

Immovable Cheese

Slide -

Slide - Motivational speaker and author Spencer Johnson wrote a book in 1998 entitled, "Who Moved My Cheese."

It became a monster hit reaching number one bestseller status on various lists such as the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Businessweek, USA Today.

The book was essentially a modern parable about change and how different people react in a positive or negative way in order to accommodate change in their lives.

Slide - The story involves four characters who live in a maze: the mice Scurry and Sniff, and two 'little people', Hem and Haw, a term for indecisiveness

They live in a maze, a representation of one's environment, and look for cheese, representative of happiness and success.

The idea of cheese and who moves it was the author's clever way of expressing the idea that what we desire in life (the cheese) and how we obtain it is constantly changing and unless we adapt, we will die.

In a section called The Handwriting on the Wall, Dr. Johnson summarizes the seven key ideas in the book concerning change.

The first idea is the base idea and then the other six ideas are various ways that people can successfully deal with the first idea. So, the first idea is of course

1. **Slide - Change happens**

That's the base, change happens, or as the author puts it "they keep moving my cheese around."

This is reality number one, the fact that the source of your happiness, the basis or the object of your contentment is constantly changing.

If you understand and accept this then you have taken the first and most important step in dealing with change.

Once you have grasped key idea number one: change happens, you can now use the other six key ideas in your own personal experience with change.

2. **Slide - Anticipate change** – Be ready for the cheese to move. Don't fret, don't worry or whine.

Just be ready for it to happen because it always happens there's always change.

3. **Slide - Monitor change** – Smell the cheese from time to time to see if it's still good

sometimes change is needed and we just don't realize it.

We're wondering what's going on, what's happening and we realized oh I need to change this.

4. **Slide - Adapt to change quickly** – The sooner you let go the old cheese the sooner you get the new cheese,

don't waste all your energy and resources and goodwill fighting change get into it or get left behind.

5. **Slide - Change with change** – Go **where** the cheese is, don't just acknowledge that there is a change you must also change yourself if you want to succeed.

6. **Slide - Enjoy the change** – Savor the cheese, change can be good so enjoy the experience as much as you can.

7. **Slide - Repeat change** – "Hey they moved the cheese again."

Realize that the change experience is constant in life and you'll have to go through it many times because that's what life is about.

People spend the greatest part of their energy and ability resisting inevitable change that happens in everybody's life and what the author here was trying to get across was instead of spending all your time and energy resisting change, in other words, resisting changes is your default position how about considering change from time to time, cooperating with it and the keys that it gives here.

I remember the hard time I had excepting the change to wearing glasses.

Slide - Our life is more than cheese.

If our lives were lived only here on this earth and we had to deal with the ever-shifting reality of this world with only our own wisdom or maybe the wisdom of Dr. Johnson, this little book would be very helpful.

Actually, it is helpful in the sense that it does remind us that in life things do change and we constantly have to adapt in order to deal successfully with this reality.

One very important thing that the book fails to mention however is that not all things change, not everything changes.

As a matter of fact, in this changing world there are several unchanging realities and that's really what I want to focus on today.

Things That Don't Change

Slide - Unchanging Realities

1. God does not change

The Bible says that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1

The God of creation has always existed even before this changing world existed, He existed.

Not only has God always existed but He has always been the same without change.

A couple of scriptures,

Slide - Malachi 3:6 "For I am the Lord, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob."

And then James says the following concerning this matter,

Slide - James 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

No change, you always know who you're dealing with when you're dealing with the Lord.

This eternal **changeless** being created a changing world and in doing so made possible the expression of His own immutability.

We know, we understand, we appreciate His unchanging nature because we live in a changing world.

Otherwise we wouldn't be able to discern this primary quality that He has.

That God is **changeless** is seen as we glimpse His eternal nature through the looking-glass of this passing world.

Slide - 2. Unchanging Realities - The Word of God never changes

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

This unchanging feature of God's Word is seen in various context,

Slide - for example the premise of God's Word does not change.

The story that the Word tells is **relevant** to every generation from creation to the consummation of the ages,

the **content** of Scriptures is the divine **context** for our lives and our history and our future,

in other words, the Word tells every generation it's essential life story without change.

People who heard the gospel in the 17th century and in the 11th century and in the 9th century and in the first century were being addressed with a timeless message that didn't change.

God's Word fit perfectly their life and circumstances whether they were Gentiles living in Thessalonica or Jews living in Jerusalem and 21 centuries later Americans living in Floral City.

God's Word never changes and it has the ability to explain man's condition in every context in any time until the end of the world.

Another unchanging feature of God's Word is the fact that the

Slide - Power of God's Word doesn't change either.

The Word never loses its power to establish moral norms.

We read epistles for example that teaches how we should conduct ourselves in the church and as Christians and what is the right way to act and what is the wrong way to act and so on and so forth we're reading that today it has the power to form our character and to direct our lives,

and yet people a thousand years ago were reading the exact same words that had exactly the same powerful effect on their lives.

