

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 24 • Issue 3

DESERTED PHONE BOOTHS

Don't be left behind

Treasures in the Desert

You are not alone

A Joyous Reunion

Welcomed to the
other side



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

AN ACQUIRED TASTE

Every December 31st, millions of people with the best intentions in the world make resolutions to change something about themselves over the coming year. If you were one of these, and you're still on track to make the change, congratulations! Unfortunately, studies show that most people have already given up by February or March.

Why is that, you may wonder. There are seemingly endless articles by psychologists, self-help gurus, life coaches, and others, suggesting that the abandoned goals were actually upended by real-life events, or they were unrealistic from the start, or there was no accountability.

These are all likely possibilities, but I think it's often simply that we're quite satisfied with the status quo. The way things are on December 31st may be fairly comfortable, or we're used to them that way, unlike the changes we're mulling. As the playwright Arnold Bennett wrote, "Any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by drawbacks and discomforts."

Much of our lives are spent on autopilot, and while it's perfectly natural and normal to crave routine, there's much to be discovered outside our comfort zones. "We tend to create clutter and remain stagnant when we are doing the same old things," says life coach Julie Coraccio. "When we begin to see things differently and look around us, we open ourselves up to new possibilities and new opportunities."

One place that is always a sure source of encouragement toward growth is God's Word. The Bible has a lot to say about the goodness of change and God's presence with us every step of the way. Here, for example, you can feel God's excitement come through as He describes the changes He's making: "I am creating something new. There it is! Do you see it? I have put roads in deserts, streams in thirsty lands."¹

Whatever changes or choices you face in your life, remember that God loves you. He created you in His infinite love and works in your life for your good, and if you look to His Word, He will offer guidance through uncertain times.

1. Isaiah 43:19 CEV

For more information on *Activated*, visit our website or write to us.

Website: activated.org
Email: activated@activated.org

Local contacts:

South Africa:

Tel: (082) 491 2583

Email: sales@bigthought.co.za

India:

Email: activatedindia@activated.org

Nigeria:

Cell: +234 (0) 7036963333

Email: activatednigeria@activated.org

Philippines:

Cell: (0922) 8125326

Email: activatedph@gmail.com

EDITOR Ronan Keane

DESIGN Gentian Suçi

© 2023 Activated. All Rights Reserved.

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. Other Bible quotations are from the following sources: Contemporary English Version (CEV). Copyright © 1995 by American Bible Society. Used by permission. New Living Translation (NLT). Copyright © 1978, 1996 by Tyndale House Publishers. Used by permission. Common English Bible (CEB). Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible. Used by permission. King James Version (KJV). Public domain.

REBUILDING

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

Charles Edison, Thomas Edison, C. H. Wilson, and an unidentified man standing in the yard after the fire of 1914. Building 24 in the background.

The real heroes are those who rebuild their lives using adversity as a stepping stone to greatness in the midst of the chaos life has thrown at them.—*Nikki Rowe*

Your potential lies ahead of you—whether you're 8, 18, 48, or 80. You still have room to improve yourself. You can become better tomorrow than you are today.

—*John C. Maxwell (b. 1947)*

When defeat comes, accept it as a signal that your plans are not sound, rebuild those plans, and set sail once more toward your coveted goal.

—*Napoleon Hill (1883–1970)*

THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 9, 1914, an explosion set fire to a large scientific laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey. At least ten buildings were destroyed, along with years of research and development. Property loss alone was estimated at \$7 million (\$183 million in today's dollars). "There go all our *mistakes*," the laboratory's founder and CEO said as he watched the blaze.

"Although I am 67 years old," he told a *New York Times* reporter who was at the scene, "I'll start all over again tomorrow." The next morning's newspaper included a notice that all 7,000 of the lab's employees were to report for work immediately. A disaster of lesser proportions would have demoralized just about anyone else, but years of trial and error had conditioned Thomas Edison to see disasters as opportunities.

Most of the reversals you and I face aren't nearly as catastrophic, but they have two things in common with

