The background of the entire image is a soft-focus landscape. In the foreground, a rustic wooden fence with three rails runs across the frame. To the right, a large tree with dense green leaves is partially visible. The sun is positioned in the upper center, creating a bright, hazy glow and a lens flare effect that filters through the trees. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

**Choosing to
Change when
Change Happens**

Brenda Henderson

Choosing to Change when Change Happens

BRENDA STROHBEHN HENDERSON

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To Joe
for encouraging me to seek the very heart of God
and to follow my heart;
no wonder I treasure yours

To my mom, Lorraine Strohhahn,
for hungering and thirsting after righteousness,
even in seasons of great change

To the memory of my dad, Ben Strohhahn,
who, like Moses, humbly—yet courageously—walked with God
and who devoted his life to helping others know Him better

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PREFACE

Change happens. Not only is that a true statement, but that was the title of a recent four-week ladies' Sunday school class at my church. Little did I know how things would change when the pastor's wife called and asked me to teach one of those weeks. I was to choose a Bible character from whom we could learn lessons on change and prepare a thirty- to forty-minute lesson. I was free to choose the person as well as my approach to the topic.

God put, as Joe (my husband) likes to say, a “fire in my belly” from the very minute I began working on the lesson. I chose Moses and initially planned to look at all of the changes in his life: the bulrushes, the burning bush, the ten plagues, the Red Sea crossing, the Ten Commandments, to name a few. The goal for my study time each morning was that I hoped to saturate my mind with all of the events, their correct order, and the changes God walked Moses through.

But God changed my thinking.

The more I read in the Bible (starting in Exodus 2 with Moses's birth and ending in Deuteronomy 34 with Moses's death), the more the *facts* did not jump out at me. Instead, I was struck over and over again by Moses's growing knowledge of—and relationship with—God as he saw God working in each of the changes he was going through.

Oh. My. Heart. There was that topic that I loved so well: “Knowing God!” I began to see that the *more* we know of God and the *better* we know Him, the more we can choose to change how we view the changes that come into our lives. The lesson (and therefore the study times) took a drastic turn toward the personal and the practical!

After I taught the lesson, I was speaking with Joe about the fact that I had put in so much study time and had gathered so much material that I probably could have taught a whole series of lessons just from the life of Moses. As I began to pray about it over the next few days, I knew what I needed to do. I needed to focus on pouring my heart and my efforts into providing the Moses study for other ladies to use as well.

When I tossed the idea out to Joe, he enthusiastically supported the idea, and he has greatly encouraged me in “gittin' 'er done” these last few weeks. The goal has been to just power write in order to take the passion burning in my heart and put in on paper ASAP!

So it thrills me to no end to share what God has done, because you are holding in your hands this copy of *Choosing to Change when Change Happens*, a seven-lesson Bible study designed for use in either personal or group study! May you be enlightened, exercised in your faith, equipped, empowered, and encouraged as you study through the spiritual changes in the life of Moses.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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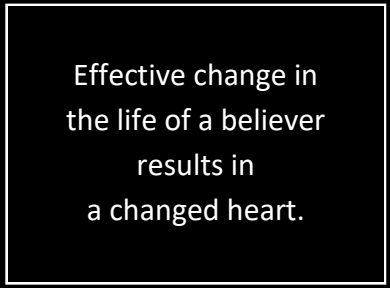
Lydia Yoder, when the changes around me felt as if they might overtake me, God gave me you. Your friendship is a constant, even when the geographical distance between us changes.

And to the readers of *Petals from the Basket*, you encourage me, keep me in line, and lift me up with your kindness, patience, and dear ol' sweet selves. I owe you a boatload of gratitude—big time. Thanks for being all kinds of wonderful!

LESSON ONE CHANGE

Change. The very word evokes excitement, dread, anticipation, fear, grief, joy. Regardless of our age, marital status, or social setting, regardless of our penchant for adventure or our comfort level with routines, the same is true for all of us—change happens.

As we begin this study together, I am excited about the opportunity for us to learn about change from the life of Moses. From the home of Hebrew parents who kept him alive (despite the king’s command to kill all baby boys), to life as the adopted son of Pharaoh’s daughter, to living as a “refugee” in Midian, to leading God’s people out of captivity in Egypt, to being the recipient of the Ten Commandments, to teaching an entire nation about the one true God, Moses’s journey was more than just a physical one. The path Moses took was filled with challenges, rewards—and change. Sometimes his response was correct; at other times, it was appallingly wrong. Yet throughout Moses’s life (just as in our lives), each change—along with its correct or incorrect response—gave Moses an opportunity to learn more about our amazing God!



Effective change in
the life of a believer
results in
a changed heart.

While Moses, a man with whom most of us feel we are quite familiar, dealt with many of these changes throughout his lifetime, the change in Moses’s knowledge of God—resulting in a *truly* changed life—will be the focus of our study in these lessons. Though basic life changes may begin on the

outside, effective change in the life of a believer results in a changed heart. And that, my friends, is the purpose of this study—changed hearts!

Take a moment to jot down a few of the changes that you have either recently experienced, are experiencing right now, or are facing in the near future—or, if you're like many of us, some from each category!

As you look over this list of changes, don't let it overwhelm you. We're about to tackle it with the powerful sword of the Word of God! In fact, borrow a portion of Moses's prayer in Exodus 33:13 as you continue through these lessons and specifically ask the Lord,

“Please show me now Your ways, that I may know You...” (ESV).

God begins sharing Moses’s story with us in chapter 2 of Exodus. Actually, He provides the “backstory” in Exodus chapter 1, where the king of Egypt made a very specific decree regarding the nation of Israel that would eventually—and greatly—impact the life of Moses.

Read Exodus 1:8–22.

According to verse 9, why did the new king want to slow down (if not eliminate) the Israelites’ birth rate?

Although this new king initially tried to overwork the Israelites and break them down *that* way, what was the result? (See verse 12.)

When his angry plot against God’s people didn’t work, the king came up with an even more devious plan to eliminate the growth of the Israelite nation: *Maybe I could recruit the midwives to do the dirty work for me and literally eliminate the competition from their very first breath.*

But I love how these courageous women responded to his ungodly command. More importantly, I love *why* they responded in the way they did. When your motivation is powerful, your actions will be powerful!

According to Exodus 1:17, why didn’t the midwives obey the king?

In a last-ditch effort to regulate the population growth of the nation of Israel, the king commanded “all his people” (Exodus 1:22) to cast into the Nile every Hebrew baby boy who was born. I can almost hear his evil laugh ringing through the end of the chapter: “Mwah-ha-ha...!”

But listen carefully, because as chapter 2 unfolds, the melodious symphony of God’s sovereign plan begins to swell in jubilation as the parents of the newborn baby Moses carefully hide him near the very waters that were to have been used to drown him.

This part of Moses’s story is somewhat familiar to those who grew up attending Sunday School. “Moses in the Bulrushes” was a childhood favorite! For you, this next part will be a brief (but needful) review of events. However, some of you are new to the Christian faith or to the practice of attending church on a regular basis, so let’s quickly follow Moses as he travels from a waterproofed basket in a river bed to a cushy bed in Pharaoh’s palace.

Because of the evil king’s proclamation that all baby boys should be drowned in the river (Exodus 1:22), Moses’s mother, upon giving birth to a beautiful baby boy, hid him in her home for three months, as recorded in Hebrews 11:23. (What loving mother wouldn’t at least *try*?) When it became impossible to hide him any longer, she waterproofed a basket, put her precious little one inside it, and hid it by the river’s edge. Her daughter, Moses’s sister (Miriam), hid nearby and watched to see what would happen.

Read Exodus 2:5–6. In your own words, what did Miriam observe?

Exodus 2:7 tells us that Miriam spoke out immediately to see if Pharaoh's daughter wanted her, a Hebrew girl, to find a Hebrew nurse for the baby she had found and had properly identified as the child of a Hebrew couple. According to Exodus 2:8, when Pharaoh's daughter gave her the go-ahead, who did Miriam get to be the child's "surrogate nurse"?

Imagine her delight when she realized that *she* would get to be the one to see his first moments of crawling, walking, speaking, etc. I wonder if even the waterproof basket in which her child had been placed could have contained his mother's tears of joy!

However, after he was weaned—in a time that would come far too soon for any mother's liking—she would again (undoubtedly) shed tears as she took the young boy to live in the palace as the son of pharaoh's daughter.

Imagine with me her fear (as the Bible itself does not speak of it) that her son would be living in the house of the leader of those who treated her people, the Israelites, like mere slaves. I have never had the joy of giving birth to a child, but I can still envision the depth of love and loss she was facing. What a hole there must have been in her heart. To quote a currently popular expression, "I can't even."

Think next of her giving her handsome little boy a farewell kiss on the forehead amid her bittersweet joy over the fact that although he would no longer be living within the confines of her home, he was at least *alive!*

Friends, this is not a mere "once upon a time" story that was written to capture our imaginations. This happened! And in the lessons yet to come, I believe we will see some of what God was preparing this young child for. Like He did with each of us, God had a plan for this little boy before Moses was even conceived! God saw the big picture—again, just as He does in our lives—and knew what would best prepare Moses for his future.

Read Psalm 139:1–18 and, on the next page, write your thoughts about God's knowledge of *you* as seen in this passage. As you put these thoughts on paper, include how you think these truths may apply to any or all of the past, current, or upcoming changes you listed on page 2.

This introductory lesson has quickly taken us through the first major change in Moses's life—from birth in a Hebrew home to life as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. It was imperative that we have this foundational information before moving through the remaining lessons. We can learn from the many changes Moses had ahead of him.

But I have one more important truth to share with you before we discover the many facets of change both in our lives and in the life of Moses. Because, like the foundational information regarding Moses's first major change, all the lessons that follow spring from your viewing them as a woman who has had a major change in *her* life! This Bible study is designed to provide you with a desire to choose to change your understanding and knowledge of God when change happens. But if you are not yet a woman of faith (a believer in Jesus Christ and a follower of Him), these lessons will be merely “inspirational” rather than spiritual in their impact.

Second Corinthians 5:17 (NASB) states: “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” In other words, friends, our lives are changed, different, new when we are “in Christ.”

So what does it mean to be “a new creature”? Matthew Henry, in his *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, writes that it is: “a thorough change of the heart.” There's that word: *change*. In this case, the heart no longer lives for sin and its temporal pleasures but for Christ and His eternal treasures.

Because of the sin of Adam, the first man created by God and the first to choose his own selfish desires over the commands of God (see Genesis, chapters 2 and 3), all humans are born with sinful hearts. A holy God, however, cannot look on sin and demands that there be a payment for the sin—death. Try as we might in our strength, we can never be good enough on our own, do enough right things, or follow enough rules and regulations to earn our way into His favor.

So this amazing, compassionate, loving God sent His Son, Jesus, from heaven (see Luke 2) to come to earth and live among humankind (even though He Himself was one with God). Knowing that we could never merit

His favor, God sacrificed His only Son (His holy, sinless Son, Jesus) to be the One to die so that we, sinful humankind, could have our sin-debt paid in full and could be forgiven of the sins that, from birth, had been our very nature. Christ died the most horrid of deaths—He was tortured and nailed to a cross—but because He was very God Himself, He did not remain dead but rose from the dead (just like the Bible said that He would)! Not long after this miraculous resurrection from the grave, He ascended into heaven to be with God, His Father, and to intercede on our behalf. Because of this death, burial, and resurrection, God now offers us a pardon for our sins!

That, my friends, is a gift that simply requires our using the faith that He gives us to believe Him and to accept this offer of being saved (“salvation”) from the penalty for our sins! It is a gift of pure grace! The Bible, God’s Word to us, states: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8, NASB).

In Acts 16, two followers of Christ were asked how someone might also become a follower of Christ, accept this grace-given gift of God, and know this forgiveness of sins. Their reply? “They said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...’” (Acts 16:31, NASB).

Have you accepted this gift of forgiveness and eternal life in heaven? If so, please briefly share your faith story on the following page(s). This is the greatest change you have ever chosen, and it is foundational to the changes you will continue to make as you learn more about your great God.

