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Making a Difference

By Gina Kelly Ellis

With this being a Presidential election year, we are hearing much about change. Everybody wants something to change, no matter what party with which you are affiliated or which candidate you are behind. Now, I am not about to get into politics in this column! No way am I that dumb! Everybody is free to have their own opinions and I will not presume to try to influence you one way or the other. This is not a column about politics. It is a column about change. I was having a conversation with one of our teachers recently and the topic of change came up. We all want to change in some way. I would like to change the way I do many things in my life. For instance, I would like to change my weight. I am not happy this size. I would like to lose a little. So I have to make changes, right? Well, I should, but the truth is that I want to change without having to change anything.

Ouch! Did that hit anyone besides me? As Christians, we are changed people. But the reality of it is that so many of us ask God to change our lives without really wanting anything to change. We want outcomes changed but we don't want to change the behavior that leads to those outcomes. Well, that is not how it works. As a Christian, change must start from the inside. I talked last week about how, once we become Christians, life doesn't immediately look like marshmallow clouds and rainbows. More often than not, it is black ominous clouds and hard pelting rain as we start our walk with Jesus. But, our hearts have changed and gradually, as we learn to talk to God and listen to Him, and as we learn to spend time in His Word and as we learn to lean on Him in every situation, then we see change on the outside.

God is in the business of change. He

changes hearts. He changes lives. But, He does not force His will on any of us. We have to want that change. And we have to recognize that many times that change will require us to leave some of our old life behind. Maybe books we read, movies we watch, language we use, reactions to certain situations. We have to look at our lives and realize that if we truly do want God to change us, we have to be willing to part with those things that create a barrier between His way and ours.

David says, in his famous Psalm of repentance, "Create in me a clean heart, O God. And renew a steadfast spirit within me." This is the change I want. I want to start each day with these words and then truly let God have His way in my life. A clean heart each day is the beginning of change. And true change that comes from the Father will make the difference!

The Necessity of Newspapers in Society Texas Journalist...by Willis Webb

At least one segment of my profession's demise has been predicted for years even, at times, from within the industry.

To some degree that prediction is coming true within the more precise world of major city daily newspapers. One of the most recent examples is the New Orleans Times-Picayune. Its owners cut it back from seven days a week to three times per week.

Perhaps New Orleans isn't a good example of the scary trend but nonetheless, there are still some signs that major dailies are in trouble. After all, New Orleans has suffered some blows that most major cities aren't going to undergo, Hurricane Katrina being the most damaging.

New Orleans lost significant population after being inundated by levee failures during Hurricane Katrina. That loss was accompanied by a parallel demise of businesses that buy advertising space in a daily newspaper, the lifeblood of any publication.

Perhaps New Orleans will ultimately regain some, if not most, of the population loss. However, newspapers are like

any other business in that they must have substantial revenues and must operate at a profit. The revenue-expense-profit numbers told the Times-Picayune's owners that wasn't possible with a seven-day-a-week paper.

While there has been considerable rumbling in the daily newspaper segment of the industry for several years, the major effect has been a shrinkage in size, revenue and news-advertising capacity.

On the other hand, the nation's community newspaper industry continues to significantly out-perform its big city daily brethren. Thankfully, it is rare to hear of a weekly or semi-weekly paper closing its doors. Community newspapers — small dailies, thrice-, twice- and once-weeklies — are still reasonably healthy, although perhaps not at the levels of the 1970s and '80s.

Smaller communities — those served by the smaller newspapers — provide an element that is not so easily identifiable nor as significant an influence in large cities: smaller papers can make it more personal.

Space constraints at major

dailies dictate that significant space be given to international, national and state news as well as the civic and governmental news of that city. While, big dailies may have some personal and individualistic news, they cannot and do not produce it in a volume that comes close to what community newspapers are able to do as a percentage of their total news product.

You can be almost assured that Madie Jones' 95th birthday will be acknowledged with a picture and information in a community newspaper whereas a daily of any size is compelled, by the ruts of tradition, to devote a significant amount of space to "the larger picture of the news." Yet, Madie's celebration is the lifeblood of a community newspaper's existence, compelling enough to be attractive to advertisers from every segment of a city.

Community newspapers are noted as providers of scrapbook clippings, giving such papers a coffee table life beyond the regular city daily.

Predictably, a community newspaper's share of the local advertising revenue compared

to a daily paper in a major market is significant enough to bolster the community paper's existence. A major daily's uncertainties are exacerbated by less total and comprehensive community coverage than a community paper's.

These problems are magnified in today's young society where reading something in print is not as natural as it is for the older segment of the population. Add to that all the readership areas opened up by the proliferation of online sources. Today's young adult readers are more inclined to get their information from some electronic source, rather than get the printer's ink on their hands by reading the daily newspaper or tire themselves out, God forbid, by holding up a "heavy" book.

Community newspapers, however, have gained strength in today's market by offering strong products both in print and online, continuing to prove their necessity in the market.

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Paper 'n Ink:

it truly is the information age...

By Lynn Brisendine

Reading has become an interesting adventure. I was glancing through an app on my iPad that capsulizes articles from a huge number of magazines. The Zite site is updated at least daily, if not hourly.

A person can manipulate the content by choosing a list from the menu offered. And when the article is chosen, it closes with a screen asking if it was interesting to the reader and if the reader would like to see more articles like the one read.

I like news of the cosmos and regularly see deep space pictures taken with the Hubble space telescope, or one of the large land based telescopes which continue to scan the heavens and add to the knowledge base of humanity. The site has many such articles.

While too much is available on just this one app, so many others are available, most of which I haven't used.

