

Section C

An Easier Kind of Change

Part One

An Easier Kind of Change

Making changes in our lives for the better isn't always easy. In fact sometimes it's downright difficult. Destructive habits of behavior, thinking, and intending can be challenging to look at in ourselves, tricky to recognize for what they are, and even harder to own up to and make choices about. So it's not uncommon for people who discover this process of life change and spiritual transformation to have a hard time either getting started on it or seeing it through.¹

If you've discovered this process of life change and spiritual transformation, and you're having a hard time either getting started on it or seeing it through, there is something that can help. It's a kind of change that is *easier* than the full, four-step process, and which helps you make immediate, positive changes in your life *before* you ever engage in the deeper work of the full process. This easier kind of change is described in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg as follows:

When we are considering doing something evil, and are forming an intention to do it, we say to ourselves, "I am thinking about this, and I am intending to do it, but because it's a sin, I'm not going to do it."^{2 3}

One of the interesting things about this easier kind of change is the immediate, powerful impact it can have on your mental/emotional/spiritual state. Swedenborg writes:

Doing this [see above] counteracts the enticement that hell is injecting into us and keeps it from making further inroads.^{4 5}

People who utilize this easier kind of change are often surprised at the sudden, dramatic impact it has on their state of mind. Often it has the very effect Swedenborg says it does: The enticement to do or say something hurtful or destructive suddenly stops. In

¹ There are a number of reasons why making changes in your life can be difficult. For a discussion of some of these reasons, see *Part Two* of this article, titled, *Some Common Reasons Why Making Changes in Your Life Can Be Difficult*.

² Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity*, paragraph no. 535

³ In this process of life change, the word *evil* refers to anything in your outward behavior or inner life that is harmful, damaging, or destructive of what is good and true, regardless of whether or not you know or accept it to be so. The word *sin* (as far as recognizing it is concerned) refers to any such thing that you discover is not only damaging or destructive, but also against God's universal standards of behavior (summarized in the biblical Ten Commandments), against God's Word, and thus against God. (For more on this concept of sin, see the Step 2.1 and 2.2 worksheets of this four-step process.)

⁴ Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity*, paragraph no. 535

⁵ As mentioned in Section B of the *Sourcebook (Starting Assumptions)* this process of life change and spiritual transformation assumes there is a life after death, a heaven and a hell, and that angels and hellish ("evil") spirits exist. It also assumes that we are regularly influenced by them.

fact, the shift in a your state of mind can be so immediate and complete that moments later you don't even remember what the enticement was about.

Regular practice of this easier kind of change accomplishes several things: First, it helps you get used to the fact that harmful thoughts and impulses are normal parts of human experience. Second, it helps you see and acknowledge destructive thoughts and intentions early on—as they're just entering your mind and heart—and prevent them from making further inroads. Third, it helps you gain courage, interest, and momentum for going through the *full* process later on.

In summary, this easier kind of change is a quick, easy, non-threatening way to begin making immediate, positive changes in your life. It also helps you get ready for the full, four-step process later on.

Part Two

Some Common Reasons Why Making Changes in Your Life Can Be Difficult

There are any number of reasons why making changes in your life for the better can be hard to do. Here are some of them:

- Making changes in your life may be something you lack experience with, aren't practiced at, or aren't used to.
- You may feel unready, unable, or unwilling to make changes for the better.
- You may feel *sad* or *depressed* at the thought of searching out harmful habits in yourself, or at the thought of letting them go or giving them up.
- You may feel *afraid* of making changes that you'd like to make.⁶
- You may feel that you lack courage, confidence, or strength to follow through.
- You may wish that changes in your life could spontaneously happen, or that someone else could make them for you.
- You may feel lackadaisical or indifferent: You just don't *feel* like making changes, or you just don't *care* to.
- You may be “stuck” in harmful patterns of behavior, thinking, and intending.
- You may have your heart set on other, conflicting priorities that override life change and spiritual transformation.

Any of these reasons (or others) can make it difficult to get started on this process of life change or see it through. In addition, the *thinking* part of you may have convincing reasons for *not* engaging in regular self-inspection and change (even *religious* reasons,

⁶ *Lack of practice* at making changes, *unwillingness* to change, *sadness* at the thought of changing, and *fear* of changing are some of the main reasons why it can be hard to get started on this four-step process or see it through. There can even be a connection between these reasons and progression among them—such that ongoing lack of practice *breeds* unwillingness to change, and unwillingness to change *breeds* sadness at the thought of it and/or fear of change itself, especially fear of taking the first step—*Self-Examination*.

depending on how you were brought up or how you personally interpret God's Word). Under these circumstances, you may feel an understandable distaste for, dislike of, and/or resistance to regular self-inspection and personal improvement.

These are just some of the reasons why making changes in your life can be difficult. The best way to get past *any* of them is to practice the process itself and put it to work in your life.

Good wishes in this spiritual practice.