

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

# activated

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## THE GENTLE WEAVER

Remade whole

## How I Cleared My Inbox By Not Doing It

From inundated to  
inspired

## A Parent's World

Living my best life

## A Rural Idyll?

Finding strength in  
difficulty

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

### A CHANGELESS GOD IN A CHANGING WORLD

One thing that seems set in stone is that most things don't stay the same over time. Many people are conflicted about that. On the one hand, you have people who are eager for change, like self-help author Karen Salmansohn, who said, "What if I told you ten years from now your life would be exactly the same? Doubt you'd be happy. So why are you afraid of change?"

On the other hand, you have people who aren't eager for change, who are happy with the way things are. But even they are very aware that change is inevitable, that the world and society is continually changing, that children grow up and leave home, that our bodies age, and so on.

Certainly, change can be very difficult. Whether it's changing a habit or your job or your home, for example, change is often a challenge—and it's even more difficult when it's imposed on us suddenly or without our approval. Most of us have been living through a time of unusual turmoil and disruption over the last year, and frankly, most of us are probably exhausted by it.

So how do we stay steady in an ever-changing world—and what are our options? Where can we turn in times of crisis?

The Bible tells us that the one thing that never changes is God! And it teaches that because *He* doesn't change, we can be at peace even when everything else around us does. God works in our changes to move us forward, to bring us to a better place, one that is closer to Him. "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God."<sup>1</sup>

This is the secret to not only embracing change but also welcoming it.

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1. Romans 8:28

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BY UDAY PAUL

**WALKING AROUND MY HOMETOWN IN INDIA WHERE I GREW UP AND HAVE SPENT MOST OF MY LIFE,** I am intrigued by how much the city has changed over the years. What was once a small and laid-back city in the early '80s has exploded into a major technological hub and a thriving metropolis. Cinema halls we frequented as youngsters have been demolished to make way for shopping malls and office spaces, older buildings have been torn down to make way for new structures, and new flyovers have been constructed to ease the burgeoning traffic. The cozy city of bygone days has almost become unrecognizable.

And it's not just my hometown. Change is a global phenomenon. Even the great empires of the past flourished for a season and faded into oblivion. They may have straddled the world like a colossus for a while, but were all replaced by a newer power. The only vestiges of their existence are now confined to history books and archaeological sites and relics.

We live in an age of such rapid change that it can be unsettling at times. Whether in politics or economics or technology, things are in a constant state of flux. It's human nature to want to resist change and stick to the status quo, but we're forced to either adapt to these changes or be left behind. As a quote from the classic book *Who Moved My Cheese?* says, "The quicker you let go of Old Cheese, the sooner you can enjoy New Cheese."

Continual change prevents stagnation and decay. Even the days

and seasons go through cycles which must be completed. God is always effecting change in every sphere of His creation. As the Bible says, "The things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever."<sup>1</sup>

No matter what changes around us, it is comforting to know that we believe in a God who does not change and is the same yesterday, today, and forever.<sup>2</sup> Our faith in Jesus is like an anchor for our souls that holds us secure and steadfast when we are buffeted by the winds of change.<sup>3</sup> As Christians, we can embrace any changes in life boldly, knowing that we trust in a God who does not change in His essence, His words, and His promises to us.<sup>4</sup>

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1. 2 Corinthians 4:18 NLT

2. See Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8.

3. See Hebrews 6:19.

4. See Matthew 24:35; Hebrews 1:10–12

# CASHING IN ON CHANGE

BY MARIA FONTAINE

I'VE HEARD AND READ MANY ENCOURAGING STORIES ABOUT THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES EMBRACING THE CHANGES THAT COME WITH AGING. Well, now it's my turn! I'm discovering the benefits of embracing change in new ways.

With my health slowing me down, I was realizing that I couldn't do as much as before, yet there still seemed to be just as much to do as ever. I had prayed for renewed strength for quite a long time, but finally I began to understand that my restored health would depend on some lifestyle changes. I felt that Jesus had many things that He wanted me to learn by going slower, taking better care of myself, and developing some new work patterns.

God cares for every area of our lives, and they all work together.

