

## Stand Fast In A Changing World

We Live in a Time of Tremendous Change

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Things have changed tremendously since I was a kid; life is not even close to how it was when I was growing up. I was born and raised in southern California about 20 miles from Los Angeles in the little city of Lakewood where I grew up in a new home that my dad purchased at the end of World War II. It was a 3 bedroom, 1 bath home of about 1,200 square feet.

Things have changed; homes at that time were much smaller than they are now. I lived there until I graduated from high school and got married; another change. Now, on average, people move once every five years, but at that time people put down roots and they lived there, like we did, all the way until they grew up and got married.

There were around 250 homes in my neighborhood. There was an association in the neighborhood that had a pool in it where I was able to get together with most of the other kids in the neighborhood. We had swim meets and all kinds of things. Then, 95 percent of those kids lived in the same house, just like I did, until they graduated.

Our house was the third house from the corner. The corner house on our street, where the Ponsey family lived, had three children. Think about this: There were 5 people in this small home, 1,200 square feet, with 1 bathroom. The next house was the Millers, they had four kids, and then our home where we had two. The next house was the Fidges; they had three kids. The next house was the Kyfers; they had three kids. The next house was the Owens and they also had three kids. And the next house was the Adeburs and they had two kids.

The far house across the street was where the Cooks lived and they had four kids. Next door to them were the Johnsons with three kids and next to them were the Nesbins who were out of the ordinary and did not have any kids. The next house was the Burnetts; they had two kids. The Robins' had two kids, the Calahans also had two kids, and the Cochranes had six kids.

The first 14 houses on our block had a total of 36 kids. What a difference from the times we live in today. There were 40 homes on our block and they all had tons of kids; that is why my generation is called the baby boomers. The neighborhood I live in today has 30 homes and I do not think there are 15 kids in the whole neighborhood. I doubt that there are 15 kids; I rarely see any kids out there. Where I grew up, the street was full of kids.

Another big change, most moms stayed home and raised their kids; I can only remember two moms in the whole neighborhood that worked. How things have changed. Generally, very few people got divorced and when they did it was a scandal.

Now, all of you young moms with kids think about this and you decide if you would allow your kids to do what all the kids in our neighborhood did and what I did. We all had bicycles and from the time we were 9 to 12 years old and we rode our bikes everywhere. We would ride 20 miles one way to the beach. We would tell our moms in the morning that we were going to ride our bikes to the beach and do you know what our moms would say? They would say, "You'd better be home in time for dinner or your dad will probably spank you." We were gone all day and we did not even take a lunch with us and our moms did not worry about us.

Do you know how we fed ourselves? We spent part of the day at the beach collecting bottles and asking people if they would give us their soda bottles when they were finished. The deposit on soda bottles at that time was 2 cents and a hamburger at the beach was twice as much as a hamburger anywhere else, costing 50 cents. We would gather bottles, it would usually take us a couple of hours and we would walk miles and miles to feed ourselves. Sometimes we would mow lawns to earn bus fare so that we could go all the way to Huntington Beach because, in those days, the bus fare was 25 cents one way. So, we would have to earn 50 cents to go to Huntington Beach when we were only 10, 11, or 12 and we would be gone all day. Things have changed tremendously.

Another thing that has changed since I was a kid: Would you young moms let your kids hitchhike up and down the Oregon coast when they were between 12 and 14 years old? Maybe 15? We did. I hitchhiked a lot and my mom and dad knew it; I would tell my mom, "We're all going to hitchhike down to Doheny Beach today to go surfing." All our moms would say was, "You'd better be home in time for dinner."

When I was a kid, we really had freedom of movement. It was nothing to hitchhike 60-70 miles in a day. What a difference from the times we live in now. My family got a telephone in 1953 before we owned a television set. That telephone was called a party line and served three families. With a party line, you had to pick up the phone and listen to see if someone else was already on the phone. If someone else was already using the line, you were supposed to put the phone down and wait until the line was free so you could make your call. Things have changed; today, what do you kids and all of us have? We have 'blueberry' phones, 'raspberry' phones, every kind of 'berry' phone. What an age.

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My family got a television in 1955. At that time, which is still pretty much the same today, we lived in the big media center. We had seven channels on our TV; that was it. Today, I have over 100 channels and I have to pay for them. I sit down at night with Debby to watch TV, I go through 100 channels, I hand her the clicker, and I say, "There's nothing worth watching on TV" and I go do something else.

When I was a kid, television was free. Today you can watch nudity on TV, you can watch queers, sex scenes, blasphemy, and the list goes on and on. When I was a kid you watched shows like: *Father Knows Best*, *Lassie*, *My Three Sons*, *Leave it to Beaver*, some cowboy shows, and some other shows like *Dragnet*. Again, what a change!

