

## Patrick Henry as Change Agent

Think about a time when you heard someone talk about something. Whatever this person said or how he or she said it, made you think about it long after the speaking was over. Maybe it even changed you. Maybe it changed the way you think about something or even changed the way you do things in your own life. Has this ever happened to you?

Sometimes we are changed by others. We hear what is said and it changes us. From that moment forward, we think differently and even act differently. This happened to Patrick Henry. Most of us know Patrick Henry as the patriot who said "Give me liberty or give me death". What you will learn today is how Henry learned to speak that way and why he chose to say those words. Henry became what is known as a change agent—someone who changes something.

Patrick Henry usually attended church services at the Anglican Church. It was also known as the Church of England since it was the only approved church by the King of England for the colonies. At age 11, Henry's mother took him to listen to Samuel Davies at the Polegreen Meeting House. Davies was not a preacher for the Anglican Church. He was a travelling minister from the Presbyterian Church. Samuel Davies was also a change agent. Davies was the first travelling minister to apply for a license to preach in Virginia. What did he change? He changed the Virginia colonist's ideas about religion and freedom. Most people who listened to Davies in the south did not have an education. Davies spoke to them with respect. He valued education and used his sermons to teach as well as to preach. His voice was his tool. He spoke about religious freedom and personal freedom. His listeners heard his message as his voice changed from soft to loud to sounding scared or angry.

Patrick Henry listened to Samuel Davies many times. After listening to Davies preach, Henry's mother encouraged him to recite the sermon on the way home. Every Sunday, Patrick Henry did just that. Henry later said, "I was first taught what an orator (speaker) should be by listening to Davies preach." He gave many speeches in his life and used the skills he learned from Davies. Perhaps the most famous speech happened at St. John's Church in Richmond. Henry gave the speech when Virginia considered whether or not it should prepare for war against England. He spoke in favor of individual rights and spoke out against England taking rights away. He knew that staying under the control of England meant no rights and that meant being slaves to the King. He ended his speech with the words "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!" By six votes, the vote was in favor of preparing for war. Henry used his words and his voice to encourage others to fight for their rights.

Both Davies and Henry changed life in Virginia as everyone knew it. Davies spoke of religious and person freedom. He was the first non-Anglican minister to preach in Virginia. Henry learned to speak by listening to Davies at the Polegreen Meeting House. When the time came to fight for individual rights, Henry used those skills in his famous speech. The changes that came to Virginia in the 1700s by Davies and Henry are the basic rights that Americans have today.