

# THE COURAGE TO CHANGE

SAYING GOODBYE TO GOOD ENOUGH  
AND EMBRACING THE PROMISE OF  
WHAT CAN BE

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## INTRODUCTION

Change happens to everyone, and it's happening all the time, all around us. Sometimes I feel the world is changing faster than some people can keep up with it. When I think about the way life was in the United States when I was growing up in the 1940s and '50s, the changes I have witnessed are mind-boggling. Of course, technology has impacted the world and precipitated changes in ways previous generations could not have imagined. This has resulted in new industries, new ways of communication, and new ways of working. In addition, values and priorities have changed. Social structures have changed, and even nations have changed. There are countries on the map today that didn't exist even thirty years ago.

We change our minds about how we think about things, we go through life transitions, and our friends change. We may have had someone in our life for many years, and for a variety of reasons they are no longer present. They may have died, moved, or simply changed what they are doing, and their time is occupied with that instead of with us.

Change is all around us, happening every day, in big and small ways. People's tastes and expectations change.

Our relationships change, our jobs change, our finances change. Our children grow up and leave the nest. Our bodies change as we get older. If we take good care of ourselves, we can slow down the process of aging, but no one looks at eighty the way they did at twenty. I speak from experience. Society changes, styles change, and what people value changes.

I've experienced quite a few changes in my own life and ministry recently. Our ministry employs several hundred people, and what employees expect now is very different from what they expected thirty-five years ago. Not all those changes have been easy for me, but sometimes we must change, whether we want to or not. For example, working from home is popular today, and computers make it possible for people to work from almost anywhere, at any time. Even though I am more accustomed to an 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday, I have had to change my mind.

We are all products of the era in which we grew up, and we usually like things the way they were. But if we are not willing to change, we will probably get left behind while everyone else moves on. We must remember that just because something was right for 1980 doesn't mean it is right for 2025 or 2030. I know people who stubbornly cling to "the good ol' days," and they are not effective in the present.

Even though everything around us shakes and changes, only God never changes (Malachi 3:6). God's Word doesn't change (Isaiah 40:8), and it should dictate our standard

and style of living. Everyone and everything else is subject to change. Because God always remains the same and His Word is always true and powerful, we can have the courage to change.

About twenty years ago, our conference attendance was declining. As I looked around at the crowds, I realized that the people there were about the same age I was. This wasn't a good sign because it meant I wasn't reaching younger people. Our son Daniel, who was about twenty years old at the time, had recently come to work for us in a position of authority and suggested many changes that I resisted at first. He recommended having younger bands lead worship, updating the way I dressed, and modernizing the look of our platform. He also advised changing our monthly magazine and even redecorating some of our office space.

At first, I felt insulted by my son's ideas, as though he was saying I had not done a good job. But he helped me understand that this wasn't the case. I had taken the ministry to the point where it was, but the time had come when I needed input from people who were younger than I was.

One day, in a meeting, the discussion got a bit heated. I finally said, "Dan, everyone here agrees with me." He replied, "Of course they do. They're all the same age you are." He was right, and we have let him make the changes he suggested. Even though I didn't particularly like all of them, I must admit that he was correct, and our ministry

has grown. Now when I look at the crowds at our conferences, I see people of all ages, from all walks of life, not just people of my generation. The growth our ministry has experienced has enabled us to help more people. Had I refused to change because of stubborn pride, I might not even have a ministry now.

I hope the story about our ministry helps you realize how important it is to be willing to be open to change. Perhaps you are facing some changes right now and are struggling with them, or perhaps you need to make some changes and are afraid to do so. I know that change requires courage, but I also know that leaving behind an old season and embracing the new experiences God has for you will be worth it through any anxiety or fear. Don't ever be afraid to give up the good to go for the great! We had a good ministry, but now it is better than ever.

*Don't be afraid to  
give up the good  
for the great.*

We are facing more changes right now and are still in the process of deciding what they should be. But I know that when God closes one door, He always opens another. Don't miss what God wants to do in your life now because you are clinging to the past. Have the courage to change.