When I was a kid, our parents did not buy us a car. Can you young people imagine that? They did not buy us a lot of clothes or a lot of toys. In my family, my sister and I did not even get an allowance. My dad always said, "If you want something, you need to get a job and you need to work for it." Think of how much things have changed.

I got my first job when I was eight years old where I worked on Sunday selling the Herald-Examiner newspaper. I sold an average of 20 papers on Sunday and I received 5 cents per paper so I usually came home with a dollar. When I got home, what do you think my dad said to me? He said, "How much money did you make"? I would tell him I had made a dollar and he would tell me to give him the money. I would give him the money and he would give me back five cents. That was what I had for a whole week. In those days, five cents would buy you a candy bar, a donut, a bag of popcorn, or a fudgcicle at school, and he thought that five cents was all you needed.

Later on, I got another paper route for 40 dollars a month, then I got another one for 80 dollars a month and I always had to give my money to my dad. He saved it for me and he always gave me a little bit out of my own money. So, on the side, I mowed lawns and I was able to pocket all of that money because I did not want my dad to know that I needed more money or where it was really being spent. I had regular customers and, again, I mowed lawns until I got married when I was 18 years old.

After working a paper route, I worked at a car wash on the weekends and, at that time, minimum wage was \$1.25 per hour. Most of the time from ninth grade on, I worked two jobs. I worked at Delmonico's Pizza Parlor busing tables, Clue's Strawberry and Rhubarb Farm, and at Cole's Market as a box boy. I went over to the bayou where all the Mexicans lived with the extra money I made mowing lawns and I would buy cars in there, take them to the school, and sell them. I let the other kids make payments to me because they did not have the money to buy a car even though a lot of them had jobs too.

My dad knew I was working all of these jobs and he continued to take my money and save most of it for me. When I was 18 years old and I got married, he gave me my money. I was not any different than the other kids I grew up with; we were all the same. I turned 18 and got married, he gave me my money, and I bought my first house when I was 19 years old. How many young people now have a house? How many of you have a house by the time you are 21? All of my buddies and I all had homes; the last one of us to buy a house lived in an apartment for few years and bought a brand new house in Cerrito when he was 21. What a difference! But the reason we could do that was because there were jobs.

Lots of jobs were available; we did not go to college. Most of us barely got through high school. When I started working, in the first job I had at General Motors, I worked swing shift and made 10 cents per hour more than my dad made. How things have changed, brethren.

Now, our kids go to school, end up with huge debt from student loans, and when they get out of school, they are lucky if they can get a job. There are a lot of things that have changed since I was a kid.

**Matthew 24:42 (Amplified)** Watch therefore give strict attention, be cautious and active, for you do not know in what kind of a day whether a near or remote one your Lord is coming.

In this verse, God tells us to watch; but for what are we watching? The main thing God wants us to watch for are the changes in morals and character in society and how far the world has fallen when it comes to every day Christianity. God is gone from our government, our schools, and our universities. He is gone from our churches, our politics, and most peoples' lives. Things have deteriorated very rapidly in the last four or five years in the whole world, not just in America.

I am going to give an example of the morals and character and the lack of God in most peoples' lives today. I will tell a story about a young lady that JB and I know and most of you will think that it is not normal, but it is. What she is doing she thinks is absolutely normal, and a lot of kids and young adults are doing the same thing.

I believe this young lady has four kids; she might only have three. She has never been married and her kids all have a different dad. She told JB that she is pregnant again even though she has a boyfriend who she really does not like but she goes around with

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him because he has money and she needs money, like we all do. She told JB that she is getting an abortion because the other four kids were taken away and she was not going to let another man take a kid away from her. She went out and got an abortion and then she went and got artificially inseminated because she did not want a man to be able to take the kid from her.

What she really wants is a meal ticket. She gets money for having a kid because the state pays for them. These are where our morals are! When she went to get artificially inseminated, it cost too much money and she could not afford it so she asked another guy to credit her. He said he would help her out; he said he had no interest in her but if she wanted to have a kid he would help her and once she had the kid he would be done with her and he did not even want the kid to know he was its dad. This is where we are in America.

Things have changed tremendously. In Matthew 24:42, God tells us to pay strict attention and to be cautious and active. Pay attention to what? Be cautious about what? Be active in what?

He is telling us to give strict attention to how we conduct *our* lives and how we treat one another! And, I will get back to this, how we treat one another within the church. He wants us to give strict attention to Bible study, prayer, fasting, meditation, and He wants us to be cautious that we do not get lackadaisical when it comes to these things. He wants us to make real changes in our lives. He wants us to be active in them and active in our relationships with one another within the body of Christ. He warns us that life is short and that we need to be prepared spiritually because we do not know if the day of Christ's coming is near or far. God tells us the same thing in the very next chapter.

