

I. Introduction

A. Our prayers for government and leaders are often motivated by a desire for change. For our prayers to be on target and effective, it is important that we understand how change happens in a nation.

1. What is the process of change?
2. How does prayer fit into the process of change?

II. How a Nation Shifts

A. There are four different types of change:

1. **Directed Change**

- a. Someone who has the power to make change, uses it
- b. “Top-down” change; centrally controlled and imposed
- c. Power-centric – derives its source from someone having power to make change

2. **Organic Change**

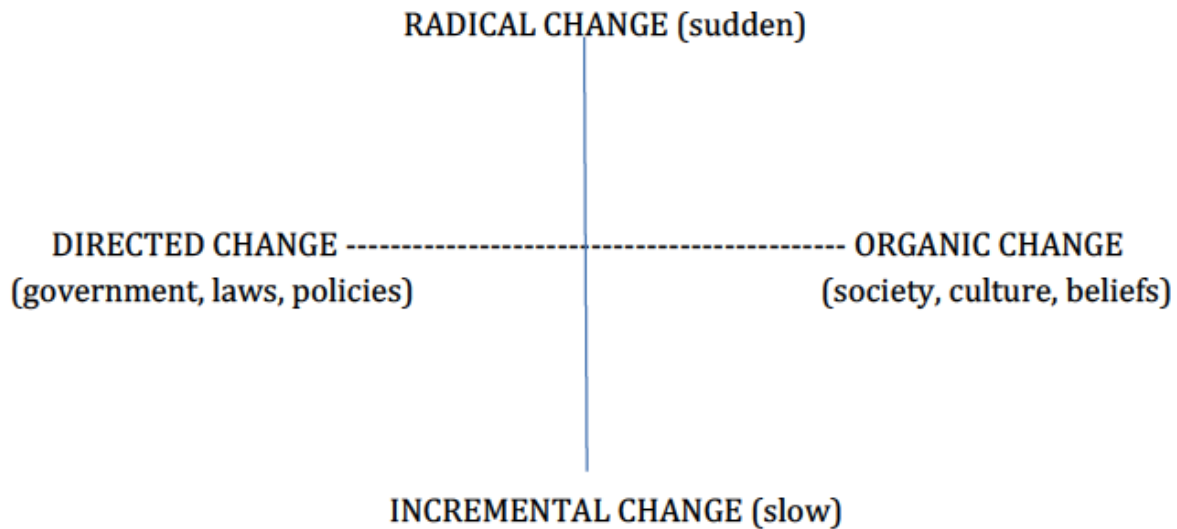
- a. Happens because people’s beliefs change; value-centric, “bottom-up”
- b. As beliefs change, society changes
- c. It’s voluntary change – people choose to make this change

3. **Radical Change**

- a. Quick or large-scale, sudden or significant
- b. Episodic change – occurs occasionally and at irregular intervals
- c. Often carries unforeseen secondary implications

4. **Incremental Change**

- a. Gradual change; happens in steps or over a period of time
- b. Often difficult to measure when it starts or stops
- c. Difficult to attribute to one specific source or cause



B. Directed and Radical Change (Top Left)

1. This is the kind of change most people tend to focus on
2. Legal challenges, demonstrations, anger, protests, demands
3. This kind of change happens utilizing the power of the government or courts
 - a. A modern-day example of this would be the government's Covid mandates
4. Where Christians tend to focus their prayers: *change the laws, change the policies*

C. Radical and Organic Change (Top Right)

1. Rare to see radical and organic change
2. Dramatic change from the bottom-up
3. Politically, this is usually messy and risky with uncertain outcomes
 - a. Example: "Arab Spring"
4. Usually radical because of many underlying, incremental changes
5. Prayer focuses: *revival, renewal, awakening, reformation*

D. Directed and Incremental Change (Bottom Left)

1. Want the government to make the changes, but realize it will take time, steps
2. The focus is still on government, usually through convincing politicians
3. Prayer focuses: *elections, candidates, lobbying, changing the minds of parliamentarians, appointments of the right people*

E. Organic and Incremental Change (Bottom Right)

1. Focus on changing the beliefs of the people more than the policies of government
2. Changing beliefs of people will result in organic change politicians cannot refuse
3. Prayer focuses: *values, belief, salt & light, leaven, righteousness, transformation*

III. Prayer Strategies to Shift a Nation

- A. For prayer to be effective, it needs to focus on the right things. Focusing on one thing does not exclude the others, but it gives us our *priority* in prayer and a target for evaluating progress.

1. Focus on organic, not directed change

- a. Most of Jesus' examples of the kingdom of God were organic in nature.
 - i. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mt. 13:31-32; Mk. 4:30-32; Lk. 13:18-19)
 - ii. The Parable of the Leaven (Mt. 13:33; Lk. 13:20-21)
 - iii. The Parable of the Farmer who Planted Seed (Mk. 4:26-29)
- b. Paul taught for two years in Ephesus. As a result, the locals burned millions of dollars' worth of sorcery books and the local craftsmen saw their idol sales significantly drop. Nations change when people change.
- c. *Focus your prayers on people, not programs or policies*

2. Focus on incremental, not radical change

- a. Change often comes slowly
 - i. Abraham was to be father of a nation, yet God gave him only *one* son
 - ii. Jesus came to establish a kingdom and started with just twelve disciples; said He'd be right back, and He's been gone for almost 2000 years
 - iii. God is incremental – "glory to glory", "line upon line"
 - iv. It's not that God never moves in seismic shifts, but these are usually the result of compounding incremental movements
- b. Don't measure the significance of the change by the size of the change
- c. *Focus your prayers on the journey, not the destination*

3. Every change involves a transition (something that must change) and a trigger (something that causes the change)

- a. Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30)
 - i. The transition was to see an increase in wealth
 - ii. The trigger was investing and doing business wisely
- b. "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few" (Lk. 10:2)
 - i. The transition is in the harvest that must be reaped
 - ii. The trigger is to pray for more workers, not more harvest
- c. *Focus your prayers on the trigger, not the transition*

4. Every change has a root (cause of the situation) and a result (what needs to change)

- a. Jesus constantly focused on the root

"The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil..." (Lk. 6:45, ESV)

- b. *Focus your prayers on the root, not the result*

IV. Conclusion

- A. We have to acknowledge that our track record of effectiveness in prayer for our nation has been limited. One reason is, the Church has typically attempted to use prayer to impose change on the nation, rather than taking an organic and incremental approach to our prayer strategy.
- B. If we implement the four prayer strategies above, our prayers for the nation will be more fruitful and effective.