What book? what notes? what author can claim the same other than the Lord who has given us His word?

The words of men come and go, the words of men rise and fall, in their ability to move people and to move nations;

How many people remember Mao Zedong? the leader of the revolution in China brought the communist ideology to China, and how many people remember Mao Zedong's little red book?

Every citizen had to have a little red book it was actually a little red book and what it included were the sayings of Mao, how one should conduct themselves what life was about so everybody had that book notice I said how many people have heard of Mao Zedong, not everybody raised their hand, then I asked how many people have heard of Mao Zedong's little red book and even less people raised their hand.

And Mao, it wasn't like he was alive five hundred years ago I was just in the twentieth century and yet many have forgotten his name and don't know who he is look much less the little red book.

Where is he today? he's gone and where is his little red book? it's a souvenir it doesn't guide anybody's life anymore.

But God's Word has never lost a fraction of its power to do what it claims to do and **that is to regenerate man's everlasting soul.**

So, the Word has not changed in its premise it hasn't changed in its power and neither has it changed its everlasting promise.

Slide - **The promise of God's Word never changes**

Adam and Eve believed the promise contained in God's Word to them and they lived to hope beyond mankind's greatest sin.

Noah believed the promise contained in God's Word and survived the global flood.

Abraham believed the promise contained in God's Word and had a son at the age of 100.

The Jews believed and they eventually lived in the land of milk and honey.

The Apostles believed and saw a risen Lord.

Today those who believe and receives unconditional forgiveness and the indwelling of God's Spirit.

The Word does not change in its promise that those who believe it will receive the blessings that it offers,

So, God's Word is unchanging in its premise, its power and its promise;

people change, society changes ideas change but God's Word never changes,

isn't that wonderful to note to understand to grasp when you're reading God's Word, you're reading something that just will not change.

The beauty of that is that when you learn something in God's Word when you receive it and believe it what you have just learned will not change.

Things changed because it was a man-made thing made that up and human beings changed it.

There is an expression "we used to think but now we know" or "we used to know but now we think"

Isn't it wonderful when you read just the Bible and believe what's in the Bible what you have learned as true remains true today tomorrow forever?

How do you think the Apostles and the early martyrs were able to go to their deaths unwilling to change what they believed and confessed in order to save their own lives?

Can't we understand the motivation that they had, go ahead beat me kill me, how can I deny what I know is true, and you killing me is not going to make it untrue that's the power of God's Word, to give us power.

Slide – 3. Unchanging Realities Jesus Christ doesn't change

Hebrews 13:8

You read books that were written 300 years ago about Jesus, devotional literature written about Jesus hundreds of years ago

and you can relate immediately to what he said he's talking about somebody that you know,

you're reading it and you're saying that's exactly how Jesus is,

I understand that about Jesus I've also discovered that about Him,

wait a minute you're 300 years apart talking about the same person.

How does that work? Jesus doesn't change.

In speaking of His timelessness and the timeless nature that He has the Hebrew writer says of the Lord Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever, not only is Christ unchanging He is also eternal and omnipresent, for this reason:

Slide - He was the reason and force for creation – Colossians 1:16

He was with the Jews to sustain them in the desert – I Corinthians 10:4

He died on the cross – John 19

He appeared to the Apostles after His resurrection – Acts 1:3-4

He is with all Christians through the Holy Spirit – Acts 2:38

He will be with all Christians and judge sinners and disbelievers at the end of the world – Matthew 25

He will rule at the right hand of God for all eternity – Matthew 19:28

How can one person **do** all these things? How can one person **be** at all these things?

How can the same person exist in all of these different dimensions in the past physical world and in the future spiritual?

How can the same person do that?

He is unchanging, why?

Because He is eternal that's why. And so Jesus does not change in person or in position or in power.

Slide - We have the world we live changing but God's kingdom is unchanging.

When we say that He's the anchor of our souls, He's always at the same place isn't He?

I encourage you to listen to the voice inside your head or your heart that speaks to you and I encourage you always ask yourself who's talking to you?

If the one inside is criticizing you and telling you that you're unworthy and no good ask yourself is that Jesus talking to you?

If the voice inside says come you who are burdened and heavy-laden come, I will give you rest, that's not the devil talking and Jesus speaks to all of us in the same way.

Why? Because the same Lord that speaks to me through His word and through His Spirit speaks to you

His wisdom has given us concrete word in our language so we can make sure that it is He who is talking to us through His word.

He's easy to find, He's easy to recognize in every generation in every situation because He is always the same.

So, in our lives as citizens of this world the cheese does get moved and we **do** have to accommodate ourselves to never-ending change until we die

But in our lives as citizens of the kingdom of God however we can take comfort in the fact that there is **a constant a permanence a stable set of realities**

because the source of our happiness and peace is always the same, nobody is going to move it and here's why we can have confidence in what I call our **immovable cheese** that's where the title comes from.

