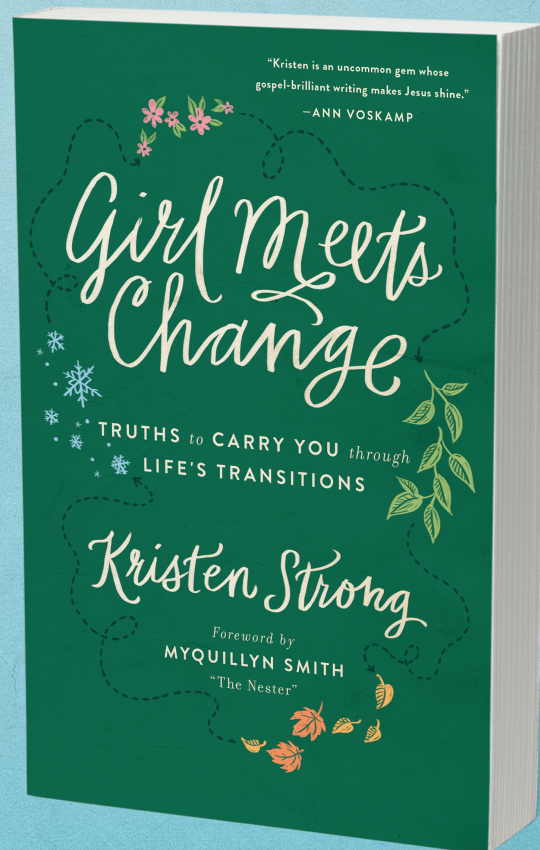


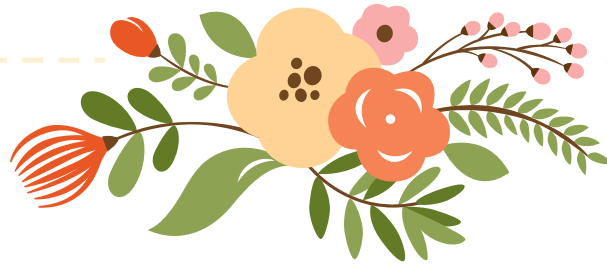


Small Group

COMPANION GUIDE

BY KRISTEN STRONG





Hello there, friend!

Abundant thanks to you for choosing *Girl Meets Change* to read with your small group! I wish I could meet with you and your people at your favorite coffee shop, corner lobby, or cozy living room to learn from you as you read along together.

My fervent prayer is that as you read and reflect on these pages, the Lord will speak into your changing life in very specific, purposeful ways meant just for you. My sincerest hope is that God will use this book as a tool to help you see change in a new light, where God intersects your sense of anxiety with his sense of purpose. And it's my extreme delight to offer you this small-group companion guide as a tool to help the hopeful message of *Girl Meets Change* sink deeply into your heart and soul.

A few notes about the study itself:

- **I have broken this study into six weekly gatherings.** Of course, you and your people are the boss of your own small group, so feel free to discuss more or fewer chapters each week!
- In the “Closing” section of each gathering, **I provide time and room for reflection and journaling.** Feel free to journal in your own favorite space or on the lines provided in this companion guide.
- **Make the closing prayer time as loose or as structured as you desire.** The group may pray together out loud, one member may pray for all, or each member may keep the conversation private between herself and God. Whatever method you choose, be sensitive to the fact that not everyone is comfortable praying out loud.

I would love to connect with you at my blog, *Chasing Blue Skies* (www.chasingblueskies.net), as well as on Facebook (www.facebook.com/chasingblueskies), Twitter (@Kristen_Strong), and Instagram (@KristenStrong)—my favorite!

