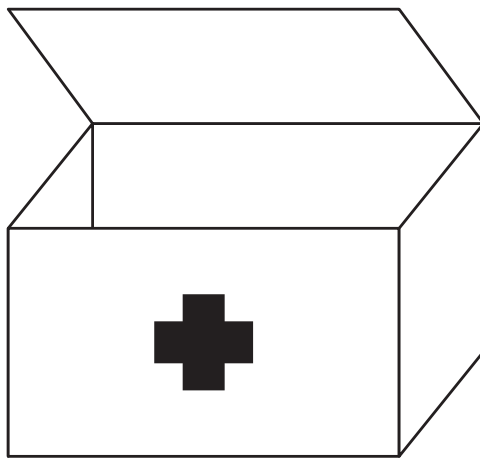


THE SPECIAL 'FOOLS-RUSH-IN- WHERE-ANGELS-FEAR-TO-TREAD' CHANGE AGENT'S FIRST AID KIT.

DAVE ANDREWS



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The Scale Of The Pain.

LYLE SCHALLER, IN HIS BOOK THE CHANGE AGENT, warns us that *'anyone seriously interested in planned social change should be well advised to recognise two facts of life. First, despite the claims of many, relatively little is known about how to achieve ... change. Second, much of what is known will not work!'*¹

Even when we find a way that *does* work, (like Paul's strategy in The Idiot's D-I-Y Guide For Turning Your Congregation Upside Down And Inside Out) we often find there are a lot more *difficulties* working it out than we had imagined. Daniel P Monyham, a prominent advocate of change in our day says, *'Out of a desperate desire for success, we constantly underestimate difficulties.'*²

Paul says that, for him to bring about change in the church, he had...

'to fill up in (his) flesh what (was) still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.' Col. 1:24

So it should not surprise us that *for us* to bring change in the church that we too will have to *'fill up in (our) flesh' the blood, sweat, and tears that are 'still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, the church!'*

Our work for change has met with a lot more failure than success.

I've been scolded, censured, sacked; dressed down, beaten up tossed out on the street; officially excommunicated & publicly sent to Coventry!

As a result, people like Gordon Preece, the editor of Zadok Perspectives, refer to me as a 'Jeremiab' - 'a weeping, often angry, prophet'. And, he is right!

1. Schaller,L. The Change Agent Abingdon Press Nashville 1986 p.11

2. Schaller,L. op cit p.118

Reflecting on my own painful experience as a wanna-be change agent, I have come up with my very own 'Change Agent Pain Scale'.

Change Agent Pain Scale

| <u>Scale of Pain</u> | <u>Impact of Pain</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Level One | Disturbing |
| Level Two | Distressing |
| Level Three | Devastating |

Let me give you three examples of three levels of pain I have experienced in working for change that many of you may have experienced as well.

Level One – Disturbing.

The last time that I spoke in a church in my home town 25% of the congregation walked out; and, after the service, of the 75% of those who stayed who hear what I had to say, only two people would speak to me – a friend of a friend and a visitor.

Level Two – Distressing.

I work for Queensland Baptist Care. I used to teach a course at the Queensland College of Ministries. But sometime back there was a complaint about the content of the course. So I was brought before a special meeting of the faculty to answer some questions about my theology. And -, though I thought that I acquitted myself quite well - I have never been asked back to teach another course again.

Level Three – Devastating.

I used to be a part of a small-is-beautiful, low-profile, long-term, hands-on, grass-roots, local community ministry called Dilaram. Then, one day, Dilaram was taken over by a larger-than-life, high-flying, fast-moving, do-anything, go-anywhere, global evangelistic agency known as YWAM.

I was concerned about the YWAMification of Dilaram So I decided to speak out against it . But - when I spoke out—I became a marked man.

Some of the world famous leaders of the International Council of YWAM, flew into town, from the four corners of the compass, to make sure that they dealt with me. They said I was 'a rebel', and, as 'a rebel', I should be summarily excommunicated. So they promptly expelled me, from the community - there and then - on the spot!

From that moment on, I was no longer allowed to be part of the community that, up until then, had been my whole life. I was literally put out of my home. And not permitted to return. Not even to pick up my luggage. Lest anyone talk to me. And, of course, everyone was forbidden to talk with me. Or offer me any help. Those who did so risked the same treatment themselves. So few did. In the ensuing days I tried to talk with people. But, sadly, even people who had been my friends, who saw me coming down the street, would turn their back on me and simply walk away.

I was devastated. That people I respected wouldn't even give me the time of day. But would precipitously pitch me and my family out of our home; dump my wife and I, with a young child, out in the street; and, then ban everybody in the community - on pain of excommunication,- from helping us. All in the name of the Lord!

An Emergency Plan For Acute Pain.

No one was more honest about the pain involved in the process than Paul.

'I have been in prison frequently, flogged severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. (And) once I was stoned. I've been in danger from rivers, in danger at sea, in danger in the city, in danger in the country; in danger from bandits, in danger from strangers, in danger from neighbours, and in danger from false friends. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not feel sick?'