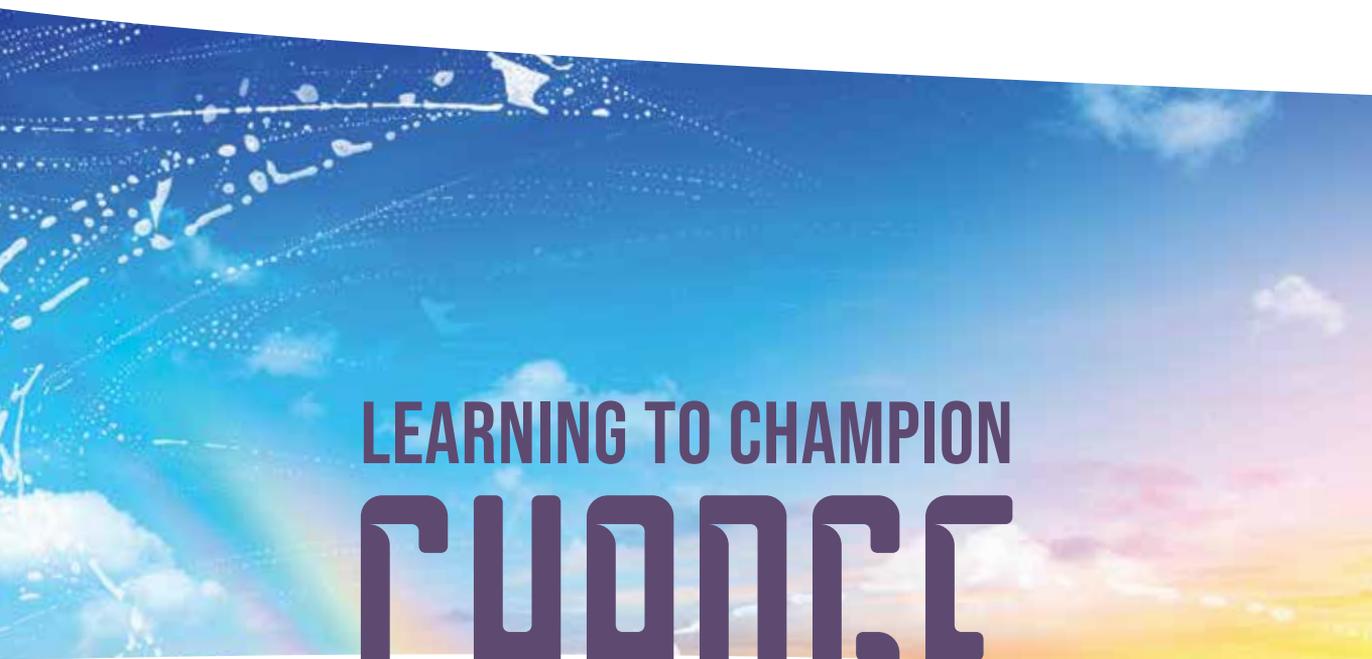
Edison's inferno. First, regardless of their nature, they present us with a choice: How will we react to our change of circumstances? Second, depending on how we react, such changes inevitably change *us* for better or for worse.

On the first score, positive thinking and determination are powerful forces for making the most of difficult circumstances, but when we also enlist the help of our all-powerful God, our chances for a positive outcome increase exponentially. "The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."¹

On the second score, if we ask God to use every challenge that we face to help make us better people, He will. In fact, "Make me better" is one of His favorite prayers to answer.

KEITH PHILLIPS WAS *ACTIVATED'S* EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FOR 14 YEARS FROM 1999 TO 2013. HE AND HIS WIFE CARYN NOW WORK WITH THE HOMELESS IN THE USA. ■

1. 2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT



LEARNING TO CHAMPION CHANGE

BY MARIA FONTAINE

WHEN WE FACE TIMES OF CHANGE, we can often feel and see God moving and working in our lives, as change is in the air all around us! When He's the one pointing us in a new direction, it's good change, it's good news, even if it poses new challenges, because it spells progress and forward movement and new horizons. When He asks us to start working on something or to start moving in a certain direction in our thoughts and efforts, we can know without a doubt that it's going to be what we need and where we need to go.

Change is a funny thing. It's wonderful on the one hand, and changes help us to achieve our goals. On the other hand, as you enact the changes, it's natural to feel a little uncomfortable, or even a lot uncomfortable and destabilized, as you find yourself having to learn new things or take on new skills. Change can leave you feeling uncertain, out of the loop, or insecure.

You've heard the saying "You don't get something for nothing," and that's so often the case with the changes we face. We may want the change because we want the end result, but we often wish we could fast-forward the part where we undergo the process of change itself, the transition and adjustment phases, and skip ahead to the

