

Pat Robertson Reveals the Real Reason Churches Avoid Change

Another eternal principle in the secret kingdom I call the Law of Change. Jesus said that nobody will “put new wine into old wineskins. Or else the wineskins burst, the wine runs out, and the wineskins perish. But they put new wine into new wineskins” (Matt. 9:17a). What is the spiritual meaning of this teaching?

Human institutions, like old wine skins, become brittle and are often subject to cracking. People involved are set in their ways, and they love the phrase “we have always done it this way.”

In his brilliant treatise on the New Testament, J. B. Phillips said, “Those who think they know God always persecute those who really do.” Contemplate the historic record when Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg. He was merely trying to be a good Catholic and offer suggestions to bring about peaceful reform. Instead he was excommunicated and hunted down as an outlaw by the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

When John Calvin gained ecclesiastical control of Geneva, he permitted the drowning of those known as Anabaptists, who felt that being sprinkled as unbelievers was inadequate and wanted to be baptized by immersion as believers.

King Henry VIII started what we now know as the Episcopal Church, and yet he had one of his many wives executed because she held allegiance to the pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the modern era, charismatics and Pentecostals were persecuted by Baptists and more Protestant denominations

because the old skins could not accommodate the new wine that the Holy Spirit was pouring out throughout the world.

Henry Ford was considered a brilliant inventor, but he was fixated on the manufacturing of his black, stripped-down Model T automobile. When his son, Edsel, created a shiny, sleek Model A car, it was reported that his father took a sledgehammer and broke the beautiful new car to pieces.

The brilliant Thomas Edison put together an electrical system dependent on direct current; he rejected the alternating current proposed by Tesla. The ultimate conflict resulted in Edison losing control of his company to a syndicate formed by banker J. P. Morgan.

To most people, "the old way is always better."

When I first came to the Tidewater, Virginia, area with a mandate from God to start a Christian television station, I went before the ministerial counsel to attempt to gain their support. After I had made my presentation about how wonderful a Christian television station would be, I stepped outside the main room. While in a waiting room, I overheard the conversation of the assembled clergy. One statement still resonates in my mind: "If we can't stop it, at least we can disassociate ourselves from it." What I was proposing was a vastly new way of reaching people with the gospel and of bringing the message into the homes of people. Traditional churches at that time wanted nothing to do with it because they felt this technology would be disruptive to their Sunday services.

Later on I was told by one minister, "If you can give up all this business about the Holy Spirit, then you can get Baptist support." What God had in me was new wine—new worship, new methods of preaching the gospel and a return to the worship of the first century.

I formed The Christian Broadcasting Network. My initial

capital was \$70. I had to struggle to accomplish what God had placed inside of me. But if I had tried to link my vision with existing church life, I would have ruined them, and they would have ruined what we had in mind. It took considerable struggle to stay free and independent, but the anointing of the Holy Spirit was powerful. As the years went by, the new wine that our work represented became perhaps the most powerful evangelistic tool in the entire world. We produce programs in 59 languages that are seen in 100 countries around the world. We have powerful motion pictures, a news channel, various avenues on the internet and broadcasts that over the years have resulted in at least 1 billion people receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Imagine what I would have given up had I forsaken the power of God to gain Baptist support or to alter our broadcast techniques so as not to offend the local Sunday church services of a few small churches in Tidewater, Virginia.

What is now known as the charismatic movement is the fastest-growing religious expression in the world, with at least 600 million adherents, well on the way to one billion. There is no way that any existing church structure could have accommodated the move of God that is now sweeping the world.

Change for change is not the answer. I am a firm believer in the maxim "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." If something is functioning well, we would certainly want to support it. But at the same time, we recognize that dramatic inventions—whether the steam engine or power looms or locomotives or automobiles or airplanes or the current level of work done by robots—will be opposed by those who feel threatened by innovation.

French peasants wore wooden shoes called sabots. It is alleged that when peasants felt that machinery was taking away their employment, they began to throw their shoes into the gears of the machines. Some say that's how we got the word sabotage.

Whether that's an urban legend or not, even today I'm reading of a resistance by labor unions at job-saving automation that is taking away the jobs of unskilled laborers. But like it or not, we cannot resist the Law of Change and the simple truth that new wine cannot be poured into old wineskins, lest the skins break and the wine will be lost. {eo}

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