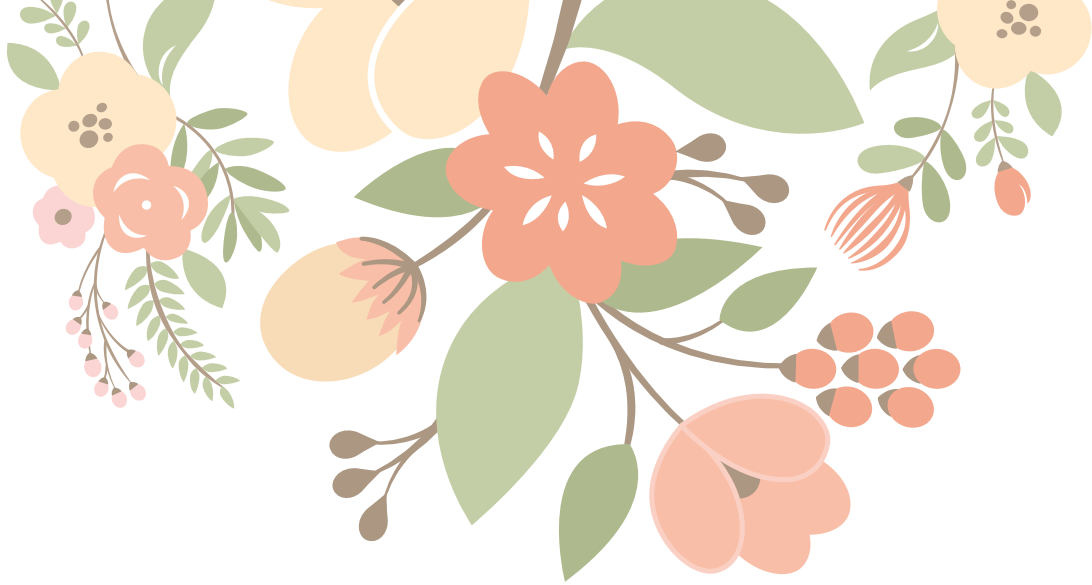
Finally, if you'd like to receive additional encouragement during your own life transition, post a photo depicting a snapshot of your change and tag it with #girlmeetschange on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter.

MUCH LOVE TO YOU, DEAR ONE,

Kristen (Recovering Change Detester) *Strong*

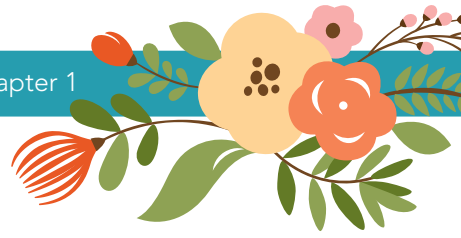
• www.ChasingBlueSkies.net





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First Gathering

In the introduction, I tell of choosing Oklahoma State over the University of Arkansas to avoid change. Instead, that choice led to a lifetime of big change. Can you recall a time when you made a purposeful decision to avoid change only to have it show up in brand-new ways?

Read Genesis 12:1–4. We can learn from this passage that if, as God did with Abram, he is sending you to a new place, he is sending you with a promise of blessing. What might that blessing look like in your own life?

How might you gather hope as you wait to see God's promise fulfilled?



part one

ACKNOWLEDGE: THE CHANGE AND THE LOSS

Chapter 1: Change Up Close and Personal

1. What is a defining life change that stands boldly before you today?
2. What are you struggling with most about this change?
3. Is it easy or difficult for you to push yourself outside your comfort zone?
4. As you keep company with the hard parts of your change, what are some ways you see evidence of Jesus asking you to draw closer to him in the midst of the hardship?
5. Read Matthew 1:18–23. As Joseph discovered then and the rest of mankind has discovered since then, change is often the tool God uses to manifest his presence in our lives as never before. How does knowing this minister to you?
6. Recall a sentence or passage from both the introduction and chapter 1 that strongly resonated with you. Share these sentences with the group and tell why they resonated with you.