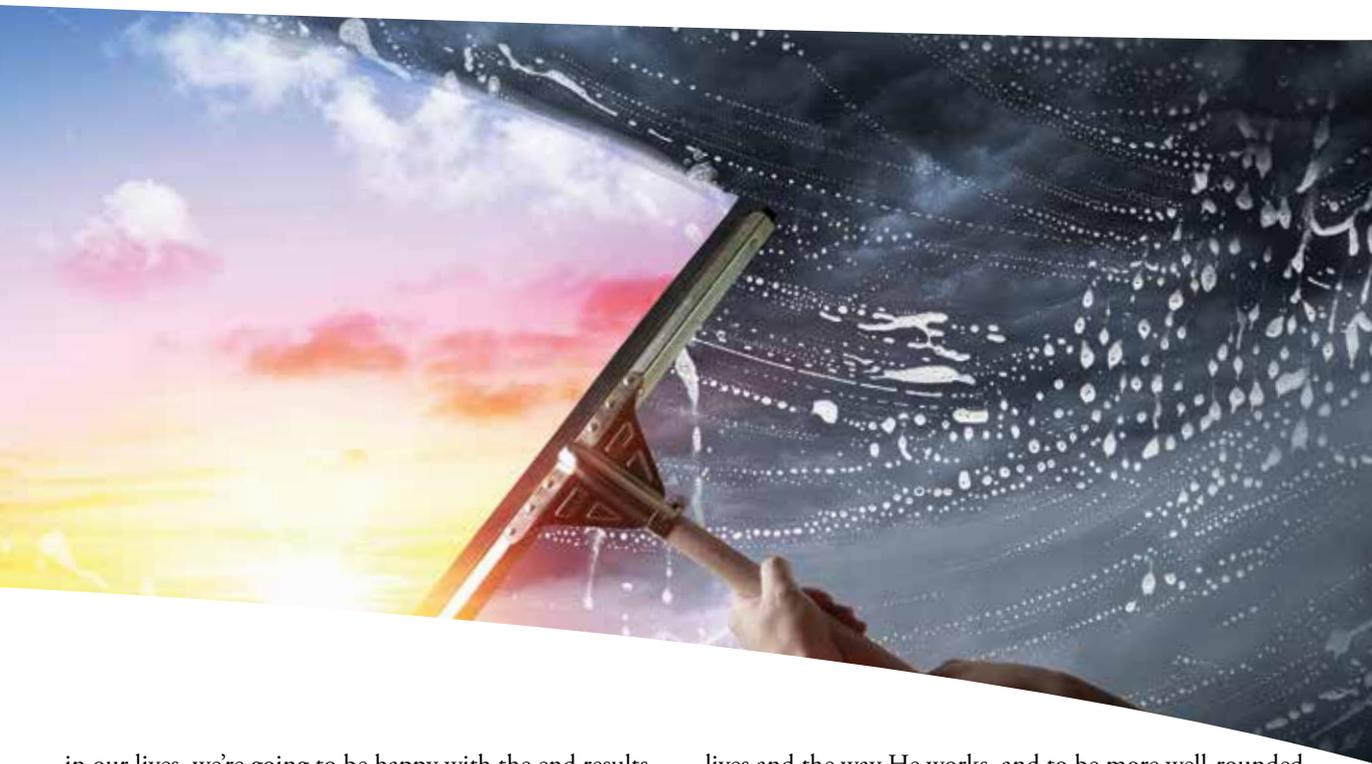
stable, fruitful end result. That would certainly be nice, but it's just not realistic.

We need to look at the process of undergoing the change as part of the reward, because it's the process that helps to strengthen our faith, build our character, and produce growth in our lives. God's Word tells us about the merits of going through times of testing and challenges, and how valuable that is.

Finding out how God wants us to change and do things differently is a positive thing. He doesn't ask us to make changes simply for the sake of self-improvement. He asks us to change because He knows what His will and plan is for each of us and how we can best fulfill that.

Even if hearing about change makes you feel unsettled—which is very natural—you can trust in Jesus and His unfailing promises to always be with you and to never leave or forsake you, no matter what you face. You can also ask Him about any upcoming changes, and about anything that makes you feel unsettled or insecure. He has the answers!

Changes generally cost in terms of some temporary uncertainty or feeling unsettled. They cost in terms of patience and perseverance during the transition phases, but we can trust that in all the changes God brings about



in our lives, we're going to be happy with the end results. He is concerned about every aspect of our lives, and He's going to bring about changes that will work together for our good and will make our lives better.

TIPS FOR EMBRACING CHANGE

A tip for embracing change is to not try to “prepare” too much or imagine “what if” scenarios to try to figure everything out in advance. We all do this sometimes, and it's natural to want to try to prepare for any eventuality. But the fact is that God gives us the grace when the time comes, when the change is introduced. So the best thing we can do while we're waiting is place our trust in Him, strengthen our faith, and try to avoid worrying about it.

Some changes can take quite some time to fully come about. In the meantime, it can be a test of our patience—because most of us want to see progress and results now! That's just the way we humans are. But God has His reasons for letting so many things in life take time, and it's often because they work out better that way. The time involved helps us to grow through the change, to understand more about His nature and plan for our

lives and the way He works, and to be more well-rounded in our experience and lives. It teaches us faith and trust. It teaches us to hold on. It teaches us patience. As the classic verse teaches, “Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.”¹

And, while you're waiting for changes that are coming your way, there is plenty to put your heart and mind and efforts toward right now, today, to pave the way for whatever God will bring about in your life tomorrow or in the future. If you embrace the changes that are already here, it will strengthen you today, and it will prepare you in heart, mind, and spirit to embrace the changes that are yet to come.