I, of course, read print. I exchange newspapers with publishers across Texas and my P.O. box is filled practically every day with newspapers from Perryton to Port Aransas. It gives me a better feel for what is going on in the real Texas. And I can keep up with many friends who write their columns and offer their take on a myriad of subjects.

I also subscribe to the *Avalanche Journal* and enjoy reading it every day. I don't really go to the *Austin American Statesman* or the *Dallas Morning News* sites all that much, but I have both of them bookmarked and occasionally scan them for other news of Texas.

Almost daily, I read the *New York Times*, its digital edition, and balance it with the ongoing television networks.

I have two apps which allow me to purchase books and read them on my device. One offers a link up with other devices including my smart phone which allows me to read a selected book anytime I find myself waiting in a long line or a waiting room without lugging a larger tablet machine with me. All of which is made possible through another new electronic wonder called The Cloud.

I can also order books to be downloaded in no time on my phone, my iPad, my computer and who knows what other formats exist.

Anyway, it is getting kind of confusing. I see something that interests me and, with a simple keystroke or application on a touch screen, I download the book and my credit card is billed. It's almost too easy. All of which means I now have three books I am trying to read, along with several apps on my phone, the newspapers I mentioned above and emails which offer me instant news bulletins from several sources.

Too much, huh? Well, in all of this I haven't touched on blogs, twitter, Facebook, or any number of other social interactive sites, none of which I use, and the list goes on, and on, and, well you get it... too much.

While all of this is happening, other venues of information or entertainment proliferate. I have satellite television which, if I choose, I can tune in around 200 channels offering me sports, news, cooking shows, movies, cartoons, do-it-yourself shows, weather information, travel information, some stuff people shouldn't be watching, and too much to even enumerate in this piece.

All of this, and I haven't mentioned the internet. With any number of web browsers, I can almost instantly find out about anything that is on my mind. The amount of information available is truly mind boggling. What once took a lot of time and a nearby library to discover, after cross referencing volumes of encyclopedias or atlases or dictionaries, is just one little slot and a few keystrokes away. It's amazing, not to mention enthralling.

With the internet, so many other services are available to pass the time. Many internet-based music channels will cater to your tastes. Some movie channels offer their own apps allowing anyone interested to view their shows on a wide range of portable venues.

Lastly, (which should be firstly) with all of this and more, comes work time. Which, again, all of the above could affect in the negative. But in truth, at least for me, my work gives me a good excuse to tune out and take care of business.

Oh, and our websites are first class, offering local and state information and a huge assortment of links. Don't dare miss them.

Letter to the Editor

P.O. Box 1200 Seminole, Texas 79360

Sign and include address and phone number...

You may also send your letter via the Internet send it to seminolesentinel.com

The Sentinel requests that letters be concise and reserves the right to edit for libelous content or inappropriate language and space. We will edit a letter to conform with the standards we use in publishing a responsible community newspaper.

Read the *Sentinel* Online...Check it out... just go to seminolesentinel.com

How to Stem the Tide of Growing Junk Mail

By Jason Alderman

Here's more than you ever wanted to know about junk mail: Each year, direct mail creates 10 billion pounds of solid waste in the U.S. and costs local communities more than \$1 billion in collection and disposal expenses — not to mention putting you at greater risk for identity theft if you don't shred personalized mailings before tossing.

So how can you stop the flood of junk mail you receive? You could try moving or changing your name, but as you've probably noticed, a lot of what's delivered to your mailbox is addressed to "Occupant." In fact, the U.S. Postal Service relies

heavily on such deliveries, which now outnumber first-class postage mailings.

Here are a few more practical suggestions for stemming the tide:

A good way to significantly reduce the number of offers you get for new credit accounts and insurance is to register with www.OptOutPrescreen.com, a secure website created by the leading credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, Innovis and TransUnion).

By completing a simple online form, you can request to be removed from marketing lists the bureaus supply to lenders and insurance companies

for use in firm (preapproved) credit or insurance offers. The electronic opt-out is valid for five years. If you want to opt out permanently, you must mail the form to the address provided. You can also opt back into such mailings electronically through the website. And, if you prefer, you may opt in or out by phone at 888-567-8688.

Another good method to curb the amount of direct mail you receive is to register with www.DMAchoice.org, a program run by the Direct Marketing Association, the leading trade organization for businesses and non-profits that send direct mail. When you register, your

name is put in a "delete" file that is sent to DMA's 3,600-plus members to check against their mailing lists.

It's important to note that not all marketers belong to DMA, so registering won't stop all such mailings. Also, it won't stop mailings from companies you already do business with or to which you've made a donation in the past. To get off their lists you'll have to contact them directly.

You can also register with DMAchoice.org to stop mail from being sent to a deceased individual or if you want to manage mail being sent to a dependent in your care. And,

they have an email preference service where you can opt out of receiving unsolicited commercial emails from DMA members for six years.

A third opt-out option to explore is www.CatalogChoice.org, a free service that helps you submit opt-out requests for catalogs, coupons, credit card offers, phonebooks, circulars and more. Catalog Choice also offers several paid where they do more of the legwork to get you off third-party mailing databases.

One last suggestion: If you've got elderly parents, you might want to screen their mail for an overabundance of direct

mail — especially catalogs and solicitations for money. If they're on a fixed income and susceptible to strong sales pitches, the combination can be devastating to their bank account. You can help them register with the organizations mentioned above.

No matter how diligent your efforts to get yourself off unwanted mailing lists, you're probably still going to get some junk mail. But it's good to know there are ways to significantly scale back the amount.

Jason Alderman directs Visa's financial education programs. To Follow Jason Alderman on Twitter: www.twitter.com/PracticalMoney.

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