

Reflections on Application

"When the general gets too far ahead of the army, they confuse him with the enemy and start shooting at him."

-Anonymous

"When stretched too far, mercy becomes injustice."

-Cukrowski

Two Models for Action

- Wait
 1. Proverb: A general and his army
 2. This view respects individual differences (theological and emotional) and values *expediency*.
 3. Analogy: Surgery
 4. Text: There were no Gentiles or women among the twelve apostles.
- Act Now
 1. Proverb: Mercy and injustice
 2. This view respects the ideals of *justice* and/or *faithfulness*.
 3. Analogies: Slavery, racial integration, and compromise in the past
 4. Text: Luke 6:6-11

Ten Reflections on Change

1. Change happens slowly. In the United States, consider the issues of slavery, women's suffrage and the civil rights movement; each of these changes to the fabric of our nation took significant time. If change happens this way in the political and social realms, it's not surprising that it happens similarly in our churches.
2. Change often does not occur in regular, incremental ways; rather, it begins slowly, a critical mass is reached, and then it moves quickly.
3. Change is more difficult in homogenous contexts.
4. Change requires some prompt. A prompt can be intellectual (e.g., new information; cognitive dissonance), emotional (e.g., harsh words; injustice), social (e.g., ACU's apology to African Americans), or personal (e.g., being led or inspired by a charismatic or respected leader, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. or an elder).
5. Change requires taking a risk and making a decision. The risk may be personal or financial; the decision may result in criticism, pain, and loss. Nevertheless, faith implies some level of risk; there will not be a time in our congregations if we wait for risk to be eliminated. Our churches need leaders who will make brave and faithful decisions.
6. Change has a generational aspect; in other words, new default modes are continually being created, often within one generation. For instance, integration on buses, in bathrooms and at lunch counters—all significant issues less than fifty years ago—is a non-issue for people today.
7. Stories motivate change. It is important for the voices of women, previously muted, to be heard. On this topic, I recommend the website Half the Church, which collects the stories of women who have experienced a call to ministry (<http://halfthechurch.wordpress.com>).
8. Change in churches on this issue has been based on the study of Scripture; that is, churches have become gender-inclusive *because of* and not *despite* Scripture. For virtually every member who returns to the Bible, there is new evidence on the table, as people discover what women are doing in the Bible.
9. People need time to make the transition from head to heart. A person may very well be convinced that women can, for instance, serve communion; actually seeing a women do so for the first time, or actually participating herself, will elicit strong emotions. Individuals should expect to feel strong emotions when gender is addressed. Setting this expectation goes a long way toward mitigating the surprise or the negative effects of these powerful emotions.
10. Change is aided by positive (vs. negative) rationales. For example, it is not likely that a call for change based on "my rights" will (or should) motivate change in churches; instead, leaders should issue calls for the church to live out the creation narrative, where both men and women are created in God's image, to use the Spirit-given gifts of all the members, and to serve as one body, where there is no male and female in Christ.