As Christians, we have nothing to worry about and everything to be hopeful about when it comes to the future, no matter what challenges and trials it may bring. God is in control, and we can rest in the truth that any change He brings into our lives will ultimately work for our good, and for the good of others whom He has called us to love and to reach with His love.

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

1. James 1:4



Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control of what you do have power over instead of craving control over what you don't.—Steve Maraboli (b. 1975)

TIMES OF CHANGE

BY AMY JOY MIZRANY

ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF THE MODERN WORLD IS THE *RATE OF CHANGES THAT AFFECT OUR LIVES*. In a constantly swirling cycle, trends are born and die faster than ever, people *follow* and *unfollow* dozens of people within a year, and a celebrity or singer that's popping one month will be forgotten the next.

Needless to say, this is something that a lot of people struggle with, myself included. Change is often needed and good, but not all things change for the best. And the distinction between what is a step forward or backward isn't always obvious in real time.

One of the secrets is having a foundation. When you have something certain to hold onto, it helps in letting the things that don't really matter slip by. With God as our point of reference, it's easier to keep track of the things you should never allow to change, like honesty, kindness, and integrity, and those that can shift, such as where you live, where you work, or how you contribute to making a difference in your community.

1. See Proverbs 3:5–6.

2. See Hebrews 13:8.

God can also provide His guidance on the things that change—e.g., which church you should attend, or what school to send your child to, or what career to pursue. He has promised to guide us as we put our trust in Him and commit our ways to Him.¹ If you seek Him and listen to His still, small voice, you'll be able to rest in the choices you make. As long as you remain true to God's Word, and stay in touch with Him, He will help you to see and discern what changes will be a step higher and cause progress.

God often works in our lives through events that break the limits and shake things up. So don't be scared to embrace the switch-ups and switch-outs that come your way when they are in line with the Bible and His Spirit. Flourish, progress, grow. Move forward. With Jesus, who is the same today, yesterday, and forever.²

AMY JOY MIZRANY WAS BORN AND LIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA, WHERE SHE IS A FULL-TIME MISSIONARY WITH HELPING HAND AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. IN HER SPARE TIME, SHE PLAYS THE VIOLIN. ■

A photograph showing a young woman with long dark hair hugging an older man with grey hair from behind. She has her eyes closed and a joyful expression. The man is wearing a brown jacket. In the background, another person is partially visible, and the setting appears to be an indoor space with large windows.

A JOYOUS REUNION

BY JOYCE SUTTIN

MY DAD JOKES ABOUT DEATH MORE THAN ANYONE I HAVE EVER KNOWN. He is 94 and says he never dreamed he would live this long, outliving my mother by 30 years. He jokes that maybe God forgot about him. The worst part of a visit with him is saying goodbye, because there is never a guarantee I'll see him again. In contrast to me, Dad seems quite at peace about his situation. Sometimes I feel like a hoarder trying to hang onto my moments with him.

Then I had a dream that changed my outlook. I was thinking about my relationship with my dad as I drifted off to sleep on the couch in his living room, and suddenly I was on the other side. I recognized some of my loved ones who had already passed on to heaven sitting in a light-filled room watching arrivals. A glass elevator would shoot up every few minutes and someone would get out and be greeted with hugs and a joyous celebration. I realized they were waiting for people who had passed from this life. All the tears and sadness here were balanced with rejoicing there.

The most amazing aspect of the dream was seeing how my loved ones were waiting. It wasn't the kind of impatient

or nervous waiting I tend to do in airports or bus stations. It was a beautiful, peaceful waiting, knowing that everything was going to happen in God's perfect time. I realized that my dad is experiencing that same kind of peace.

Since having the dream, I have a different view of my aging father. I count it as a blessing every time I talk to him or see him, but I have stopped fretting. His time is in God's hands and his passing will be in God's time, with loved ones on the other side to welcome him to his eternal home.¹

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A TEACHER AND WRITER, AND LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, USA. ■

Jesus has prepared a place for each believer in heaven.² If you want to be sure that you will go to heaven, where you will meet with other believers who have gone before and are waiting for you, all you have to do is receive Jesus as your Savior by simply praying:

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me so that I can live forever in heaven. Please come into my heart. I ask that You forgive me for the wrong things I've done, fill me with Your Holy Spirit, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Thank You. Amen.

1. Note from Joyce: My father died peacefully in the arms of a dear friend not long after this article was written.

2. See John 14:3.

AGING AND CHANGING

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA V.