II Cor 11: 23-26

But, somehow, Paul was able to absorb the pain without it destroying him.

'We are pressured on all sides, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.'

I Cor 4: 8-9

How did Paul manage to take the punishment without being crippled by it?

Paul had to quickly develop his very own 'Emergency Plan For Acute Pain'.

An Emergency Plan For Acute Pain

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Step One | Run |
| Step Two | Hide |
| Step Three | Die |
| Step Four | Rise |
| Step Five | Try Again |

Step One - 'Run'

We think of Paul as a heroic figure who stood his ground. But Paul knew that, at times, it was better to *run* than to stand your ground.

The Jews conspired to kill (Paul). Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But (he) learned of their plan. And his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall' And he ran away.

Acts 9:23-25

Step Two - 'Hide'

Paul was not only prepared to *run* away, he was also prepared to *stay* away for years at a time - *biding* from the risk of further harm.

'Later I went to Syria and Cilicia ... (where) I was personally unknown ...' And 'fourteen years later I went up to Jerusalem again'.

Gal. 1:21 - 2:1

Step Three - 'Die'

When Paul was hurt he cried, and sometimes the hurt was so great he wrote to his friends that he felt like he was actually '*dying*' inside.

'We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus ... we are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake ... So then, death is at work in us.'

2 Cor. 4: 10-12

Step Four - 'Rise'

Paul often felt like he was 'dying' inside, but – 'in Christ' – he said he found the strength to 'live' on - and to 'rise' to the next occasion.

'Dying, and yet (I) live on; beaten, but yet not finished; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.'
'I can do everything through (Christ) who gives me strength!'

2 Cor. 6:9, Phil 4:13

Step Five - 'Try Again'

Time and time again Paul overcame acute existential pain to try and try again.

'We who are alive are being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you'.

2 Cor. 4:12

At one period the pain I experienced from unresolved conflicts I had with people in my community (who were my neighbours) was so great I had to leave the street I had been living in for ten years, sell my house, and buy one at a safer distance.

During that time I used to drive into my driveway, park the car, run upstairs, close the door, pull the curtains and hide from people who might come by and knock at the door.

On a number of occasions I actually withdrew into my bedroom, lay down on my bed, curled up into a foetal position, bugged myself for comfort, and waited to die.

In an emergency, when the pain is acute, all of us need to be able, like Paul, to give ourselves permission to run and hide, for weeks, months, even years; to develop the capacity to die inside, yet stay alive, and rise to the challenge; to take heart from the example of Christ and, when we are ready, to try again!

However, it is my contention, we will only be able to deal with the *acute* pain we face in a crisis, if we learn to deal with the *chronic* pain we face constantly.

An Ongoing Program For Chronic Pain.

A little while ago my wife, Ange, and I decided to see how our friends were doing twenty years after we'd started our own faith-based community revolution.

Ange and I had been hard at it and were feeling frazzled from the relentless stress involved in doing our bit for our do-it-yourself contemporary church reformation. And we thought it might cheer us up to catch up with some of our comrades.

Our friends were now dispersed all over the planet. So we had to save up to buy 'round-the-world' tickets to visit them. But we eventually got the money together for the tickets and took off for our 'chai-and-chat' tour of India, Nepal, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the US and the UK.

It was just what the doctor ordered for us. It was a real 'pick-me-up' tonic to have the chance just to sit and talk over a cuppa with people that we had known in our youth and who, as middle-aged men and women, were struggling with the same issues in their lives as we were.

We noted that they - like us - were battling to maintain their commitment to integrity, family and community against immense external pressures, and constant internal temptations, to chuck it all in. And we noted that all of them - like us - bore the scars that came from battling to maintaining their commitment. An ongoing encounter with Christ.

The first characteristic we were able to distinguish, that seemed to give our friends a radical edge, was their encounter with Christ. It was their ongoing, intimate, existential experience of the amazing, magical, mystical love of God, revealed in Christ, that inspired hope in the possibility of redemption, in spite of disappointments, and infused their wounded weary hearts with a renewed capacity to love.

An ongoing commitment to vocation .

The second characteristic we were able to distinguish, that seemed to give our friends a radical edge, was their commitment to vocation. For them, vocation was not a call to be someone else – like someone more successful and/or more famous. For them, vocation was a call to become themselves – their true selves - more freely and more faithfully - and to be renewed in the joy of being who they really were.

An ongoing accountability to others.

The third characteristic we were able to distinguish, that seemed to give our friends a radical edge, was their accountability to others. None of them were saints. They all had problems - which left unresolved - would be inimical to their progress. But instead of denying their contradictions, they dealt with them - by welcoming feedback from people who knew their problems, and were committed to their resolution.

An Ongoing Program For Chronic Pain

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| First Part | An Ongoing Encounter With Christ |
| Second Part | An Ongoing Commitment To Vocation |
| Third Part | An Ongoing Accountability To Others |

Ange and I are very intentional about maintaining this ongoing program, as a way of dealing with our chronic existential pain, so that it does not destroy us.