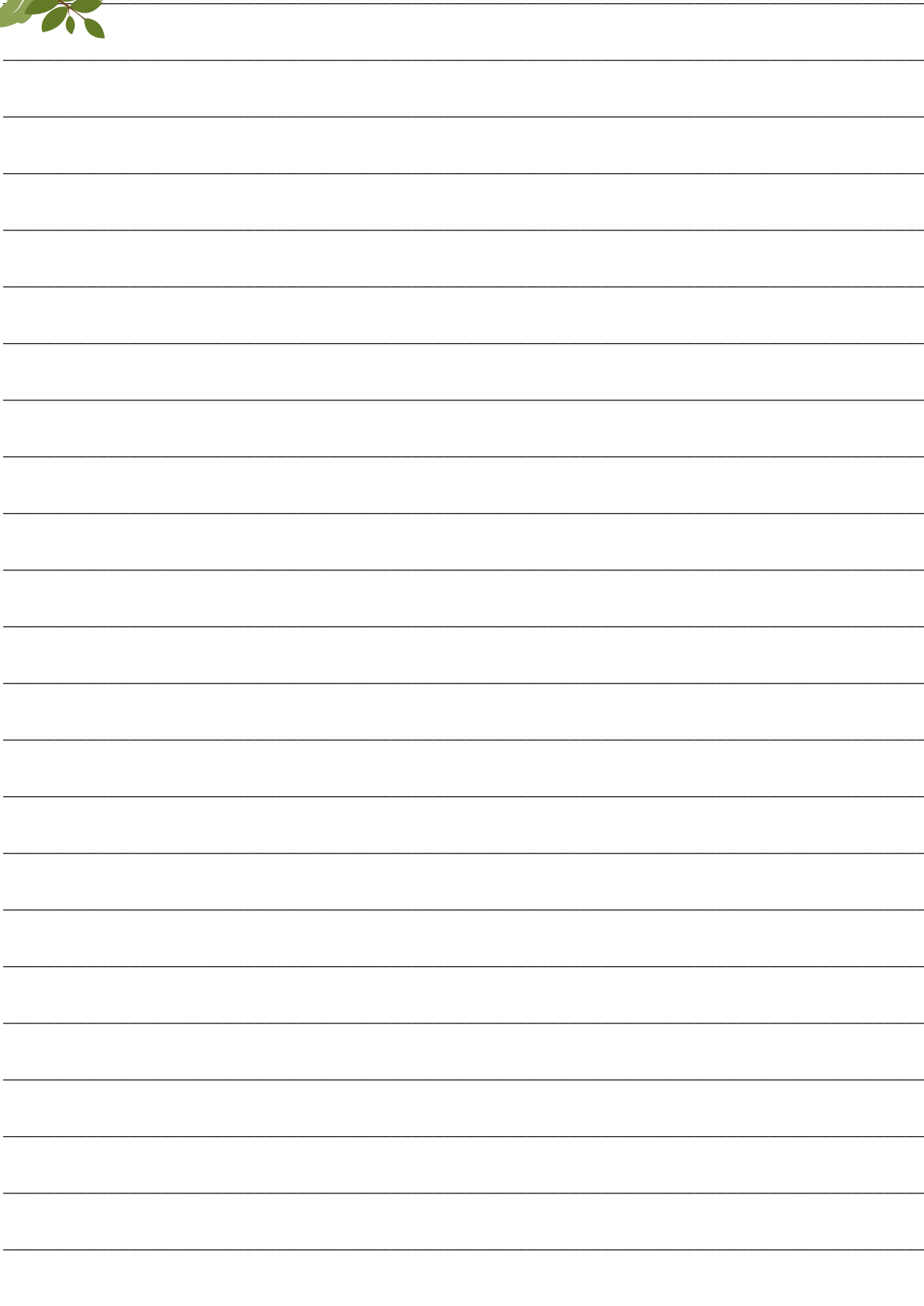
Closing

In the space provided on the next page or in your own separate journal, take time to write one or more things you learned about change today.

Prayer

Some thoughts to contemplate as you close in prayer:

- As you consider your own defining life change, pray that the Lord will show you the purpose of it.
- Pray for God to open your eyes to how he wants to be closer to you because of the change.
- Thank God that no matter where change takes us, we can hold on to his unchanging promises





Second Gathering

At the beginning of chapter 2, I tell a story from my high school years when I could watch people part like the Red Sea as my cousin John walked down the hallway. As change approaches your own life, are you more or less likely to step wide to the side of it?

Recall a sentence or passage from chapter 2 and/or chapter 3 that deeply resonated with you.