THERE IS OFTEN A MISCONCEPTION THAT THE OLDER WE GET, the less malleable and willing to change we are. I've been seeing that it is often quite the contrary! As we age, our bodies, minds, and spirits experience innumerable changes. So many new factors enter our lives that we're driven to change previous habits and accept new scenarios. Studies have shown that even older people can produce new brain cells.¹

For the believer, this is not only possible, but quite doable. "So we aren't depressed. But even if our bodies are breaking down on the outside, the person that we are on the inside is being renewed every day."² Just because our bodies are deteriorating doesn't mean that God is finished with us!

In my case, as I grow older, I've had to implement quite a few changes in how I operate. For example, I've been used to certain physical exercises that I've come to realize I can't engage in anymore, as age comes with a gradual decrease of physical capacity, and my muscles, nerves, and bones can't take the stress and strain they used to. I can't sustain the same fast pace that I could



before, and that means I have to move on to better age-friendly routines.

Until recently, I was playing in a basketball team. The guys were very accommodating and made me feel welcome and like I was an asset to the group. All good, until I began to limp, and running the full court became increasingly—and noticeably—difficult. During one game, the public in the stands gave me a round of applause when I was replaced by the coach. I appreciated the support, but in truth, it was rather humbling, and I realized I had to come to grips with my condition. After some tests, it became clear I needed a hip replacement before I would be able to play ball again. In the

1. Amy Norton, "Older adults can still grow new brain cells," Healthday, April 6, 2018
2. 2 Corinthians 4:16 CEB



meantime, my main workout has become cycling, which is a lot less taxing on my hip.

The Bible has a lot to say about changes, but it doesn't say anywhere that they're reserved for the young or middle-aged. Whether we're starting the climb or we're reaching the top of the hill, we have to continue growing to stay close to God and keep moving forward. Even though God is called the Ancient of days,³ His creation experiences constant cycles of change and seasons of life—a cheerful thought for us older folks.

I don't pretend to be young. I've embraced my age and taken it as an opportunity to learn new things, adopt new perspectives, and flow with my changes and challenges as much as possible. Stay young in spirit, yes, but concede that I am *un*young in body—and hopefully, I have grown in judgment and wisdom.

Here are a few of the changes I've experienced in my latter years. If you're older, you might try drafting your own list.

—I have acquired a greater awareness of health and wellness. My wife and I pay more attention to our nutrition, exercise, sleep, etc., and we try to lead healthier, more balanced lives.

—I value friends and family more, as I realize that they may not always be around. I now try to stay more in

3. See Daniel 7:13.

4. See Philippians 1:6.

5. Philippians 3:13–14 CEV



touch with loved ones, get involved positively in their lives, and be there for them when they need help.

—God's Word has become more real to me. I delve into it with greater depth and regularly discover new truths or unearth vintage ones.

—Because I have less physical strength, I have to organize my work and my days in order to use my time better. I'm striving to be more efficient. I try to keep an ongoing to-do list, set an alarm for appointments, and write down important work details and business transactions.

—There are plenty of things that we will need to give up in old age, to be sure, yet whatever we give up, God can help us to replace with something else for that season of life.

—Old age can also be a time of dusting off old, shelved dreams and putting forth an effort to fulfill them. What dream do you have that you can now attempt to realize?

—In many ways my faith has been put to a greater test. But that has strengthened me spiritually.

I don't want to paint a rosy picture of old age, because there are a lot of inherent difficulties, but even these serve to draw us closer to God. God has started a good work in us, and He will perform it until the end.⁴

The apostle Paul expressed this very clearly when he said: "My friends, I don't feel I have already arrived. But I forget what is behind, and I struggle for what is ahead. I run toward the goal, so I can win the prize of being called to heaven. This is the prize God offers because of what Christ Jesus has done."⁵

GABRIEL GARCÍA V. IS THE EDITOR OF THE SPANISH EDITION OF *ACTIVATED* AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN CHILE. ■

Treasures in the Desert

BY STEVE HEARTS

OVER THE YEARS I'VE LEARNED THAT WALKING WITH GOD IS ANYTHING BUT PREDICTABLE. The terrain we traverse with Him can vary from day to day. He does indeed lead us through plenty of "green pastures," where His presence is impossible to doubt and His blessings rain down in abundance, where hunger and thirst are nonexistent, and we lack nothing.

There are also deserts and wildernesses which make life seem like one big drought. It seems the trek knows no end. The bareness and desolation stretch on for miles. The sweltering heat of the sun mercilessly beats down on us, and its glare threatens to blind us to the presence of our Maker and constant companion. *Is it worth it to continue?* we ask ourselves.

