

**Part 1**

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

<sup>26</sup> They will perish, but you remain;  
they will all wear out like a garment.

Like clothing you will change them  
and they will be discarded.

<sup>27</sup> But you remain the same,  
and your years will never end.

**Psalm 102:25-27**

I don't like change. Even when things aren't going great, or I'm dissatisfied with a certain situation, change is hard. I want stability. Sameness is comfortable. These past 2 years seem to have magnified the role that change plays in our lives. I, for one, have not been a fan of these times. As I thought about a topic for this preparation, the concept of change seemed to beckon me. After all, our mission in Women's Walk is to walk with women in their healing and transforming in Christ. Transformation—by definition, is change. It's a process of becoming different; of undergoing modification; a change in form, nature, or character.

As I thought about change, I was taken back to my early science lessons. In biology, organisms often strive to maintain internal constancy despite external changes or stresses—it's called homeostasis. It is crucial for the survival of organisms and is often seen as a resistance to change. In physics, Newton's laws of motion address change as well—if something is at rest, it will stay at rest unless a force is brought upon it—or if it's in motion, to change speed, direction, or movement, there must be a force applied to stop or change that movement. It seems that even nature fights against change and doesn't want to change unless it is forced to. Or does it?

Our world is constantly changing and was in fact, created to change. Seasons change. We mature and age. Our culture is constantly changing. Relationships evolve. There are always both internal and external forces acting upon us that require us to change. Change directions. Change attitudes. Change actions, opinions, beliefs... And as Christians, we are to change—we are a new creation and we are to become Christ for the world (Corinthians 5:17). That's a tall order.

Tom Robbins, an American novelist said that *"A truly stable system expects the unexpected, is prepared to be disrupted, waits to be transformed."* I find this observation insightful. And while he wasn't talking about Christians, I think it applies very well to Christian transformation. God makes it clear in the scriptures that he desires our transformation, even expects it. We don't always know what to expect, but we know that if we are chasing after God, our lives will be disrupted by Him. We are commanded to

change. We are to allow God to transform us into HIS image—as we were created to be, before we were disrupted by sin.

Romans 12:1-2: "... Do not be conformed<sup>[d]</sup> to this present world,<sup>[d]</sup> but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."

Ephesians 4:20-24: "... truth is in Jesus: you took off your former way of life, the old man that is corrupted by deceitful desires; you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; you put on the new man, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth

1 Corinthians 11:1, Ephesians 2:10, 2 Peter 1:4, 2 Corinthians 3:1

The good news is that Godly change brings abundance. It also, though, often brings trials, pain and loss.

Psalm 66:11-12 says: "You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs; you let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance." I love the idea of being in a place of abundance, but the journey—not so much. I don't love the idea of crushing burdens or having to walk through fire. Can I say, "no, thank you"? Tim Keller, in "King's Cross" says: "Jesus may ask of you far more than you planned to give, but He can give to you infinitely more than you dared ask or think".

God promises, in Jeremiah 29:11 that his plans for us are good. Even when we struggle, fear, suffer loss and don't understand the changes that are happening; God is faithful, and good, and loving, and holy. And as everything around us changes, GOD doesn't change. EVER. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He is, to use a great word, "Immutable". So, not only does God not change, but he also CAN'T change. Job 21:13 tells us that [God] is unchangeable.

2 Corinthians 1:20

Isaiah 41:10

Psalm 145:9

Psalm 33:11

James 1:17 says "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." In Malachi 3:6a God says, "I the lord do not change". Paul reminds us that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. So as we tumble through the sometimes rough waters of change, we know that God is GOOD, FAITHFUL, LOVING, HOLY and IMMUTABLE. He doesn't change.

He is the stability that we crave. He is the source of our homeostasis.

Song used in preparation for the weekend:

Veritas- Great is thy Thankfulness

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2i7\\_X8RQis](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2i7_X8RQis)

**Spiritual Prep Part 2**

A group of blind men heard that a strange animal, called an elephant, had been brought to the town, but none of them knew what an elephant was. Out of curiosity, they decided to learn and imagine what it was like by touching it. So, they sought it out, each blind man approached the elephant from a different direction and felt a different part of its body. The first person, whose hand landed on the trunk, said, "This being is like a thick snake". For another one whose hand reached its ear, it seemed like a kind of fan. As for another person, whose hand was upon its leg, said, the elephant is a pillar like a tree-trunk. The blind man who placed his hand upon its side said the elephant, "is a wall". Another who felt its tail, described it as a rope. The last felt its tusk, stating the elephant is that which is hard, smooth and like a spear. Which one was right?