Slide - We have confidence because as I mentioned God never changes,

the God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament is the same God of the 21st century.

Now that cuts both ways,

you know that God you read in the Old Testament who says if you disobey me the earth will swallow you up and you will die,

that's the same God that we are praying to,

the God that is offended because someone offers worship to him in an improper manner and they die instantly that's the same God that we have today.

The God who spoke to His people with fire and noise and the earth trembling,

that's the same God that we pray to today

it's not like God mellowed out in the 21st century to let things slide,

No, He's a holy God, remember the Hebrews were afraid to even go forward they said to Moses you talk to Him don't let Him come near us yeah that God that's our God.

Yes, we can depend on Him and yes, He never changes but let's make sure we understand exactly who He is,

a holy God demanding that we be a holy people, in our speech, in our conduct and in our attention.

We have confidence because God's Word never change.

The story it tells remains the same, the power it has never waivers, the promises it makes are ever sure we can depend on it

but we also have to remember to learn it, preach it as it is and make sure that we pass it on to the next generation complete without changing without eliminating or adding that's our responsibility.

And of course, **God's Christ never changes**, He is and will forever be the Son of God and Savior of our souls we can depend on the Lord the same Lord that the martyrs in the first century gave up their lives in order to confess

we need to be ready to give up our lives in the same way.

He is worthy for us to give up our lives in order to maintain our good confession of faith.

We haven't been asked to do this in a dramatic way of course but we could we could.

And so after hearing about these two realities the two realities being one: things in this world change constantly and two: things in the kingdom of God always remain the same.

After reviewing these two realities what conclusions should we come to what should these things mean for us?

Slide - Well knowing these two things means that first of all we must learn to separate these two,

you see just because your world changes from time to time doesn't mean that God is changing or His power has diminished or His promises are no longer available, don't confuse the changing world with the unchanging God.

Some people think that because their lives have changed for the worse that God has somehow lost His power or backed out His promises,

they don't realize that a change in life especially a difficult one is usually a call for us to sustain an unchanging faith.

How else does God tests our faith? With gifts with presents with good times?

No He examines our faith through difficult changes, a change of health, a change of economic level, a change of ability a change in family.

Through our changes God is whispering to us do you still believe that I'm here

do you still believe that I am with you

do you still believe that I can deliver you?

As a matter of fact, turmoil caused by change is best dealt with an unshakable faith that is steady and unmovable.

Perhaps in the context of this lesson we could say that one-way God tests our faith is to move our cheese around from time to time.

Slide - Finally knowing these realities about the nature of the world and the kingdom should mean that **we must be ready and are ready for the final change.**

All of our changes are simply conditioning us to realize accept and prepare for the final change and that is of course death itself.

It's amazing that everything in the physical world points to this sobering reality but so many people refuse to deal with it let alone prepare for it.

And when I say prepare, I don't mean buying a burial plot and planning your funeral and getting a will ready I mean of course do that but that's simply a plan for the disposal of your body not a preparation for death.

Slide - Preparing for death requires us to decide where we will live after we die that's prepare for death.

Will we live with and commune with God in His eternal and spiritual kingdom of life is that where we plan on living after we die?

Or will we live in darkness plagued by regret and tortured with the absent of the Spirit eternally?

Regardless of where your earthly cheese / happiness is or was or will be, regardless of how well you've learned to adapt to the changes in this world, all of us need to take comfort in the fact that the unchanging God makes an unchanging promise to you in His unchanging Word guaranteed by His unchanging Son

and this is that you are to believe in Christ confess His name repent of your sins and are baptized today,

you too can become unchanging in life unchanging in spirit in time and joy and love in Christ all unchanging.

And the way to prepare for that is the same today as it was 2,000 years ago.

We could be transported back to the first century we would not understand the language we would not understand the social customs the food would be very strange for us and what we would drink we would become lately lost I mean we'd recognize human beings but other than that we wouldn't be able to communicate you know we would be completely lost except if we were at church,

if we were at a church service 2,000 years ago we might not understand the language but we would know exactly what was going on.

And if someone came forward after the teacher or preacher had spoken what we thought was the gospel we would know exactly what was going on as they went to the river or whatever we know exactly what's going on, we wouldn't understand the words but we'd know exactly what was happening, why?

Because the way to prepare for death 2,000 years ago has remained the same for 2,000 years,

we prepare for death in exactly the same way: we bury the old body of sin in the waters of baptism we resurrect a new spirit a new life a regenerated soul ready now for death

Invitation - And so if you desire to live in this future unchanging place and have not yet prepared for that in the way that I have described to you even today

if the Lord is calling you to do what Christians have done for thousands of years if this is the day you are to respond then we encourage you to do that now.

Slide -