I've experienced the sudden and abrupt change from a green pasture to a barren wilderness. Yet, despite the tedium of the journey, I can boldly say that the times of wandering in the wilderness have served to enrich my life more than almost any other period.

Upon experiencing one of these abrupt changes, my first reaction was to wonder, *How did this happen? How did I ever end up in such a state?* But upon talking with and reading the writings of other fellow travelers on the road of faith, I came to realize, quite to my relief, that to experience spells of spiritual dryness is not an uncommon occurrence.

The symptoms of this dryness vary with each person. In my case, the fire and passion with which I went about my work was considerably dampened. This was partly due to a seeming decline in visible progress made. I felt as though I were laboring and toiling without truly getting somewhere. God's presence seemed distant and His voice silent. It was a tedious chore just to put one foot in front of the other.

In an effort to steer my heart and mind away from the self-pity that I'd nearly succumbed to, I began thinking back on my life and all the ways in which Jesus had marvelously come through for me. I thought of the many lessons I had learned over the years, which were serving as lifesavers for me.

As I did this, I remembered my love for writing, something I had wanted to pursue for years but had put off. Without a second thought, I set to work. The more I wrote, the more fulfilled I became. Writing proved to be surprisingly therapeutic for my spiritual life. I found myself reconnecting with Jesus as He inspired me with more to write about. The more I wrote, the closer I grew to Him. I know that if it weren't for my journey through the desert which brought me to my knees, I would have never rediscovered, let alone pursued, the calling the Lord gave me as a writer. This calling truly turned out to be my treasure in the desert.

desert

I'm reminded of John the Baptist, who also spent some time in the desert before his mission of preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.¹ He no doubt grew weary of "wilderness wandering" at times. Imagine living on a diet of "locusts and wild honey."² But the time spent in the desert was what prepared him to fulfill the calling God had mapped out for him.

Although I still find myself in times of wilderness, I journey on, taking comfort in the fact that I'm not alone. My Maker and best Friend is walking with me and leading the way. I am greatly encouraged by the promise "I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."³

If you find yourself in a desert place, don't lose heart. Persist in faith and rest in the knowledge that "the man who walks with God always gets to his destination." Furthermore, your desert trek may lead you to treasures that would not be found elsewhere.

STEVE HEARTS HAS BEEN BLIND SINCE BIRTH. HE IS A WRITER, MUSICIAN, AND MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN NORTH AMERICA. ■

1. See Luke 1:80.
2. See Matthew 3:4.
3. Isaiah 43:19 KJV
4. *Treasures in the Snow*, copyright © 2000 by TFI.

MY TRUEST FRIEND

Sometimes I walk beside You
And I feel Your presence sweet,
Like a fragrance that pervades the atmosphere,
And bright flowers seem to spring forth
At the impress of Your feet,
And Your voice like rippling waters fills my ears.
Yet, sometimes I grope to find You
And I see no earthly sign,
As I wander in a desert vast and bare,
And my cries are met with silence
From the unforgiving sky,
And I find no evidence that You are there.
Sometimes through verdant pastures,
Beside laughing, rippling streams,
Sometimes through mighty canyons, deep and grand,
Sometimes through arid wastelands
Where the heat dissolves my dreams,
And I faint to grasp Your caring, guiding hand.
Yet these feet will go on walking
On the path that You have led,
And this heart will go on trusting till the end,
And will know You the more deeply,
When my feelings all are fled.
Though I see You not, You are my Truest Friend.⁴

IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE MADE MISTAKES, taken wrong turns, even failed miserably at this or that, you're in good company. Many of God's heroes in the Bible did too, but they learned from their mistakes. And God came to them, as they sat in the midst of failed dreams or disappointed hopes, and gave them a new reason to live. That's what He can do when we give up on our own plans and projects and decide to try His. He gives us goals to help us grow and move in the right direction, and then He helps us attain them. Give Him a chance. Let Him give you the good things He has for you.

—*Nana Williams*

Learn from yesterday,
live for today, hope for
tomorrow.

—*Albert Einstein*
(1879–1955)

Never let go of hope. One day you will see that it all has finally come together. What you have always wished for has finally come to be. You will look back and laugh at what has passed and you will ask yourself, How did I get through all of that?

—*Author unknown*

Do the one thing you think you cannot do. Fail at it. Try again. Do better the second time. The only people who never tumble are those who never mount the high wire. This is your moment. Own it.

—*Oprah Winfrey (b. 1954)*

Ever tried? Ever failed? No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better.

—*Samuel Beckett (1906–1989)*

Don't waste energy trying to cover up failure. Learn from your failures and go on to the next challenge. It's okay to fail. If you're not failing, you're not growing.