They all need to be in a healthy state. Some areas where I needed an overhaul, or at least some "tweaking," were my diet, exercise, sleep, and work habits. Also, I needed to make an effort to minimize the stresses that I'd allowed to build up.

When I prayed, God showed me to make a list as a way of reminding myself of the benefits that I would discover as I implemented the changes I needed to make. Here are some of the thoughts that I collected:



“  
I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart.—Ezekiel 11:19 NLT

If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we aren't really living.—Gail Sheehy (1936–2020)

Nothing endures but change.—Heraclitus (c. 535 – c. 475 BC)

It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad.—C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)  
”

- Change is necessary for progress and a normal and healthy part of my life and service for God.
- I don't have to accept the things that are hindering me. Making needed changes in one area of my life will make it easier for me to change in other areas.
  - To see me make changes for the better makes Jesus happy.
  - Jesus pours forth His grace and love during difficult times of change.
- Change brings more closeness with Jesus because I am relying on Him to get me through the remaking.
- Change can strengthen your spirit like exercise strengthens your body.
- Accepting the changes that God has shown me to make helps me

move past my natural comfort-seeking, settling-down instincts that can cause me to miss so many good things in life.

- When I believe that change is necessary in my life, I can welcome the changes rather than fretting and worrying about them.
- Change will help me strengthen my perseverance and my faith.
- I'm more conscious of the power of God, because I know that I couldn't be victorious on my own.
- As I embrace the changes I need to make, the boundaries of my previous comfort zones will expand. I'll be able to do things I have never thought I could do before.
- I can make progress in my life every day by learning or doing something new, no matter how small.
- When I express my thanks to God for the changes that He has

brought my way, I'm reconditioning my mind to look on them as good things to be thankful for.

Making this list and reviewing it has been very beneficial for me. The blessings and advancement that result from accepting and wholeheartedly embracing the changes God is asking of me are more than worth the sacrifices that they might require.

I pray this list will be a blessing to you as well, as you embrace the changes God brings into *your* life and discover the joy He wants to give you as a result.

MARIA FONTAINE AND HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ADAPTED FROM THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE. ■



# PROGRESS— ONE STEP AT A TIME

FEEDING READING

## **ASK GOD TO HELP YOU SET GOALS AND ARRIVE AT THE BEST PLAN FOR ACHIEVING THEM.**

The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives.—*Psalm 37:23 NLT*

People plan their path, but the Lord secures their steps.  
—*Proverbs 16:9 CEB*

Many plans are in a person's mind, but the Lord's purpose will succeed.—*Proverbs 19:21 CEB*

## **BE CONSCIENTIOUS—DO WHAT YOU CAN.**

Those who work hard will prosper.—*Proverbs 13:4 NLT*

Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.—*Proverbs 21:5 NLT*

A faithful man will abound with blessings.—*Proverbs 28:20*

So be careful how you live. ... Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.—*Ephesians 5:15–16 NLT*

## **THANK GOD FOR HIS HELP, EVEN IF IT ISN'T IMMEDIATELY EVIDENT.**

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.—*Psalm 100:4*

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.—*1 Corinthians 15:57*

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.—*Philippians 4:6 NLT*

## **TRUST GOD FOR THE FUTURE.**

Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.—*Psalm 37:5 NLT*

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.—*Proverbs 3:5–6*

Do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we

drink?" or "What shall we wear?" Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.—*Matthew 6:31,34 NIV*

I am sure that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished.—*Philippians 1:6 GNT*

## **HAVE PATIENCE FOR THE DESIRED OUTCOME.**

Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.  
—*Galatians 6:9*

Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.—*James 1:4 NIV*

Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.  
—*James 5:7–8 NLT* ■



# CONTROL?

BY MARIE ALVERO

## I WAS ONE OF THE HOPEFULS THAT STARTED LAST YEAR WITH A BRAND-NEW PLANNER.

2020 was full of promise, and I thought I had some control over the direction of the year. I had a long planned/postponed trip to see my family slotted for early spring, some home improvement plans, a saving/financial plan, plans for family vacations, etc.

But then, the world changed, and we were left dealing with the new reality!

