

Love, Believing, Rejoicing, and Change

By Clyde Cook

As I mentioned at convocation I usually speak on our theme verse for the year then. But I wanted to do the exercise on change instead. And as the chapel board graciously invited me to have this time with you today I thought I'd share my thoughts on the theme verse at this time.

Let me start with some questions. How many of you have ever cram for an exam? Let me see your hand. How many are good at cramming? How many of you have ever worked on a farm? How many of those of you who've worked on a farm have ever crammed? In other words you goofed off during the summer swimming, partying, fooling around and then in the Fall you cram for the harvest. You might chuckle at scenario because we know that that's ridiculous. There are certain principles of farming in order to get a harvest. Farmers do not have the luxury of cramming. There are chores that need to be done throughout the year in order to be a successful farmer. Likewise to be a successful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ there are certain principles that if we follow will result in a life that's pleasing to God. And where better to work on these principles than here at Biola. So today I want to focus on three principles that will help us to be effective disciples. And these are found in First Peter Chapter 1 verses 8 and 9. And though you have not seen him you love him. And even though you do not see him now you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. For you are receiving the goal of your faith the salvation of your souls. The three principles I want to address on our banner...banner.

Loving, believing, and rejoicing. I start with love as this is the very nature of God. God is love.

It's his character. And if our goal is to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ we must be like him in character. You remember the first time you were in love? I think for me he was back in Junior High. It's quite a stretch for me but maybe not so difficult for you. My buddy and I were nervous we thought we were in love with our two Junior High classmates. They were fun to be with and were also good friends. We were nervous because we discussed whether or not we should try to kiss them during our Saturday afternoon double date. We said this is the day we've been dating for a while. We're going to try to kiss them. The four of us have been exploring the tide pool in Heisler Park in Laguna Beach where we live. We go down there and we see some tide pools there and see an [inaudible] and put our fingers in there. Of course the tentacles just kind of grab... grab around your finger there and little tingly sensation. They would find a hermit crab and plop the hermit crab in the sea [inaudible] and see if he can get out before he got eaten. Which it always did. And when he tired of that we searched under the rocks to see if we can see an octopus hiding under there. Well after an hour or two of exploring the tide pools we went up to the top of Heisler Park there and sat on a bench overlooking the beautiful Pacific Ocean. On the way up we slipped a couple of mints in our mouths. This was the place and this was the moment. As we sat on a park bench we did the old yawn move. We gingerly put our arms around our respective girlfriends. Then we discussed with them what we were going to do. They were surprisingly agreeable. As they were probably as curious as we were to see what it was like to kill someone who was not a relative. Who is going to go first took about five minutes to decide. And finally we settled it by saying we would all count to 3. 1, 2, 3 and then do it. After several false starts which ended up in giggling. We finally made it to three and the two sets of lips of each couple met. What a disappointment.

Not even a clod moves to say nothing of the earth. My buddy's girlfriend complained that it hurt cause she wore braces. It was over. Our grand experiment and it was no big deal. So we headed back to the tide pools. Which were much more fun. And thinking about the wonderful truth that God of love I thought about that first feeling of being in love. Was it love? If not what was it and what is love anyway? Someone said Love cannot be defined only experienced. Perhaps he was right. Now the Greeks had three primary words for we called LOVE. One was Eros in which we get our English word erotic. It's a self seeking love. It speaks of desire or lust. Speaks of sensual passion. It could be characterized as taking and it's not found in the New Testament. Another Greek word is Phileo and shows up in such English...English words as philanthropy or Philadelphia. This is a reciprocal love. A love between equals and depends on the mutual congeniality of those loving each other. It speaks of feeling of warmth affection. It can be characterized as sharing and is found in the New Testament. The third word is Agape or Agapao. It speaks of a different love. It's a love that gives of itself without counting the cost. Agape love does not depend on the merits of the one loved. It involves a deliberate choice and it is an unselfish and serving love that has to do with the intellect and the will more than the emotions. It's the word for love that appears most often in the New Testament and it can be characterized as giving. So we have "Taking". Eros. "Sharing", Phileo and "Giving", Agape. One of the best descriptions I've heard of Agape Love. Is love is an earnest and anxious desire for and an active and beneficence interest in the well-being of the one love. Maybe you haven't heard the word beneficence before it means doing good acts of kindness. So love is an earnest and anxious desire for an active and beneficence interest in the well-being of the one love. Notice that the focus is on the well-being of the One Love. Agapao is the word that the Apostle John uses in his incredibly powerful statement. God is love. God does not just love but...does he do loving acts.

