

June 7, 2015 Closing of Sunday School 1 Corinthians 13:8-13

It is said that the only constant is change. This seems particularly true in our day and age. Every year car companies roll out new and improved models. By the time an electronic gadget reaches the store it is obsolete. If you don't keep up you are quickly left behind.

But external changes are only a part of the total changes that occur. Even when technology was basically stagnant and the way of life didn't change much from generation to generation, internal change was still a constant.

As long as you are alive you are changing. You may not like some of the changes that occur. Wrinkles become ever more present. Our bathroom scales remind us that weight changes don't often go the way we want them too. And at least for me, the amount of hair on my head is constantly changing - and not in the direction I want.

But there are changes that you do like, and you may not even realize them, for we are all changing emotionally all the time. Let me give you a brief psychology lesson in human development.

When you are born you are powerless and helpless, but in the first years of life you begin to gain control of your body. What parent isn't thrilled and relieved when a child is potty trained, right?

In a few more years you discover you're bodies abilities - you can write, throw baseballs, ride a bicycle and operate a computer.

Adolescence comes all too quickly for most parents' liking, but come it does. And now the person is developing a unique sense of identity - a sense of identity unique and distinct from the significant adults in your life - usually your parents. Quite often adolescents try to get a sense of who they are by defining themselves by who they are not - they are not their parents. Obviously this causes friction between parents and children. The situation isn't helped by the fact that the brains of most teenagers are marinating in hormones.

Something happens as adolescents move onward. Instead of defining themselves by what they are not, they begin to define themselves more and more by who they are and what they can do. 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung says that in normally functioning people they become less satisfied by the

way they first developed their identity in adolescence, and they begin to search themselves more deeply. But even then you still aren't done.

Several months ago I was coming out of a store in Canandaigua and my kids were with me. As I was walking across the parking lot I noticed a young man coming behind me. He was a strapping young buck, lean and powerfully built. Beside him was an attractive young woman. As it turns out they were parked right beside me - a big shiny new Ford F-250 four wheel drive pick-up truck. I confess to feeling a moment of jealousy thinking this guy's got it made. He's got the cute girl, the big truck, and even though I'm sure it isn't paid for, he's probably got a good paying job and not much to spend it on other than the truck and the girl.

In the next moment I smirked, because I'm climbing into my unwashed old Dodge minivan with two kids in tow. I thought, just give that guy ten years and we'll see what he's driving and what his priorities are. Hopefully if he has kids his priorities will change.

Another psychologist, Erik Erikson, had thoughts along the same lines as Jung. Erikson saw midlife causing another crisis

in peoples' lives. He didn't call it a midlife crisis though. He called it, "Generativity versus Self-Absorption." Are they feeling like they're doing something productive with their lives? Are they satisfied with who they are? If not, self-absorption, or mid-life crisis time!

But it goes on. In retirement a person recognizes the finiteness of life and increasing physical limits. Reflecting on one's life, one looks at ones successes and failures; what has been learned and what one's legacy will be.

My point in all of this is to show that simply being alive is to be changing. As we celebrate the end of a Sunday School year we remember that faith is an ongoing process of growth and learning. There is no point of stagnation or knowing it all. Both of our Bible readings speak of God's work in maturing faith.

Indeed when you read the Bible as a child you take all the stories at a simple literal level - exactly the way you understand the world. As you age you begin to see that those exact same Bible stories are more sophisticated, behind the words are deeper struggles. Perhaps the story isn't as literally true as you remember it when you were a child but you

discover that the same story is also speaking to a deeper and more profound truth. Eventually you discover that the Bible and God's work in your life is incredibly sophisticated; every bit as sophisticated as the problems and challenges of life.

You are changing, and through faith God is changing you too. People who think they're done with faith growth at high school graduation, or confirmation, or even as early as baptism, are missing the adventure before it even begins.

My challenge for all of us is to realize that faith continues to grow and mature. It will continue to challenge and engage you. Therefore it is important to be in a constant mode of continuing education. Read the Bible. Even if you've read it through once, read it again. It hasn't changed, but through God you have. Be connected with other people of faith. See movies, read books, pray, do service projects, and share faith with others.

I can almost guarantee you that when you're journey's through you won't have all the answers. There may be more questions than ever in fact. But it will have been a fun ride, an adventure lived with God.

We close the Sunday school year for our children and we are already planning for next year. But we all need to put effort into growing and maturing our faith with every day we live.

Amen