctively hated a lie whenever I discerned it in others or myself” (Scott Peck) In Heaven as on Earth How do you feel about truth?
- 6) “Until you do something, nothing happens; it’s just a lot of talk.” (Unknown) What is it going to take to get you to seek out the source of the truth for you life and do something?