His very essence is love. God abounds in love and in loving kindness because his very nature is love. God is love. And it is his very character. So he cannot do anything that would go against or betray that character because his love is so tied in with his character. It follows that the characteristics of that love would follow his nature. For example we read in Jeremiah 31:3. Yea I love thee with an everlasting love. His love is there forever because he is Forever God is also all sufficient. Therefore his love is not dependent upon somebody else's love. It's a totally giving love a love that is unconditional and is not dependent...dependent upon the merits of the one love. God is also consistent. So this love that flows from his character is consistent. It's dependable. You can count on it being there not being turned off and on. One of the worst experiences a person can have is being betrayed by one who loves and you thought who loved you and you love that person. Few years ago there was a murder case where this betrayal was portrayed so graphically. It seemed like the ideal marriage. A providing father a devoted mother and two wonderful children. However years of loving and caring for one another exploded in one awful night when a husband brutally murdered his wife and two children. What went through the wife's mind when she saw this person who had promised to love and to cherish her until they are part of them raised his hand with an instrument of death against her? Or what of the children or they saw the hand of one who protected them, provided them now trying to destroy them. The parents of the woman when interviewed said they could have handled it a bit better if the murderer had been an intruder but to be betrayed by the one you love they said was so devastating. But God will never betray us because he is love. His love is everlasting consistent and true. So I trust that this year might be a year you are experiencing God's love and that reflecting that Love and then reflecting that Love as we love others. The second principle is that a belief is faith is so important to Christian life. It's a principle by which you must live and which

builds our character. It was by faith we entered into this new relationship with Jesus Christ. By grace are you saved through faith. It was that mysterious joining of faith with the word of God that brought about the miraculous new birth. You believe God and rejected Satan's attempt to cause us to doubt. You remember in the garden this was his weapon? God had said very strongly. If he would take of that fruit "Dying thou shall die". In the the Hebrew its so strong. "Dying thou shall die" and Satan came along and said: "Did God say that? Thou shall not surely die." So Adam and Eve had a choice believe god who said dying thou shall die. Or believe the father of lies who said. Thou shall not surely die. And they chose to bury the father of lies and so eternal death and separation from God came upon them and passed down to us. So thousands of years later God says you receive eternal death and separation from me why you did not believe me. Now in order to believe and be saved and have me reconciled me what must we do? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved you say so beautifully ties together. And so we believed and we entered into this new life a life of the supernatural a life that has his treasure and an earthen vessel that the excellence to the power of God and out of us a life when troubles on every side is not distressed. A life that can be perplexed but not in despair. Persecuted but not forsaken. Cast down but not destroyed. Now those of you who have been around me while Biola heard me speak in his verse many times especially when I talk about perplexed but not in despair. The Greek word translated in the King James perplex is a compound word "Aporeo". Now "Poreo" means a way or a bridge or a crossing. In Greek when you put the "A" in front of it, it negates it. It's like a minus sign. So when you say "Aporeo" it means no way. We get many English words this way. Theist is somebody who believes in God. You put an "A" in front of it, an atheist doesn't believe in God. Gnosis is knowledge. Put an "A" in front it, Agnostic, we can't know. And so "Poreo" is a way or bridge crossing you put an "A" in front of it, makes it no. So

