

A Formula for Change

By Martha Roden, guest speaker
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The Bible often talks of miracles – amazing transformation that occur in a single moment: Lazarus arises from the dead, the blind man sees again, and the hemorrhaging woman stops bleeding.

But I am more inclined to believe that true and lasting transformation occurs slowly, little by little, over time ... so slowly in fact, that we often don't even realize the change has occurred – unless we have remained observant.

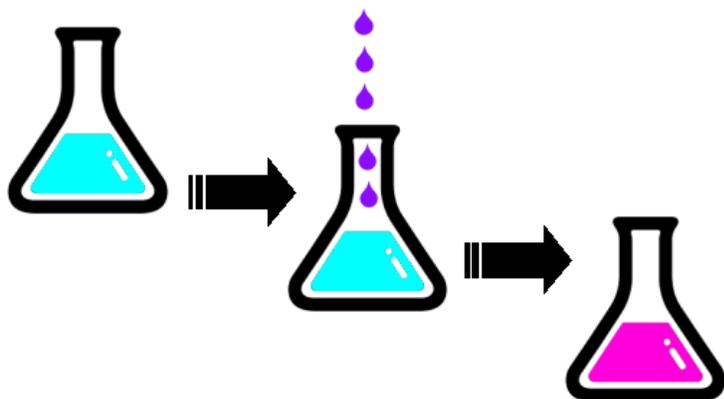
Let me give you two examples from the physical world.

Titration

How many of you have taken chemistry? Do you remember titration?

That's where you have a solution of unknown concentration and your job is to figure out what that concentration is.

You do this by adding another substance, one drop at a time, until a threshold is reached and a chemical reaction occurs: the solution suddenly changes color.



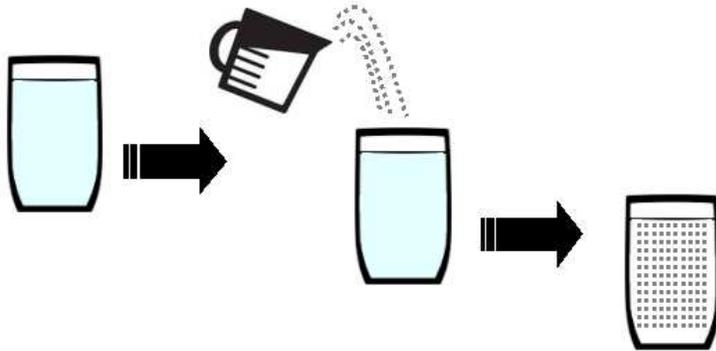
Once you know how much of the other substance you added, you can figure out the concentration of the original solution.

The trick, of course, is to pay attention and be observant. I can't tell you how many times my mind wandered and I missed the moment the solution changed color. I had to redo an awful lot of labs!

Crystallization

Here's another example: crystallization.

You start with a glass of water. Then you add sugar, a little at a time, which dissolves in the water. Finally, a threshold is reached and the sugar no longer dissolves – it crystallizes.



Once again, if you're not paying attention, you won't know exactly how much sugar you added or when the crystallization occurred.

Sure, that's just chemistry, but I think it applies to personal and spiritual change as well. You make small changes in your intentions, words, and actions, a minute, an hour, a day at a time ... and one day a threshold is reached, and you realize you have become a different person.

You are a more authentic person – more yourself – the person God created you to be.

And even though change can be difficult, it is heart-warming to know that we do not have to change the world – we do not even have to change another person – we only have to change ourselves.

That's because:

$$\mathbf{a} + \mathbf{b} = \mathbf{c}$$

You Another person The situation

This means, if you are **a**, when you change, even if **b** does not change, **c** does – the situation changes.

$$\cancel{2} + 3 = \cancel{5}$$

↓

$$\textcircled{4} + 3 = \textcircled{7}$$

You The situation

Slow and Steady

I have learned that when it comes to personal change – it is what it is – personal, involving changing only yourself. In this endeavor, **slow and steady** often produces the greatest and most lasting results. Even small changes practiced daily, add up: an extra 10-20 minutes of prayer or meditation, a daily gratitude list ... even a few yoga poses.



Slow transformation does require **patience** with yourself. It means letting go of unrealistic expectations. It means not comparing yourself with others. It means surrendering yourself to God's will instead of trying to know and control everything.



Slow transformation also requires vigilance – it demands that we **pay attention** to our progress so we can recognize small changes as they occur, and express **gratitude** for them.

And often, we can only see the changes in ourselves when we look back at how we were in the past ... or when someone else reminds us of how we were.

I look back at the pit of despair I was drowning in back in February 2013 when I thought my marriage was over. I re-read the talk I gave to the Fellowship in April 2014, "My Daily Companions: Fear and Uncertainty." And I realize how much I have changed and how much the situation has changed. Today my constant companions are acceptance, surrender, and hope.

The problems my husband David and I experienced have slowly resolved on their own as we have worked on ourselves, individually, at our own pace. We have each had our own tools for transformation. Mine have been prayer, meditation, yoga, therapy, Al-Anon, church, and lots of talks with friends. David and I each took it one step at a time and slowly changed. Today we are different people than we were 3 years ago ... and our marriage is stronger than ever.

Remember, transformation is a slow process that requires patience and vigilance, and God is always guiding this process with wisdom that comes from seeing the whole.



And as long as we are human beings, we will always be works in progress, perfectly imperfect ... because that's the human condition!