If you have not yet chosen to turn away from (“forsake”) your sins, accept God’s free gift of salvation, and follow after Christ Jesus as your Savior (the only One Who has the ability to save you from the punishment of sin), wait to fill out the next page. Don’t worry that it’s blank. It’s better to have a blank page than a false hope that “all is well.” Please speak with one of your study leaders (if you are doing this in a group), or if you prefer or are reading through this book on your own, you can pray right where you are and let God know that you desire to repent of your sins (i.e., choose to turn away from them), that you believe that Christ died to pay for your sins, and that you accept His free gift of salvation. And then, as the men in Acts 16:31 told the man who asked them the way of salvation, “you will be saved!”

CHOOSE to CHANGE (Practical Application)

This was a brief introductory lesson, so the first practical-application assignment is easy:

Read Psalm 139:1–18 at least three times this week.

Another option is to listen to Psalm 139 via an online Bible, such as Bible Gateway (BibleGateway.com). To listen to the entire chapter (twenty-four verses) takes only two minutes and fifty-two seconds!

Seriously. Did you catch that last statement? Here it is again: To listen to the entire chapter (twenty-four verses) takes only two minutes and fifty-two seconds!

Circle the three days on which you read or listened to Psalm 139:1–18 this week:

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

MOSES MOMENTS (Small Group Discussion)

As you break into your small groups this week, introduce yourselves, share one thing you would like to learn through participating in this Bible study, and take time to pray for one another, asking God to use this study to help you know Him more and to live for Him more intentionally.

JOURNAL, NOTES, and PRAYER REQUESTS

LESSON TWO CHANGE IS ENTRUSTED TO US

As an editor of marketing publications and books, I saw many interesting sentences and paragraphs in a day's work. One of the errors I saw most often was the "passive" voice.

In passive-voice sentences, no one is doing the implied action. For example: The chair was set next to the desk. This sentence is passive. Who set the chair there? Did the chair actively participate?

But if I say, "Sharon set the chair next to the desk," Sharon is the one acting out the verb *set*. This simple change turns a passive sentence into an active one. An occasional use of passive voice is fine, but the power of the document is weakened when, in the majority of the sentences, no one is acting out the verb.

When change happens, we can choose to allow the change to change us.

Sadly, many of us treat change with a passive approach. We say, "Change happens. There's nothing I can do about it." And then we sit and pout because of the change that was "inflicted upon us." But there *is* something we can do! When change happens, we can choose to allow the change to change us.

Read Philippians 4:8, aloud, if possible. This is one of the greatest tools you can use when choosing to change your viewpoint as changes occur.

In this list of qualities that should be true of our thoughts, what is the first thought quality we are told to think on?

What is true is that this thing—this *change*—happened.

God didn't withhold something or someone from you because He is mean.

God didn't stop loving you.

God didn't love someone else more than He loved you or love you more than He loved someone else.

God *entrusted* this change (trial, blessing, disappointment, gift, heartache, loss) to *you*. View it as an honor, a privilege—an assignment, even. View it through God's heart. His compassionate, loving, caring, wisdom-filled heart caused Him to choose you as the recipient of this change.

Generally speaking, how do you view change when it comes?

In Exodus 3, Moses faced the prospect of a pretty major change in his life. Living as a “refugee” in Midian (because he had killed an Egyptian taskmaster in Egypt and was himself about to be killed for it by the pharaoh whose daughter had raised him), Moses was tending his father-in-law's sheep out in the desert when he looked over and saw a bush that was on fire but that wasn't being destroyed by the fire.

Read Exodus 3:3. What was Moses's reason for going over to the bush? (NOTE: His reason was not as spiritual as we often think that it was!)

Once Moses approached the bush, God called out to him from the bush. Imagine how startled he must have been. Seriously. A bush that was on fire but didn't burn up, and now the voice of God was calling him by name! Wow. Just wow!

Moses clearly began to approach more closely, because God admonished him with the words that we read in Exodus 3:5. Write the verse here:

When God next identified Himself to Moses in terms that Moses would understand—"I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"—what was Moses's response (Exodus 3:6)?

The reason for this was that Moses was "afraid to look at God" (ESV).

Why might Moses have been afraid (list both good reasons and "bad" reasons)?

The truth of that matter is that we aren't told exactly *why* he was afraid. In fact, the possible conclusions we each gave to the question on the previous page were probably influenced by and filtered through what our own responses may have been.

But I do think that one thing is clear: Moses wasn't *fully* familiar with the holy, powerful, and all-knowing (omniscient) God who was about to entrust an important change to him. Why do I think this?

1. God had to identify Himself with names familiar to Moses's lineage.
2. God had to tell Moses to remove his shoes because he was on holy ground. (NOTE: In those days, removing one's shoes was a way of showing respect for someone who was to be revered due to his or her status.)
3. Once God identified Himself, Moses was afraid—either due to his shame over his sinful heart or his awe that he was in the presence of a holy God. Perhaps it was a perfect combination of the two: reverent awe.

When changes came, Moses began to change his view of God and therefore chose to change his habits, relationships, reactions, actions, etc. So don't write Moses off or think poorly of him. In fact, in Exodus 33:11, the very human Moses was eventually called a friend of God!

But I'm getting ahead of where we need to be in this lesson, in this moment, because Moses will first need to scrape his knees on the gravel a few times as he falls down on the job and fails to rise to the occasion. So let's return to Exodus 3 and read Moses's response to God's assignment.

Read Exodus 3:7–10. Note that God shares with Moses His desire to help the Israelites, who are being held in bondage in Egypt. Verse 10 states the plan that God is entrusting to Moses's care. What is He asking Moses to do? Summarize or write the entire verse here:

Exodus 3:11 begins sadly. Write the initial words of the verse.

Thus begins a back-and-forth conversation between God and Moses—Moses objecting; God entrusting, enlightening, exercising, equipping, empowering, and encouraging.

Five times—yes, five!—Moses objects to or questions God regarding the task that God has entrusted to him. Let's take a few moments to look at those objections, because we will most likely find them to be similar to our own possible reactions when changes come our way.

Objection 1: “Who am I?” (Exodus 3:11).

Answer 1: “Certainly I will be with thee” (Exodus 3:12).

When God entrusts us with the task of moving forward, He promises to walk with us through the changes!

One thing to remember here is that Moses, undoubtedly trained and taught during his time in the palace by some of Egypt's most scholarly educators, now tended sheep—and they weren't even his! They belonged to his father-in-law. (See Exodus 3:1.) This was *not* a

step *up* on the social ladder. He had moved in the wrong direction, and his opinion of himself was most likely pretty low at this point.

Oh friend, just because you've fallen doesn't mean that you can't get back up. Just because you've made wrong—and perhaps sinful—choices doesn't mean that you are through. It's called grace. And it's amazing!

How does God describe His grace to Paul (and us) in 2 Corinthians 12:9?

My dear husband often reminds me that God's grace is almighty, astonishing, abundant, and amazing! And it is because of this grace that we can keep moving forward in our Christian walk. It is why Paul said in Philippians 3:13–14 (NASB), “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Additionally, let's take a quick look at the end of Moses's journey to see how it played out. Remember that as the reply to his first objection at the beginning of this leadership task God had promised him, "Certainly I will be with thee." Are you ready for this? In Deuteronomy 31:6, 8, and 23, in his final address to the children of Israel before his death, Moses, who has by this time seen God in action and has come to know Him as no other human has before or after him, reminds them of something in these three verses. What is the common thread that Moses repeated three times in this chapter (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8, 23)?

Moses had seen it firsthand. He knew it to be true.

And it's still true today! When God entrusts us with the task of moving forward, He promises to walk with us through the changes.

Objection 2: "When I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" (Exodus 3:13, NKJV).

Answer 2: "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14, NKJV).

In verse 15 (NKJV), God adds, "This is my name forever."

God wanted Moses (and us!) to know that He *does not* change, and He *will not* change! He can be trusted. He keeps His word. This knowledge should change how we respond to the unexpected. In the midst of our changes, there is great comfort in the fact that God doesn't change!

Several years ago, I visited my brother, who was then living in New York City. I was living in Minnesota at the time and had previously lived in Iowa and Central Indiana. In other words, I was basically a small-town girl from farm country (though I had never lived on a farm).

As we toured the city and my brother showed me the skyscrapers and the phenomenal views from multiple rooftop observatories in these historic landmark buildings, my thoughtful brother added a special event to our

sightseeing. He bought tickets for us to hear the New York Philharmonic, and this current (at the time) music major couldn't have been more excited about anything!

As we entered the building, there were steps—numerous steps!—that allowed concertgoers to have a view of the lobby as they ascended multiple flights of stairs, depending on the location of their seating for the concert. In other words, our inexpensive tickets kept this not-so-fond-of-heights middle-America girl climbing and looking down with inwardly and increasingly strong desires to beg for main-floor seating. My brave brother, who by this time was a true New Yorker, boldly climbed from floor to floor to reach our seats.

By the time we got to the top floor, I was a hiccup away from being very out of control of my emotional reaction to this big-city experience! And then it happened. The usher opened the door of the little seating box, seemingly stapled (in my out-of-control-by-this-time mind) to the side of the wall several stories up from the main floor and suggested to those already seated nearest the door that they stand and make it easier for us to climb over them to reach our seats.

Unh-uh, no way, no now. That was not going to happen—no matter *how* much I loved my brother!

At this point in time, I discovered, firsthand, what it means to go into hysterics. I couldn't breathe. I was gasping for breath as I sobbed uncontrollably, and I'm sure I plastered myself against the wall outside the box faster than the usher could shut the door (at my brother's gracious request, knowing that if I *looked* out, I'd *freak* out)!

In the midst of my gasping and sobbing, I got out the only words that could portray my thoughts to my dear brother and the world's most patient usher: "I...just...want...to see...(sob, gasp, sob)...a *cow*!"

You see, I needed to be in a building that didn't move. (Did you know that those hugely tall buildings are actually *built* to gently sway in the wind? Oh. My. Heart.) I needed solid ground. I needed for things not to change but to be consistent, reliable, familiar, safe.

Friend, I know this may be a trivial illustration of how I also need the unchangeableness of my God in the midst of life's changes, but the feeling was so very real to me that I was reminded of it this morning when seeking a way to somehow describe the comfort that should have come to Moses and to the children of Israel in knowing that the great I AM never changes!

In Malachi 3:6 (KJV), God states: “For I am the Lord, I change not....”

Read Numbers 23:19, Hebrews 13:8, and James 1:17 and summarize their truths in the space provided:

Objection 3: “But suppose they will not believe me” (Exodus 4:1, NKJV).
Answer 3: “What is that in your hand?” (Exodus 4:2, NKJV).

Read Exodus 4:3–9 and list the five miracles (“signs”) that God performed to show Moses (and thereby the children of Israel) that God truly was the source of Moses’s task.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

When change is entrusted to us—and really, on any given day, at any given time—people should see the outward display of a changed life. This isn’t about just doing or saying “the godly thing.” It is about *being* a godly person—a person whose life reflects the God he or she claims to serve.

In Matthew 7:15–20, God speaks of those who are teaching false doctrines. He warns believers to identify false teachers not only by what they are saying but by what they are doing. What does He tell them in verse 20?

I believe this principle can apply to all of us. The fruit that is evident in our lives is indicative of the changes taking place in our hearts. As we learn more about our great God and trust Him more, the fruit of His Spirit will be in us and will impact our choices—and our changes.

Read Galatians 5:22–23. List the nine fruits of the Spirit that should be evident to those around us.

Objection 4: “I am not eloquent” (Exodus 4:10, ESV).

Answer 4: “Who has made man’s mouth?” (Exodus 4:11, ESV).

It was easy to roll my eyes and get a little miffed at Moses’s fourth objection. *Seriously, Moses? God made you. So if He says you can speak, you can speak.* But Moses didn’t stop there. (He was *really* trying to get out of this, wasn’t he?)

