

OUR CHANGELESS GOD IN THE CHANGES OF OUR LIVES

**All Scripture verses are taken from ESV unless otherwise indicated.*

Opening Prayer:

We thank You, dear heavenly Father, for promising to be with us always through all the changes in our lives. Teach us to recognize both the temptations during transitions that changes bring and how You strengthen our faith. Guide us and teach us as we travel through these challenges. In Jesus' name we pray and trust. Amen.

Introduction:

*Coping with transitions caused by changes in our lives is a gift from the Holy Spirit as He sanctifies us and works through God's Word. **

Read together:

⁵ **Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.**
⁶ **In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.** (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Lesson:

Change describes all of life. Sudden or gradual — anticipated or unexpected — pleasant or painful — all transitions that take place because of change bring challenges to our faith.

1. Name pleasant changes experienced in life.

(graduations, birth of a child, promotions at work, new occupation, marriage, recognition of achievement, baptisms, confirmations, retirement, etc.)

2. Name sad or frightening changes experienced in life.

(death of a child, death of a spouse, death of a parent or sibling, diagnosis of life-changing or life-threatening illness, accidents, loss of position or occupation, loss of home, retirement, children leaving home, divorce, war, etc.)

3. How may even Christians react as we experience changes – pleasant or painful – unexpected or anticipated?

(doubting our faith, doubting God's love for us, doubting God's wisdom, fear, anxiety, uncertainty, insecurity, loneliness, inability to accept the change, anger, frustration, disillusionment, dissatisfaction ...)

Scripture is our guide when recognizing and dealing with both temptation and testing during changes in our lives.

4. What is the greatest danger we face during times of change?

Ephesians 6:12 (NIV) and I Peter 5:8

Ephesians 6 ¹²*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (NIV)*

I Peter 5 ⁸*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

(Satan is the real danger because sorrow, sickness, success, or joy can become Satan's tools of deception as he seeks to undermine our trust in Christ. The forces of evil are real, powerful, and ever present as they use every opportunity to steal us away from the victory Christ has earned for us.)

5. Describe our source of strength in any situation that brings change into our life.

Ephesians 6:10–11 and 16

¹⁰*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.*

¹⁶*In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;*

(Our strength comes from our Lord working through His Word as the Holy Spirit guides us. We exercise our faith and grow in trust as we pray with perseverance even when we do not see improvements or understand how God is working through and in the changes of our lives. We grow stronger as we recognize how Satan tries to deceive us during both times of joy and times of sadness – times of confidence and times of fear. When we know who or what the enemy is, we fight the “good fight” by relying on what God tells us rather than on how we “feel”.)

6. What do the passages below reveal about God's role in our lives?

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

(God has plans for each of us in this life — plans to help us, not to harm us — plans for our life here on earth and in heaven.)

Psalm 121: 7–8

*⁷ The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
⁸ The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and forevermore.*

(God knows everything we do – and He promises to protect us from what evil can do to us in this life.)

Psalm 118:29

*²⁹ Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!*

(God’s love and care for us will never end.)

Isaiah 43:1b–3a

*“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
³ For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*

(Christ has redeemed us — called us by name in our Baptism — and declares our victory over Satan by telling us we are His! The battle with Satan rages while we are here on earth — but God has won the victory for us. We live in His Kingdom while here on earth even though Satan continues to plague us and cause us pain and harm. In heaven we will be free of Satan and his use of doubt and fear through all the changes we experience here on earth.)

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

(God has promised to make good result from suffering in the lives of those who are His children. We suffer with Christ here on earth, and we will be comforted even as Christ was.)

7. How does Scripture describe God’s relationship with us?

Psalm 139:1–18 and 23–24

*¹ LORD, you have searched me and known me!
² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;*

you discern my thoughts from afar.
³ *You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.*
⁴ *Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.*
⁵ *You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.*
⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.*
⁷ *Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?*
⁸ *If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*
⁹ *If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.*
¹¹ *If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"
¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.*
¹³ *For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*
¹⁴ *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.*
¹⁵ *My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*
¹⁶ *Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.*
¹⁷ *How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!*
¹⁸ *If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
I awake, and I am still with you.*
²³ *Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!*
²⁴ *And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

(God's knowledge of each person is intimate and individual. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows what we will say before we do. He knows our thoughts. There is no

where we will ever be that He will not be with us. He knew us before we were born. He knows how many days we will live. He searches our hearts. His love is unending and unlimited.)

