

Navigating Your Change Mazes, by Tom Lutz

Review by Dr. Chet Weld (posted on Amazon.com)

Tom Lutz says that many people want "better sameness" which insulates us from any kind of change and leaves us ill-prepared for positive changes. Better sameness is simply a different face on the "status quo," or you could call it "the same pig with lipstick."

Because continual changes are a part of life, Lutz helps us to navigate the "corridors of change" by defining several different kinds of change and suggesting strategies for navigating each kind. For example, we've all been through a "Blind Side" change. Lutz suggests the following actions:

1. Get on your knees and ask God to calm you. Don't follow your emotions to run in panic.
2. Concentrate on where you are in the maze. Don't focus on how you got there.
3. Stop and reflect. Is it the change that is causing your trauma or it the fact that you were surprised? (When you calm down, you may see the maze shrink because the change isn't such a big deal.)
4. Look back over your experiences. Have you ever been faced with a change like this before? If so, can you remember what you did then? That experience can guide you to what you should or shouldn't do to navigate now.

5. Call a Christ-follower friend. One you can trust to be objective and confidential. Take the time to describe the change. Ask the friend to help you distinguish between the mind and heart dimensions. Talk it through. He probably won't be able to navigate for you, but it should help clean your windshield of extraneous bugs so you can see the maze corridors more clearly.

6. Look at yourself in the Change Capacity mirror. Determine whether you've allowed the change to shove you into territory where you don't normally operate. If it has, get back to where you function the best.

Remember Kodak film for our cameras? Now 80% of Kodak's revenue comes from digital products. Kodak smartly navigated a change maze. Actually, this maze was a different kind of maze because Kodak could see the changes coming. Lutz has strategies to navigate these and several other kinds of mazes. He also suggests that people have basically four kinds of "change capacities": Resisters, Slow Followers, Fast Followers, and New Idea People. For anyone who is called to be a "difference maker," it's important to know the change capacities of everyone on your team. Also, difference makers have a clear understanding of the "AS-IS" and a clear vision of the "TO-BE."

Lutz also defines "change fundamentals," e.g., "Change abides by the law of inertia: If a body is at rest or moving at constant speed in a straight line, it will continue to do so unless it is acted upon by a force." Other interesting points include a list of "Signs of Hitting the Wall," along with actions to take; a "To Change or Not Change" list; a list of

"Absolutes" that will help to keep us focused and able to make good decisions; a list of "Marks of Leadership" that help difference makers lead their team through change; and a list of different resistance forces to expect and how to handle them. Two of Lutz's recommendations stand out: "Urge every member of your team to assess whether their faith is directing their behavior and their resolve" and "Never pass up an opportunity to communicate." This advice flows from his principle that we cope with change better if we separate facts from emotions and if we let our spirits lead our responses to change: "Your response to change can be spearheaded by your heart, your mind, or your soul. If you let God inhabit your soul, the dominance of the Lord in your life can lead you to cope with the facts and emotions of a change more effectively."

Lutz was strongly influenced by the ministry of his personal friend, John Piper. For the last 20 years, Lutz' business has been to consult, mentor, and coach business executives, church leaders, politicians, and many others. Lutz draws from his experience in several different careers, including his work with IBM (which he says stands for "I've Been Moved"), his own traumatic life events that caused him to "Run out of cope." He also gives many biblical references of Bible characters that faced various change mazes and how they were transformed for the better by and through them. Our biblical heroes usually overcame a WIFM mentality ("What's In It for Me?") and learned to lean wholly on God. Lutz suggests that an important question to ask ourselves is this: "Is the change driven by spiritual values?"

I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in navigating

the corridors of their own change mazes more successfully. The book is filled with "Reality Cases that combine personal experiences and observations to reinforce the principles and approaches discussed." As Lutz states, God allows all of us to at all times be in a change maze of some kind. Therefore, it would seem that we can all benefit from any wisdom that helps us to pass through these mazes successfully. Tom Lutz can be reached at Tom@LutzGroup.com.