I've thought a lot about change in the context of recognizing the need for a change and committing to making a change, but what about changes that are forced on us? A war, a divorce, a terminal diagnosis, a loss—all these things bring tremendous change that even the most recalcitrant are forced to adapt to. How do you wrap your head

around a change that you absolutely do *not* want? What do you allow to change, and what do you fight to keep unchanged? And what do you hold onto while it's all spinning out of control?

You may have heard the saying "All things change, but Jesus never." As a wife, a mom, a sister, a daughter, a friend, a homeowner, an employee, and a healthy, financially stable, free person, I don't like the implication that any one of those things can change without my consent. How do you sit with that?

If 2020 showed me anything, it's how small my ability to control anything is. And how much my happiness has been actually a satisfaction derived from controlling "my world." This is a hard thing to wrestle with, as the things I'm trying to control and protect are good, beautiful things that *should* be protected, like my family, our home and loved ones, etc. But, ultimately, I have very little control over anything but my own heart, mind, and actions.

I always love reading the epistles in the Bible. Paul will be exhorting on big subjects like the persecution and other hardships he and the church were enduring, and he'll throw in something like this: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."<sup>1</sup>

It's really that simple.

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1. Philippians 4:6–8

BY JESSIE RICHARDS

# HOW I CLEARED MY INBOX BY NOT DOING IT

**OKAY**, it's not quite cleared as in "0 Items," and I don't ever expect that. In the past month, though, I've gone from a rather long-standing position of always having between 100 and 150 items in my inbox to having only between 7 and 30 at any given time—except, of course, when I open my mailbox for the first time each day and the mail floods in.

For as long as I've used email (I'm an administrator, and much of my work is now carried out by email), I've read advice by efficiency experts telling me not to live in my inbox. "Have set times of the day to check your email," or "Don't stop what you're doing to read and attend to each new email as it comes in," for example.

I always thought that sounded great. Not trying to take care of everything as it comes in would free up more time for my actual priorities and to get bigger projects done, and I'd be less stressed ... but what about my inbox? Surely messages would pile up even worse, I would bottleneck other people's work, and they would get annoyed at me. Think of all the time, manpower, and money that could be lost if I didn't reply or attend to problems immediately.

The fact is, a lot of my work, including some priorities, does center on my inbox. I do have to read, consider, and

answer a lot of matters daily, so keeping it closed for all but a couple of hours a day just doesn't work. And sometimes I do need to attend to things pretty soon after they come in.

I have tried different time-saving and focus techniques with some success, but the pile-up problem persisted. Recently, however, I made a discovery that took it all a step further.

I took a couple of weeks away from the office for quiet work at a retreat. That's when I got the idea to start off







my work-days not by opening my inbox, but by doing the top one or two priorities on my to-do list. *Gasp! Start my workday outside my inbox?! Not get into it till 11:00 or noon?! Seriously?!*

Over those two weeks, I did that every day. There were also a couple of days when I wasn't able to connect to the Internet at all to pick up my email. That was tough on my nerves, but it turns out the world doesn't stop when I do.

What happened to my inbox through all this? Over those two weeks, the number of messages stayed about

the same as before. Despite my “neglect” in not giving it nearly my full time, it wasn't growing.

Then, a couple of days before the end of my time away, I had an epiphany: Why wouldn't this work on an everyday basis in my normal work situation? I resolved to try.

When I sat down to work on my first day back, instead of opening my email, I went to my to-do list, and started with the top item—a letter I'd been putting off for far too long—then took care of the next few items. Around 11:00, I opened my email and began taking care of the most urgent business.

After about 10 days of this new modus operandi, I saw the magic working. Two notable things had occurred: I had worked my way through a substantial to-do list that included many items that had been squatting there for too long, and the number of items in my inbox had shrunk from an already fairly tidy 70 or so to a far tidier 10 or so. I had cleared my inbox by not doing it.

I would say that a miracle had taken place, except that I don't think that was actually the case. I think it can better be attributed to listening to people who know what they're talking about—in this case, the time management experts. I started doing things the way I'd known for a long time I should, but hadn't because it was so different and “not me,” and now I'm feeling all nice and flexible and rejuvenated. I'm approaching the six-week mark, which is said to be how long it takes to solidify a new habit. I think it may stick.