—*H. Stanley Judd*

I am not judged by the number of times I fail, but by the number of times I succeed; and the number of times I succeed is in direct proportion to the number of times

I can fail and keep on trying.

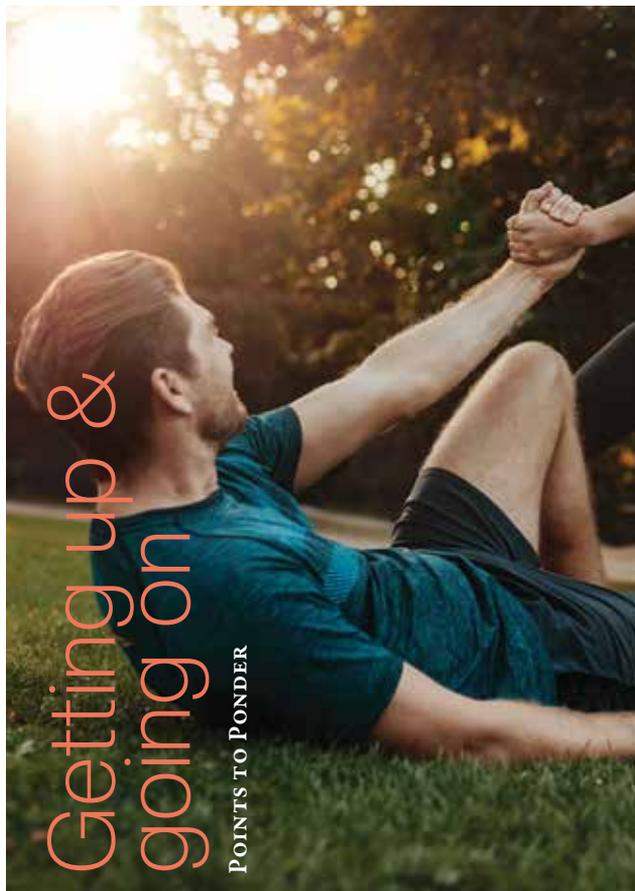
—*Tom Hopkins*

Adversity pushes the envelope of accepted performance. Until a person learns from experience that he can live through adversity, he is reluctant to challenge himself to press his limits. Failure prompts a person to rethink the status quo.

—*John C. Maxwell (b. 1947)*

Commit yourself to a dream. Nobody who tries to do something great but fails is a total failure. Why? Because he can always rest assured that he succeeded in life's most important battle—he defeated the fear of trying.

—*Robert H. Schuller*
(1926–2015)





SHAKEN BY LIFE'S CHANGES?

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Q: *I prefer stability and routine to big changes and drama, but the latter seem inevitable. That's unsettling. How can I learn to handle changing circumstances so they don't rock my world so much?*

A: You're right; change is inevitable. In fact, life is a never-ending series of twists and turns. Growing up takes about 20 years; growing into the person God wants takes a lifetime. Helping our children through their growing pains changes us nearly as much as it does them. When those dearest to us go through upheavals, it affects us too. Relationships at every level evolve continually. Big-picture issues—the economy, politics, the environment—affect us. We can't escape changes, but we can learn to make the most of them. Here's how:

Identify the issues. Separate the aspects you have some control over from those you don't, and commit all aspects to God, who is ultimately in control of everything.

Understand the issues. Differentiate between the practical aspects and the emotional, and deal with each accordingly. Together they may seem overwhelming, but individually they are usually manageable.

Keep an open mind. What you've been doing or the way you've been doing it may have worked reasonably well so far, but there may be better alternatives.

1. Matthew 19:26 CEV
2. Philippians 1:6

Enlist God's help. Circumstances may overwhelm *you*, but God cannot be overwhelmed. "There are some things that people cannot do, but God can."¹ That's the *God factor*.

Stay positive. Focus on the opportunities, not the obstacles.

Find and give support. Chances are, you're not the only one involved. Communicate and find ways to make things work out to everyone's advantage.

Be patient. Progress is often a three-step process—one step back and two steps forward.

Think long-term. "He [God] who has begun a good work in you will complete it."² ■

A PRAYER FOR TIMES OF CHANGE

Heavenly Father, Your creation is changing continually—seasons and cycles in perpetual motion. Help me to flow like that, to not be afraid to let go of my comfortable habits and routines in order to discover new things. Instead of holing up in the security of the familiar, help me to venture out into new territory. Help me to not stagnate, but to progress and continue to grow. Most of all, help me to change in the ways You want me to change, so I can become all You know I can be.

Deserted Phone Booths

BY CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER



A CITY WHERE I USED TO LIVE IS DOTTED WITH DESERTED PUBLIC TELEPHONE BOOTHS. Obsolete and derelict, they stand silent and empty, eerie reminders of their former usefulness, now simply taking up sidewalk space, useless to all but a few spiders that are ever quick to spin their webs in out-of-the-way corners. Twenty or thirty years ago, these booths were a vital means of communication. Long replaced by cell phones, these relics are no longer worth the trouble, either to keep up or to tear down.