As I have prepared and read about change in preparation for this upcoming weekend, the second thing that was made clear to me, after being reminded of God's immutability, is that when facing change, perspective is everything! As I have gotten older, I need glasses to read or to see things that are too close, or too small. In life, I need a different lens through which to see my life situations as well. I've been reminded of a favorite praise chorus from the 80's that always reminded me of how I should be seeing those people and the circumstances around me: "Let me see this world, Dear Lord, as though I were looking through your eyes..."

Psalm 39:5 says: "Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath." This verse has spoken to me volumes in the past week. My best—the work I do, the influence I have, everything—is merely a breath in the scope of God's eternity. Things that seem so important to me, are miniscule when the whole picture is viewed. And yet...what is a "mere breath". It's short, maybe 2-3 seconds long—but do you know the physiology of even ONE breath? Diaphragmatic pressure variations, alveolar volume and pressure, intrathoracic pressure, complex exchange of gasses (oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen), diffusion. Neurological, cardiovascular, respiratory, hematological, muscular systems all engaged for one purpose. One small thing, but oh so complex. Perspective.

One author spoke of living in a variety of places growing up. One was described as picturesque and breath-taking. Beaches, mountains, amazing views with stunning sunsets. Perfect weather, delicious local produce—where life "tasted sweet and ripe, like a sticky, mouth-watering mango". She also described another place that was less ideal—flying cockroaches and scurrying centipedes. Closed-minded neighbors who were harsh and gave unsolicited advice. Expensive to the point of it being hard to afford basic staples (\$10 cantaloupe). Thick, sickening smell from burning fields hanging in the air, air pollution from a nearby active volcano. Yes, they are the same place—Perspective.

So, how do we gain a godly perspective? By getting to know HIM, and his attributes. Who is HE? He is Immutable. Love. Just. Righteous. Holy. Omnipotent. Omnipresent. Kind. Good. Merciful. Jealous. The list goes on and on. We can't see the world the way He sees it unless we know HIM.

Finally, Ann Voskamp says, in *The Greatest Gift*, "Joy is a function of gratitude, and gratitude is a function of perspective. You only begin to change your life when you begin to change the way you see". Being grateful doesn't mean that change becomes easy. We face change straight on, acknowledge that it is difficult and challenging, and change the lens through which we view our circumstances. We use "God glasses". We look to scriptures for how to be grateful, even in difficult situations. We acknowledge the difficulty, and we face change—even though it is hard, because of the abundance that God has for us on the other side of the change.

### **Spiritual Prep Part 3**

Change is hard, because we crave stability and because we are stubborn, afraid or powerless. We feel trapped or become too comfortable. Change can hurt. Change, though, is not only inevitable, but necessary.

Our perspective is not God's perspective, and by knowing HIM, we gain a glimpse of the world, other people and our own situation the way He sees it.

Finally, GOD doesn't change. He is always Faithful, loving, just, kind, present, wise and powerful.

As I was looking at the concept of change, I began to look for object lessons. Of course, the first one that comes to mind is a caterpillar being transformed into a beautiful butterfly—a natural process, completely designed by nature that is both beautiful and amazing. I also, though, read about the process of tempering, which is used with metal, glass and chocolate—among other substances. It is a process by which external forces create change in the structure and function of a material.

Each type of change is so different from the other; but each is representative of the changes that we all face. Instead of choosing one type of change, I decided to look at both of them.

Metamorphosis. I'm going to call this a change from within.

This metamorphosis is the type of inner change that happens as we mature in Christ. I believe that there is a deep desire in each of us to know God.

We've all heard the concept of there being a "god-sized hole" in each of our souls. Christian commentators, saints and philosophers have spoken of this for centuries.

You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. St. Augustine

C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*: If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

"What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself."

- Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* VII(425)

But what does the bible say?

In Ecclesiastes 3: 10-11, it says :God set a burden on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end”

John 7:37 Jesus said "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"

The word "innermost being" is the Greek koilos, meaning hole or empty place. Jesus is describing a spiritual empty place in the heart of man, not a physical belly or womb. This empty place is the source of thirst and the divine solution to this hunger/thirst is to fill it with living water from the Holy Spirit. So—the butterfly. A worm with lots of legs eats leaves until it has enough energy to form a cocoon. Once in that cocoon, it transforms completely and when the transformation is complete, it breaks out and has become a completely different creature. So, I asked a simple question—is the DNA of a caterpillar the same as the DNA of a butterfly? The answer is, of course, both simple and complex. While the DNA is the same, the expression of the DNA, the action of the mRNA, is very different. Certain traits are turned on in one, and off in the other. The caterpillar has 6 simple eyes—it can't see color, and vision is very basic. The butterfly has 2 complex eyes that can distinguish between shades of every color and sees even little details of the world around it. The caterpillar uses strong jaws to chomp plant/leaves. The butterfly only drinks nectar from flowers using a tube/straw-like structure. Caterpillars can't reproduce and are asexual. Butterflies—reproduce and have gender. They are the same, but very different.