At this moment I can say with conviction that my inbox is my servant, not my master. My inbox is no longer my to-do list, but a tool to help me complete my to-do list. And I actually have time to write about it!

JESSIE RICHARDS HAD A ROLE IN THE PRODUCTION OF *ACTIVATED* FROM 2001 TO 2012, AND HAS WRITTEN A NUMBER OF ARTICLES AS AN ACTIVATED STAFF WRITER. SHE HAS ALSO WRITTEN AND EDITED MATERIAL FOR OTHER CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS AND WEBSITES. ■



BY CHANDRA REES

# A PARENT'S WORLD

I DON'T KNOW WHAT PLANET I WAS ON WHEN I THOUGHT THAT WHEN I BECAME A PARENT ALL THE SKILLS I'D NEED WOULD SIMPLY "COME TO ME."

It wasn't long before I realized that parenting, while it has brought countless incomparable joys into my life, is hard work. Every day seems to bring new challenges, but I know for a fact that being a parent has made me a better and happier person.

Of course, my husband and I didn't suddenly transform into good parents the moment our first child entered our lives! I would say we had the *potential* to be good parents, but I've come to realize that every day is a learning process. I expect to be honing my parenting skills for many years to come, as I adapt my parenting to the evolving needs of my children and the situations we'll find ourselves in.

On those days when I feel frayed at the edges and question my ability as a parent and I wonder whether my efforts are paying off, my mind goes back to the day when God spoke to my heart regarding these special years of parenting. It was one of those days when it seemed like, despite my best efforts, I wasn't even coming close to retaining a handle on all that needed to be done. I was frazzled and irritated, but then God spoke to my heart these simple words: *You will look back one day and realize that these were your better years!*

I try to carry that thought with me when I question whether I'm really cut out for parenting. After all, I've been blessed with five beautiful children, and I'm so grateful for each one. It's easy to get locked into the daily grind of life—the extra messes that need to be tidied up, the rising laundry pile, the personal ambitions that are

taking a back burner—but I've come to realize that being a parent means adjusting my dreams and aspirations from being based on my circumstances before my children entered my life to how my circumstances are now.

As I have changed my perspective on what I can achieve and accomplish to match up with my reality, I'm much more accepting of the challenges that come with parenting. In fact, I'm excited by the richness that my life is filled with now that I have children in my world. There were so many things that I could not comprehend until I crossed that line from adulthood into parenthood. Mine is now a parent's world. I will never be the same again.—And I don't think I'd want to!

CHANDRA REES IS A CHILDREN'S AUTHOR AND MOTHER OF FIVE IN THE USA. ■



BY JOYCE SUTTIN

# THE GENTLE WEAVER

I FOUND A BEAUTIFUL KNIT CARDIGAN ON SALE AT AN EXCLUSIVE STORE I WAS BROWSING THROUGH WITH MY GRANDDAUGHTER. We were in an artsy shopping area enjoying an afternoon together. The sweater was the perfect shade of blue that I love and a kind of cotton that is practical for Texas summers.

As I inspected it, I saw the reason for the steep discount. Under one of the arms, there was a snag that had unraveled and become a hole. As I looked at the knitting, I saw that it was a familiar stitch that I knew how to do.

I took it home and with a small crochet hook patiently began to weave. It took me a few hours, gently

weaving under and over the threads pulling the strands together. It wasn't something I could rush if I hoped to do it right. Eventually the hole disappeared and I twisted and tightened the loose yarn to look as it was originally designed.

I enjoy wearing that sweater and usually save it for special occasions. It's even more meaningful to me because I know the story. I saw the problem and I was able to fix it. By patiently pulling and weaving the threads, I could make it look almost perfect.

