

## THIS WEEKS MESSAGE

September 29/30'07  
"Our Amazing Race" Series

This Week's Message: "Can We Change"  
Pastor Mark Burch

Jeremiah 13:23 "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?"  
Ezekiel 36:26 "I will give you a new heart...I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh...I will put my Spirit within you."



Perhaps one of the key reasons that so many churches close their doors each year across North America, is because of the inability to adapt or change for the times. One generation founds the church with a passion and mission to impact their community...but without an intentional and regular "re-tuning" of the missional instrument (the church) it can easily fall out of step with the times and places and people it has been called to reach.

From the birth of "the church" in Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago, the journey of Jesus' family has been one long journey of change and adaptation. The MESSAGE has remained the same (the offer of life through Jesus Christ) but the methods and approaches to ministry have changed again and again.

So...what will it take for Willow Park to adapt to the time, place, and culture we live in today? How can we with relevance and authenticity bring the message of Jesus to our generation?

Bottom line...Can we Change?

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

### History (Making it Personal)

1. Talk about a time you tried to make a "life-change." Maybe something as simple as giving up a habit, or as significant as dealing with prejudice or racism in your life...How easy was it to "re-orient" yourself?
2. Think back to a time in your life when you wanted to do something in a way it had never been done before... How did people respond? What were your results?
3. You may not be able to re-wire your DNA – but what have you learned about changing your activities, your habits, your mindsets? Why is "change" so difficult?

### Digging Deeper (Looking to the Bible)

4. Read Jeremiah 13:23 together with Ezekiel 36:24-33 and 2 Corinthians 17. Talk about the difference between human effort to change – and spiritual transformation that only God can do. Have you witnessed a leopard's spots being changed? A stone-cold heart warmed?
5. Take some time to walk through the book of Acts – recalling the "seasons" of the church that we talked about on the weekend.
  - a. Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35 – ethnic bound
  - b. Acts 6:1 cracks in the fellowship
  - c. Acts 8:1 pushed out of the nest
  - d. Acts 8:4-5; 26-31 half-breeds
  - e. Acts 10:9-22 to the "gentiles"
  - f. Acts 11:19-21 cross cultural boundaries
  - g. Acts 15:5-11 Do I have to live like a Jew?
  - h. Acts 17:16-32 Clash of religious world-views
  - i. I Corinthians 9:19-23 – All things to all people
6. In light of the study above – Do you think the New Testament church would have become what it did, without the persecution God allowed? What did it take to move these people beyond "doing church" just for themselves?

### Taking It Home (Application)

7. Reflecting on the early church – are we any different? Have we adopted a consumer mindset when it comes to selecting a church family? What do you think?
8. Pray for your group members, and pray for our church family, that God would compel us to look beyond ourselves to the 1,000's in our region who need to know Christ.
9. Ask God for a "new heart" to replace the old – let Him know that you are a leopard that really would like some stripes instead of strips.