Chapter 2: The Way Change Moves

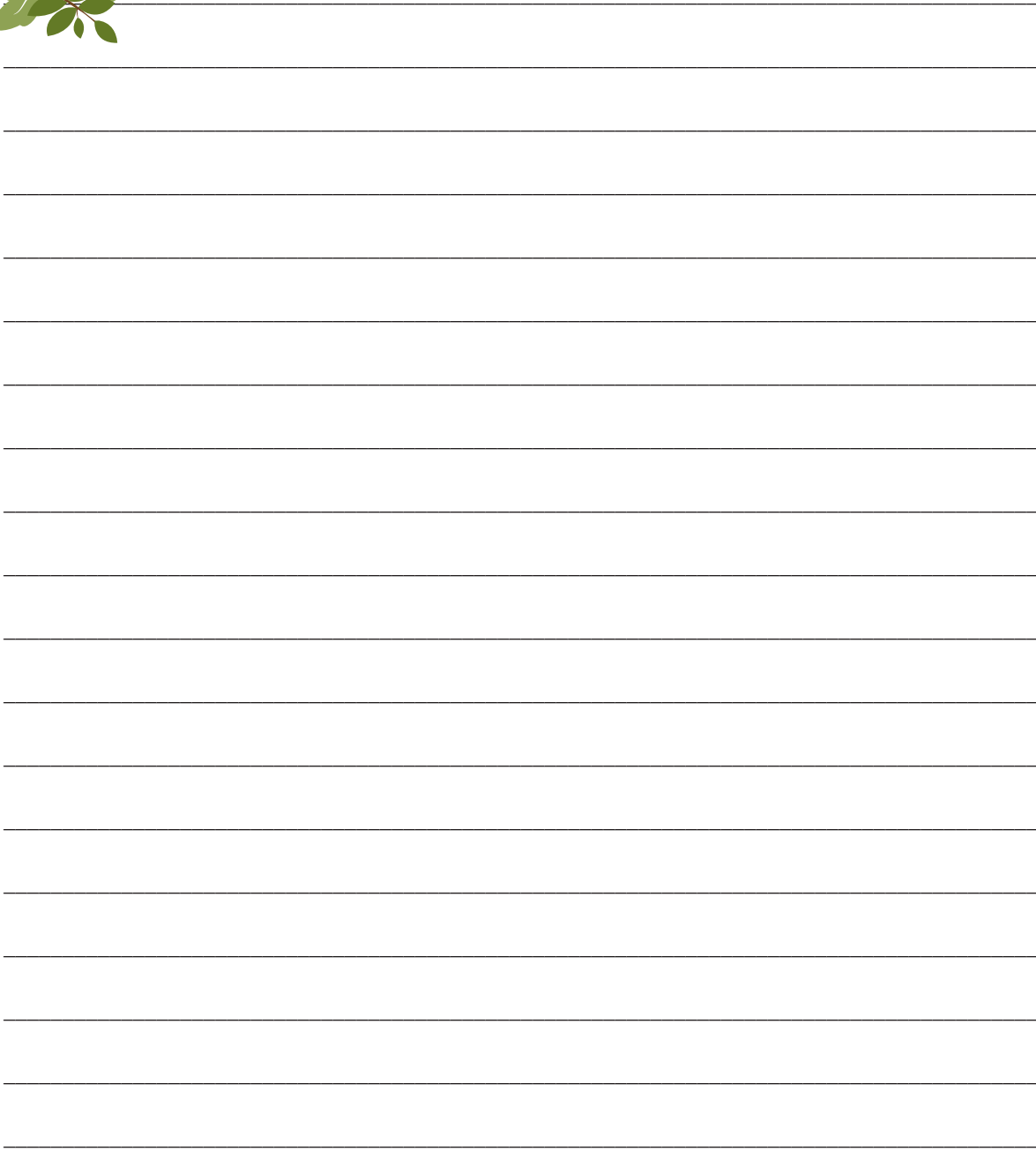
1. Joseph from the Old Testament met change at the bottom of a well. What is the farthest place your own change has thrown you?
2. When Mary told Gabriel, “I am the Lord’s servant. . . . May your word to me be fulfilled” (Luke 1:38), she said yes to a lot of uncomfortable questions and awkward situations within this change (e.g., explaining to her fiancé that she was pregnant). When mulling over your own season of transition, what are some uncomfortable facts this change brings?
3. Do you find your current season of change is beginning more on the inside or the outside?
4. Many of us would rather circumvent difficult change than have to move through it. The traveling through hurts. Read Zephaniah 3:17–19 out loud or to yourself. How can this passage comfort you as you move through your own change and transition?