It reminds me of the areas in my life that have, at times, become unraveled. An accident, a loss, a difficulty, and some area in my life fell apart. I felt like

You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.—Psalm 139:13 NIV

If you haven't met the friend who will love you through thick and thin and who holds the keys to happiness and eternal life, you can meet Him right now by praying a prayer like the following:

*Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me so that all my mistakes and wrongs can be forgiven. I open the door of my heart and invite You in. Give me Your gift of eternal life, and be my nearest, dearest, truest friend. Amen.*

something discarded and useless until the Weaver saw me and gathered me in His arms. With gentle hands He mended me. He steadily pulled together the parts that had become unraveled. He fixed the damage. I would always remember what had happened, and there would always be a trace of the mending, but He made me useful again. God gently wove the torn threads of my life and made me whole.

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BY ANNA PERLINI

# A RURAL IDYLL?



**EVERYONE HAS TIMES IN THEIR LIFE WHEN THEY FEEL THAT THEY'VE REACHED BOTTOM AND THAT THINGS COULDN'T POSSIBLY GET WORSE.** For me, one of these times happened when I found myself having to cope with a totally unfamiliar lifestyle and surroundings in a village outside Belgrade.

I was a city girl who had only read about country life in library books or heard about it in bedtime stories from my grandma. I had never experienced it in real life until my husband Michael and I found a cheap house in the Serbian countryside and decided to move away from the big city and raise our small kids in a natural environment. I thought it was such a romantic idea! The day we moved was a gorgeous spring day, almond trees were blooming, and flowers and green grass were livening up the garden surrounding the plain wooden house we

were moving into. Everything looked so bright and cheery that I didn't notice anything missing.

Well, later on, I surely noticed what was missing!

We had two small children under five, number three was on the way, and my husband had a job in the city as an English tutor. He would leave home early in the morning and come back late in the evening.

In our romantic wooden house, we had running water and electricity, but few other conveniences, such as washing machines or heaters. When Michael was home, things seemed okay, but the rest of the time, I was on my own. I was just starting to learn the local language, and the inability to communicate effectively with the few neighbors we had—and who all seemed to have it all together and figured out—compounded my feelings of isolation.

September came and our daughter Lara was born, a chubby little thing who brought us much joy

but who didn't seem to need much sleep! Winter was approaching, and conditions got progressively harder. More wood chopping, more diaper washing, shorter days, and a general feeling of helplessness. At the end of the day, Michael would often come back from work to find me in tears as I couldn't start the fire in the stove or some other catastrophe had occurred.

A few months later, we moved to a better house, but the time I spent in that village became a reference point in my life, and one I'm even able to look back on with some fondness. I'm grateful for the strength and wisdom it infused in me and how the experience prepared me in a way for the rest of my life. If I made it under those conditions, I knew I could make it anywhere!

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1. <http://www.perunmondomigliore.org>



BY PETER AMSTERDAM

# PERSPECTIVE ADJUSTMENT

Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger [...] may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us.<sup>3</sup>—*David Livingstone (1813–1873)*

**DURING AN ESPECIALLY BUSY TIME**, I had a perspective adjustment that changed my outlook for the better.

I was involved in several major projects, had a huge amount of work to do, and was quite tired—almost exhausted.

The Bible verse that came to mind and changed my attitude about my circumstances was, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”<sup>1</sup> I realized that the long hours of work, the tiredness, and the difficult decisions I faced were all part of my “reasonable service.”

1. Romans 12:1

2. Romans 12:2

3. See Romans 8:18.

Most of us have responsibilities that are sometimes difficult and trying. We all face situations that are challenging or cost us personally. We all have times when we feel so tired we think we can’t go on.

Some of the great men and women of God, our forefathers in the faith—people like Abraham, Moses, Peter, and Paul, as well as outstanding Christians down through the ages such as David Livingstone and Mother Teresa—made great sacrifices and endured many hardships and sorrows during their lifetimes. They repeatedly suffered poor health, many of them experienced loneliness, some of them struggled with depression, and they sometimes worked years on end without seeing much in the way of results. When we look at our situations from that perspective, it helps to see some of the things we go through in a different light.

The verse that comes right after “present your bodies a living sacrifice” says, “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”<sup>2</sup> That verse applies well to having the right perspective on the sacrifices we make. If we have a realistic and yet also positive, praiseful attitude, it can make a big difference. When our perspective is renewed and realigned with the Lord’s, it does literally transform our life.