Read Exodus 4:10. At the end of this verse, what other self-deprecating descriptions did Moses give regarding his speech?

Moses, Moses, Moses. God created you, which means He created your eyes, your ears, and the mouth that you are saying doesn't work well enough for what God is asking you to do. He will make sure that it is capable of carrying His message!

In John Gill's *Exposition of the Bible*, he writes regarding this verse: "He that made it, and made it capable of speaking, could remove any impediments in it, and cause it to speak freely and fluently."

But Moses wasn't there yet. His knowledge of God was limited. Remember that he had grown up in a godless palace, where, even though his parents had taught him the ways of the Lord during his time in their home, his spiritual training would have been halted. So at this point in time, he was still learning that what God said, He not only *would* do, but He had the *power* to do!

Oh how patient God was with Moses—and how patient He is with me! How often has God entrusted a change to me, and I've replied with, "I can't *handle* this; I'm not *capable* of this"? Or how many times have I said, "I can't do it as well as *she* can, so give me something else to do"?

Get honest with yourself (and with God) for a moment. What is it about your physical, emotional, or spiritual makeup that tends most often to be your internal excuse for not moving forward in your service for God? (Note: Some of you may be able to leave these lines blank. If so, that's great! Be an example and an encourager to those around you who struggle in these areas.)

Let's stop here and see what the Bible says about these insecurities.

NOTE: Let me first state that I think some of our insecurities are there for a reason. Perhaps this illustration can serve as an example here: I am extremely insecure about playing the French horn, because I'm not good at it, and it's clearly not what God has for me to do. So that is basically a God-given insecurity that lets me know not to volunteer to play a French horn prelude for church next Sunday!

Read Romans 9:20. In fact, it's such a powerful verse that I'd like for you to write the verse here:

When change happens and we fear what may or may not lie ahead, we have the responsibility to choose to properly view that change. Ladies, questioning what God has entrusted to us from the perspective of implying that He has made a mistake is not an option. Questioning Him by asking, "Why did You entrust this to me? How may I know You more or serve You more fully by going through this?" will allow us to know Him better. And that is a choice. The right choice.

Objection 5: "Please send someone else" (Exodus 4:13, ESV).

Answer 5: "Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses" (Exodus 4:14, ESV).

Before I continue, it's imperative that I share the remainder of God's answer. It is filled with God's mercy, grace, compassion, love, and patience—which He did not have to give to Moses, and which He did not have to give to us.

Answer 5, part 2: “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs” (Exodus 4:14–17, ESV).

Yes, the great I AM not only became angry with Moses, but He also poured out His mercy on him and didn’t write Moses off as a lost cause. In fact, God lovingly provided someone to help Moses accomplish the task—Moses’s brother, Aaron. Even though Moses begged, “Please...get someone else to do this,” God wanted Moses to do it! God entrusted Moses with not only *this* change but also the changes that were to come. God graciously forbade Moses to miss out on the lessons, responsibilities, joys, sorrows, and blessings that were intended for *him*. But in an act of unmerited favor, He gave Moses someone to help carry the load.

As an all-too-independent person sometimes (okay, fine—*most* of the time!), I find it difficult to accept help. Sometimes it’s because I know how easy the task is, and I would feel silly accepting help when I can quite easily do it on my own. Other times, however, I pridefully refuse help because I don’t want to appear incapable or don’t want others to think I’m not smart enough, talented enough, or managing my time well enough to tackle—let alone finish—the job.

Yet Scripture tells us in Galatians 6:2 (NASB) to: “Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.” I believe that is speaking both to the person needing help and to the person who has the time, ability, resources, talent to help.

Just as Aaron had the courage and ability to speak well and Moses apparently thought that *he* did not, we each have strengths and weaknesses that we bring with us to the table. In fact, Romans 12:4–8 reminds us that we each have different gifts and abilities, and each gift from God serves a purpose within the body of Christ.

According to 1 Peter 4:10, how are we to use the skills, talents, and abilities that God has given to us?

Friend, God has entrusted you with the changes you have faced, are facing, or will face. You get to choose whether or not you will view those changes as something to avoid because they make you uncomfortable or as something that will create in you a woman who knows more about her God for having walked through the changes that faced her. Your choice at this point will make all the difference in the outcome of the change that God has entrusted to you.

“God is pleased sometimes to make
choice of those as his messengers
who have fewest of the
advantages of art or nature,
that his grace in them may appear
the more glorious.”

—Matthew Henry
Commentary on the Whole Bible

CHOOSE to CHANGE (Practical Application)

Look around you—at those in your community, in your church, in your small group, in your home—and ask God to guide you to someone who needs help carrying his or her load (burden). How could you use your strengths and abilities *this week* to bear someone’s burden *with* that individual or *for* individual? Be as specific as possible.

MOSES MOMENTS (Small Group Discussion)

1. As you break into your small groups this week, discuss the five objections Moses had. Which of these are most likely to be your objections? What can you do to prevent those objections or to overcome them if they surface?
2. Discuss how acknowledging that God has entrusted a change to you can make a difference in how you view that change.
3. Share specific answers to prayer from this past week and “bear one another’s burdens” by sharing brief requests that others in the group can pray for in the week ahead.

JOURNAL, NOTES, and PRAYER REQUESTS

LESSON 3 CHANGE CAN ENLIGHTEN US

Enlighten: “to supply with spiritual insight or light” (*Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary*). In my own words: “that which provides the recipient with an aha moment!” An aha moment? Back to the *Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary* for this one: “a moment of sudden realization, inspiration, insight, recognition, or comprehension.”

Moses’s *aha moment* came in Exodus 15. As much as I want to jump right in on the good stuff, we need to walk through some pretty intense changes along with Moses before we can get there. You see, God entrusted Moses with a pretty serious change that took place once he and Aaron began passing along to the children of Israel what God wanted them to hear. But before this major change could take place, Moses and his family had to go through a few changes of their own.

Read Exodus 4:20. Where did Moses and his family go?

Moses took an object with him that God thought was important enough to mention in Scripture. What was this object?

Now read Exodus 4:21. What was the importance of the object he took? What would he do with it when he arrived at the new location?

To me, this little act of obedience—taking the staff/rod that God had commanded him to use—showed that Moses was becoming more fully aware of Who God was. He was learning that God would use that rod to show His great power to the children of Israel—and to the Egyptians. He watched God in action and saw that He kept His promises. He knew that He could trust God. This change in Moses’s viewpoint was huge!

Over the course of the next nine chapters in Exodus (Exodus 5–14), Moses talked with God freely, and in this ongoing communication with Him, He learned more and more about the depth of Who God was. And Moses was choosing to change because of it! Many lessons, sermons, and/or books could be written to elaborate on the events of the ten plagues that came upon Egypt through the hand of God. The plagues were not fictitious events merely written in Scripture for the sake of effect. They happened. They were *plagues*—on steroids. But they were real. And they were horrid.

Rather than spend ten lessons on the plagues or put our focus on them for this entire lesson, I’d simply like to walk through an overview of the plagues and then keep moving forward in our understanding of how change can enlighten us regarding the power of our God. Grab your Bible and a pen or pencil, because we’re going to do this “chart style.”

Plague #	Scripture Reference	Plague
1	Exodus 7:14–25	
2	Exodus 8:1–15	
3	Exodus 8:16–19	
4	Exodus 8:20–32	
5	Exodus 9:1–7	
6	Exodus 9:8–12	
7	Exodus 9:13–35	
8	Exodus 10:1–20	
9	Exodus 10:21–29	
10	Exodus 11:1–12:36	

Talk about change! Wow! Yet through each plague that the Egyptians endured (and that the Israelites observed), Moses was learning that God hated sin, kept His Word, and was compassionate in the midst of it all. God was shining a light on His own character to give Moses the spiritual insight that he would need in order to lead God's people—and to believe it firsthand. In other words, God was using change to enlighten Moses!

In preparing for the Sunday school lesson that led to the writing of this book, I wanted to see the changes that Moses chose to make after change happened in his life. I read Exodus 2—Deuteronomy 34 and made a list of statements from God about Who He was and statements from Moses about Who God was. When I got to Exodus 15, the results nearly caused me to go into a hallelujah fit right there in my chair in the family room!

Exodus 2 recorded the birth of Moses, so there (obviously!) wasn't much interaction between God and Moses there.

Exodus 3 and part of chapter 4 recorded the conversation of objections and answers between God and Moses at the burning bush. God was telling Moses His names and His attributes. Moses, with sandals off, listened in reverent awe.

In Exodus 4–6, Moses talked to the people about “their God,” “your God,” and even about “our God.” He saw God at work, but it seemed a bit impersonal yet at that stage—a bit “formal” on his part, if you will.

As you saw through filling in the chart on the previous page, Moses watched firsthand as God fulfilled the meting out of the plagues and prepared His people for their exodus from Egypt (seen in Exodus 7–12). Moses was getting closer here, but it took one final change—one massively impactful enlightening event—for him to choose to change his view of God and his service for God.

Read Exodus 14:13–14. The event that preceded these verses was the Israelites' exodus (departure) out of Egypt. Pharaoh had finally listened to God, and he had let God's people go! But as you might suspect, he regretted it, gathered his warriors and horses together, and took off after them. Just prior to these verses, the Israelites had learned that Pharaoh was following them, so they angrily complained that God had brought them to the wilderness to die. They even went so far as to say that it would have been better to have stayed in Egypt and to have remained slaves. They were afraid, they were agitated, and they were keeping an eye out for the Egyptians who were after them. In the midst of it all, they quickly forgot that God had just freed them from their bondage to the Egyptians.

However, a “new,” almost calm Moses courageously speaks up and gives them three simple instructions in Exodus 14:13:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- _____

Before we continue, may I just add here that this was *Moses* speaking? It doesn’t say, “God told Moses, who then told Aaron, who then told the children of Israel!” No! “And Moses said to the people....” This reaction—this admonition—came straight from Moses’s heart!

He had seen it, and he knew it to be true: “The Lord will fight for you” (Exodus 14:14, NKJV). How might this one truth impact the three instructions he had given them in Exodus 14:13?

I don’t recall that my mom ever *yelled* at us. Instead, her voice grew softer when she wanted us to stop quarreling, be still, and listen. Moses instructed the children of Israel to “stand still.” They were frantic. Their emotions were getting the best of them, and they were inciting a “mob mentality”: because the growing crowd of nervous complainers was growing, more were joining in, getting even more people all riled up.

However, Moses had listened to, learned from, and personally witnessed numerous acts of God by this time, and he knew that the key to keeping calm in the midst of uncertain change was to rely on the power of the almighty God.

When we remember that God is present, that He is enough, that He cares, that He loves us—then, then we can know the stillness of a heart and mind at rest.

When change comes, you get to choose how you will react. Will you panic and get stirred up by the voices around you, allowing your spirit to question the wisdom and love of your heavenly Father? Or will you choose to change right along with it and, with a peaceful spirit, “stand still,” acknowledging that God has entrusted you with that change?

Read Psalm 46:1 and write the verse here:

Now read Psalm 46:10 and write the first half of the verse.

They go hand in hand, don't they? When we remember that God is present, that He is enough, that He cares, that He loves us—then, *then* we can know the stillness of a heart and mind at rest. No, we may not know why He chose to entrust the change to us. We may not know what awaits on the other side of the change. We may not even know yet what our next step will be. But in the stillness of the choice to trust Him and to keep our eyes fixed on Him, we will see Him work, and we will *know* that He is God. This is where Moses found himself after the exodus from Egypt—trusting

God. And God, Who is always good, demonstrated His power in a larger-than-life way!

Imagine the fear that would overtake you as you stood before a sea that was too deep to cross but that had to be crossed if you were to flee from your enemy. It was your only way out, but to even attempt to cross over on foot was certain death due to the depth of the waters. It's easy to judge the children of Israel until we walk in their sandals! But God, Who is faithful to His word—*every time*—not only got the Israelites across the Red Sea; their sandals were dry when they got there!

Remember the rod that Moses obediently took with him when he returned to Egypt? Read Exodus 14:16. God had a new task for Moses to use the rod for. What was he to do with the rod this time?