# **PART 1**

## **Walking with God through Life's Changes**

## CHAPTER 1

# The Greatest Change of All

*Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!*

2 Corinthians 5:17

I believe the greatest change of all and the greatest miracle we witness is how God changes people. This chapter's opening scripture says that when we are in Christ, we become new creatures altogether. We are changed on the inside, and we need to learn to live "inside out." When we surrender our lives to Jesus and receive Him as Lord and Savior, I like to say that we become new spiritual clay. The Holy Spirit begins the process of molding us into the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). God comes to live in us and the seed (essence) of all we need to develop His character is present in us. It simply needs to be watered with God's Word and worked out in our behavior as the Holy Spirit reveals truth to us and teaches us how to love. Becoming new is a difficult journey, but it is also very exciting. The more we learn to surrender to the Holy Spirit and His work in our lives, the easier the process of transformation is.

I have learned this lesson firsthand. I have needed many changes in my life over the years, and God has been faithful in bringing them about in His timing and in His ways. He has walked me through each one, and they have all been positive. I needed the changes desperately, and I do not think they would have happened apart from a relationship with God.



## My Awakening

I had a tormented childhood, and by the time I began to walk with God, I needed deep healing in my soul and many changes in my thinking and behavior. When I came to realize through God's Word that Satan had robbed me of peace, joy, righteousness, dignity, and confidence, and that he had stolen my childhood through abuse, I became furious and wanted to lash out at everyone. I felt that something was owed to me, but I kept trying to collect from the wrong people.

When I realized how much the devil had stolen from me because my father sexually abused me, I felt cheated. Even more frustrating, I realized I had wasted a lot of years in negative mindsets and emotions and could never get those years back. I did not want to continue repeating the same cycle of bad attitudes, so I decided something needed to change.

*You can't change your history, but you can change your destiny.*

It was too late to change the circumstances that made me unhappy, but over time, I learned many lessons that finally got me on the right path. I learned that I couldn't change my history, but I could change my destiny. I learned that even though I didn't have a good beginning, I could have a good ending. I learned that God would repay me for my former shame (Isaiah 61:7). I learned that we only overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). And I learned a very important

lesson: Many of the changes I needed depended on forgiving the people who had hurt me. As long as we remain bitter and unforgiving, we cannot make any forward progress in life. In fact, I believe it is so vital that I have written an entire section on it in chapter 12, “Let Go and Let God.”

I had to change my thinking to change my future, and it certainly wasn't easy. None of the changes were easy, but they were necessary if I didn't want to perpetuate the miserable existence I had been living. Trouble is a promise, but misery is an option.

*Trouble is a promise,  
but misery is an  
option.*

God's Word says that we are to forget the former things and not dwell on the past because He is doing a new thing and doesn't want us to miss it (Isaiah 43:18–19).

Over a period of years of step-by-step obedience to God, my life changed, and I am no longer angry, resentful, or even sorry about what happened to me during my childhood, because I know God is working it out for good.

## The First Step toward Change

Facing the truth about ourselves and our current behavior is the first step toward change. We cannot change unless we know we need to. This was true for me, and it's true for you. Jesus says that if we continue in His Word, we will know the truth and the truth

*You cannot  
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will set us free (John 8:31–32). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17), and Jesus says, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6). Jesus is also the Word who became flesh and came to dwell among us (John 1:14). There is no possibility of knowing truth without knowing Jesus and allowing His Spirit to work in your life.

The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah writes, “The heart is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9 NIV). It is very easy to deceive ourselves about ourselves, but we cannot do anything about something that we don’t know exists. When God reveals to us something that needs to be corrected, it is a manifestation of His love. I’m grateful that God loves me too much to leave me the way I am.

Our world today is so confusing that many people are asking “What is truth?” They often say truth is relative, meaning that it must be considered or judged alongside other things. Most of the time today, people think of truth as whatever each person wants to make it in their life. I believe this is a big reason the world is in the condition it is in. Jesus doesn’t say He is “a truth”; He says He is “the Truth.” Anyone who follows His guidelines for life knows that following them is the only way to live that produces true peace, joy, and right relationship with God.