Deuteronomy 4:31 and Hebrews 10:23

Deuteronomy 4 ³¹*For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers that he swore to them.*

Hebrews 10 ²³*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.*

(God will never fail to keep His promises to us because He is God and cannot be unfaithful.)

Ephesians 1:13–14

¹³*In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

(God's promise to us is guaranteed through the gift of the Holy Spirit guiding us through all the changes of life as He protects us and teaches us God's Will.)

8. How may God use suffering in our lives?

Hebrews 12:5–7

⁵ ... *“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.*

⁶*For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”*

⁷*It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*

(God uses the challenges we face to discipline and teach us to trust Him and to obey his Word. We learn what it means to live as God's forgiven children. God is always more powerful than Satan, and He makes us benefit from what Satan uses to harm us.)

I Peter 5:6–7

⁶*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

(We learn humility as we recognize our inability to battle Satan's temptations alone. Humility teaches us to love and trust our Lord above all things. We will be exalted fully in Heaven. Meanwhile, because we are His sons and daughters we can cast all our anxieties on Him.)

Proverbs 3:11–12

¹¹*My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof,*

*¹²for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.*

(God may permit suffering in our lives as a way to teach us to depend on Him and to trust Him above all things. We learn what it means to have no other gods before Him.)

II Corinthians 1:3–5

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

(Christians who understand the Theology of the Cross know what suffering Christ endured to reconcile us with His Father - suffering caused by our sin. Our sin also causes us to share in Christ's sufferings. Because God comforts us in our suffering, we are able to comfort others in their suffering by helping them see God's love even in their suffering.)

Conclusion:

How do these verses describe the listed results that come from “trusting in the Lord with all your heart” on your journey through the changes of life?

1. CONTENTMENT

Hebrews 13:5 *⁵Keep your life free from love of money, be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

(Satan works also in changes that bring prosperity. We can be tempted to depend on or credit our own abilities for our successes. We may be tempted to become selfish with our blessings. We can be tempted to allow the rewards of success to become our God. When we recognize God as our benefactor, share our blessings, and are contented with what He gives us — we grow in appreciation of God's gifts and in recognition of our dependence on Him and His presence in our lives through all of life's blessings.)

2. THANKFULNESS AND TRUST

Psalm 31: 7–8a *⁷I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love,
because you have seen my affliction;
you have known the distress of my soul,
⁸and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;*

(Recognizing that it is God who delivered us in the past from our affliction gives us reason to both thank our Lord and to trust Him for the future.)

3. SECURITY

Psalm 100:5 *⁵ the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness is to all generations.*

(The certainty that God’s love and care will never end gives us peace and security when we face future changes in our lives.)

4. COURAGE AND CONFIDENCE

Joshua 1:9b *⁹ Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

(We know we will continue to face both times of testing and times of temptation in our future, but we do not face them alone. Our God understands our fears and doubts – and He will be with us even during those times. We can say with confidence, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13)

5. CONTINUING GUIDANCE

Proverbs 23:12 *¹²Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.*

Colossians 3:16 *¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

Psalm 25:5 *Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.*

(God promises to “make straight our paths” in Proverbs 3:6. He does this through His Word. Our guidance comes through what His Word teaches us about Himself and about ourselves. It is our map through the changes in life on our journey to heaven.)

Closing Prayer: Psalm 71:12, 17–18

Leader: O God, be not far from me;

Group: O my God, make haste to help me.

Leader: O God, from my youth you have taught me,

Group: and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.

Leader: So even to old age and gray hairs,

Group: O God, do not forsake me,

Leader and Group: until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Say or sing together “All Depends on Our Possessing” (*LSB* #732; *LW* #415; *TLH* #425).