So whenever you are tempted to feel that life is too rough, try to look at the sacrifices you have to make through this new perspective. When you do, you can’t help but see things more positively.

PETER AMSTERDAM AND HIS WIFE, MARIA FONTAINE, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ADAPTED FROM THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE. ■

BY SALLY GARCÍA

# SEASONS



POPULAR MESSAGES TODAY TEACH US TO LIVE *IN THE MOMENT*, to practice *mindfulness*, to take a *deep breath*... But sometimes our moments are more than moments—they stretch out into seasons. And that requires taking more than one breath. One of the wonderful things about getting older is that I have lived for many seasons, and so have many of my friends. These seasons have given us insights, and as we go about collecting experiences, they become like jewels to be treasured.

I haven't always felt this way. Then one day, the first few verses from Ecclesiastes 3 changed my mindset, like the proverbial "eureka moment." I read that:

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

1. Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 KJV
2. Isaiah 57:15
3. Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV



A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.<sup>1</sup>

It spoke to me so deeply that I committed it to memory (a real challenge to keep it all straight), and every time I've reviewed it, new applications have come to mind. For example, *a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing* can be when someone I love is far away, or it can be the situation I'm in at the time of writing this, when we show love by upholding social distancing.

After the tsunami and earthquake crisis of 2010 in Chile, we befriended many families that ended up spending three hard, rainy, cold, muddy winters in flimsy temporary housing. It seemed like an eternity. During those years, they experienced intensely *a time to break down and a time to build up, a time to get and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to cast away*. Then, the day came when the last temporary camps finally closed, and every family had

their own home or apartment. It was *a time to laugh* and *a time to dance*.

And life has gone on. Ten years have passed since the night of the earthquake and tsunami. The memory, the experiences, the times of *weeping* and *mourning* and the times of *laughing* and *dancing* are all part of that season. Each family can look back from the vantage point of having dealt with monumental challenges and having come through victorious.

I spent many seasons as a missionary living in community, as a teacher, as a hospital clown, and as a relief volunteer. I also experienced times of *weeping* and times of *laughing*. Now, looking back, each season holds treasured memories that I would not change for the world.

I thought of more seasons the other day:

A time to be a child and a time to grow up, a time to be young and a time to age;

A time to be a parent and a time to be a grandparent, a time to be quick and a time to go slow;

A time to care and a time to be cared for, a time of strength and a time of sickness;

A time to learn and a time to teach, a time of success and a time of failure;

A time of making mistakes and a time of getting it right, a time of forgiving and a time of being forgiven;

A time of wealth and a time of need, a time of surplus and a time of austerity.

My husband and I are in the midst of a tranquil season. Though we are officially “senior citizens,” we are enjoying good health and mental faculties. We're still active physically, yet we're fortunate enough to be able to slow down a bit and go at our own pace. I spend more time reading, studying, and writing about things that deeply interest me. We have a network of like-minded friends and people who we minister to spiritually. Most gratefully, we are still able to share God's message with others.

I think most of us regard what will be the last stage of life with a bit of trepidation. The “what if” looms over our heads. Yet, by now we've learned that through each season He is with us. *The High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy*<sup>2</sup> also dwells with us here and now; and *He has made everything beautiful in its time*.<sup>3</sup>

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

# CHANGING TIMES

My love will never leave you; you will never lose it, and it will never diminish. Rest in My love, for in My arms you will find comfort and peace for your spirit. My love will uphold you; as you abide in it, it will sustain you. There is tremendous power in My love. It covers a multitude of sins, changes hearts, renews spirits, casts out all fear, gives hope to those who despair, lifts those whose hands hang low, restores health, and brings light where once there was darkness.

I am the author of hope, the source of strength, and the fountain of faith. I will not fail to continue to strengthen you, for I never fail My own. Even when you feel you don't merit such love because of the mistakes you have made, those mistakes can take on great worth in the form of experience gained and wisdom acquired.

When you're faced with tough decisions, I will be your guide. When you find yourself in difficult and uncertain surroundings, I will be your light. When you're presented with overwhelming odds, I will help you rise above. When the storms of life rage about you, I will be to you a fortress of protection. When you feel the ground tremble beneath your feet, I will be your confidence.

