

MONDAY MANNA

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ADAPTABILITY, A TOOL FOR FACING CHANGES

By Sergio Fortes

For each of us who labour on the marketplace, change is nothing new. Whether we like it or not, change is a familiar experience, one that happens all the time.

Some business and professional people, even high-level leaders and executives, declare with absolute conviction, "I hate any kind of change!", as if change itself has the capability for determining who likes it or who does not, and then graciously asking for permission before settling in.

One of the most respected radio stations in my country of Brazil uses an appropriate slogan that forces us to think: "In 20 minutes, everything can change." However, in many cases, changes – even very drastic ones – can suddenly occur in much less than 20 minutes.

Who can forget that approximately 18 months ago, the first cases of the Covid-19 virus shook the entire world? Less than a month later, our private and professional lives were turned upside down. No one asked for our approval before necessary social changes were enacted in response to the growing pandemic.

When change occurs, whether it is dramatic or a minor inconvenience, how are we to respond? The correct emotional reaction in dealing with changes in our personal or professional lives, according to Harvard professor Dr. Daniel Goleman, is called *ADAPTABILITY*. This is one of the most important emotional intelligence skills, the acclaimed researcher has stated.

Adaptability, Goleman said, is the ability to adjust to changes, new situations, or unforeseen events. Although not predictable, these are routine realities of life, especially in the business and professional world. But more than simply adjusting, it is important that we learn to overcome the adverse impacts of change. Then, through a positive approach for dealing with changes we might not have foreseen or desired, we can discover new opportunities.

I have found that when things seem out of control, it is wise to focus on the One who is in control. As God declares in Jeremiah 29:11, *"For I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* We find similar assurance in Proverbs 3:5-6, which tells us to, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight."*

In the Scriptures we find the wonderful example of the apostle Paul, whose professional and personal life circumstances changed all the time. If he walked to a place of worship, he was thrown out. If he got onto a ship, it threatened to sink. If he gathered people and gave testimony to how his life had been changed, he was arrested. One time, when he managed to survive a shipwreck, he was bitten by a snake.

Paul could have become embittered, complaining all the time, feeling like a loser or a failure. However, he made an extraordinary statement that puts us to shame for the way we handle our changes: *"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength"* (Philippians 4.11-13).

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That victorious statement teaches me three things about change:

1. I must learn to adapt to any circumstances.
2. I cannot allow any change to steal my contentment.
3. I must stand and live by faith on the one foundation that never changes: Jesus Christ.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

What is your typical response to changes, especially ones that come totally unexpected and are not of your choosing?

In what specific ways did the Covid-19 pandemic and the many changes that resulted from it affect you, your work and everyday life? How did you respond to those changes?

In times of uncertainty and anxiety, where do you turn? Do you, like the apostle Paul, find you are able to find contentment and peace, even when the world around you seems to be turning upside-down? Explain your answer.

The Bible offers many promises from God that tell us to trust Him even when circumstances are difficult, even seemingly impossible. What passages, if any, have you found that seem especially reassuring for you?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Isaiah 26:3, 40:31, 41:10

Psalms 37:4-5, 40:1-3

Matthew 28:20

Hebrews 13:5