When a person is born again (receives Jesus as Lord and Savior) and begins to study or hear His Word, that person will be convicted of sin and want to change. They will want their behavior to align with God’s Word. The best way to

accomplish this is to first admit sin, then repent of it, receive God's forgiveness, and be willing to turn away from the sin. Then, instead of simply "trying" to change, they need to ask God to help them. They may fall back into old habits several times before new habits are firmly established. If you do this and find yourself reverting to old ways, do not feel condemned. Simply start over. The righteous person falls seven times and gets up again (Proverbs 24:16).

Conviction (recognizing a need to change) is from God, but condemnation is from the devil.

Condemnation hinders spiritual growth and is not helpful in any way. I wasted at least twenty-five years of my relationship with God

*Conviction is from God; condemnation is from the devil.*

feeling guilty and condemned and "trying" hard to change before I realized that only God could change me and that I needed to ask Him to do it. He changes us as we study His Word, pray, and spend time with Him. He often shows us things we can do, and when He does, we should do them. But if what we do isn't Spirit-led, it is useless. Success in any area is not by might nor by power, but by the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6).

The apostle Paul reveals a personal dilemma in Romans 7:15–8:2. The process he went through is no different from what you and I go through as we seek to be like Jesus. He starts by saying that he can't seem to do what he wants to do, and he finds himself doing what he doesn't want to

do. Take the time to read about this below in the Message translation, because this paraphrase makes the passage very clear:

What I don't understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can't be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary. But I need something *more*! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't *do* it. I decide to do good, but I don't *really* do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer,

thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

Romans 7:15–25 MSG

Only God can deliver us, and only He can change us. As we wait on Him to do so, we are not to be condemned but to be full of faith and very thankful that God has delivered us. We need to claim the victory God has given us while it is becoming a reality in our lives. For example, let's say a person who is impatient realizes it is not God's will for them to be impatient, so they repent and ask God to help them be patient. Each time they display impatience, they may say "I'm so impatient." But what they should say is "God is working patience in me and changing me little by little."

If you have never been taught this or heard anything like this, it may seem odd to you. But Romans 4:17 says that we serve a God who "calls those things which do not exist as though they did" (NKJV). We should speak according to who we are "in Christ," meaning spiritually, not according to how we currently behave. To speak by faith is not to tell a lie; it is stating what is yours spiritually—what you are growing into in Christ—as a child of God. Our words are powerful, and if I keep hearing "I'm so impatient," I will continue to be impatient. But if I hear "In Christ, I am patient," then I will eventually produce what I believe.

The best way to deal with the changes in your life is to face them with God and believe what He says in His Word. He loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. You can trust that God knows what He is doing in your life and that it will work out for your good (Romans 8:28). Change often hurts, but in the end, it frees us and makes us glad.

## Questions

1. How has God changed you?

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2. What does the fact that you cannot change your history but you can change your destiny mean to you?

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3. What change would you like to see in your life in order to give up the good and go for the great?

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4. What is the first step you can take to begin to move your life from good to great?

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5. Why is it important to speak faith-filled words as you are waiting on God to bring about a complete change in your life?

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joyce Meyer is one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers and a *New York Times* bestselling author. Joyce's books have helped millions of people find hope and restoration through Jesus Christ. Joyce's program, *Enjoying Everyday Life*, is broadcast on television, radio, and online to millions worldwide in 112 languages.

Through Joyce Meyer Ministries, Joyce teaches internationally on a number of topics with a particular focus on how the Word of God applies to our everyday lives. Her candid communication style allows her to share openly and practically about her experiences so others can apply what she has learned to their lives.

Joyce has authored more than 150 books, which have been translated into more than 160 languages, and over 41 million of her books have been distributed worldwide. Bestsellers include *Power Thoughts*; *The Confident Woman*; *Look Great, Feel Great*; *Starting Your Day Right*; *Ending Your Day Right*; *Approval Addiction*; *How to Hear from God*; *Beauty for Ashes*; and *Battlefield of the Mind*.

Joyce's passion to help people who are hurting is foundational to the vision of Hand of Hope, the missions arm

of Joyce Meyer Ministries. Each year Hand of Hope provides millions of meals for the hungry and malnourished, installs freshwater wells in poor and remote areas, provides critical relief after natural disasters, and offers free medical and dental care to thousands through their hospitals and clinics worldwide. Through Project GRL, women and children are rescued from human trafficking and provided safe places to receive an education, nutritious meals, and the love of God.

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