Chapter 3: Don’t Just Get Over It

1. When change arrives in our lap, we might talk ourselves into leaning toward one of two extremes:
 - A. We pretend nothing is so different.
 - B. We tell ourselves to *just get over it*.Spend time sharing which side you believe you lean toward and why.
2. What is one thing you have cried about recently? Do you find yourself keeping a stiff upper lip, or are you comfortable letting the tears fall?
3. Read John 11:1–44, which tells of Lazarus’s death. Now reread verses 32–33. In the original Greek language, the word translated “troubled” in verse 33 is akin to a bull snorting. Why was Jesus angry? How does this passage minister to you as you consider your own difficult parts of change?
4. What are two or three hard questions you can ask God right now?
5. In the midst of the turmoil change brings, what is one practical way you can put faith over feelings?
6. The ESV translation of Psalm 51:6 says, “Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.” What is one way God has used change in your life to bring hidden truth to light?

Closing

In the space provided on the next page or in a space of your own, write about a wound of yours that you want to take into the presence of Christ. Journal ways you can give yourself grace for the *bouleversers* of your own change.



Some thoughts to contemplate as you close in prayer:

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Third Gathering

In chapter 4 I talk about how difficult it was for me to move away from a neighborhood that held many friendships and the familiar feeling of home. Have you experienced a change in your own life that wiped away the familiar feeling of home?

Recall a sentence or passage from chapter 3 and/or 4 that strongly resonated with you.



part two

ACCEPT: GOD IS BELIEVABLE

Chapter 4: Go Ahead and Give Up

1. Read Acts 17:26. Whether you are moving from one address to another or from one season to the next, this verse indicates that movement and change are a part of God's plan. How does this comfort you in your specific transition?
2. What is an example of a recent change in your life that had a long, murky middle? Within the long wait, were you tempted to hijack the Lord's plans with those of your own?
3. Read Jeremiah 31:3–4. When turning over events of your history, what is one way the Lord has loved you with an everlasting love? In other words, how has he proven himself believable?
4. When considering your past with your eyes of today, what is one way you now see God's loving-kindness in a way that at the time looked like the opposite?
5. Once again familiarize yourself with Genesis 12:1–4. In just a few short verses, we read how God told Abram to go and then detailed the changes Abram's leaving would bring, and that Abram went. Now read Genesis 15:2–5 and 21:1–7. While Abram (Abraham) obeyed quickly, there was a long waiting time between his obedience and the fulfillment of God's promise. When Isaac was born, twenty-five years had passed since God first promised Abraham children. What are some lessons you can take away from this that pertain to your own change?
6. Read Galatians 3:6–9. Knowing this passage applies to you and me, how does this passage encourage you during change?
7. What are you tightly holding on to today that you need to give up to God in trust?

Chapter 5: Accepting Limitations

1. As you contemplate the limitations brought on by your own life change, did those limitations bring any known or unknown expectations to the surface? If so, how does viewing those limitations differently help you accept the difficult parts of change?
2. As I explain in chapter 5, my daughter's inability to compete in high-risk sports like gymnastics is a limitation for her. However, this fact also makes her life choices simpler as it crosses certain activities off her list of possibilities. How has one of your own limitations from change made your own life choices simpler? How could it in the future?

3. Read Genesis 39:1–20. Like Joseph with Mrs. Potiphar, have you ever handled an ordeal appropriately and with integrity yet still found yourself suffering undesirable consequences?
4. How might Jesus be asking you to turn the limitations in your life into invitations to draw closer to him?
5. *The Message* paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 13:8–9 says, “We’re rooting for the truth to win out in you. We couldn’t possibly do otherwise. We don’t just put up with our *limitations*; we celebrate them, and then go on to celebrate every strength, every triumph of the truth in you” (emphasis added). Does this passage provide you with a hopeful vision for your own life because of your limitations rather than in spite of them?
6. What are some practical ways you can make time for discovering the wonder in how God is working things out for you during your own waiting tests of change?

Closing

In the space provided or in another of your choosing, write down at least one limitation brought into view from change. Journal a prayer that tells God your desire to see this limitation in a new light—not as a limitation to thriving but as an invitation to draw closer to Christ.

