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Changes

Anna Lee Berry



Scripture Reading: Revelation 21

Are changes ever easy? Most of us like to be able to predict what the future will probably hold. We like to stay in our comfort zone—the place we are right now, or the place we have adapted to. For some, that place is where we grew up or where our family is.

But as we get older, our physical needs change; our house and land become too much for us to take care of, and we may need to move to a smaller place. Sometimes that means a nursing home or a place near family. It might mean relocating to a different area.

How can we navigate these changes with grace and peace?

The first consideration should be seeking the will of God. By this time in life, we should have a practice of going to God in decision making, even in the little everyday things. We recognize that we don't see the future, but God does. And He promises His children, "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14). Also, He has promised, "I will instruct

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thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psalm 32:8).

Sometimes changes come rather swiftly, but other times they require waiting. And waiting takes patience. God could use these times of waiting to help us be ready for the changes. What if we think we know God’s will, and He allows circumstances to show us differently? Can we give up our good idea and accept God’s alternate plan as His best for us?

One help for accepting changes is a life of contentment. Two of my dear friends have had to face big changes in their eyesight. For one the change has come gradually, but for the other it was sudden. One week she was driving, and the next week a detached retina made driving impossible. Both of these friends are resigned and accepting of these hard things. They look to God for their comfort and courage. And God gives us many promises of comfort and help to cling to.

Along with contentment, we need a thankful heart. Maybe we now need to look harder for things to be thankful for, but if we look, we can find them. I’m thankful for God’s help in so many little ways. I seem to have a harder time finding things than I used to, or I forget where I left something. But when I ask God for help, many times He answers rather quickly. Let’s thank God and others for all they do for us. We are blessed compared to most people in this world.

When change involves downsizing, it can be difficult to give up living space and familiar belongings, but our attitude can make a big difference. I recently read this quote: “One reason people resist change is because they focus on what they have to give up, instead of what they have to gain.” Can we look at downsizing as a freedom from “things” to take care of? Can we appreciate that a move to a new place can be an opportunity for new experiences and relationships?

Changes do bring some stress, and they may tax our lessening abilities. But we don’t need to despair. Isaiah 41:13 promises, “For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear

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not; I will help thee.” Changes here on earth are temporary. If we remain faithful, we can look forward to the greatest change of all—trading our earthly home for a heavenly home! There we will change our worn-out bodies for celestial bodies. Then we can enjoy those wonderful and unspeakable changes! None of the changes here will come close to our gain there. Let’s keep pressing on.

A Blade of Grass

Betty Ann Landis



Scripture Reading: Psalm 103:15-18

My husband and I strolled by a field where timothy grass seeds were forming on the long green blades. As I stooped to pluck a blade of grass, I recalled the words of the psalmist, “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more” (Psalm 103:15, 16).

Like young blades of grass, we have grown expectantly and joyfully in the sunshine of God’s love. At times we have felt as insignificant as a blade of grass in God’s great universe. The needs are so great, and our contribution is so small. And yet we recognize God’s special purpose for the existence of every living soul! At the same time, we know that no one is indispensable in the wider scope of His great plan.

I remembered the words of my Uncle Eli when he was battling cancer. He said, “Someday my existence on earth will end. I will be plucked away to my eternal home. But God’s plan for man will

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continue as long as the earth remains. Memories will linger in the minds of those close to me, but generally, others will forget I ever existed. Very young children will be among the first to forget the old man who once attended our church.”

As soon as I plucked the blade of grass, the remaining grasses swaying in the gentle breeze filled the place that single blade had occupied. Soon it was impossible to locate the spot in which it had been growing. “And the place thereof shall know it no more.”

Gazing at the frail, slowly wilting blade of grass in my hand, I remembered Uncle Eli again. He had added, “Other people will assume my responsibilities. One person will do the deacon work at church, others will care for my wife and family, and soon my place will be no more. With time, there will be those who ask, ‘Who was Eli?’”

Today Eli’s words have been fulfilled. If his name is mentioned, younger people may ask, “Who was Eli? Do you remember him? How did he influence others?” We older folks knew him as a godly man who humbly filled his place in the kingdom. Eli did not become famous or wealthy. Others have assumed responsibilities to fill his vacancy, and truly his place is known no more.

Through the centuries, many of God’s warriors have influenced our world, though their names have been buried in oblivion. It is not important that our names be remembered after we are gone, but that the name of our eternal God has been exalted and made known. “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psalm 90:1, 2). The challenge is to make a difference in the kingdom during our brief existence on earth. Like a single blade of grass, will my existence be an asset to the kingdom of the living God?

“One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever” (Ecclesiastes 1:4).