However, before the Israelites arrived at the banks of the Red Sea, the Egyptians were gaining on them as night approached. Therefore, the Angel of God, who had been going in front of the children of Israel during the daytime hours (to provide shade and direction for them on their journey) now went behind them. According to Exodus 14:20, why did the Angel of God go *behind* the long line of Israelites?

Here it comes! This is the life-changing change that took Moses's growing belief in—and knowledge of—God and began to make it personal!

What did *Moses* do, as recorded in Exodus 14:21, that was in direct obedience to God's command that we read in Exodus 14:16?

Read Exodus 14:21 again. While Moses carried out the visible sign of obedience, how did the waters of the Red Sea actually part (and remain parted)?

This mighty act of power by our almighty God was amazing in and of itself. But it was only the beginning! According to Exodus 14:22 (NKJV), “The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.” God had literally parted the sea in two, and the Israelites were able to walk across—on dry ground. Let me say that again: On. Dry. Ground!

Though I'm itchin' to get over to chapter 15, we just have to stop and look at what happens next! God, Who had promised that He would—in His time and in His way—punish the Egyptians (see Exodus 14:4), saw that the final Israelite had stepped out of the dry seabed and onto the dry land. In an act of power, He jostled their chariots, causing the wheels to come off, and they knew that they had better get out of there fast! Even this group of heathen, God-hating Egyptians—hundreds and hundreds of them, by the way—said (as recorded in Exodus 14:25, NKJV), “Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.” The mighty

voice of God had not spoken a word, but it had uttered volumes through the power of His hand!

Picture it. The last horse and rider in the Egyptian throng had now stepped off the dry land and into the still-dry seabed. At that moment, God spoke to Moses. On the lines below, record His instructions, as found in Exodus 14:26.

Read Exodus 14:27–30 to see how God fulfilled His promise. We should stand in awe of God’s mighty act of power!

Now read Exodus 14:28. Using the words in Scripture, how many survived this miraculous closing back up of the sea?

This astonishing act of God opened the eyes of the Israelites: “Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses” (Exodus 14:31, NKJV). This great, powerful, promise-honoring God who used a Hebrew-born, palace-raised, fearful, tongue-tied leader is the same God Who reveals Himself to us in His Word and Who entrusts us with changes that will enlighten, exercise, equip, empower, and encourage us! As you turn the page in this study book, turn to the next chapter in Exodus (Exodus 15) to read the words of the first song of Moses as his enlightened heart sings!

Read Exodus 15:1–19 and list the descriptions of praise that Moses and the children of Israel sang to the Lord. Trust me. Moses is no longer saying, “your God,” “their God,” or even “our God.” He has changed his understanding of Who God is and has chosen to personalize his praise!

Do you see why I nearly jumped out of my chair with joy when I first read these words through the eyes of one seeking to follow Moses's heart changes through his life changes? So here's the thing: you can do, say, speak, feel, hear, etc. But until you *know* Who God is, you do not see Him in the changes going on around you and within you. Once Moses saw God's hand, His power, and His love in the changes that God had entrusted to him, his heart and mind were enlightened, and he walked more closely to God and communicated more clearly with Him.

Remember, though, that Moses didn't have God's Word to sustain Him, to draw from when changes came into his life. Yes, he had the privilege of hearing the voice of God and of being the friend of God, but we have been given the privilege of seeing Him in the Scriptures! So what does "seeing God" look like today? While we do not see Him physically, He reveals His character, His attributes, His being to us in the pages of the Bible. He longs for us to know Him better. After all, the better we know Him, the more faithfully we live for Him, the more gratefully we praise Him, and the more fervently we serve Him.

Read the following verses and in your own words briefly note what you learn from them about seeking to know the Lord.

Psalm 9:10

Psalm 34:8–10

Matthew 5:6

Jeremiah 29:13

Isaiah 55:6-7

1 Chronicles 28:9

When Moses truly began to see the power of God, he was able to personalize the names, attributes, and character qualities he had come to know of God (e.g., “my strength,” “my song,” etc.). The psalmist said in Psalm 40:3 (ESV), “He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.”

Ladies, if we knew God—*really* knew Him—and if we allowed the changes in our lives to enlighten us to all that He is and all that He can do, we would be...wait. Let me be honest here. If *I* knew God—*really* knew Him—and if I allowed the changes in my life to enlighten me to all that He is and all that He can do, I would be transformed beyond recognition. And so would you. And so would your small group. And so would your church, your community, your city, etc.! After all, as Moses led the children of Israel in the song of praise in Exodus 15, the children of Israel sang along! (Please start the revival in me, Lord!)

While visiting a small Christian college in the Philippines several years ago, I was privileged to meet some dear women who taught me lifelong lessons about my walk with God: contentment (in the midst of loneliness), gratitude (in the midst of poverty), joy (in the midst of great struggle), and perhaps most importantly, the wonder of true praise. My new friends, Bing and Josie, walked with me one afternoon and introduced me to something that was not original with them, but it was brand new to me.

“M’um Brenda, would you like to make this a Praise Walk?”

I confessed that I did not know what a Praise Walk was, but that it sounded like a great thing. So in the midst of a city lined with beautiful homes and palatial hotels on one side of the street and literal shanties that were held up by wooden poles in the muddy waters of the South China Sea on the other side, I learned to take a Praise Walk!

It’s simple. Using the first letter of the alphabet, the first walker gives a name, character quality, or attribute of God: “A. God is Almighty!”

The next walker may respond with something like: “B. He is my Beloved!”

“C. He is the Creator!”

And so on. You may find at first that you’ll have to work very hard just to come up with words, but the more you do it, the more the significance of those names and descriptions will work its way into your heart! Watch God work. Learn Who He is, and before you know it, in the midst of change, your heart will respond from an enlightened heart of praise.

CHOOSE to CHANGE (Practical Application)

Do a Praise Walk/Sit/Drive/Ride at least three times this week. Try to come up with different names, attributes, or character qualities of God each time you do a Praise Walk.

Circle the three days on which you did a Praise Walk this week:

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

By the way, Moms with kids in the car with you, this is a perfect way to keep peace in the back seat while you're driving to and from school, church, music lessons, soccer practice, etc. And you'll be teaching your children to rely on the unchanging God!

Joe and I have found that if we start a Praise Walk about three stoplights from our church, we can complete a Praise Drive/Ride before we head in for Sunday school. Our focus is redirected and united as we think about our great God, and when we arrive, our hearts are ready to learn from God's Word.

MOSES MOMENTS (Small Group Discussion)

1. As you break into your small groups this week, start with a group Praise Walk. It won't take long, and you'll gain new insight from hearing the words others use to describe or to speak of God.
2. As a group, think of names, character qualities, or attributes of God that would be good to remember during some of the changes that affect all (or at least many) of us. For example, when financial needs hit, it's good to remember that God is Jehovah-jireh—our provider; when weariness hits, remember that God is our strength; and so on.
3. Share specific answers to prayer from this past week and as you pray for this week's prayer requests within your group, pray back the Lord's attributes to Him. For example, "Lord, Lauren is concerned about what will happen now that she has lost her job. Please be her provider and let your Word be a lamp to her feet and a light to her path."

JOURNAL, NOTES, and PRAYER REQUESTS

LESSON FOUR

CHANGE CAN EXERCISE OUR FAITH

You, my friend, must be commended. So from the white wicker chair on my front porch, I give you a heartfelt, “Woo-hoo!” You have reached the midway point of this study, and you’re still plugging away. May I share a secret with you? Even if you haven’t filled in all of the blanks or made it to every session (if you’re in a group study), don’t worry about it! There is no extra credit in heaven for having all the blanks filled in! However, I must quickly add that the blanks are there to guide you into a habit of studying God’s Word, searching for truth, and finding ways to apply it once you’ve closed the final page of this study, so jump back in or keep moving forward. Regardless of which one applies to you, I’m thrilled that you’re here on page 49, ready to learn more from the life of Moses!

Where we left the children of Israel at the end of Lesson 3 could be likened to kids coming home from a week of Christian camp in the summer. Often, they are on a “spiritual high,” infused with excitement for hearing God’s Word and spiritually well nourished by the quiet time that is set aside each day for devotional reading. Sadly, due to a lack of encouragement, a change in their routine and surroundings, or, in some cases because the changes were only emotional or were made in the moment or under pressure to be like the other campers, these changes are often known for being temporary. When the faith these young campers were learning to develop and nurture is tested, it fails. (By the way, church leaders of theirs, parents, and friends, when kids come home from camp, help them keep the momentum going by continuing to disciple them and train them so that they can take the next spiritual step on their faith journey. Your influence and example matter!)

When Moses and the Israelites left on a spiritual high from “Camp Red Sea,” they headed into the wilderness of Shur (see Exodus 15:22). Three

days in, they still could not find water. This was not good. However, they journeyed on, still in search of water.

When they came to Marah, they found water, but there was a problem with it. Read Exodus 15:23. What was wrong with the water at Marah?

(Side note: Read Ruth 1:20. After several changes in her life [the deaths of her husband and her sons], Naomi told people to call her “Mara” [different spelling, same meaning], because God had dealt *bitterly* with her.)

Thankfully, Moses took the problem straight to the Lord (Exodus 15:25). The Lord showed Moses a log (“tree,” KJV); Moses threw the log into the water; the water became sweet. Yum. Problem solved.

Or so you would think, based on the outward appearance of things.

Inwardly, the Israelites were still on the bubble when it came to their faith in the great I AM. Their faith needed to work its spiritual muscles and be exercised a bit.

Read James 1:2–3. When our faith in Who God is gets tested, what does that test (often in the form of a change) produce in us? (Note: Because the ladies in your group may use several different translations for their study, your answers may vary, but the meaning will remain the same.)

How can change test or exercise our faith?

The *Amplified Bible* states James 1:3 this way: “Be assured that the testing of your faith [through experience] produces endurance [leading to spiritual maturity, and inner peace].” In other words, as your spiritual muscles are tested during a change or trial (to see if they are there), the exercise required for making it through the change will strengthen them!

Read Exodus 16:2–3. What did the children of Israel do here (verse 2)? How did they take out their current frustrations on Moses (verse 3)?

When change enters the room (or wilderness, in this case), it provides an opportunity for our faith to be exercised. We can choose to complain, or we can start exercising! Unfortunately, instead of allowing their faith to be strengthened by their latest change in location, the children of Israel basically hovered over zero on the “faithometer.” God had wiped out the entire Egyptian entourage that had followed them into the Red Sea. Did they actually think that He couldn’t provide food for them?

God told them that He would provide food for them, but what were His commands regarding the amount of food they were to take? You can find the answer to this in Exodus 16:4–5.

Here is what's interesting. God specifically stated in Exodus 16:4 that He was giving them only one-day's portion (except on the sixth day) for a reason. Why did He do this?

They had come through the Red Sea experience with an increased faith in God. However, just as a young toddler learning to walk across the room has a maturing mix of victories and sudden failures, some of the children of Israel stumbled with their exercise of trusting God. Through Moses, God told them that on the sixth day they would receive enough of the manna to carry them through the seventh day as well, so they should gather up a double portion on that day only.

According to Exodus 16:14–29, when it came to this test of their obedience, how did the Israelites do? Summarize the results here.

In this segment of their story, the Israelites were being tested by God to determine the level of their obedience and faith. As we saw earlier in this lesson, the Bible clearly stated that fact in Exodus 16:4. But I want us to be careful here. Every change entrusted to us is not necessarily a test *from* God, but every change can be used to test what we believe *about* God.

Change can come in many forms, making this list far from all-inclusive, but put a check mark beside the changes you have faced or are currently facing.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Location change (move) | <input type="checkbox"/> Death of a loved one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job change | <input type="checkbox"/> Broken engagement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job loss | <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage/Remarriage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disappointment | <input type="checkbox"/> New baby |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New church | <input type="checkbox"/> Children starting school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New school | <input type="checkbox"/> Children leaving home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Graduation | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health-related issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Do you see it? Change isn't always a bad thing. Change *can* bring great joy! And yes, change can also bring loneliness and tears. But change will happen. And it will happen again—in varying forms and levels of intensity. And then...it will happen again.

