

## How Badly Do You Want to Change Your Marriage?

by Dr. David B. Hawkins

“I’m really afraid he won’t change,” a middle-aged woman said to me recently.

She went on to describe a twenty-year abusive marriage fraught with alcoholism, verbal tirades, and her own significant depression.

“Tell me how I can best help you,” I said, noting her deep sadness and feelings of hopelessness.

“I don’t really know,” she said passively. “I know I can’t continue to live like this,” she continued.

“From the sounds of it, both of you are quite unhappy,” I said. “I’m curious as to what you’ve done to change things?”

“Not much,” she said. “We went for a few counseling sessions some years ago, but I don’t remember what came of that. We went for a few sessions early in our marriage, too but not much changed.”

As I listened, I was reminded again of the man by the pool of Bethesda. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. He had been waiting thirty-eight years. Jesus asks what seems to be a very peculiar question: “Do you want to get well?” (John 5:6)

Jesus knew he had been there a long time and must have wondered about his true motivation to get healed.

Before I become critical of this man, or the woman speaking to me about her alcoholic husband and her own depression, I must recognize that I, too, find myself waiting too much of the time. As I spoke to the woman, I challenged her about whether she was willing to do what it would take to create a crisis in her marriage so that her husband might get treatment for his alcohol and emotional abuse and she might get help for her depression. *Sometimes things must fall apart before they can get better!*

I decided to ask the woman a very difficult question, and one we should all ask ourselves from time to time.

“Do you really want to change things so that your situation can improve? Do you really want to disrupt the status quo, knowing it will bring significant discomfort?”

I spoke with the woman at length about all the energy she puts into keeping things the way they are. I spoke with her about the ways she avoids ‘rocking the boat.’ I spoke with her about what real change requires of us.

Perhaps you, like this woman, find yourself clinging to life as you know it. You fear stepping out in faith and making changes. You fear bringing your problems to the light of friends who can pray with you and for you. You fear confronting a spouse in a way that will surely bring about some form of change.

There are several steps additional things to keep in mind as you consider confronting life as you

have known it, introducing some form of intervention and bringing change into your life:

**First**, *change requires letting go*. To move forward we must look around and notice what we cling to and then loosen our grip. We must let go of our routines and some sources of comfort. We must let go of the semblance of sanity we may have in favor of a greater degree of happiness in the future.

**Second**, *change requires embracing temporary chaos*. As we let go of our routines we enter into a temporary state of chaos. I liken it to walking onto a swinging rope bridge—the kind that we know will be safe, but swing and sway with our weight. It is perfectly normal to wonder what will happen to us when we let go of the known and set out into the unknown.

**Third**, *change requires courage*. Letting go and embracing change requires courage. We must act even though many parts of us scream to go back to the familiar. Yet, if we want positive change, we must allow things to fall apart so that together with God we can put them back together in a healthier way.

**Fourth**, *change requires getting support*. You cannot do this work alone. We were created to live out life in community, with friends, family, pastors and Counselors. Staying in hiding only worsens your problems. Get support!

**Finally**, *change requires faith*. Embracing change and the temporary chaos that ensues requires that we trust in God to guide our steps. As you trust God you will notice small and large miracles, times when you will smile at God's perfect timing in your life.

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