We seek to maintain our ongoing encounter with Christ.

We live in the tension between two mutually exclusive polarities of experience simultaneously. On the one hand, we feel in choosing to care we continually get wounded. But, on the other hand, we feel by bringing our selves to Christ, and placing our selves in his hands, we have no wounds so great we cannot hope for healing. So we die the death of a thousand cuts daily. And daily seek healing.

We seek to maintain our ongoing commitment to vocation.

We are tempted to want to try to live our lives like our heroes. I would like to be Mahatma Gandhi; and Ange would like to be Mother Theresa. But we constantly come back to our calling, not to be someone else - no matter how good or kind, but to be our selves - our true selves. I daily listen to my wife call me by her pet name for me - and realize that is who I'm called to be - not 'bitter', not 'sour', but 'Sweet'.

We seek to maintain our ongoing accountability to others.

We are accountable to each other. Each morning Ange and I meet to monitor how we are going. Recently I was depressed. And Ange asked me straight to my face whether I had died without her knowing it. Because, she said, that living with me was like 'living with a dead man'. That was enough to make me realize I had get some help to get myself together. So I went my shrink and sorted myself out.

If we are trying to find a way to cope with chronic pain, then I would suggest that we adapt this program to our own needs - and adopt it as our very own!

Developing Our Personal Survival Plan

Step One

Get together in a group with a bunch of close friends.

Step Two

Think of as many answers to these question as you can :

- 1 What do I do that refreshes me and restores me?
- 2 What can I do to enliven my experience of Christ?
- 3 What can I do to energise my commitment to vocation?
- 4 What can I do to encourage my accountability to others?

Step Three

Pick your best three answers to each of these questions, and then make a list of these top twelve activities as your top twelve priorities.

Step Four

Make a plan of how you can put these twelve priorities into practice in the next twelve months - noting how you can start in the next month.

Step Five

Turn this plan of action into a statement of intention and share it with someone else. Talk over what you will need in order to make it work. And then pray for each other.

Spiritual Principles For Personal Survival.

Be continually converted to Christ.
Constantly relate to reality through Christ.

Be accountable to one another.
Answer the hard questions
as honestly as you possibly can.

Don't be responsible for everything,
but be responsive to everyone.

Never react; always respond;
as constructively as you can.

Don't try to do big things;
try to do little things with a lot of love.

Extend love unconditionally,
but trust only conditionally.

Don't have high expectations;
have high hopes with low expectations.

Cultivate seeds of hope in the grounds for despair.

Never forget –
There 's no salvation without grace,
and no grace without suffering.

Always remember –
that strength is made perfect in weakness.

Dave Andrews.

Spiritual Disciplines For Personal Survival

1. We need to make sure we get enough sleep each night, so that we can wake up every morning, not groggy, not grumpy, but glad to be alive. And as we wake we can be more aware of the love of God in us and around us, and give ourselves over to the joy of living more freely and more faithfully.
2. In order to prepare ourselves for the day we can take a bit of time just to sense the tensions in our bodies that signal things we are uptight about. Often these are grievances, real or perceived, of ways that people thwart our plans. We can note the issues they raise that we need to address. Then let them go.
3. Once we let our grievances go we can begin to let the love flow. We can try to do this by bringing to mind all the people that we are connected to in our community, then one by one, picture their face, speak their name, and pronounce a blessing upon each and every one of them, friend and foe alike.
4. We can often be in a hurry. On the move from morning to night. But at regular intervals throughout the day we can always take the time to stop, to look, and to listen. And to deliberate on the activities, conversations, and undercurrents in our community.
5. Every now and again we can try to get a bit of distance from our community and put it into a bit of perspective. We can meditate on our community. As it is. And as it might be. Imagining all the things we could do to bring people in the locality together more.

Spiritual Disciplines For Personal Survival (cont.)

6. Because there's so many things we could do, it's very difficult to figure out exactly what we should do. We are often confused. So we can seek clarity by listening to the still small voice inside us. We can listen until we hear a word that is right for us. Then we can take that word to heart.
7. We can take it to heart. But not go for it on our own. We can run it by a group of people whose opinions we trust. And together decide on what we are going to do. Discern the direction we ought to take, on the basis of consensus and consent.
8. Even if we get the direction right, doesn't mean we get the action right. We may get it wrong far more often than we'd like to admit. So it's important to be a part of a group that can help us monitor our progress by reflecting on our actions.
9. When we reflect on our actions, we are brought face to face with our failures, as well as our successes. And if we're not careful we can let our failures discount our successes. So it's important to be a part of a group that can help us not only evaluate our progress but validate our progress.
10. Last, but not least, we need to keep coming back to the person of Jesus whom we encounter most enchantingly in the gospels. We need to prayer-fully immerse ourselves in the scriptures so as to let the spirit of Jesus engage us, challenge us, and change us.

Dave Andrews