Beautiful Surrender

Betty Ann Landis



Scripture Reading: Psalm 90

Fall is the season for “letting go.” The leaves are changing into breathtaking vibrant hues of red, yellow, and orange. Once they were fresh spring green leaves unfolding, then the deeper summer tones that gave pleasant shade in the heat of the day. Those summer leaves experienced gentle breezes and harsh thunderstorms. They held on every day as the months passed.

Now they are in the season of “letting go.” Their stunning beauty speaks of quiet surrender as one by one they fall to the earth. The winter months may look foreboding with possible ice storms and frigid wind gusts. But when the tree is stripped bare, it will courageously face the unknowns without wavering, knowing spring will follow.

So it is with the seasons of life. We have enjoyed the energy and beauty of youthful days. A season of much activity followed. We enjoyed the comfort and security of a spouse and other family members. We weathered the storms of life and basked in the shade of each other’s presence. Gradually, we sensed the autumn season approaching.

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After my husband was diagnosed with terminal cancer, my fears of the unknown future began to loom dark and foreboding as a winter storm. “It will be hard, but you will be okay,” he said. I wanted to hang on tight to the comfort and security of the past. But the season of letting go had come.

My late aunt once said, “The older years often bring the most changes in life. As a child you grow and make changes from year to year until you become an adult. You welcome the changes that marriage and children bring to your life. But in older years, the changes come more steadily and rapidly. There can be parting with a spouse and losing health or vision or hearing. We may need to give up a driver’s license and the ability to live alone in our own home. Moving to a smaller home means parting with possessions and memorabilia from the past. You may begin to feel stripped and bare as you face more unknowns. At the same time, your close relatives and friends are experiencing similar losses and death.

It is tempting to live in the past and wallow in self-pity and depression. But in quiet surrender to the changing season, there is unspeakable beauty. Your world could change color very quickly, or it could happen in slow motion. The painful transition of letting go can be thrust on you in one crushing blow. Or it may include a long goodbye to your beloved.

Either way, it can become a time of pointing others to the greatness and goodness of God. He has a way of sending special tokens of His love and care that may not be obvious to others. That is your opportunity to speak of His wonderful works! There will be more opportunities to trust Him for the unknowns than ever before. Meanwhile, the pleasant memories of spring and summer days will continue to bless you over and over. For the child of God, the promise of eternal spring brings courage and hope. “And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us” (Psalm 90:17).

Coming and Going

Edwin Eby



Scripture Reading: Genesis 47:1-12

You enter life, you leave it.
You enter life, you bring something.
You leave life, you give something.
Coming and going of life is inevitable.
Birth is joy, death is sting.

You are writing a gospel a chapter each day. By the deeds that you do and the words that you say—so true, so profound. These words were on a motto that hung in the living room of my childhood home, where we children often took our naps. Many times, my mother thought I was sleeping as she had told me to, but I was either peeping or waiting to sleep, as youngsters are prone to do at nap time. My young mind had no way to grasp its truth—but there it was burned, as it were, and etched into conscious memory.

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Most of us beyond the sixty-year mark can better grasp that truth than those who are younger. Our thoughts sometimes wander into the beyond. The past is more memoirs than the future is reality. Those past years of family time, work time, and life were somewhere between our coming and our going. Childhood years. School days. Teen years. Courtship years. Early marriage years. Middle child-training years. Happy years as children left the nest. Then grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Then graying years.

All these years were part of the coming. One life season followed another, each with its own beauty. The going is next. What did I bring? What will I give? What will I leave in my “going”?

The patriarch Jacob’s life had ragged edges, joys and sorrows, faults and blessings, plus the in-betweens. Brought before Pharaoh and asked his age, Jacob gave testimony to coming and going. “The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage” (Genesis 47:9).

Jacob admitted that life was full of experiences, some for the better, some less so. His one hundred thirty years indicated a coming—and going came next. God had measured all his days, though they had been fewer than the days of his fathers. Jacob’s testimony was powerful.

Would to God we, too, can testify and leave blessings to the next generation and honor to God. Would to God we, too, can leave to those coming behind memories of godliness and faithfulness.

Life is one person’s turn in eternity. Senior life is one last opportunity to leave something to those who follow.

Living Again

Edwin Eby



Scripture Reading: Job 14

Can those who die ever live again?

This was Job's cry when he was so sick he despaired of even continuing to live. On one hand, Job was finished with life. On the other hand, as he considered physical death, its sting also seemed like more "bad news." In verse 7, Job contemplated how a tree can grow new sprouts after it has been cut down, but how for humans, death seems so final. In a paraphrase of verse 14, Job lamented, "Can those who die ever live again? If I knew they could live again it would give me hope through all my years of struggle, and I would eagerly be willing to die."