**Matthew 25:13 (Living)** So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of My return.

**Matthew 26:41 (Living)** Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.

Brethren, there is a lot of temptation out in the world now; anything goes. You can do anything you want; you can have anything you want. God says the spirit is willing but the body is weak. How true that is.

**Luke 21:34-36 (Living)** Watch out! Do not let your hearts be dulled by

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carousing and drunkenness, and by the worries of this life. Do not let that day catch you unaware, like a trap. For that day will come upon everyone living on the earth. Keep alert at all times. And pray that you might be strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand before the Son of Man.

As we do what God instructs us to do in watching, and we look around our neighborhoods and the cities we live in, our country, and the world, we see every aspect of life and what God intended for mankind deteriorating. Do you think we should not be concerned? Is it time to be concerned? We should want to make changes in our lives; right now!

We call the church of God "family" and we are the family of God but we do not treat one another like family all the time. I do not treat my family like a lot of us treat one another. Why is that? Since God has called me into the church the gossip mill has always been in really good shape. If you and I treated one another like family the gossip would cease to exist! In my family, we do not gossip about one another. Are we perfect? Absolutely not! We do not gossip because we have our faults and we have plenty of them. But, families do not gossip about one another because they love one another.

The world is changing dramatically and not for the better. This should concern us and make us want to change and get closer to God. A big change within God's church would be to eliminate the gossip mill and for all of us to start acting like family. Please turn to I Corinthians 16. Again, I have the Living New Testament.

**I Corinthians 16:13-14 (Living)** Keep your eyes open for spiritual endangering. Stand true to the Eternal. And whatever you do, do it with kindness and with love.

There is no love in gossip. Another change we could make is offending others and in being offended. We need to be very careful with what we say to one another. Often, we do not realize that we have offended someone by our actions or our words. We all know what it says in Proverbs 18:19:

**Proverbs 18:19** A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city and contentions are like the bars of a castle.

When we offend someone, it is tough to win them back over. On the othe side of this

ugly coin, being offended and letting yourself become offended is very detrimental to your spiritual growth and well-being. It is really tough on you to allow yourself to be offended.

**Ecclesiastes 10:4** If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your post for conciliation pacifies great offense.

This verse is saying, "Do your duty and humble yourself." Do you know the definition of conciliation? The definition is: to bring together, to win over, to soothe the anger of, to have good will. This is what God wants us to do when someone offends us! He wants us to humble ourselves and reconcile with them.

I am going to tell you a story that happened with JB and myself at the swap meet and you tell me if this would offend you. JB and I were looking in this guy's stall that we did not know and I had gone up to him earlier and tried to buy some parts from him. He would not sell them to me for the price I wanted to pay. JB was in his stall later so I walked up there and JB was buying the very parts I wanted, so I said to the guy, "You'll sell him these parts but you wouldn't sell them to me. Why not? Isn't my money good?" He said, "You're an a-s-" and you know the rest of it. Do you know what JB and I did? We busted up! We were laughing so hard that his wife started giggling with us.

I asked this guy, "Why is he a good guy and I'm bad?" Then, he started giggling and we talked to him for a while, we got our parts, and I asked him what his name was and he said his name was Red, introduced us to his wife and we talked for quite a while before we left his stall. Now, I did not get upset, JB did not get upset, and do you know why we did not get upset? We are not going to the swap meet to get upset with people. We do not go out there for a corn dog or a soda pop, we are not going out there to look at rusty car parts. We are going out there to make money. If we can buy things from Red, it is a home run!

Brethren, should we not have that attitude every day of our lives? Should we not get up every day and say, "I'm trying to qualify for the Kingdom of God"? Why should I be offended today? Why should I gossip? Why should I over-drink? Why should I lie?" I can go on and on with this list. What are you and I trying to do? Is the Kingdom of God not our goal? Now, you are probably sitting there saying to yourself, "Wait a minute, Kim. We're under grace; we don't have to qualify."

That is right; we are under grace. So is the whole world. We have all sinned and the penalty for sin is death but because of grace, God does not execute the penalty

immediately. If He did, no one would be left on planet earth. However, you and I still have to qualify for the Kingdom.

**Matthew 25:23-30 (NLT)** "Good work," his master said, "You are a good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over this small amount so now I will give you much more." Then, the man with the one thousand dollars came and said, "Sir, I knew you were a very hard man and I was afraid of you. I was afraid you would rob me of what I earned so I hid your money in the earth and here it is." But his master replied, "Wicked man! Lazy slave! Since you knew I would demand some profit, you should have at least put my money in the bank so I could have some interest." And then he said, "Take the money from this man and give it to the man with ten thousand dollars. For the man who uses well what is given shall be given more and he shall have abundance. But from the man who is unfaithful, even what little responsibility he has shall be taken from him. And throw this useless servant, this bum, out into outer darkness and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

If we did not have to qualify, these verses would be null and void. You and I would not have to do anything; just like this useless servant. And then we could justify what we did not do and blame it on God! That is exactly what this useless servant did. He hid the money and said, "I know you're a hard man; it's your fault that I hid the money." We could do that, brethren. You see, we need to qualify for our position in the government of God.