With each change that comes, our faith is given an opportunity for growth, but that spiritual growth will only come as we see the heart of the unseen God in every change. So bring on those changes, because they offer opportunities for us to change and for our faith to increase!

However, knowledge and trust go hand in hand. To trust God more, we must know Him more. To know Him more, we must spend time with Him, read His Word, and talk to Him in prayer. So let's take a moment or two to make our study personal and focus on this element of trust.

Read the following Scripture verses, focusing on the principle of trust within the verse. Now apply that principle to one or more of the changes you are currently experiencing. (Refer to your list on page 2 or the list above. You may need to add any recent life changes to that list while you're there.)

Proverbs 3:5–6

Joshua 1:9

2 Samuel 7:28

Every change entrusted to us is not necessarily a test *from* God, but every change can be used to test what we believe *about* God.

Psalm 9:10

Psalm 56:3

With those verses fresh in your mind, think of the faith it took for the Israelites not to hoard the manna each morning. They had to believe that God would keep His word—that there would be manna on the ground again the next morning.

My friend and her sons moved to the United States from Ukraine. Due to the government system that was in power in Ukraine at that time, they were used to waiting in line each morning for that day’s portion of rationed food—nothing more, nothing less. When they came to the States, her younger son stood in awe as they were in the checkout line at the large local supermarket. The young boy saw a box of candy bars and was certain that they needed to buy the entire thing that day, because (based on their experience in Ukraine) it probably wouldn’t be there the next day. Imagine his wonder the next time he returned to our lavishly filled grocery store, only to find the candy rack once again brimming with variety and with the promise of a seemingly endless supply. It didn’t take many trips to the store before they realized that they didn’t need to gather up all of the chocolate bars. The store would restock its shelves, and there would, without a doubt, be “more where that came from!”

On a much larger scale, this must have been how the Israelites felt. As they watched God provide, they knew He would do so in the future. As they saw Him keep His promises, they knew He could—and should—be trusted. Sweet friend, what is there that you think God can’t do, provide, or take care of? The answer is found in one of my favorite verses, Jeremiah 32:17. Write the verse here. (This is a great one to memorize!)

Follow up on the above verse by writing the words of Luke 18:27 here.

On March 26, 2012, I began sharing what God was teaching me and did so via my new blog, *Petals from the Basket*. As I was writing this lesson for *Choosing to Change when Change Happens* today, my very first blog post came to mind, and I stopped to read it this afternoon. As I did, I remembered—at least in part—many of the amazing mercies my Lord has bestowed on me since the change I wrote about that day in my Milwaukee apartment. I want to share that post with you here.

* * *

Chalkboards and Changes

A little over two years ago, I began a new job and moved into a new apartment in a new location. *New* was clearly the key word. One of my favorite purchases after moving was a square, gray-and-black-framed chalkboard that hangs on the wall in my bathroom. I have never written on it. Not once. It's a clean slate. Literally.

Two of my favorite verses in the Bible are found in Lamentations 3:22–23 (ESV): “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

So there is something about the visual reminder of that clean slate every day that reminds me that God gives me brand new mercies each morning! How amazing is *that*? Actually, since that is a totally rhetorical question, I'm going to write it again, and end it properly: How amazing is THAT!!!

One week ago today, my life went pear-shaped (i.e., the bottom fell out), and I find that I will once again begin a new job, in a new apartment, in a new location. Change. But a change appointed by my unchanging God.

A few moments ago I walked from one side of my apartment to the other and dropped off some freshly folded towels in the bathroom. As I turned to leave, I glanced up at the never-touched-by-chalk chalkboard on the wall. I stopped to wipe away tears of joy as I thanked Him that I'm facing each new day, each change, with fresh mercy!

And that is precisely why, when I move to a new apartment to start a new job in a new location, I will once again hang my

clean slate smack-dab in the center of my bathroom wall. After all, not everything needs to change!

* * *

(By the way, Joe and I would love to “see” you over at the blog site—www.PetalsfromtheBasket.com—where I share personal and practical tools and resources for everyday Christian living, and Joe writes some of my favorite posts from his “Captain’s Corner,” integrating his years of experience in the airline industry with the truths of God’s Word.)

But let’s get back to the verses from the blog post I shared above. There’s that daily feeding again. Only this time, in this day and age, it isn’t manna. It’s a daily feast of mercies. I don’t exactly know why God gives brand-new mercies each morning, but I’m grateful that He promises to do so! And I trust Him to keep His promise.

I trust Him because I know Him. I know Him because I’m choosing to let my faith grow with each change that comes my way.

As a still relatively new bride (we just celebrated our first anniversary as of this writing!), I’m daily reminded that a good relationship takes two people, each giving one hundred percent. The more I learn about Joe, the more I love him, the more I trust him, and the more I want to know him even more! (I’ll pause if you want to say, “Awww,” here....) So why should my relationship with the almighty creator of the universe be any different?

God has daily mercies that He gives to us. Note that word: *daily*. Yet we can come up with a gazillion excuses as to why we can’t have quiet time/devotions/God-and-I time with the Lord each day.

List some of the excuses you think people use most often to explain why they don’t spend time in God’s Word and prayer, strengthening their faith and trust in God.

Circle the excuse (or excuses) that you find yourself using most often.

Though you and the other women using this study are literally scattered all across the world, from all walks of life, and in varying age categories, I'm pretty certain that your choice for the most likely common excuse had something to do with not having enough time. And I'm about to blow that excuse right off the map!

If you're in a group study, select someone to use a stopwatch or the second hand on her watch to time the exercise that follows. Now select another woman to read Exodus chapter 15 out loud. (If you're studying this material on your own, read the chapter out loud or silently, making sure to check the time before you begin.) Go.

Record how long it took to read Exodus 15:

_____ minutes, _____ seconds

If you were to use the audio version of this that is available on www.BibleGateway.com, listening to someone read Exodus 15 aloud would take 4:11 (4 minutes, 11 seconds).

At one time, I too would have said, "I really don't have time to read an entire (lengthy) chapter from the Old Testament in one sitting." But after seeing that little stopwatch tell me that I had spent only 4:11 to read/listen to Exodus 15, I began to think differently:

Wait a minute, Brenda. The creator of the universe loved you in spite of the sins with which you were born. He gave the dearest Treasure He had, His Son, Jesus Christ, to die the worst possible death—crucifixion on a cross—in order to provide for you the gift of eternal life. And you can't give Him at least four minutes and eleven seconds of your day?

I now choose to make the time—and *take* the time—to read the Bible daily, giving Him my best and most alert time. (That time varies for each person, so choose the best time of day that works for you!)

Oh my heart, sweet faith-friend, I don't want to belabor the point, but if we don't have four minutes and eleven seconds to read about and learn from the God of the universe, then we have greater problems than time management! If we expect our faith to grow and to sustain us in times of change, we must choose to let the change exercise and strengthen that faith through a greater knowledge of our promise-keeping God!

CHOOSE to CHANGE (Practical Application)

Read Moses's song of praise, Exodus 15, at least three days this week. If you have a regular Bible-reading program, feel free to substitute Exodus 15 with your predetermined reading schedule.

Circle the three days on which you read Exodus 15 (or another Scripture portion from your daily Bible-reading schedule):

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

MOSES MOMENTS (Small Group Discussion)

1. As you break into your small groups this week, begin with a group Praise Walk/Sit.
2. Discuss some of the excuses you listed on page 57 as to why women don't spend time reading the Bible each day. However, don't stop there. Finish your discussion time by sharing solutions for these excuses and come up with some ideas for how to best schedule a quiet time with the Lord into your schedules.
3. Share specific answers to prayer from this past week and pray for this week's prayer requests within your group. Ask the Lord to help the ladies in your small group grow in their faith as you each grow in your knowledge of God.

JOURNAL, NOTES, and PRAYER REQUESTS

LESSON FIVE CHANGE CAN EQUIP US

When change comes and we choose to face it with joy—whether it be a “good” change or a “bad” change—it’s all too easy to slip into a level of confidence and boldness that can quickly turn into arrogance. We feel empowered by our choices (more about that coming up in Lesson 6), and we begin to think, “Bring it. I’ve got this.” No, sweet friend. *God’s* got this, and that’s the only reason *you’ve* got this. Remember that. Always.

Don’t get me wrong. Confidence is a great thing. In fact, let me encourage you to confidently use the skills, talents, and abilities God has given you. He created you (remember our Psalm 139 readings?), and He wants you to boldly utilize His creation to carry out His purpose for His glory.

But beware of that fine line between confidence and arrogance. I define it this way: Confidence is knowing that God gave you the skills, talents, and abilities to accomplish His purpose in you and through you. Arrogance is thinking that you had something to do with it!

Do you remember the Moses who confidently lifted up the rod and stretched his hand out over the sea to part the waters so that the Israelites could cross over on dry land? (See Exodus 14.) Do you remember the Moses who, with that same confidence, lifted the rod again and stretched out his hand over the sea once more for the waters to come together with such a great force that the Egyptians, including the evil pharaoh himself, were drowned in its waters? It’s almost hard to remember that this was the same Moses who, in reply to the great I AM, had objected *five* times to God’s calling on his life—seemingly due in part to a great *lack* of confidence. (See Exodus 3.)

So what made the difference?

I believe that when Moses humbly and willingly put himself under the teaching of God almighty and not only learned *from* Him but in so doing learned *about* Him, God was able to equip Moses through the changes he was facing at nearly every turn of his journey through the wilderness.

You see, that's a key step when you are choosing to change when change happens—humbly and willingly placing yourself under godly teaching and instruction so that you will be equipped to keep moving forward in your spiritual journey. Because God created you for a purpose, He will equip you for that purpose. And He may use change to do so.

Read Paul's benediction to the book of Hebrews in Hebrews 13:20–21. Though different translations use different words, the words that begin verse 21, “make you perfect” (KJV) or “equip you in every good thing” (NASB), come in part from the Greek word, *katartizó*. According to the online version of *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, one of the primary definitions of this word is: “prepare, perfect, for his (its) full destination or use.” Paul's prayer was that they would be fully prepared—i.e., *equipped*. Using Paul's benediction in Hebrews 13:20–21 as a template, write your own prayer to the Lord, asking Him to equip you and prepare you for the changes you are facing or will face in the days ahead.

Several years ago now I was teaching a group of women how to weave a jelly basket—a small oblong basket that had a wire handle and, if woven properly, held two jars of jelly. I had carefully prepared basket-weaving kits for the ladies and had made sure that each bag of supplies contained everything the women needed to create this little basket in one evening. As a bonus, I had purchased each “student weaver” two jars of jelly to put in her freshly woven basket.

Unfortunately, as the ladies began to arrive, I realized that in my attempts to be so well organized and thorough in my preparations, I had neglected to make a sample basket so that the ladies could visualize what we would be weaving that evening. I had woven this basket not less than fifty times myself (I had given them as gifts or had sold them at craft fairs), so I knew what it looked like and how to teach others to achieve the same finished product. I apologized for not having a sample and told the weaving class that they would simply need to listen well to my instructions and not try to jump ahead of the rest of the class.

As I walked through each of the beginning steps for creating the foundation of the basket, I saw one of the ladies attempting to move on to the next step. Endeavoring not to embarrass her, I simply said, “Ma’am, you’ll want to wait for the rest of us, since the weaving of these first few rows will be critical to the outcome of your basket.”

“I’m not stupid,” was her reply. “I think I can figure it out. This isn’t rocket science.”

True story. Word for word that was her reply.

The more the rest of us wove on our baskets—the other ladies graciously and eagerly awaiting proper instruction from me, the experienced weaver—the worse her basket began to look. I caught glimpses of her as she tried to force the shape of her...“basket?” ...to look like ours.

To spare you the boredom of reading every twist and turn that evening of weaving took—and to spare me the misery of reliving it—let me just say that by the end of the evening her basket looked nothing like the others. Yes, she was done long before we were, and yes, she did it on her own. But how she ended up with a basket that shape, I’ll never know!