what Paul is saying here he says perplexed but not in despair is "No Way". Like I hear that many times a day. "No way". But then he goes on to say but not exaporeo and he adds another compound in front. In the Greek when you add the "Ex-" it intensifies it. So what Paul is saying here. No way but not absolutely no way. And the reason it's not absolutely no way is because of faith. As you go through our demanding academic programs, this verse will be put to the test many times you will often think that there's no way, no way you're going to get that paper written. No way you're going to be able to pass that exam. No way you're going to be able to continue on because of finances or a thousand no ways. And yet it's not absolutely no way because you're here. God made a way. And how does God make a way and how does he turn no way situations into not absolutely no way. How is a supernatural life lived? It's lived by faith. The Bible several times says the just ones shall live by faith. My former pastor Chuck Swindoll has written. We're all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations and the excellent training you're receiving at Biola you've been given the tools to make you effective in that particular profession in which you're heading as you move through this academic year. Make sure you are men and women of faith. There will come times when your faith is sorely tested and usually that point, you know is your faith. Our Lord said to Peter I've prayed for you that your faith failed not and my prayer for you this day as even as our Lord's that your faith fail not. The scriptures tell us not to be ignorant of Satan's devices and surely doubt is one of his principal weapons. Your faith will be sorely tested in whatever area of service the Lord put you in. May it not fail. May this be a year of faith. Of believing. Our final principle is that of joy because I feel rejoicing is so much a part of the Christian life.

It's part of the fruit of the Spirit coming right after love. Yet I meet so many Christians who are grim and uptight. Now I would trust that this would be a year of joy for you. Some of you might have seen that film came out a few years ago called "the City of Joy". Notice they didn't call the city of happiness. I'm sure there's happiness in Calcutta but there's so much poverty. I've been in 72 different countries of the world and never have I seen poverty as I have in Calcutta. Hundred thousand people have nowhere to live. Just a little piece of cloth maybe that they put on the side of the road for their bed at night. Trying to wash their teeth or they take baths in the public faucets in the street. Trucks come by in the morning and pick up those that didn't make it through the night. They barely subsist. It's a tough grim life and yet there can be joy in the midst of all that poverty because Joy does not depend on circumstances. It depends on our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessed Holy Spirit. We see this relationship in our theme verse and though you have not seen him you love him and even though you do not see him now you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. The presence of Jesus Christ brings that inexpressible and glorious Joy. He saved us. He loves you with an everlasting love. He's your closest friend. He'll never leave you nor forsake you he loves you with an everlasting love. We also see Joy related in scripture to God's countenance to life to faith to fellowship to seeing your loved ones and to laughter. Oftentimes laughter is a physical expression of joy. I would hope that this year would be a year of laughter because I'm out meeting our various alumni across the country. Inevitably it's a time of great laughter. We think back to stories maybe something happened in Chapel or in a dormitory or in the cafeteria or in a class. We laugh about at great memories. Joy is so important and physical the physical expression of that oftentimes is laughter. Nehemiah says the joy of the Lord is your strength. If Satan can rob you of your joy he robs you of your strength because your strength comes from rejoicing in the Lord.