In his sermon a couple of months ago, John Ritenbaugh talked about an actual turning or a huge change in the rest of the world and how many countries cease to exist, like Moab, the Philippeans, Amonites, Babylon, the Hittites, Assyria, Amalites, Amakalites, and Israel; these later became known as the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel.

This must have been a horrific time in the history of mankind; there was probably a lot of death due to wars, famine, disease, and pestilence. There were probably a lot of refugees and migrations of people who were so beat up they lost their very identities. Those people do not exist anymore. Who are the Moabites today? They do not know who they are; most Israelites do not know who they are! A huge shift in most populations with much pain and much tribulation occurred. Brethren, how close are we to another upheaval in the history of mankind? America just reelected the most corrupt government in its history; a government with virtually no morals.

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That government is pretty anti-God and the portion of the population that elected that government has no morals either or they would not have elected the government that we have. God tells us to watch. As we watch, we can see big changes in our country, our world, how people live their lives, how anti-God the world has become, the lack of morals and character and how self-indulgent everyone has become, the lack of love and concern for one another. Do you know what the next upheaval or actual turning is called?

It is called the great tribulation and it is in Revelation 7:14. As we watch and we see all this change, what does God want us to do? Does He want us to build bomb shelters and fill our homes with guns and ammunition? Does He want us to move to the Arctic or Siberia? What does He want us to do? Do you know what God wants us to do? He wants us, you and me, to do the same thing the world is doing, exactly the same thing; He wants us to change. He wants us to draw close to Him through personal change in our lives.

We all know our character flaws. For the most part, we know when we sin. We know what our shortcomings are. God wants us to be very concerned with the changes we see all around us. God wants us to have a Christ-like relationship with Him and He wants us to make changes in our lives. God wants us to engage in and to be involved in making godly changes every day.

**I Thessalonians 5:6** Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

God has good instructions for us in His Word if we will just use it. As we watch, stand, and experience all the change that is now upon us, it should give us a certain sense of urgency.

**I Corinthians 16:13-14** Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.

We already went through those verses but I think they are very important. And in I Peter 4, He says:

**I Peter 4:7-9** But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." Be hospitable to one another

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without grumbling.

These are the things He expects us to do. Now, the next series of verses we are going to read with some urgency and really they should put some fear in all of us.

**Matthew 25:1** “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Brethren, they were all virgins, every one of them. They all kept the Sabbath, the holy days, Passover, they all acted like they were with the program.

**Matthew 25:2-5** Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

Are we in this time period right now? Has Christ delayed His coming to give us time to make changes in our lives to become Christ-like and to become close to Him?

**Matthew 25:6-9** And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet Him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’

None of us are going into God's Kingdom on someone else's shirttail. What He is saying there is that it is one-on-one with God; we all need to watch and make changes in our own lives and not worry about what everybody else is doing.

**Matthew 25:10-12** “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ “

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The door was shut. Most of God's people understand these verses as saying that half of God's people do not have enough of the Holy Spirit; that is not exactly true. They were all virgins, they were all given the Holy Spirit; half of them did not *use* the Holy Spirit! They did not watch, they did not pray regularly, they did not overcome. If they gossiped, lied, overdrank alcohol, offended others, were not thankful, or whatever they did, they continued down that road. They did not use the Holy Spirit to overcome and make changes in their lives. They did not fast from time to time, they did not study regularly, they did not meditate, they did not love the brethren and treat them like family.

In verse 12, Christ does not say the 10 virgins did not have the Holy Spirit. He says, "I don't know you." There is a difference. This statement by Christ should give us some urgency and put a little fear in us as we see life and the world deteriorating all around us. It is very possible to put things off and run out of time! That is why *everything in life matters!* Every day matters; every hour of every day matters for us, the firstfruits.

In verse 11, He says the other virgins came also saying, "Lord, Lord, let us in!" This is why there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In verse 12 He says, "Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you." He did not say they did not have the Holy Spirit. He said He did not know them.

To avoid Christ's statement, here in verse 12, all we have to do is watch and make the necessary Christ-like changes in our lives. We need to pray and study. We know all the things we need to do. We need to get on them and make the changes because things are changing quickly. These are exciting times we are all living in, so let us all watch, work on becoming Christ-like, treat one another like family, and remember what we are trying to do. We are trying to qualify for the Kingdom of God.