As for the two jelly jars, she took hers home in a grocery bag, because they didn’t fit in her jelly basket. You see, this dear woman (who later apologized not only to me but to the other ladies in the class) had not been willing to receive instruction. She arrogantly thought she could do it on her

own. As a result, her basket could not be used for the purpose for which it was intended.

Do you see where I'm going with this? God entrusts you with change and instructs you with His Word to equip you to fulfill His purpose in you and through you. You accomplish this purpose through the strength that He provides. But you *must* follow His directions (found in His Word)! He knows what purpose the finished product is designed for, and He is carefully weaving a masterpiece—you!

In the New Testament, a leader by the name of Paul spoke confidently, saying, "I can do all things...." However, Philippians 4:13 doesn't end there. How *does* the verse end? (Note that the ending of this verse contains the key that keeps us from crossing that line between confidence and arrogance.)

In your own words, summarize what is taught regarding confidence (and its companion, courage) in the following verses.

Psalm 27:1

Proverbs 14:26

Isaiah 41:10

Joshua 1:9

Stop and look at that last verse one more time. Joshua was not only hearing this reminder directly from God; he had also heard these words as they were spoken to him by his predecessor, Moses, as recorded in Deuteronomy 31:7–8 (NKJV): “Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, ‘Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.’”

God provides the tools and resources we need to help us exercise our growing faith in Him and to become more fully equipped for the journey.

Moses could confidently tell Joshua to trust in the almighty God. He knew firsthand that God would equip (prepare) Joshua for the changes that were before him, because God had used the changes that came through trials, joys, battles, and victories to equip Moses for every change on *his* journey.

When we left Moses in Lesson 4, he was continuing on his path through the wilderness, patiently (and sometimes *impatiently*) leading the children of Israel to a greater knowledge and understanding of God. God had given

Moses and the people some pretty clear guidelines regarding the manna, and they were learning not only to trust but also to obey. Obedience was a choice for them, just as it is with us. When we are entrusted with change, we must choose to obey what God is *asking* us to do with what He has *equipped* us to do.

The next major change Moses and the Israelites faced was a somewhat familiar one. Though we often think of this change simply as the Ten Commandments—a list of rules and regulations to guide their everyday lives—these commands were given by God to equip His people and to provide them with the tools and resources necessary to guide them through their choices and changes. This is another section that could easily be made into its own study series, but in this study, we are looking at Moses’s growing knowledge of God and how it impacted the changes he was entrusted with. In fact, let’s return to our chart-making template from Lesson 3 and complete the chart below.

Command #	Scripture Reference	Command
1	Exodus 20:3	
2	Exodus 20:4–6	
3	Exodus 20:7	
4	Exodus 20:8–11	
5	Exodus 20:12	
6	Exodus 20:13	
7	Exodus 20:14	
8	Exodus 20:15	
9	Exodus 20:16	
10	Exodus 20:17	

Here's the thing: knowing that they were so easily tempted to make wrong choices in the midst of their changes (e.g., complaining, arrogance, etc.), God graciously wanted to equip them. He gave these instructions and commands as a means of *helping* them (and us).

Our natural tendency is to buck at having rules placed upon us or to try to rush ahead in the list of instructions and do things *our* way. But as we mature (spiritually and emotionally), we begin to learn that rules protect us from harm, prod us toward right choices, push us beyond our comfort zone, and prepare us to succeed in the area of God's calling on our lives.

It would be wrong for me not to address the two sides of the "rules and commands" coin, so stick with me as we look at this briefly.

On the one side, there are those who use rules and regulations to create a humanly formed list that their followers must obey in order to prove that they are loyal and sincere in their beliefs. I believe that these lists most often merely prove outward obedience, not inward change.

On the other side, there are those who throw out the rules, not wanting to be regulated by mere conformity to a set of regulations imposed upon them by an organization or a spiritual leader.

Both are understandable. Yet, in my understanding, both are wrong. God is simply looking for hearts that willingly yield in obedience. That's not weakness. It takes great strength to place yourself under the authority and leadership of someone else.

As we stop to think about the commands Moses and the children of Israel were given in Exodus 20 (and the many, many, many guidelines and laws they were given in nearly the entire books of Leviticus and Numbers), it is important to note that because Christ had not yet come to offer his life as the payment for sin, these dear Old Testament friends of ours were under the law. We, because of the precious blood that Jesus shed for us on the cross and the joyous hope provided by His resurrection from the dead, are no longer under the law!

Read what Romans 6:14 says about this and write the verse here.

Get ready for another aha moment—not for Moses, but for us! Because we are now living under the wonderful grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, he gives us His rules, but He doesn’t leave it as a list of “don’t do this” and “don’t do that.” When He tells us what *not* to do, because of grace He tells us what *to* do in its place. He doesn’t dish out a command and expect us to figure it out (“put off”); He equips us with the instructions that tell us how to live it out (“put on”)!

As we wrap up this lesson, fill in the chart below, looking at two of the “put off—put on” passages in the Bible.

Scripture Reference	“Put Off”	“Put On”
Ephesians 4:22–24		
Colossians 3:5–17		

Here's the bottom line, friends. God doesn't entrust us with a change and then leave us there wondering what to do. He provides the tools and resources we need to help us exercise our growing faith in Him and to become more fully equipped for the journey.

Read Ephesians 6:13–17. Let's end this lesson by listing the powerful equipping tools God has given to us within "the armor of God."

"O Lord my God, I kneel before you in humble adoration as I set out to face the tasks and interests of another day. Thank you for the blessed assurance that I shall not be called up to face them alone or in my own strength, but that at all times I will be accompanied by your presence and strengthened by your grace."

—John Baillie

A Diary of Private Prayer

CHOOSE to CHANGE (Practical Application)

One of the best ways to make right choices in your reactions to the changes in your life is to use the “replacement principle.” Just as God equipped us with the “put off—put on” passages, we need to replace the wrong choices in our lives with right ones.

In the chart below (I must be in “chart mode” this week!), list at least two areas that you struggle with when changes come. In the second column, list a way in which you can replace that reaction. For the third column, find a Scripture verse to draw strength from when the struggle surfaces. If you don’t feel that you struggle through change, complete the chart in a way that would help you provide resources of strength for friends or loved ones who may need you to help equip them to make right choices.

Area of Struggle when Change Comes	Replacement Thought or Action	Scripture Verse(s) to Provide Strength

MOSES MOMENTS (Small Group Discussion)

Spend your entire group time sharing specific answers to prayer from this past week and praying for this week’s prayer requests within your group. Ask the Lord to help the ladies in your small group use the changes in their lives to equip them for making right choices.

JOURNAL, NOTES, and PRAYER REQUESTS

LESSON 6

CHANGE CAN EMPOWER US

What do coaches, teachers, parents, and Moses have in common? They have all witnessed the empowering “shot in the arm” brought on by success, and they have all experienced the deflating effects of falling short of the goal. Think about it. When your team wins, your confidence in your ability to win is strengthened all the more. Conversely, when your team loses, you begin to lack the confidence that you can ever win again.

Moses, by now in such constant communication and fellowship with the great I AM that there could be no doubt about his abilities to lead the Israelites to a greater knowledge of God, had clearly learned the importance of following God even in the unpredictable mix of victories and defeats. His choice to focus on the unchangeable God regardless of the outcome demonstrated to those around him—and to us—what a life dedicated to God looks like. He chose to allow each change to empower him with a greater trust and confidence than he would have ever dreamed possible when standing before the burning bush those many years ago.

Moses begins the book of Deuteronomy with a mini history lesson of the children of Israel as their journey had unfolded during his lifetime. (See Deuteronomy 1–3.) Moses wasn’t *living* in the past. He was *remembering* the past. More importantly, he was remembering how God had provided for, directed, and protected the Israelites during those years. His firsthand knowledge of God demanded that he not only reminisce about the facts but that he also record the works of the Lord for future generations.

Read Psalm 111:2. How does this verse describe the works of the Lord?

Too often when we are entrusted with a change we look backward, not to be encouraged by remembering the works of God but to wish ourselves back to a supposedly easier, better, more nearly perfect time—i.e., to the time before the change happened. But the victories we've experienced in the past as we've seen God exercising our faith and equipping us for the change (and using that change to equip and prepare us for the future) should propel us forward with a greater hunger and thirst for an ever-increasing relationship with God.

Read Philippians 3:13–14. Where was the writer of these words (Paul) encouraging us to put our focus?

Moses viewed the past as a resource that was brimming with demonstrations of God's great work. He saw it as a tool that would guide the Israelites through their growing understanding of the power of God.

Read Deuteronomy 4:9. List the four things Moses encouraged the children of Israel to do with the lessons they had learned.

As I write these lessons, my sincere prayer is that you—and I—will gain a greater hunger for knowing God because of having looked at the spiritual changes in the life of Moses that came as a result of the changes he faced throughout his lifetime. So let's pause for a moment and apply the teachings of both Moses and Paul.

On the next page, journal how you have seen God work in your heart through at least one of the changes you listed on page 2. Include the character qualities or attributes of God you find yourself thinking about more often for having been entrusted with that change. Do this for yourself or to share as a written testimony for future generations.

Not only have you been empowered in your walk with the Lord through the exercise on the previous page, but you may someday choose to share this, thereby empowering others who are going through the same, similar, or even different changes. My hope is that this will help you to confidently proclaim the works of the Lord from your firsthand experience.

Actually, let's stop and think about that for a moment.

If we were to look at it in terms related to this study it would say: Share with others what you learned through firsthand experience from the change God entrusted to you.

However, as would always be the case, Scripture says it even better.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–4. How do these verses apply to the changes you have faced or are currently facing?

These verses were “nice,” but I didn’t fully grasp their practical truth until I experienced a then-devastating change in my life at the age of twenty-five. I’ll share as much of that story as space allows.

* * *

For many years, my annual mantra on August 9 was: “Any regrets I may have over that which I have lost are swallowed up in relief over that which I have escaped” (Unknown). It’s catchy, isn’t it? However, I take it one step further and use it to realize that it’s because of the goodness and wisdom of God that I can view this day on the calendar in that way. I have learned to say that I am grateful for “the day that never was.”

Some may read what I am about to share and think that I should “be over it by now.” I am. Some may read what I am about to share and think that I am in some way bitter. I am not. Some may read what I am about to share and think that I must somehow despise men. I do not. Unh-uh, no way, no

how! (And my beloved “Captain Joe” is proof of that!) I’m going to share it anyhow—but not to prove anything or to defend myself against those whose thinking couldn’t be further from the truth. I share this because somewhere there is a girl, a family member, a coworker, a friend whose life plans just changed, and I want her to know that she’s not the only one, that joy will come again, and that hope will return.

With my wedding plans nearly finalized for my—you guessed it—August 9 wedding date, I received a call mid-April that changed everything. The wedding was off, and the reality of an uncertain future loomed before me, taunting me with its emptiness and lack of hope. I had cancelled my contract for teaching the following year (and my replacement had already been secured), and there I was, twenty-five years old, with every well-laid-out plan beyond that minute suddenly erased with the giant pink eraser of “there will be no wedding on August ninth.”

Before I continue, I will be transparent and tell you that it hurt deeply, and that for several months, when I looked at what I was “missing out on,” I was bitter, angry, and, quite honestly, a little ticked off. But when I looked at how God used that one single moment in time to change my life—and my heart—I became grateful, empowered, and comforted. God knew best. The man to whom I had been engaged married not long after, and his wife is the perfect match for him. They faithfully serve the Lord together, and the choice to put an abrupt end to our plans—in the long run and in the big picture—was the right one.

When I was finally able to take the blinders off of my view of things, I saw so clearly that I had been in love with love; he and I both deserved more than that. (By the way, God’s love runs so much deeper than anything we can muster up just because we long for marriage.)

Sadly, I primarily received the empty platitude from so many people that I had probably even said more than once myself: “God’s got someone better in store for you.”

