

# The Real Truths about Change

Although Labor Day weekend is not the unofficial end to summer, to most of us it is because our children head back to school. If you're in college, classes resume or have already started, and work schedules are back to normal with everyone returning from vacations or reduced summer hours. I've always loved this time of year, especially when I was younger, because it was a time of change, new beginnings, fresh starts, with new teachers, new classes, meeting new people, and a new schedule. For three of my daughters, they too loved this time of year. However, for one of them, this time of change was dreaded and feared.



Those of you who know my daughter Lizzie, would never have thought this. Days before the first day of school, Lizzie would get sad and cry because she didn't want what was normal, getting up every day and doing the same thing, to change. She feared any experience that was unknown to her or different from her daily routine. Gina would pray with her and hold

her before she fell asleep, reminding her that Jesus was with her and would help her adjust. She also promised her, as she did every year, that she would go to McDonalds and bring in fries for her and her friends at lunch on her first day back to school. We all have different responses to fear and change and for some of us it's seeking comfort from food. For Lizzie, it was McDonald's fries. Not only did this fear and anxiety occur at the beginning of school, but also after any extended time off from school for extended holiday weekends, or for Christmas or spring breaks.

Change is defined as making someone or something different. We all experience change in many ways. Some changes are big or small, in our control or out of our control.

How do you respond to change?

For all of us it varies and it depends on whether it is change we know is going to happen, or is an unexpected or sudden change.

For some of us, like Lizzie, it's fear of the unknown. It could be anger and frustration focused on why things have to change. It could be sadness and depression because you're grieving what you have to give up for the new change. It may be unbelief in that you can't comprehend that whatever the change is has even happened and more deeply, why did God even allow this change to happen.

These responses, though are all completely normal in the moment are unhealthy. They should lead us to examine our relationship with God.

Let's take a look at those who followed Jesus, some changes they experienced, and their responses.

Jesus was with the disciples for three years, performing miracles, changing other's lives, and changing their lives. Through it all, Jesus told them about a change that would occur. He told them that He would die and rise from the dead, yet they didn't believe Him. Interesting. Was it because it was something they didn't want to happen? However, it did. Jesus was crucified and buried in a borrowed tomb and here's where we pick up the story in the book of John.

### **John 20: 11-23**

<sup>11</sup> Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb <sup>12</sup> and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

<sup>13</sup> They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." <sup>14</sup> At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will get Him."

Let's take a look at all the changes that have occurred for Mary. This was the teacher she loved and served. Even though He told her and the disciples what was going to happen, He was killed in a horrible way through crucifixion. A sudden change she couldn't see, nor wanted to see, had happened. She now came to anoint the body, and Jesus' body was not

there. This was an unexpected change and yet a truth that Jesus had shared with her and the disciples. Let's see what happens...

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

**Luke 24:8** tells us, "Then they remembered what He said." When He revealed Himself to her she then remembered what He said and promised.

Returning to John, chapter 20:

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Notice that through all this change that Mary didn't understand, she kept serving and taking care of Jesus' physical needs, even though as she believed, He wasn't alive. Did Jesus reward her for doing this when He revealed Himself to her? One thing I have learned in my journey and through many changes that I have experienced is to continue to be who God has created me to be, in serving Him and others, and not run.

Jesus revealed Himself to Mary, and He told her what to do, and she did it. When we seek to serve Jesus in the midst of change we don't understand or struggle with, it is there He will tell us what to do and how to trust Him.

"I won't move until You speak" is a powerful line and prayer in the song Alayna share with us earlier. I came across this song during the pandemic and have never forgotten it. The pandemic brought about many changes to all of us that didn't make sense. It was hard to discern what was the truth, and how to be a light in the midst of political, racial, medical, and spiritual divide. God reminded me with this song, as He had in the past when changes occurred that were out of my control, that I needed to be still with Him, seek Him, His heart, and His truth, before I responded or had taken any action.