So I pray that this might be a year of great rejoicing that overflows in laughter. Loving, believing, and rejoicing. Three important principles that I'd like to concentrate on this year. As we close I'd like to leave you with one final thought. All three principles of loving, believing, and rejoicing are tied in with obedience and scripture and talking about love our Lord Jesus Christ said it so plainly and John 14:15. If you love me keep my commandments. Faith is also tied to obedience as to believe and to obey are so closely related in scripture and often are used interchangeably. Joy too is connected with obedience and comes from being filled with the spirit. The carnal Christian cannot experience the joy that wants us so much to, to enjoy. One quick way to be robbed of your joy your faith and your love is to be disobedient. Now I'm not talking about the occasional disobedience that we experience and is brought to our attention by the Holy Spirit or somebody else, we repent of that. I'm talking about a pattern of life that's in disobedience. This disobedience erodes your integrity and character. Let me share with you a few ways where it can be tested here at Biola. First the behavioral standards. When you enter Biola you entered into a covenant with us regarding certain behaviors. One of these is the refraining from alcoholic beverages and we're not saying you can't be a Christian and drink. We are saying that as a community while you're a student you've covenanted together not to be involved in alcohol. Therefore disobeying in this area is not a matter of Christian liberty but of integrity as you've agreed to do something. And if you don't you violated your word. And this erodes character. Another area that caused me great grief is lying about Chapel attendance. I try to be in chapel as often as my schedule permits. I get such a blessing out of being here and hearing a speaker of the worshipping or whatever is taking place. Do you wonder why I sit in the back row there because of the backrest. I like it. I don't know how you, my...I commend you for sitting on the floor with that, but with a herniated disc I need a backrest so that's why I crawl up

there and sit up there so I have the backrest, but inevitably as I come to chapel I see people who swipe their cards and then have walked out as if this does not matter. Or that God doesn't care about your integrity or your word in that matter. God does care and such behavior erodes your integrity and prevents you from fully realizing love, joy, and faith. It also grieves me to hear of stealing that goes on. In fact last year I was a victim of a rather expensive piece of equipment. Whoever took that piece of equipment had to be associated with Biola. Just the location of it and being able to know how to get it out. The cafeteria could save hundreds of dollars each year if there was not any stealing going on your food costs would be reduced. Are there any cups, glasses, or silverware in your room or apartment that don't belong to you. I was astounded to learn from one of our students that he's seen full sets of dishes and silverware in dorm rooms and apartments. I wonder what kind of message we're sending to bon appetit. A few years ago we put a five thousand...a fifty thousand dollar security system in the library and recovered the cost in two years which meant that we were losing twenty five thousand dollars worth of books per year. Cheating is another opportunity you have for disobedience which is being unfair to yourself as you might need that knowledge later on to say nothing of your classmates who studied hard without cheating. Purity of life and thought is another area where it's easy to disobey. God is so clear about fornication. He tells us about the damage it does to one's body, soul, and spirit. And certainly if you're involved in immorality it affects the way you love the way you believe and the way you rejoice. Dear Biola women, if a young man says to you prove your love to me. By sinning against the God who made you and loves you. You can be sure it's not Agape love it's taking its Eros. He wants to take something from you that's very precious. Agape love wants what's best for you and that is to wait for sex within marriage as God intended it. Sin is not what's good for you it's not what's best for you. Believe God who loves you and made you and

knows what's best for you. Now I realize that perhaps none of these areas applies to those of you who are in Chapel today. The person who swiped his or her card and left is not here. Those who are involved in stealing or immorality are also probably not here. So this is a warning against some of the temptations that you might face in the future while here at Biola. But what happens if you are involved in disobedience now. You can repent and change. Do you remember what I shared in convocation? Reach out for help. You're not alone in this struggle. We're all in this struggle to be holy and righteous before God. We have some incredible help through the counseling center, through faculty, through staff, through colleagues. Seek out someone to whom you can be accountable and covenant to be pure and to be honest and to be truthful. To be obedient. To be holy. And remember don't let relapse cause you to give up. For the Lord's sake, for your classmates sake, but most of all for your sake. I plead with you to be under the authority of the word of God. His way is right. It's just, it'll save you grief and pain. He gives us absolutes and there is no room for partial obedience or halfhearted obedience. David writes restore to me again the joy of your salvation and make me willing to obey you. Then I will teach your ways to other sinners and they are guilty like me or repent and turn to you. God has made us and he knows what's best for us. And so when he gives us these commandments it's for our benefit. He desires that earnest and anxious desire for our well-being. Three important principles for this year that if we follow will result in lives that are loving, believing, and rejoicing. This is my prayer for each one of us including myself this year. Let's pray. [Side B message starts at 24:17]