Though Job wrestled with calamity and losses, he was a man of faith. He later proclaimed, "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:26). Though Job lived in Old Testament times, he believed, as did the Apostle Paul, that he would be part of a bodily resurrection and see God in a celestial body. (See 1 Corinthians 15.) Though Job did not have the Gospel

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story, yet by faith he believed in a Redeemer who would rise from the dead and still have flesh attributes. Jesus said, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39).

We know that we do not need to fear the second death, which is of spiritual nature, and we have hope within to carry us through the physical sting of death. Yet from the human perspective, death is vile and painful. Even Jesus agonized in prayer as He wrestled in the garden. “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared” (Hebrews 5:7). Jesus cried out in pain, and God heard Him!

But it was hope beyond death that carried Jesus through His suffering. “Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has won the victory over death and has become the author of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.

By faith, Job claimed the promise of life after death. A tree that is cut down can sprout again through the scent of water. Through this “scent of water,” all believers can face inevitable death and live again! Through the resurrection power of Jesus, we have spiritual life now and the assurance that we will see God and be given a celestial body. We will live again!

A Life Worth Sharing

Elaine Gingrich



Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 6:17-19; 2 Corinthians 6:4,10-13

When Ken and I were raising our family on Blue Lake Road, an older retired couple, Don and Eleanor Hunter, lived across from us on the shore of McDonald Lake. They were old-timers and had built a cottage between the lake and the narrow road winding through their property.

Ken did some house renovations for the Hunters, and we enjoyed becoming acquainted. A childless couple, they were actively involved in the small United Church a few miles away. At some point I scribbled down my impressions of Eleanor and what I had learned from this older woman. Recently I came across those few paragraphs.

“Eleanor told me one day that she had decided to stop worrying about what other people thought and to just be natural, to just be herself,” I had written. “Some considered her eccentric, and sometimes she got carried away with an idea that worried or intrigued her, but she was never dull or boring, and she faced life and death with courage. She was a real person with whom one could develop a

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friendship, not just a pale shadow. She dared to open her heart and mind to her friends and offer herself to them.”

I'm sure one reason her comment caught my attention was because I was by nature a shy person, lacking self-confidence, quick to feel self-conscious, preferring to blend in and not look conspicuous. But her refreshing naturalness freed me to relax with her and be myself too.

My jottings record some of our times together. “How glad I am that I invited them over for a maple syrup supper, even if I felt inadequate as a hostess,” I recalled. “How glad I am that I sang my songs for her, that I asked her to share from her vast knowledge of minerals and geology, that I sang with her while she practiced her hymns for church on the piano, that she agreed to come to church with me one time despite being busy enough with her own, and that I helped her prepare her sermon on faith even though I do not believe in women preachers.”

How easy it is to let fear of embarrassment keep us from doing the most beautiful things in life. One happy thing about aging is the increasing freedom to laugh off minor embarrassments, to accept my idiosyncrasies, and to enjoy being the unique person God has made me to be.

As an older woman, I want to help others relax and live as God has made them. I long to model that for my granddaughters, to help them accept themselves and to attempt things that are difficult for them.

God has given us richly so many things to enjoy and opportunities to attract friends of all ages, if we stay alive to beauty, are interested in others, and are eager to learn. Whether our interest is flowers, music, books, bread-making, bird-watching, art, Bible study, or history, we can find some way to welcome others into our lives. We can share what God has given us, and we can joy in living the abundant life.

A Life Worth Sharing

The Hunters told us some of the history of our area, especially about gold and copper mining, which was Eleanor's field as a geologist. I learned about feldspar and quartz and the granite of the Canadian Shield on which we lived. They took us to salvage a few of the garnets still remaining on the stony beach at Depot Harbour, a ghost port town. After Eleanor died, Don gave me a beautiful little old book of birds, which she had treasured.

Studies show that self-confidence often peaks in midlife and then declines with aging as physical appearance changes and independence lessens. Does that need to happen to us, who depend on God to be our strength? God offers healing for our emotional wounds and the promise of being fruitful in old age.

Frank Lloyd Wright said, "The longer I live, the more beautiful life becomes." R. Smith said, "There is a beauty about age which the beauty of youth cannot imitate or duplicate." The Apostle Paul wrote that though his outward man was perishing, his inner man was being renewed day by day.

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Proverbs 17:22). We need not shrivel up with age and loss, but we can retain a big heart for people, a curious mind toward the world around us, and an ever-increasing longing to know Christ better.

Lord, help me to live a life worth sharing.