The scriptures are full of verses that talk about this type of change in humans after we are “born again”. We meet God, where He met us—in His Son. We grow through knowledge of Him—from his word and the guidance of His Spirit.

(Ephesians 4:20-24)."But that is not how you learned about the Messiah, assuming you heard Him and were taught by Him, because the truth is in Jesus: you took off your former way of life, the old man that is corrupted by deceitful desires; you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; you put on the new man, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth"

"Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

"He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them & was raised" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms," (Ephesians 1:18-20).

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come" (2 Peter 1:4)

The other type of change I want to talk about is the change that happens when an outside force affects us. These changes tend to be the ones that are so hard—or hard-fought. These are the changes that happen as a result of “trials and tribulations”. They often are precipitated by the consequences of sin—ours, or those of others. These are the changes that God uses to mold us and strengthen us, if we allow Him to. You know—the potter and the clay. But instead of that analogy, I want to look at the process of tempering.

To temper means to moderate, bring to a proper or suitable state, to modify some excessive quality, to restrain within due limits, to bring to a desired consistency. To stretch. To harden or strengthen by the application of heat, or heating and cooling. To strengthen through experience or hardship. To toughen.

Chocolate: Of course, I want to include chocolate. Yum. The science of tempering is fascinating. Cocoa butter is the fat in the chocolate. It comes in 6 forms of crystals, each of which has its own properties. By heating chocolate you are actually manipulating the crystalline structure of the whole. When chocolate is tempered, it is brought to a very precise temperature to maximize the 5<sup>th</sup> type of crystal, then manipulated and cooled in a controlled environment. The 5<sup>th</sup> type of crystal produces shiny, beautiful chocolate that has a perfect snap to it, and doesn't melt in your hands. A master chocolatier can turn a hunk of chocolate into a beautiful masterpiece. (yes, I watch too much food network). If the balance of crystals is not right—and other types dominate, you end up with a dull, crumbly or goeey mess.

Steel/metals: The science of tempering metals is even more complex. Much of it was beyond my understanding. The basic purpose of tempering is to make changes in the properties of the metals in such a way that it can be used for larger number of applications. The properties that are being changed by the tempering are hardness, flexibility, toughness, strength, and more. Interestingly, when done properly, the metal become less hard, softer, but strength and flexibility are also increased. The process involves extremely high temperatures for long periods of time, followed by controlled cooling processes. Cool it too fast or too slowly, and it loses the properties you want. The metal can be shaped only at certain times during the process without damaging the structure, appearance and usefulness of the finished product. The master blacksmith can form sharp blades, fine jewelry, horseshoes, anything—through this very precise process. And yes, there is a reality competition shows that feature this process as well, and yes, I have seen at least one of them).

Glass: They often refer to tempered glass as toughened glass, or safety glass. It is up to 6 times stronger/harder than untampered glass. It can withstand higher temperatures than regular glass. And when/if it breaks, instead of breaking into sharp shards that can damage anyone around it, it breaks into small pebbles with smooth/soft edges. Glass tempering is also done at very high temperatures. The glass needs to be heated to at least 600 °C (1,112 °F), then cooled quickly under controlled circumstances. (There is a great glass art show called Blown Away, but they are artists, and are not actually tempering glass—it is, though, fascinating)

Each of these tempering processes, if done correctly, yields a stronger, softer, more flexible and more beautiful end-product. They require a master who not only understands the properties of the metal and the exact specifications of the process, but who is invested in the outcome of the process.

Our Master is invested. He “created my innermost parts”. He knows the number of hairs on my head. He knows us better than we know ourselves—and loves us anyway! In addition, he has more than “skin

in the game". He already GAVE his son, so that we can be with him, and he desires that not ONE will perish.

He knows how high the heat can go without damaging us. He knows how far we need to be stretched to form the best version of ourselves. He desires us to be stronger, and softer, more flexible and more beautiful. He created us, and he is transforming us. The heat may come from all different directions, but He sees all, knows all, is all-powerful. He has already won. AND, he is faithful to keep all of his promises to us. When it seems like it is too much, He knows. He knows our limits--better than we do.

There is so much in the scriptures that promises us these things:

Isaiah 43:

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

**2**When you pass through the waters,  
I will be with you;

and when you pass through the rivers,  
they will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire,  
you will not be burned;

the flames will not set you ablaze.

**3**For I am the LORD your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

"I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate<sup>[a]</sup> the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:16-18).

Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. (Romans 12:12)

<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Change is hard, Change can hurt. Change, though, is not only inevitable, but necessary. If we approach our life striving to see from His perspective, change becomes less hard. Luckily, HE doesn't change, his perspective is ALWAYS the same, and ALWAYS consistent with who HE is. By knowing HIM, we have stability, even in change.