Each year I used this convocation message to speak on our theme verse. However this year I am going to save my exposition of the theme verse until a chapel in a few weeks and share my thoughts on it then. What I want to do in our time together today is to talk about change. As the Christian life is full of change. We're going to be more loving more believing more rejoicing

disciples. We must be willing to change. When you made the decision to follow Jesus Christ and to surrender your life to him it meant some important changes. These would include a uh, include a new destination instead of heading for hell you're heading for heaven. Rather than an enmity with God, you've been reconciled with him rather than internal death. You have eternal life. Rather than just existing. You can have an abundant life. Rather than a dirge of despair, you can have a song of hope. As Jan sang about that new song. Rather than anxiety. Peace. Rather than hatred. Love Rather than doubt. Faith. Rather than sorrow. Joy. Rather than floundering along in life you have some absolutes to guide you. Which are centered in God's eternal truth and in his inspired word. This is what the new life is all about change. Change you to become more like Jesus. We want to be more like Jesus. We want to be more trusting, more loving, more believing, more joyful. Now in Romans chapter 8 Paul tells us that our purpose in life is to become like Jesus we're being conformed to the image we have been predestinated to be conformed to this image of Jesus Christ so this is our ultimate goal. Every one of us has been designed by God to become more like Jesus. Now this transformation is going to be complete when we see him as John writes, we shall see him and we shall be like him. But in between this process of becoming a Christian and finally this transformation that takes place when you see him. There's a process that takes place. And Paul writes about this process in Second Corinthians 3:18 where he says: What we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord a change into the same image from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord. So Paul says in this process that the believer the son of God looks into the word of God and there he sees Jesus Christ and there the believer him or her is changed into that same image even as by the spirit of the Lord. And so this process takes place as we study the Word of God as we let the Spirit of God interact in our life and this is Biola's mission. We want to help you in this change process by strengthening your

mind and character so that you become more like Jesus. However change is difficult. We resist change and in order to demonstrate this I want to try a risk this morning. I want you to try an exercise with me that I learned from Ken Blanchard the author of *The One Minute Manager*. It just sold over nine million copies. Ken acknowledges that this exercise is not original with him. He says he obtained it from Charlie Smith from the University of Maine. I know it's crowded and hot in here. It might be a little difficult but I want you to give it your best shot as I think of it will be rewarding. I need everyone who is able to, to please stand and you need to get a partner. You're in a wheelchair. You can still participate just get a partner. Everybody needs a partner. All right. You need to be quiet so you can hear the instructions. Everybody paired up. Anybody need a partner? What I want you to do now is face your partner and I do not want any talking for the next minute. No talking. The next minute. I want you to just observe the physical characteristics of your partner. His or her face. His or her clothing. Just observe your partner. No talking. No touching. Just observe. Look your partner over. All right 30 seconds more. No talking now. Now I want you to turn your back on your partner so you can't see each other. No talking please. You've had a chance to observe your partner and your partner has had a chance to observe you. What I'd like you to do is to make five changes in your appearance so when you turn around to see your partner there'll be five things that will look differently about you. So make five changes in your appearance. No talking now please. When you think you made five changes check with your partner and if your partner has made five changes turn around and guess. And let him or her guess. All right. Need to come to order. OK I need your attention. Keep standing keep standing it's not over. All right. Really appreciate the way you got into this. All right you've had a chance to make five changes and your partner had a chance to make changes and you both guess what the changes were. Probably praised your partner if you got

