



Is change good? Apparently, the 1.7 million people who rushed to purchase iPhone 4 when it went on sale in June thought so. This was a far greater number than the initial sales of the first versions of the phone. But after using the device for a while, customers began to complain.

Users reported that when they held the phone in a certain way, the strength of the signal coming into it was greatly reduced. Some said that this led to dropped calls and even the inability to make calls at times. Data from AT&T (the carrier that supports iPhones) shows the iPhone 4 does drop more calls than the iPhone 3GS. But the difference is less than one out of every 100 calls.

In an early response, Apple said that signal loss happens with many other phones when held the same way. The company claimed the real reason for the apparent drop in signal strength was that the company had been using an incorrect formula to convert signal strength into the bars displayed on the screen.

On July 12, however, the issue became more contentious. *Consumer Reports* magazine refused to endorse the iPhone 4 until the problems were corrected. *Consumer Reports* said careful testing has confirmed user reports that holding one's hand over a particular spot on the phone drastically reduces the signal strength it receives. They recommended covering the spot with duct tape or placing the phone in a case to alleviate the problem. Researchers for the magazine found no similar problems with other phones tested.

On Friday, July 16, Apple held a press conference to again address the issue. The company offered two changes. First, they released an update in the iPhone software that converts the indicator for signal strength to a more accurate one. Secondly, they promised a free case to anyone buying iPhone 4 before September 30 of this year.

Early this week consumerreports.org responded. "Consumer Reports believes Apple's offer of free cases is a good first step. However, Apple has indicated that this is not a long-term solution, . . . As things currently stand, the iPhone 4 is still not one of our recommended models."

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above news story to read. After all teens have had the opportunity to read the article, discuss it in this way:

Do you or anyone you know own an iPhone 4? From what you or others have experienced, what is your conclusion concerning this new model? Are changes necessary, and if so, what changes would you recommend?

Apple has brought about significant changes in technology over the years. The Consumer Reports organization has a long history of getting companies to improve their products. Are all changes necessarily good changes? Explain. What obstacles do you suppose these companies have faced over the years when trying to bring about change?

The path to change is rarely smooth. People and organizations that bring about change do not do so overnight. Obstacles and setbacks often have to be overcome before lasting change is achieved. A parable of Jesus tells us that the changes necessary for personal spiritual growth also face obstacles. Let's examine some of those obstacles described in the Parable of the Sower.