[illegible]

Prayer

Some thoughts to contemplate as you close in prayer:

- As you sit in the middle of your life transition, tell God of your desire to give up your plans for his.
- Ask God to help you *trust up* by believing like Abraham that the blessing comes after obedience.
- Seek the Lord's help and companionship as you become the boss of your limitations so you can use them to your advantage.
- Ask for God's help in balancing the tension of living in acceptance of the struggles limitations bring with feeling assured that God's provision will show up in a new way.
- Ask Jesus to help your heart thrive through your limitations and to know he will see you through this change.
- Thank God that while time doesn't heal all wounds, time with the Healer does.



Fourth Gathering

In chapter 6 I tell of my *leeetle* panic attack because of a rather grave injustice: No windows in a hospital waiting room. (*No, I'm not dramatic at all.*) Has a life change of yours ever brought such emotion and anxiety that you “snapped” over something small?

Share a sentence or passage from chapters 6 or 7 that deeply resonated with you.

Chapter 6: Light in a Windowless Room

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17–18 and review Corrie ten Boom's story around this verse on page 112 of the book. What is a “flea” in your life that you can thank God for right now?
2. Share a story of a time when you were first thankful for something and second, received the blessing from it.
3. Read Exodus 33:12–23. Spend some time thinking about a dark season in your own life. Can you believe that perhaps it was dark because the Lord's hand hovered above you in mercy and protection rather than because he abandoned you?
4. Sometimes change is a result of a normal life season, but sometimes—as with my friend Sherri—change is a result of others' actions. If this is true for you, how do you let go of your anger at that person?
5. How much do you identify with the mantra “Pick yourself up by your bootstraps”? As you reflect on your own change, can you believe that part of thriving through it looks like accepting and relying on the love of Christ rather than on your own efforts and strength? What are some ways you can take steps to accept his love today?

Chapter 7: Handing Over the Hand-Wringing

1. Read Hebrews 4:16. What are some areas of your life where the enemy has succeeded in convincing you that your difficulty is beyond God's desire to help?
2. Read Genesis 42:1–20, where Joseph sees his brothers for the first time since they threw him in the cistern years earlier. This passage also details the first of a series of hoops Joseph has his brothers jump through before granting them food to take home. Put yourself in place of Joseph. Would it have been easy or natural for you to dish out a little similar revenge? Do you find it a comfort that a faith giant such as Joseph was not a perfect pillar of faith?
3. Read Genesis 42:21–23. When a devastating change enters your life at least in part because of a poor choice or two of your own, how difficult is it not to condemn yourself for those poor choices? How can you today stop looking inward in condemnation and instead outward in recognition of God's grace and mercy?
4. What is your favorite way to proactively keep your sword of the Spirit in your hand rather than in your sheath?

Journal a list of things you're thankful for that were brought to light specifically because of change. Also, brainstorm ways you can more easily incorporate Scripture reading and memory into your daily routine.



Some thoughts to contemplate as you close in prayer:

- Pray for the Lord to flood your heart with the knowledge that he is greater than any change in your life.
- Confess your unbelief to God and ask him to help you with that unbelief.
- If you are not a member of a church body, ask God to guide you to a Jesus-loving place with a thriving community who can speak love, support, and encouragement into your life.
- Thank God for his hand of mercy that covers us.
- Thank God that no matter the battle we face, it is already won because of Jesus.



Fifth Gathering

The astronauts' wives mentioned in chapter 8 were able to adapt to the changes that being a member of the early American space program brought by relying heavily on one another. When pondering your own change, what is one way old or new friendships have helped you through the stressful times?

Share a sentence or passage you may have underlined that resonated with you.



part three

ADAPT: A HEART THAT THRIVES

Chapter 8: Because We All Need Friends in Low Places

1. Do you believe your ability to accept and thrive through change is directly proportional to the state of your friendships? Why or why not?
2. What is one aspect of your life change about which you would like to tell a safe person, "I don't want to walk this path alone"?
3. Refamiliarize yourself with Ruth 1:8–18. Do you identify more with Ruth or Naomi in this story? Are you more likely to protest offers of help, or will you allow yourself to be vulnerable enough to accept help? Does one response come more easily for you than the other?
4. We all need a little of both Ruth and Naomi in us. We need to be able to offer help to others as well as receive it in return. Do you feel you balance the two regularly or that seasons come demanding more of one than the other?
5. What is a time in your life when you've discovered God nudging you to change your *what is* to his *what will be*? What were the fruits of following his direction?
6. The more you open your own heart up to be served, the easier it is to follow God's calling to serve others. What is one way you can enter into this rhythm by accepting service from others and later extending that gift to someone else?
7. Read Ecclesiastes 4:12. Plain and simple, God desires his kids to have friends. But sometimes we walk in lonely seasons when friends are few and far between. Have you ever now or in the past found your friendship landscape too sparse? If this is you today, could it be because God wants your attention elsewhere right now? Or could it be time to step out and *open up, show up, and lift up*?