them all right. What I want you to do now is to turn your back again on your partner. And make 10 more changes. You can't use the original five. So you want to make 10 more. So you'll have made 15 changes altogether. So ten more changes. When you think you've made the ten changes. Listen up please. When you think you've made ten changes or have gone as far as you want. Check with your partner and see if he or she has made them and see if you can guess what changed. When you finish changing you can sit down. OK when you're finished you can sit down. OK. OK. We need to get moving here before we all start smelling. Kind of hot. OK. I have your attention. What you've experienced is how difficult it is to change. And before I debrief the exercise I want to talk about four levels of change. Our first level of change is knowledge. Knowledge is very easy to change. Our professor is going to assign you something to read or give you a good lecture and you can learn something new. Your knowledge of that particular subject changes. The second level of change is a little tougher than knowledge. It's attitudinal change. An attitude is an emotionally charged bit of knowledge. Now you know something and you feel very strongly about it in a positive or negative way. The third level of change is much tougher than knowledge and attitude. Now it's behavior. Why is behavior tougher the knowledge and attitude? Because you have to do something. To do something you have to overcome what? Old habits old ways of doing things. So you have to get rid of one thing and put in something else. Let me give you an example. How many of you know at the knowledge level that right now you're doing or not doing something that's not particularly good for your health. You know you're not eating, you're eating too much not exercising not getting enough sleep. How many are in that category. My hands up here too. We all know this. Yet why do we keep doing it? We all know that our health is important and many of us know at the knowledge level we are not doing something very good for our health. How many of you have a

positive attitude towards making some changes in what you're doing or not doing about your health. We lost a few. Some people say well I'm going to die anyway. Even though we know something. Even though we know something at the knowledge level as well as the attitudinal level you can say yes but I know, but I'm not going to do anything. Now how many of you think it's going to be easy to behave on these good intentions. Why is it tougher because behavior is tough. Changing your behavior. I get up every day and I say OK I'm going to eat healthy today. That's tough to do because as President at Biola I'm the designated eater. I get invited to so many business lunches and dinners. Seems like I'm eating all the time. Several years ago my doctor put me on a diet. I love Polish sausages. So I asked if they were excluded. He said You said you can have one Polish sausage on your birthday. After six months I was 187 years old. I can smell a Polish sausage a mile away which makes it hard to drop about 20 pounds which I'd like to. Like to drop the 20 pounds so I could go to the beach. I don't go now because I don't like to hold my stomach in for three hours. Even though I know about it and have a positive attitude towards it it's tough behaviorally. The fourth level of change is organizational behavior. Which is much tougher than individual because there's so much more complicated there's so many others involved. However I don't have time to go into that this morning. Now if behavior is the toughest level of change we have to know what is happening that holds us back from changing and that's what this exercise is all about. I'd like to suggest there are seven lessons we can get out of this exercise. The first lesson is that when I asked you not to talk for a minute but just observe the physical characteristics of your partner how many people felt a little uncomfortable, a little unease, a little awkward? Why? Because I asked you to do something that you're not used to doing. You're not normally used to looking and standing and staring at somebody you know for a whole minute. So here's a first lesson. If you don't feel awkward doing something new you're

probably not doing something new. Change is going to feel lousy. It's going to feel awkward. You're going to feel uncomfortable. It's normal because if you don't you're not doing something new. The second lesson is when you started to make your changes how many of you started by taking something off? A watch, an earring, a shoe. Almost everybody starts by taking something off. A very interesting point. When people are asked to do something different the first thing they think about is what do I have to give up not what am I going to gain. So for most people they don't even want to hear about the benefits they're concerned about what's going to happen to them. The third lesson is that nobody seemed to help each other. Did I say you couldn't help it help each other? I didn't say that at all. You all assumed that you had to do it by yourself. You should've said something you really looked hysterical. Here you have your back toward somebody and I say ten changes and you say ten changes he has to be crazy. How I'm going to do ten changes and a foot away somebody else is saying yes he is crazy. I don't think I can do it either. Could you imagine that if you realize you could get help from others you could have walked around this gym and made 30 changes. Give me this. Give me that I'll give you this. The people in the change effort feel they are alone. So reach out for help. You need it. It's not a natural tendency you start off in change feeling alone. I believe it was John Dewey who said we like to think you can be totally self-sufficient with no need to rely on others is a form of insanity. The fourth lesson is that most of you did pretty well when I said make five changes. When did the volume in this place go up. Everybody started mumbling and yelling when I said ten. Why? Research shows that people can't handle more than five changes anything more than that we go on tilt. Prioritize. What are you going to do first? What are you going to do second? Don't try to take it all on at once because otherwise you're going to be in trouble. It's all right to paint the big picture. Where you want to go but then make sure you take on a few changes at a time. The fifth