First of all, just because he chose not to marry you does not make him a bad person. Though many people use that expression to console someone who is sad after a breakup, it’s not a great expression. In fact, it’s kind of tacky and lame to attack “the bad guy” or “the bad girl.”

Secondly, maybe God has singleness, not “someone better,” in store for you. But be careful here. Don’t follow my poor example of saying (as I did more than once at that time), “I’m never going to get married. No one’s going to ever hurt me like that again.”

Was I tickled pink all those years about not having an earthly life companion? (I didn't marry until age fifty-five.) No, I was not. Am I thrilled to be exactly where God wants me to be at this moment, in this place? You bet I am! Because His way truly is perfect. God didn't stop what He was doing on that April morning of my phone call and say, "Oh no, I forgot all about Brenda." He knew what was best for me. He allowed me to learn things that I would never have known otherwise.

This was a change I had been entrusted with. I had to stop looking at it from a heart of grief; instead, I needed to start seeing it through the eyes of grace.

He entrusted me with that change.

Before we get back to Moses, let me just admonish you to be careful about the "consolation" you give to others.

"It's good to be single. Think of all the things you couldn't do if you were married." "It's better to not be married than to be married to the wrong person."

Then there's the opposite side, when someone becomes engaged:

"Oh, you'll love married life. Being married is the best thing ever!" "There are so many more ways you can serve God as a married couple."

Instead, we as the body of Christ need to joyfully serve in whatever way—at whatever time—God has for us. Perhaps what we should simply say (and what we should teach our children and those in the church pews) is: *The best thing you can be is what God wants you to be today, in this moment, in this place. His way is perfect.*

When we view life through that lens, we can, with sincerity and a joyful heart, be thankful for the day that never was, because it has been a vital part of making us who we are today.

* * *

It was not until I walked through the change I just told you about that I fully understood 2 Corinthians 1:3–4. Yes, there were friends who put their arms around me, cried with me, sat with me, prayed with me—and all of those moments meant the world to me. But when a friend who had not long before that experienced a broken engagement herself called me and said, "I understand," I truly felt that someone understood. She had walked through a similar change and had received comfort similar to what I

needed in that moment. After speaking with her and with another friend not long after that, I began to realize that this was a change I had been entrusted with, and that I had to stop looking at it from a heart of grief; instead, I needed to start seeing it through the eyes of grace.

Based on the changes you have recently faced or are currently facing, who do you think you could best comfort or walk with through their changes? Let me clarify that. Don't use any names, unless you have someone specifically in mind. Here's a fictitious example: "Because the change I just faced was cancer, I could use the comfort I was given to comfort other cancer patients or to help others who have received bad news from a medical diagnosis."

The point is this: You've experienced a victory by learning more of God through the changes you faced. Let that empower you to help someone else be victorious!

Moses had seen numerous victories over the course of his lifetime. He had watched God do the impossible. He had seen the children of Israel—though often plagued by very human failures—succeed in both literal and spiritual battles. And he felt that future generations would be empowered by hearing the remembrances of these great victories and of the God Who had empowered His people to achieve them.

Psalm 90, believed by the majority of commentators to have Moses as its author, is an excellent example of reviewing the past for the purpose of calling on hearts to praise God. In Lesson 3 we studied Exodus 15, the first song of Moses (as it is often called). Before we study his final song (Deuteronomy 32) in our next (and final) lesson, let's stop and allow the truths of his *second* song (Psalm 90) to remind us of the wonderful works of our almighty God.

Read Psalm 90:1–2. Moses doesn't waste any time telling us some foundational truths about the great I AM. What do we learn about God in these verses?

I find it intriguing that Moses, in what he knew would soon be his final days, was remembering all that God had done for the children of Israel—and for him. In fact, in Psalm 90:12 he refers to the urgency he felt to leave a legacy of praise. Write the words of Psalm 90:12 here.

Not long before my grandfather passed away, I helped him record some of his favorite stories for my mom, his only child, to be able to listen to. His stories were of life on the farm in Southwestern Wisconsin, and they were simple stories of simpler times. My mom dearly treasures those recordings—and so do I.

But as much as I love listening to my grandpa's stories every now and then, I can't begin to imagine how it would have been to have sat at Moses's feet and to have heard him talk of literally meeting with God. I can't fathom the honor of listening to the man who was, as Charles Spurgeon wrote in his *Treasury of David*, "chosen of God, inspired of God, honoured of God, and faithful to God in all his house." It is no small wonder that one of his songs of praise to the Lord was included in the book of Psalms!

I love how Psalm 90 ends in verse 17 (ESV): "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!" Moses's greatest longing was that the favor of God would be upon him (and the Israelites) and that God would empower him (and the Israelites) through the knowledge he (and they) had acquired about God. Moses knew Who God was. He no longer questioned or doubted God. And he knew that each change had led him to a deeper understanding of God and a greater desire to serve Him.

Sweet friend, are you starting to see your changes that way? Are you seeing the blessings and joys that bring change as opportunities to proclaim God's praise? Are you seeing what at first seemed like human failures, mistakes, or losses as the victories that they actually were because they gave you a chance to develop a closer relationship with God? That's called empowerment, and that's what change can do.

The victories we've experienced in the past as we've seen God exercising our faith and equipping us for the change (and using that change to equip and prepare us for the future) should propel us forward with a greater hunger and thirst for an ever-increasing relationship with God.

CHOOSE to CHANGE
(Practical Application)

1. Complete the second column of the “Praise Walk” chart on page 107, choosing names, character qualities, or attributes of God that you’ve perhaps seen in a new light since starting this study. (We’ll do the third column later.)

2. Review the works of the Lord in an abbreviated format by listing five things you’ve seen God do or provide over the last five years.

3. Share at least one of these remembrances with a friend, loved one, or small group member.

MOSES MOMENTS
(Small Group Discussion)

1. As you break into your small groups this week, begin with a group Praise Walk/Sit. You may wish to go around the group and have each lady share her list from page 107.

2. If you have time, have each lady write a card (or send an e-mail) to someone, encouraging that individual with a Scripture verse or quotation regarding the goodness of God.

3. Share specific answers to prayer from this past week and pray for this week’s prayer requests within your group.

JOURNAL, NOTES, and PRAYER REQUESTS

LESSON SEVEN CHANGE CAN ENCOURAGE US

My mom recently shared with me that when she reads in the Bible about the end of Moses's life, she literally gets teary-eyed and wants to tell him not to go up that mountain. (We'll look at that together in a few moments.) That's how I feel about this lesson: *Don't write it, Brenda. It's the last lesson, and that means your time with these dear students of God's Word is about to end!* But alas. This is the last lesson, and you've earned my admiration with your stick-to-itiveness!

A few months ago I had the privilege of speaking to a group of young single women about knowing God. At the end of the session, I took time for Q&A, and one of the young ladies asked, "How did you know that Captain Joe was *the one*?"

I didn't even have to stop and think about it. My immediate reply was, "I knew him well enough to know that he trusted God and followed His leading. Therefore, I knew that I could trust Joe. His plans weren't about Joe; they were about God."

Friends, on a much larger scale yet only through brief glimpses, that's what we've seen in the life of Moses. As his faith grew, his influence grew. In their moments of seeking God, the people knew they could trust Moses, because he trusted God. He sought God first when changes came. He wasn't perfect—not by a long shot. But God used Moses to accomplish great things during his lifetime and to teach us great things during ours.

The titles of the lessons in this study were not randomly selected. In fact, the verbs were selected with great intentionality. You see, I believe, as we studied in Lesson 2, that change is entrusted to us. It's not a possibility. It's a certainty, because, as we saw in Psalm 139, God knew us from before

our conception. But we can't stop with that thought. Our human curiosity and earthly minds want to know *why*. Why does God send floods and hurricanes and allow the deaths of young married couples, teenagers, wise elderly men, and unborn babies? May I give you my honest answer?

I don't know.

I only know that there is a God in heaven, and it's not me. He is all-wise, all-knowing, and all-powerful. I am not. I see through the eyes and heart of one who had a beginning and who will have an end. God sees as One Who had no beginning and Who will have no end. His view is far superior to mine. He doesn't cause evil. He allows it, because He gives us choices and doesn't hook us up to puppet strings and make us do His bidding.

And I know this. God is good; therefore, all that He does is good. I am a good person sometimes, so sometimes I do good things—but not all the time. (My husband, family, and friends can attest to that, but I beg them not to!) God is not merely a good person. He. Is. Good. He is not mean!

What two things does Psalm 119:68 tell us about the goodness of God?

But how can we truly believe that? How can we *know* that He is good when we are so often surrounded by bad things and bad people? The psalmist answers that in the last half of the verse you just read. He states: "Teach me Your statutes" (NKJV). He longed to know Who God was and to see Him in action. Moses did too. And so should we. As we saw in Lesson 4, we can learn more about Him by spending time reading the Bible and talking with Him in prayer.

Read Psalm 119:97. As you write the verse on the lines below, stop to be honest with yourself and with God by asking if you could truly pray those words to the Lord today. If not, why not? That's the area that needs spiritual exercise. If so, pray the words back to the Lord as the longing of your heart today.

Before we move on, let me share a personal aha moment that I had a few years ago regarding the goodness of God.

My father, now worshipping the Lord in heaven, was facing major surgery. As was wise and right to do, our family asked people to please be in prayer for my dad and for his medical team. As we shared news of his successful surgery with those who had been praying, several said to me, “Praise the Lord. God answered our prayer.” Some added, “God is good!”

His answers don't have to align with my requests, but my requests should align with desiring His will.

That's when it hit me. What if my dad had passed away on the operating table? Would that have meant that God was *not* good? Would that have meant that He had *not* answered my prayer? Of course not. His answers don't have to align with my requests, but my requests should align with desiring His will. I want to want what God wants. If that is truly my heart's cry, I will be able to say—at all times—with the psalmist: “You are good and do good” (Psalm 119:68, NKJV).

As I mentioned above, our finite human minds want to fix what we think must be wrong. We want our cookie when we do right (i.e., we wonder why we don't get what we're praying for—a husband, children, healing—when we are seeking God with all of our heart). When that doesn't happen, we want to know why.

As I stated in an earlier chapter, I believe that asking why is not a bad thing. That's how we were made by the God Who is always good. But we must ask why in the properly motivated spirit of asking God what He wants us to do with the change He has entrusted to us. (See Lesson 2.)

Read John 9:1–3. What did the disciples think were possible reasons for the man's blindness, and what was Jesus's reply?

At the start of this lesson I mentioned that the wording in the chapter titles was intentional. I stated above that I truly believe that in God's infinite wisdom and goodness change *is* entrusted to us, and Lesson 2 was titled accordingly. However, Lessons 3 through 7 contain the word *can* in place of the word *is*. Change *can*—has the ability to—enlighten us, exercise our faith, equip us, empower us, and encourage us. But that choice is ours.

When change happens, we must choose to change. We must choose to learn more about the character of our good God, mature in our relationship with Him, and apply the spiritual knowledge that can come through the changes He entrusts to us. When knowing God is our choice, we are encouraged to know Him more and to view the changes in our lives as opportunities to encourage others in their faith or to point them toward faith in God.

Moses has been an excellent example of this, hasn't he? Nineteenth-century evangelist Dwight L. Moody summarized the life of Moses in this way:

Moses spent forty years thinking he was somebody; then he spent forty years on the backside of the desert realizing he was nobody; finally, he spent the last forty years of his life learning what God can do with a nobody!

When the song of our heart springs out of the same awe and wonder Moses had when he personalized his song of praise in Exodus 15, we can get a greater glimpse of the goodness of God. When we see our need for His strength, we make room for His strength to provide us with an ever-growing knowledge of just how amazing He truly is.

That's how Moses is remembered—as a man with firsthand knowledge of God. In fact, stop for a moment and read Exodus 33:11. How was Moses described here?

Now *that* is a close relationship with God. No wonder Moses sang praise to the Lord!

Deuteronomy 32 is known as the third song of Moses. In the first forty-three verses of this chapter, Moses sings of what he has seen and learned about the great I AM over the course of his lifetime. But as with any good song of praise, this song isn't about Moses. It's about his good God.