Chapter 9: Asking the Right Questions to Become Fit for the Right Purpose

1. What are some anticipated and/or surprising expectations that your change brought into the light?
2. Think of a straight-up, honest question you have as a result of your change. Now put those questions through the filter of a kingdom perspective. How can you change them from more outcome-centered questions to purpose-centered questions? For example, instead of "Why can't I get pregnant?" ask, "What is God trying to teach me through this season?"

3. Review the part of Esther's story found in Esther 4:1–17. Pay particular attention to verse 14. In the NKJV translation, it reads, "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther questioned the outcome of her actions while Mordecai questioned the purpose of them. Now consider your newly formed question from question 2. How might God use it to make you fit for a new purpose?
4. Think of the definition of *thrive*, which means "to grow well." How can you see evidence today that you are indeed thriving—or growing well—amid your life change? Where can improvement still be found?
5. Is it easy or difficult for you to believe, really believe, that God desires to bless you through your change? That he desires for you to thrive through it?
6. Quietly reflect on how you can practice trusting that God desires to show you all the ways he loves you. As you are comfortable, share with your group what God tells your heart during that time of reflection.

Closing

Review pages 168–69 of the book. If you believe you are missing close friends in your life, brainstorm a few ways you can *open up*, *show up*, and *lift up*. Also, make a longer list of straight-from-the-hip honest questions you have for God and put them through the filter of a kingdom perspective.

[illegible]

Prayer

Some thoughts to contemplate as you close in prayer:

- Thank Jesus for being an always faithful, never absent or disappointing Friend.
- If you don't have a safe person you feel comfortable sharing the difficult parts of your life with, pray for the Lord to open your eyes to one. (I'm praying this for you too!)
- Pray for God's wisdom and direction for turning your outcome fears into his purposeful plans.
- Pray that you may keep your hands open to all the ways God blesses.



Sixth Gathering

In your own life, what people are *home* to you?

Recall a sentence or passage from chapters 10 or the epilogue that resonated with you.

Chapter 10: Settling in the Home Where Your Heart Thrives

1. Read Colossians 1:15–17. Think of a change or two on your heart and write it in this blank: Whether _____ happens or _____ happens, Christ holds me together. As you are comfortable, go around the room and share your statements.
2. Read John 15:9. How can you fully enter into the change Jesus asks you to live so you can fully live the God-for-you story he unfolds?
3. Read John 10:10. How might you allow Christ to flourish in you so you may have life to the full during this time of change?
4. This world is literally tilted on its axis, and this tilt is what brings the changing seasons. Considering this in light of change that knocks us off-kilter, we are steadied when we lean into it. Does knowing this minister to you in any specific way?
5. Jesus only asks one thing of you: to simply be with him. Take focused time to do this and share if, as a result, you feel a stronger awareness of his presence.
6. What is one way you know God has used change to change you for the better?

Conclusion

1. Can you think of a time in your own life when not changing was the change?
2. After reading this book, do you feel you've had a heart change about change? If so, how can you use that heart change to travel to your own mission field—whether that be found across the dinner table or across the ocean?

Closing

Review the appendix of “Bible Truths That Never Change” and write one or two that speak the most clearly to you on the next page. Pray with words from those Scriptures.

Prayer

Some thoughts to contemplate as you close in prayer:

- Confess your sin of putting more faith in what is in front of you rather than in the Father who sees everything.
- Thank Jesus that every action of his springs from his deep love for you.
- Thank Jesus for his sacrifice that proves life wins over death every time. Thank Jesus that because of this, our death thoughts—our worries and fears—don't have the final say, either.
- Pray for God to show you all the ways he is always, positively for you.
- May God help you not just know but truly believe that if we are alive in Christ and he is alive in us, we are held and at home.