lesson is that many of you quit because you felt I'm just not dressed for this. It's really interesting when you ask people to change one of the first things they say. I don't have enough resources. Give me some more resources. And the reality is there are no more resources. There isn't enough money. There aren't enough people. Today we have to do more with less. So what we have to do is to figure out how to utilize our resources. Many of you had blinders on about what a resource was. You didn't see your books as a resource. You didn't see each other as a resource. There are all kinds of things you could have done. You could have come up here and borrowed my tie or my jacket or gone outside and get a leaf from a tree or ransacked somebody's backpack. There were resources all around you. Perhaps you were complaining you didn't have enough resources so remember we need to be creative about resources. The sixth lesson is that some of you really got into it and had a lot of fun and some of you never got into it. Does that mean that the people who enjoyed the good in the others are bad? No. People are always at different levels and their response to change. Not everybody is at the same level you might be really ready to make a change be uptight about the next one. So we need to be careful about labeling people. It depends on what the issue is who's resistant, who's ready but we need to recognize people are at different levels of readiness. The seventh and last lesson is what did you do when the exercise was over? You all changed right back to where you were before. The natural tendency is to revert back. Relapse is natural so don't beat yourself up when you relapse and say oh isn't that interesting I just downed three Polish sausages in the last five minutes. What am I going to do? I'm I committed to getting back on track? Are you going to say, one mistake and it's all over. Remember a relapse is natural. So what I'd like for us to get from our exercise today is that change is not that easy. In terms of the exercise. First awkwardness is natural. Second the tendency is to focus on what you have to give up rather than what you gain. Third you're going

to feel alone. Fourth people can only handle so many changes at once. Fifth, they're going to yell about resources there's not enough of them. Sixth people are at different levels of readiness for change and seventh relapse is natural. If you can get in touch with these lessons and you can start to say look what's happening to me. I'm really feeling awkward feeling alone. You can flip off the lessons and say hey I'm normal. Isn't that fabulous. You can invite people in to help you and support you and help you work through the changes. Every year I write out my objectives for the next 12 months. They always include as one of them to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ a year from now than I am today. Thankfully we have a wonderful resource to help us change. And that's the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. We're not alone in this change process. God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us make changes so at the end of the year we'll be more like Jesus than we were today. God has given us a godly faculty and staff to help us as well as a tremendous resources of your peers. We have an incredible student body here. So ask each other for help. So I hope that this year will be a year of change for all of us. I trust that our time this morning together has helped you understand that change is difficult. It's not easy but it's necessary. I hope you'll not quit or resign yourself to the status quo or not ask for help or give up if you relapse. God wants us to be in the process of change to be more like Jesus Christ. This year gives you a tremendous potential to expand your mind and your character. You're an undergraduate student this year offers you the opportunity to study not only God's word but God's world. You have the opportunity to look through each discipline through the eyes of faith to firmly establish a biblical worldview to be equipped to just...not just to know how to make a living but to know how to live. Strengthened in your mind and your character. To those of you in our graduate programs we offer you the best and professional training in your field. The training that takes a profession and thoroughly integrates the truth of that discipline with God's inspired

Cook-Loving, Believing...

word. An education that helps you in the area of discernment and understanding and helps you hone not only your knowledge but gives you wisdom. The application of that knowledge.

Change? Not easy but vital. Difficult but necessary and attainable through power of the Holy Spirit. So that we might be more like Jesus it this year be a year of positive change in all of our lives.