

The Hardest Thing You Will Ever Do

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The great Isaac Newton, explaining the first law of motion, stated, “Everything continues in a state of rest unless it is compelled to change by forces impressed upon it.” This law has been found to be valid in the realm of human endeavor as well. It has been said that some people will change when they see the light. Others do so only when they feel the heat. This is a strong and compelling statement on our resistance to change.

To the Jews in ancient times, the world was divided into two groups - themselves and Gentiles. God’s plan was for the Jews to be a testimony to the world on how to live and believe. The Messiah would come to reveal himself to Israel and to be a light to the Gentiles, bringing salvation. His example was to spur them to share the gospel with all nations.

The will, plan and purposes of God somehow became confused over the centuries, and God chose Peter to begin the process of changing the hearts and minds of the Jewish people, who had been chosen through Abraham to be instruments of salvation for the entire world.

Something happened over the years. Instead of seeing themselves as a light to the Gentiles, the Jews saw non-Jews as despised unbelievers to be avoided at all costs.

With this in mind, imagine what a shock it must have been to Jewish Christians when they heard that Peter had the audacity to go into the house of Cornelius - a Gentile - and actually share a meal with him. This attitude was the long-standing result of the incorrect processing of information and false assumptions about themselves and their relationship with the world around them.

Change is quite difficult, but to live successful lives before God and man, we must open up to corrections from God. When the core of your heart is pure, and love of God is true, He will arrange profound experiences that can open your eyes and change the course of your life. According to Acts 11:1-4, "Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him. 'You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!' they said. Then Peter told them exactly what had happened." NLT

Change is difficult. We make assumptions about God's attitude based on our limited understanding of His commands. Peter showed that his own mind had been as biased as the elders in Jerusalem. The Spirit of God worked with both, him and the elders until their prejudices died away.

Peter allowed the Holy Spirit to correct his faulty ideas about people. This guided him into change. He was then able to see more clearly the hand of God in his life and in the lives of others. “ ‘And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God’s way?’ When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, ‘We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life.’ ” (Acts 11:17-18 NLT)

Attitudinal change is the most difficult thing we will ever do, but God promises that it will happen as we submit ourselves humbly to the correcting power of His word. The apostle Paul instructs, “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” NLT