Those old phone booths strike a sad chord in me. They remind me of people who are stuck in the past because they couldn't or wouldn't adapt to the new. Any of us can become like that. If we focus on the past instead of the present and future, we will get out of touch with the world around us and be left behind. The world is ever changing, and we need to be ready to change with it, to learn new skills and continually strive to make progress. That is true of both our physical and our spiritual lives.

1. <http://elixirmime.com>

The past year was full of learning experiences for me. Change is often downright difficult, but I've found that it usually works out for my good. I've needed to adapt to my new location and situation, and I've acquired some new skills in the process.

Human nature seems to want things to remain static, but the ways we did things yesterday are often no longer the best approach to the needs of today. Regardless of whether or not we change with the times, what was cutting edge yesterday often doesn't cut it today. Take a look at the rapidly changing world of computerized gadgetry to see what I mean. I recently looked through back issues of a popular electronics magazine and couldn't help but chuckle at the products that were being hailed as "innovative" in their day, but are outdated now.

As the saying goes, "Time and tide wait for no man." We do well to move with the times.

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A SCRIPTWRITER AND MIME ARTIST¹ WHO SPENT 47 YEARS DOING MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN 10 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. HE AND HIS WIFE PAULINE CURRENTLY LIVE IN GERMANY. ■

NUMBER MY DAYS

BY MARIE ALVERO

PSALM 90 IS A BEAUTIFUL PRAYER BY MOSES THAT INCLUDES THE LINE, “Teach us to number our days so we can have a wise heart.”¹

I think what it’s saying here is that if we could zoom out, see the beginning and the end, the brevity and finiteness of life, we would be able to better grasp what is really important.

Over the last few years, there have been many changes in my little world. Many of these were changes that we could see coming, like our kids growing up and moving out and starting their adult lives. Some were unexpected, like the death of loved ones or big changes in careers. My life has always had a lot of changes, and I held wide margins for things to change. Living in a new place, doing a new thing, or being around new people are all par for the course for me. But for the most part, I expected *the world at large* to provide a mostly secure platform for all my personal changes.

The last few years have shown otherwise. We’ve all learned that the world can and does radically change. The feeling of being totally out of control and not really knowing what the parameters are anymore was so disconcerting for me. *Too much can change! Too much can be taken away!* My soul wasn’t at peace. Hasn’t this been something many of us felt?

The recognition that we’re not in control can be so disturbing. I’ve hovered between dread and panic and finally recognized that I had to adjust my mindsets. I couldn’t live in this tension, and then came the desperation to know what to focus on, and how to see things. I didn’t initially pray in the words of the Psalm noted earlier, but my cry was the same.

This isn’t the only secret to coping with change, but it has been key for me in being able to reframe things that are changing in my life and in the world at large. The perspective of eternity brings clarity to the everyday.

MARIE ALVERO IS A FORMER MISSIONARY TO AFRICA AND MEXICO. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES A HAPPY, BUSY LIFE WITH HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN IN CENTRAL TEXAS, USA. ■

The leaves in autumn do not change color from the blighting touch of frost, but from the process of natural decay.—They fall when the fruit is ripened and their work is done.—And their splendid coloring is but their graceful and beautiful surrender of life when they have finished their summer offering of service to God and man. And one of the great lessons the fall of the leaf teaches is this: Do your work well, and then be ready to depart when God shall call.—*Tryon Edwards (1809–1894)*

1. Psalm 90:12 CEB

FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

THE BOOK OF YOUR LIFE

When I designed the book of your life, I didn't make it a hardbound stitched masterpiece. I made it more like a ring binder, with pieces that could be added and taken out. I made it so that you could freely choose to add an extra page or chapter, or a whole new section if necessary.

If you keep your book open to Me and let Me leaf through it and make adjustments, I can help transform your life to fulfill My purpose for you. You might feel that you like your pages the way they are, and you're comfortable with the layout and the thickness of your binder, but if you trust Me to work in your life, I can help you to make the right adjustments.

Be flexible, be willing to expand and adapt to new circumstances and times of change that I bring into your life, ready to fill the need, able to accommodate, and willing to try new things or methods. Have faith, and trust Me to come through for you.

I love transforming your life "from glory to glory."¹ Trust that with My help you can learn and grow as you need to in any area. You're never past learning. You can change and expand your horizons as needed. You can continue to be transformed to grow into the fullness of My image as you keep looking to and heeding the instruction in My Word.

1. 2 Corinthians 3:18

