

How to Move Beyond Your Fear to Embrace God-Ordained Change

Most of us have at least one area of our lives we wish would change. Maybe we want to have a certain degree, get a better job, drive a more reliable vehicle, get married or be healed of a disease. Maybe we think we are too shy, too talkative, too tall, too short, too skinny or too fat.

Now, what if, without any work on our part, somehow someone simply made the change we wanted to happen within minutes? What would our response be? What would be the response of those who need the same change and saw it happen miraculously? Would it be welcomed or would we be afraid?

Luke 8:26-39 is a story we've heard often. It's about how Jesus changed an unchangeable man. This demon-possessed, buck-naked man was the first to meet Jesus when He stepped out of the boat in the country of the Gadarenes.

Jesus read the situation in moments. He knew the man had been kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles. When he got loose, like he was right that moment, he would roam the country and cities instilling fear in the hearts of the people.

What Is Your Name?

"Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' He said, 'Legion,' because many demons had entered him" (Luke 8:30).

The demons begged Jesus not to command them to go into the bottomless pit, but to send them into the nearby pigs. So Jesus agreed, and the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs. Then the herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank

into a lake and drowned. In doing so, the man was delivered of the demons (Luke 8:31-33).

Herdsmen's Reactions

This story is about the demoniac, for sure, but it is also about the herdsmen and the villagers. The reactions of all three are important.

The herdsmen, who owned the pigs, were upset with Jesus not for healing the demoniac. I'm sure if they had stopped a moment instead of reacting emotionally to the situation, they would have been happy that this crazy man had been miraculously changed.

They were immediately angry because they saw their livelihood wiped out in seconds. Instead of being grateful for the change they were witnessed, they immediately went and spread rumors about Jesus.

People's Reactions

That brought the people running to see what was going on. They found the demoniac sitting at Jesus feet, clothed and in his right mind, mentally healthy.

If I lived in an area where a demon-possessed mad man roamed around naked, breaking chains, moaning and hollering, I would be rejoicing that he was looking even halfway normal.

However, Scripture says these people asked Jesus to leave because they were "overwhelmed with fear" (Luke 8:37, AMP). The herdsmen's predicament is perhaps understandable, but why are the people afraid, especially now that a huge source of fear for the area had been removed? It doesn't make sense.

Levels of Fear

There can only be suppositions here. Scripture only says they asked Jesus to leave because they were afraid. So what were

they afraid of, if not the man who was healed and made whole? On a couple of levels, they were afraid of change that might happen to them.

First, they were afraid of losing their income and provision. if the swine were a source of income and provision for the area, they may have been trying to figure out how to change their revenue source. When a plant or business where we have worked all of our lives closes, we scramble internally to figure out how we are going to survive. This physical concern would have been a huge fear for these individuals

Being “overwhelmed with fear,” though, denotes an even deeper level of fear, both an emotional and spiritual fear. They realized they were in the presence of great spiritual power that Jesus possessed. This triggered conviction in their hearts because they began to think of all the wrong things they had done.

They didn’t want those wrong choices to be revealed to everyone present. If they were like I was when I was eating whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted, they probably wanted to just keep doing what they had been doing.

Even though they may have wanted change in some areas, they quickly realized Jesus was a man of power who could change things they might not want to change. Jesus wiped out their source of income. What else might He do if He began to search their hearts as well?

Because of their understanding of their own shortcomings, they saw the devastation of their livelihood as judgment upon their city and country. They wanted Jesus to leave so He wouldn’t change something else, something they didn’t want changed.

Jesus Left Insurance

Jesus left, but not before He did something to ensure that the people eventually would understand who the power He offered

them. He told the former demoniac, who was now healed, sane and wanted to go with Him, to stay and tell his story to everyone he met.

Jesus knew the demoniac's biggest mess would be his greatest message. What better person to share who Jesus was than the one who had been completely changed, healed and delivered by a power greater than himself? He was night and day different from the man he had been.

The people were afraid of change, but the one they thought they feared the most had embraced his change. Now God would use him to help change the people he had tormented for so many years.

Jesus knew His time on earth was short. By changing one man, He planted a testimony of His power right in the midst of the people.

Embracing Change

Eventually, the people would see that they need not have feared change. They needed only to embrace it, no matter what it cost them.

This fear of embracing change is not something isolated to biblical times. I hear it all the time from those I coach to those I'm having casual conversations with. "What if I try to change and it doesn't work?" "What if someone finds out I have hidden and not-so-hidden sins?"

We think if we don't talk about these things, they won't matter to God. If they matter to us, if we can't go forward for stumbling over the past, they matter to God.

When we are able, with God's help, to work through the hang-ups and fears we have, we are better able to face today and what we know God has for us in this day.

What change are you afraid of? What might it cost you? Will

you hand that fear to Jesus right now? {eoa}

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