How quickly do any of us "not move until He speaks?"

Let's see the disciple's response.

## **John 20: 19- 29**

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders,

Let's pause here at that comma. Notice how they were responding to all the change that was going on? Because of fear, they were together locked in a room. What did they fear? They were afraid of the Jewish leaders who were behind the plot to kill Jesus. They were likely afraid for their own lives, afraid of their uncertain futures. They had no idea what this change meant for them or what was next, just like most of us think when unexpected change occurs.

Let's continue:

Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"<sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

What is the first thing Jesus said to them? "Peace be with you!" In the midst of fear, He wanted them to know peace – peace that only He can give. Peace that He promised them earlier in **John 14: 27-29**:

<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

<sup>28</sup> "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

Jesus tells them here about what will happen and that in the midst of it they should have peace.

Did they believe it? Did they listen to Him?

What about us in the midst of change? Do we seek to hear from God? Do we listen to what He says? Do we take Him at His word?

"I won't move until You speak." Is that so for you? For me?

Now let's see how this changed the disciples forever.

### **John 21:4-9**

<sup>4</sup> Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. <sup>6</sup> He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."

During all this change, the disciples and Peter continued to do what they were created to do and waited for their next set of instructions on what to do, just like Mary did at the tomb. Not realizing it was Jesus who told them to throw the net on the other side of the boat, they did.

The story continues:

When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

<sup>7</sup> Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. <sup>8</sup> The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. <sup>9</sup> When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

When they realized it was the Lord, they ran to Him. This is what our response should be to change in our lives is to run to Him and ask Him what He wants us to do.

John Maxwell made a powerful point about change: "Change is inevitable. Growth is optional." Our response to change will affect our growth in our relationship with God and others. So, what are the real truths about change?

1. God's love for us never changes: **Jeremiah 31:3** "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

2. God never changes: **Hebrews 13:8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
3. His word never changes: **Psalms 119:89** says Your word, Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

You and I need to “anchor” ourselves in these truths as we continually experience change.

**Hebrews 6:17-19** says:

<sup>17</sup> Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. <sup>18</sup> God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. <sup>19</sup> We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

These two unchangeable truths are His promises to us in His word and His oath that He will fulfill those promises.

An anchor grounds a boat or a ship in the water or in a storm that is ever changing. When anchored, the boat is never moved.

Judah Smith, in his most recent book, *How's Your Soul?* wrote, “Jesus is our anchor. However, most times we want Him to be a helicopter.”

I worked for an organization where in six years I experienced three CEOs and four new bosses. I can't tell you how many times I cried out and pleaded for a helicopter! However, as I struggled and was honest with God and what He wanted me to do, opposed to what I wanted, He became my anchor. I learned how to serve Him and others through the many changes, with the gifts He has given me. I grew tremendously.

God longs for us to grow in our relationship with Him



Twenty-four hours before this picture was taken on her wedding day, Lizzie sat on the edge of her bed in our house and cried, not because she didn't love Matt or because she wasn't excited about what God had for their lives together, but because it was change. It was change that was unknown, unpredictable, and outside of the walls of our home where she found safety.

They next day, as Lizzie, Gina and I were in the limo being driven to the wedding, we passed a McDonalds. Gina asked Lizzie if she wanted to stop for some fries. She said no, laughed, and then proceeded to share how thankful she was for all that God has done for her and has provided His peace and provisions for all her anxieties.

What about you?

What's your response to change? How do you depend on God and His word?

Some of you today you have never had the opportunity to respond to the truth that God loves you with an everlasting love, and that He sent Jesus to die for you so you can have a relationship with the never changing God, so He can do a miraculous work of transformational change in you.

**2 Corinthians 5:17** says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

If that is something you want today, it's as easy as A, B, C.

Admit that you are a sinner and want to have a relationship with Him,

Believe that Jesus died for your sins.

Commit your heart and life to Him.

Do it today.