

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus AND Ask Questions

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"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." - Hebrews 13:8

The way it used to be. A fellow in his 50s was walking up a winding dirt road in Appalachia with his elderly mother and father. It was an annual ritual, the maintenance of the family cemetery. Stopping to take a breather, the father was leaning on a fencepost when he said to the son, "One of these days you'll be coming up here alone."

But he didn't mean that he and his wife would soon enough be deceased. The son knew this. What he meant was that soon enough the son would become custodian of the family rituals, beliefs, and values. It was up to the son to continue the family's practice of the Christian faith.

The way it is now. Many of us value our role models in the faith – family, teachers, neighbors of yesterday. We want to imitate the faith that we have seen in their lives. Have our lives work out similarly. But there is a problem. Not only do we not live in the same world, we no longer seem to live on the same planet.

This is not news, of course. Twenty years ago theologian Leonard Sweet said, "Change is happening so fast we can't really imagine the world of our parents, and we can't really imagine what will be our children's world." This change is making communication more difficult as there are fewer and fewer common experiences from one generation to the next. Values differ from one generation to the next. Relationships differ. Learning styles differ. Suddenly we find ourselves dealing daily with concerns and situations unimagined by our forebears in the faith.

Much of this change is occasioned by technology. Recently, futurist Alvin Toffler died at age 87. More than forty years ago his book, *Future Shock*, was published. In it he warned that the accelerating pace of technological change would make us sick. Future shock was the term he used for a disorientation occasioned by too much change in too short a period of time. And "unless intelligent steps are taken to combat it, millions of human beings will find themselves increasingly disoriented, progressively incompetent to deal rationally with their environments."

It is tempting to wish that the world would change back into something we're more familiar with, but that's not going to happen. The way to deal faithfully with our environments is as our role models in the faith did. They weren't against change, but they didn't accept it without question. They thought and prayed about the morality of it all. Debated the benefit and cost. Tried to determine what the ramifications would be. Partook in some changes, had nothing to do with others. If they hadn't done this, they wouldn't be our role models. Instead, they'd be no more than those who went along with the flow.

And whereas our forebears in the faith did just fine thinking of Jesus in terms of providing a roadmap for faithful living, the terrain is changing so fast that a roadmap would be out of date by the time it is published. A better way of thinking about assessing constant change is using a navigational system. We're at sea in an ocean of change, yes, but we can still get our bearings. Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, functions for us as the North Star functions for sailors.

Farhad Manjoo, of *The NY Times*, points out that Alvin Toffler died during a week marked by ISIS bombings, Brexit, rumors of Mike Tyson taking the stage at a national political convention, and a computer-piloted Tesla crashing into an old-fashioned tractor-trailer. But when hasn't there been such a crazy week lately? Social media is subsuming journalism, politics, and even terrorist organizations. The largest corporations are becoming more powerful than even first-world national governments. And coming our way is the increased use of artificial intelligence, gene editing, drones, and much, much more.