Read Deuteronomy 32:1–43 or listen to it via the audio option on BibleGateway.com, where it will take you about eight minutes to do so. After reading this passage, list the descriptions of praise Moses used in this third song. Some of them are hidden in the history he used to review the works of God on behalf of the children of Israel, but if you read/listen carefully, you'll easily find them.

It was with this song of praise and remembrance in his heart that Moses faced the end of his life. He was not discouraged. He did not need to hurry and make things right with God. He was simply eager to personally share the works of God one last time with the children of Israel in order to encourage them to keep moving forward—not just in their journey toward the land that God had promised to them but in their spiritual walk with the Lord.

We may think that a good God would have rewarded Moses (there's that "cookie-reward" mentality we naturally have) by allowing him to enter the Promised Land with the children of Israel. But our good God has other attributes that also govern His actions. Deuteronomy 32:4 is translated this way in the New American Standard Bible: "The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are *just*; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He" (emphasis mine). Note: In some translations, the word *judgment* is used instead of the word *just*.

The same Hebrew word (*mishpat*) used for *judgment/just* in Deuteronomy 32:4 is used in Psalm 111:7, which I would like for you to read. How are the works of God's hands described in this verse?

Psalm 33:5 uses this same word when describing two things that God loves. What are those two things?

While God is indeed a God of indescribable, infinite, unending love, He is also a God of justice. We cannot view His attributes of mercy and grace without seeing that they are paired with His righteousness and justice. Moses knew God well and knew that God must carry out His Word. Read Numbers 20:8–12 and record God's reason for not allowing Moses (and his brother, Aaron) to enter the Promised Land?

Although Moses clearly knew that God had stated that he could not enter the Promised Land, he couldn't help but ask for God to change His mind. Read Deuteronomy 3:23–27. What was Moses's request, and what was God's answer?

As I mentioned above, when we think of God's mercy, we cannot overlook God's justice. But the opposite is true as well. When we think of His justice, we cannot forget that He is also a God of mercy. Now read Deuteronomy 32:49–52. What did God allow Moses to see from the top of Mount Nebo? Use His words in your answer.

Well, ladies, as I write these very words, I have tears beginning to stream down my cheeks. I now understand how my mom felt about the next verse in this passage. I'm going to run get a tissue to wipe my eyes. While I'm gone, please read Deuteronomy 32:50 again. What was the other reason for why Moses was to ascend the mountain?

Knowing that he was about to die, Moses took the opportunity to address the various tribes of the children of Israel (as recorded in Deuteronomy 33), blessing them, reminding them again of the wonderful works of God on their behalf, and encouraging them to remember that they were a nation who had been saved by the Lord from the hands of their enemies. In other words, Moses took this last opportunity to speak truth into their hearts. He used some of his final breaths to encourage them in their faith—just as he had from the moment he had returned to Egypt until this final address to the people.

Friends, we must follow Moses's example. We must proclaim the goodness of God while we can! Moses wasn't frail or weak. He was in good health. How do we know this? Read Deuteronomy 34:7 and record its words here.

Moses spoke as he had spoken to them often. This wasn't anything new. He lived it. They knew he met with God. They knew He was God's chosen servant, sent to minister to them and to lead them in God's ways.

When my family and I were together at the time of my dad's funeral, we were gathered in my parents' home, reminiscing about God's goodness to and through my father. We each took a turn remembering a favorite phrase or expression that he had used during his lifetime or choosing our own phrase or expression to describe what he had meant to us. I described my pastor/father with the highest compliment I could personally give to him as his daughter: "He was the same person on both sides of the door."

That's how I feel about Moses in these final chapters of Deuteronomy. He didn't change who he was when the final change in his life—the change of going from life to death—was looming before him. He kept being Moses, the leader who had come to know, trust, and love the great I AM unlike any other person before or after him.

Oh ladies, we must be women who are the same on both sides of the door. We must choose right reactions when we are faced with change. We must

choose to be encouraged as we remember the goodness of our God in the midst of change. We must proclaim the works of the Lord as we seek to encourage others—as Moses did—to keep moving forward in their journey of faith.

Read Deuteronomy 34:1–5. No questions. No lines to fill in. Just take a moment to bid our friend farewell. Because in a final act of faith, Moses, knowing what was to take place at the top of the mountain, obeyed God’s command and began to walk toward the place where he knew that he would die.

But he was not alone.

God was there with Him. God kept His promise to never leave Moses (or us) or forsake him (or us).

In fact, God personally buried Moses in an undisclosed—to this day—location. Let me reiterate those words, because I think we have a hard time comprehending the closeness of the relationship God had with Moses: God. Buried. Moses. (Read Deuteronomy 34:6.)

* * *

As we close this study, it is my sincere prayer that Moses’s choices to use the changes in his life as opportunities to draw closer to God will encourage you to do the same. Stay in the Word. Study it diligently. Meditate on it. Apply it. Live it. Proclaim it.

Then, when change happens—and it *will* happen—you can take the change that God entrusts to you and choose to be enlightened, be exercised in your faith, be equipped, be empowered, and be encouraged.

“Do thou be with me, and prepare me for all the smiles of prosperity,
the frowns of adversity, the losses of substance, the death of friends,
and the last great change of all.

May I find thy grace sufficient for all my needs.”

—*The Valley of Vision*, “Grace Active”

CHOOSE to CHANGE (Practical Application)

Just when you thought you could close this book and call it finished, I have a few ongoing assignments for you.

1. As you continue studying God's Word in the days and weeks ahead, complete the third column of "The ABCs of My Amazing God" chart on page 107 by adding Scripture verses that go along with the names, character qualities, and attributes of God. You may even find new words to add to your chart as you look for God in the changes.
2. Additionally, there is a second chart in the Appendix, "Learning More about God," and it begins on page 109. (Note: My friend Dyan created this list for her students, and I am grateful that she gave me permission to use it in this book.) As you open God's Word in the days and weeks ahead, take a moment to praise God for the attributes of His that He reveals in the Bible. Choose one verse each day (left column) and write down what that verse teaches you about God (right column). There are blank spaces at the end of the chart to encourage you to keep adding to your knowledge of God!

MOSES MOMENTS (Small Group Discussion)

1. As you meet together this final time, begin with a group Praise Walk/Sit. For variety, go around the group and have each lady share a name, character quality, or attribute of God that starts with that letter before moving on to the next letter.
2. Briefly share specific answers to prayer from this past week as a means of reviewing and proclaiming the works of God. Then allow each lady the opportunity to share a personal request that the group can pray with her about in the days and weeks ahead.

APPENDIX

THE ABCs of MY AMAZING GOD
(A “Praise Walk”)

Letter	Name, Character Quality, or Attribute of God	Scripture Reference
A		
B		
C		
D		
E		
F		
G		
H		
I		
J		
K		
L		
M		
N		
O		
P		
Q		
R		
S		
T		
U		
V		
W		
X		
Y		
Z		

LEARNING MORE ABOUT GOD

Scripture Reference	What This Verse Teaches Me about God
Psalm 147:5	
1 John 3:20	
Genesis 1:1	
1 Timothy 1:17	
James 1:5	
Psalm 139:1	
Psalm 139:2	
Psalm 139:3	
Psalm 139:4	
Psalm 139:8	
Psalm 139:14	
Psalm 139:17	
Lamentations 3:23	

Mark 10:18	
Psalms 25:8	
Psalms 11:7	
Psalms 119:137	
Psalms 145:17	
Psalms 117:2	
John 14:6	
Psalms 66:3	
Deuteronomy 33:27	
Hebrews 13:5	
Hebrews 13:6	
Jeremiah 31:3	
John 3:16	
1 John 4:8	
Titus 1:2	

1 John 1:9	
Psalm 34:8	
Psalm 100:5	
Psalm 99:5	
Isaiah 43:15	
Jeremiah 32:17	
Jeremiah 33:3	
Psalm 106:1	
Psalm 119:68	
1 John 4:6	
Psalm 73:24	
Psalm 73:26	
Psalm 77:1	
Psalm 78:35	
Psalm 78:38	

1 Corinthians 1:9	
Revelation 1:8	
Deuteronomy 32:4	
Genesis 1:27	
Job 33:4	
Psalms 91:2	
Proverbs 15:3	
Job 34:21	
Matthew 19:26	
Proverbs 3:12	
Psalms 107:1	
Psalms 23:1	
Psalms 23:4	
Psalms 28:7	
Psalms 30:2	

Exodus 15:2	
Exodus 15:11	
Exodus 34:6	
Philippians 4:13	
Philippians 4:19	
Psalms 34:4	
Psalms 40:17	
Psalms 42:9	
Psalms 43:2	
Psalms 44:21	
Psalms 46:1	
Psalms 47:7	
Psalms 54:4	
Psalms 55:17	
Psalms 56:9	

Psalm 59:17	
Psalm 61:3	
Psalm 68:19	
Psalm 70:5	
Psalm 73:1	
Psalm 92:5	
Psalm 98:1	
Psalm 103:8	
Psalm 103:12	
Psalm 104:1	
Psalm 118:1	
Psalm 118:6	
Psalm 118:14	
Psalm 118:29	
Psalm 120:1	

Psalm 121:2	
Psalm 145:8	
Psalm 145:9	

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Here is where I'm supposed to tell you intriguing, engaging fun facts about myself that make you wish we were best friends and to ensure that we will forever be connected.

Try as I might, I just can't come up with anything that earth-shattering! I'm me. Brenda Strohbehn Henderson, and that's as real as it gets. But if you need a little more than that, here you go:

1. Above all else, I'm a Christ-following, Bible-reading, wisdom-seeking, still-growing-in-wisdom, grace-receiving woman of God. Above all else.
2. I'm the youngest of four, have parents who loved each other with a sincere and incomparable love, and I was married for the first time at the age of fifty-five to an amazing man who follows God as avidly as I do.
3. To say that I'm an avid Notre Dame football fan is an understatement. (Go Irish!)
4. I've been a waitress, bookstore clerk, speech and music teacher, camp counselor, secretary, tour planner, wedding coordinator, wedding planner, personnel manager, editor, writer, and brand communicator.
5. I have liked nearly every job I've ever had (though I wasn't so thrilled with detassling corn as a teen). Because my husband is a retired airline captain, I too chose to "retire" and now focus on my own writing.
6. I play the flute, piano, and mountain dulcimer, sing a lot, and love the ongoing power of music in my life.
7. I've always dreamed of living by a lake and sitting at a desk in the corner, by a window overlooking the water, writing books that long outlive my last breath. For now, the view of the creek out the back window will do.
8. I can't begin to find words that adequately describe my love of yellow roses. Hydrangeas run a close second.
9. Girl talk over coffee (or really good tea). 'Nuff said.
10. I laugh hard, cry from the depths of my soul, love deeply, give generously, and connect with a loyalty that few understand.

My cup overflows.

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Change. The very word evokes excitement, dread, anticipation, fear, grief, joy. Regardless of our age, marital status, or social setting, regardless of our penchant for adventure or our comfort level with routines—change happens.

This practical yet thought-provoking seven-lesson study uses the changes in the life of Moses to demonstrate how our increasing knowledge of God shapes the choices we make.

Whether you use these lessons as an individual or through a group study, the goal is the same—changed hearts!

**“Effective change in the life of a believer
results in a changed heart.”**



Brenda Strohbehn Henderson writes her faith-based blog, *Petals from the Basket* (PetalsfromtheBasket.com) from her home in Indiana. As a woman who married for the first time at the age of fifty-five, Brenda brings a unique insight to the needs, desires, joys, and concerns of women of all ages and from every marital status.

Brenda and her husband, retired international airline pilot Captain Joe Henderson, enjoy entertaining, traveling, serving in the bookstore ministry of their local church, and spending time with their extended family. Joe has joined Brenda in her love for writing and frequently contributes to her blog via “The Captain’s Corner,” where he intertwines his familiarity with the airline industry with practical biblical lessons.

**We hope you enjoyed
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