A HALF-CENTURY OF CHANGE—FOR BETTER OR WORSE

By Al Diestelkamp

It is former British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli whom is credited with coining the phrase, “Change is inevitable—change is constant.” I think we can all testify to the general truth of this statement; so it should not surprise us that there have been many changes over the past five decades.

In this issue I will share my perspective on changes I have witnessed over the years. It was sixty-five years ago that I was baptized into Christ which qualifies me as a witness to many changes in our world, in the home, and in the church.

Let me begin by stating emphatically that all change is not necessarily bad or necessarily good. However, change is often unsettling to those who do not consider it to be for the better.

One does not have to be very old to be aware of constant changes in the world and our culture. Every generation experiences changes which cause the elderly to look back with favor to “the good old days.” However, lately it seems that the rate of change has picked up speed.

Again, not all the change in the world around us is bad. Even many of us in the older generation would resist having our cell phones taken out of our hands. The ability to communicate with our children and grandchildren via social media and even visit using computer apps such as *FaceTime* is a real blessing. There have also been encouraging changes in some areas of morality. Though there still is room for more improvement, some progress has been made in race relations.

However, along with the good comes evil. The Internet is a voluminous source for Satan’s evil schemes. His false teachers, disguised as “ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:15), pervert the gospel of Christ and thus deceive the masses. If that’s not enough, the devil floods the Internet with every form of temptation in an effort to take captive the minds of millions.

While the negative changes in our culture have increased at break-neck speed of late, much of this is the result of subtle and gradual changes in past generations. Secular humanism, a philosophy of life which espouses ethical behavior and responsibility without belief in or guidance of deity, has had an adverse effect on our world and contributed to a rise in atheism. Many in the elite scientific and academic communities have embraced this philosophy and promoted it in every way possible.

With God “out of the way” and humanity viewed as the ultimate authority, there is no limit to the decline in societal values and morality. Without an unchangeable source of authority, “truth” and “morality” are as changeable as society itself. The result is a set of “standards” based on majority-rule or the current thoughts of people in positions of power or influence. The so-called “sexual revolution” of the 1960’s and the accompanying “women’s liberation movement” paved the way for much of the moral decline in our nation.

Many of the negative changes we have witnessed in society have resulted from reliance on the thoughts of academia, legislators, the Supreme Court, or celebrities. I will not attempt to name all the specific negative changes in society over my lifetime or in just the past fifty years, but the following are some of the most significant:

***Family breakdown:*** Displacement of the intact family of a married father and mother as the preferred and ideal home arrangement is one of the most disturbing changes. Materialism or the desire for “fulfillment” has taken mothers *and* fathers out of the home at critical times in the lives of children. Easy, no-fault divorce and so-called alternative lifestyles have left children without a father or a mother.

***Moral decline****:* Social acceptance of fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and their public and pornographic portrayal has increased. The entertainment industry plays a significant part in “normalizing” these sins. The Bible and all who dare to speak against these sins are often maligned in the media and courts of public opinion.

***Devalue of life:***Induced abortion, which once was a crime in our nation, has since been declared a “constitutional right” by the U.S. Supreme Court, ignoring the clear statements in God’s Word declaring that those who “shed innocent blood” are an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 6:16-17).

Indeed, we live in a changing world. The only hope for reversing the negative changes is through the gospel of Christ. Let’s not sell the gospel short! It has the power to change hearts, lives, and nations, but any such changes must start with us.