

## Anxiety and Change

“Most people will choose the hell of a predictable situation rather than risk the joy of an unpredictable one” – Maxie Dunnam

What is it about change that can provoke anxiety within us? In my experience I have found both within myself and others, a resistance to change. The idea of change and unpredictability can immediately create a sense of anxiousness within us. When change is experienced, not by our own choice, it highlights the illusion of control and exposes us to the instability of life that so often encapsulates us in a state of worry.

Our expectations and perceptions regarding life, how it should be, and what it should look like are often the beacons that guide our course and actions. Expectations and perceptions are found out on the horizon of our future. It is a picture of how things should be, and unwanted change can threaten that.

When we are guided by the holy spirit, change can have a vastly different effect on our lives. It is no longer our picture of life that propels us to strive for specific outcomes and do all we can to maintain control, keeping unwanted change at bay. We can find freedom in releasing ultimate control and finding our expectations not in results that lay out there in the future somewhere, but in the expectation of everyday encounters with a living God.

The Apostle Paul demonstrated this in Acts chapter 16. Paul had expectations of traveling to Asia to preach the word. The scripture says that Paul was “kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia”. Paul reached the border, but the Spirit would not allow them to enter Bithynia. Paul had a plan and expectation, but it did not happen. The scripture does not say that Paul complained and was anxious or worried about what was next. No, he just pivoted. Paul followed the Spirit to Troas where he received a vision for the next step. Paul was free of his own expectations and perceptions. He was free to walk in the Spirit expecting that the living God would provide the plan.

My discipleship band has often used the phrase “Make plans but hold on to them loosely”. That phrase has helped me a lot over the course of the last 5 years or so. But I think it’s time to modify it, “Make plans, and prepare to pivot”. Instead of fretting over a future expectation being met, what if we were excited about what unimaginable experiences lay right behind our decision to trust and release that our “pivots” may be more life giving than our own plan. Attuning to the Holy Spirit in a posture prepared to pivot is the life of abundance that Jesus talks about. How might our willingness to release our grip on expectations impact on our anxiousness and worry, allowing us to embrace change?

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