



CAPTIVATING Thoughts

A New Season

Blog by Stasi Eldredge

I have a hard time moving on to the next. Not regarding spiritual, physical or emotional growth, but to what feels like loss. I'm talking about...CHANGE. I don't like change.

All change feels like loss. (*Except when the scale goes down or I get my hair done or happy changes like that.*)

Okay, what I really don't like are ENDINGS. I don't like GOOD-BYES. I cringe at the end of summer—which is my favorite season. It's my favorite because that's when I have rest and an influx of beauty and time with my family. Connection. Shared laughter around a fire. Lingering evenings that last until the stars have revealed themselves in all their glory. I like green. Warm rivers. Warm evenings. Warm breezes.

And those long days are coming to a close. The other morning it was 24 degrees. Oy. Though most of the trees in town still hold their deep emerald leaves, a shift is in the air that I cannot ignore, and yellows are starting to be sprinkled in to the boughs. Higher up the hills, the golden aspens are beginning to outnumber the green ones. It's happening. Time marches on.

I hate goodbyes to seasons, and I really hate goodbyes to people. Partings are painful, whether they occur at the end of a visit or the end of a season. People

move. People move on. People even move on to heaven. Letting them go, releasing them to God, is essential and I do trust Him, but even though trusting God is getting easier after experiencing so many decades of His faithful goodness, goodbyes remain etched with my tears.

And in the midst of change and the middle of goodbyes, God is calling me to live with an expectant heart. Expectant of goodness. Expectant that the best is yet to be. Certain that though I don't know what is coming, He does and He promises to be there with me.

His promise that He will never leave or abandon us—ever—is one that, when pondered, fuels our joy and our strength to press on. He'll never leave? Never?!?!? Never. Never ever. I can't see what is around the corner, but He can. And regardless of what comes, be it trees ablaze with color or barren in winter's chill, His beauty and Presence can fill it all if I will but turn my gaze to Him and cultivate a heart that has eyes to see.

Yes, time marches on. Time here is our fleeting gift. I don't know how many days I have been given, and neither do you. But I do know that spending them in regret, my fist clenched to hold on to the goodness I do know, prevents me from receiving the good gifts that God has in store for me.

Time spent in reflection is necessary and good. It buoys my heart to remember. We've come far, God and I. He's given golden nuggets in the midst of the bleakest of times. He's been lavish. And He doesn't change. If He's been generous and kind and good in the past, won't He remain so in the future? Yes. Yes, He will.

Time spent remembering who God is, what He's like and what He's done, breathes life into my soul whether my soul feels green or frozen. Time letting His living Word wash over me infuses me with life and hope. It is the water and food that we all crave.

So in obedience and with hope, I am saying "Yes" to the next season. I am speaking it out loud. Yes to the "New." Yes to believing that God is good and has good in store. Yes to letting my sorrow at goodbyes deepen my soul's dependence on Him. Yes to Jesus.

I want to be able to say "Goodbye" with an open hand and welcome every new season. Jesus, help me to do that. Help us all. Please. We trust You. Help us trust You, the only One who never changes, more.

Change!

Called to Change
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International Missions

The month of April saw C2C beyond borders for our first Captivating Experience internationally. A Team of three traveled to Piedras Negras, Mexico and hosted three, one-day Captivating Experience events, back to back! The ladies did amazing delivering the core content, working with translators, and teaching without the use of videos!

Naomi was our biblical example of the desolate woman, and Sara our example of the controlling woman. Can you

tell me why? Write, share, and send us your biblical examples.

We also visited two orphanages, one children's soup kitchen, and were invited to bring the Captivating Experience to the women behind bars later this year! Praise the Lord for His goodness and favor. (Psalm 23:6)

We grew closer as friends and ministers, sharpened our teaching/preaching skills, and fell in love with the people on this trip.

Pictured below are Cristen and our newest Team Member



We are so delighted to welcome Leslie, aka White Lilly.

Leslie may be new to Prison Ministry, but she brings a

great deal of experience with the "Captivating Message."

We are grateful God has brought her ... or "called her to change!"

Unanswered Panel Question

Q. What is the address to: Jesus went to Hell and took the keys from Satan?

A: Revelation 1:18

"I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

Note: This passage does not state that Jesus "took them from Satan." Yes, Christ defeated/overcame death through His sacrifice, because death had no legal right to hold Him. There was no sin in Him.

Acts 2:13-15

But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Colossians 2:13-15

And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our

*trespasses. He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross. **He disarmed** the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; He triumphed over them by Him.*

DIRECT FROM THE FIRST 5 DEVOTION

The Heavenly Heights of Our Riches in Christ

by Krista Williams

Paul knew the opposition believers in Christ would be facing and his desire is for all believers to know and understand who we are in Christ, all that is available to us in Christ and the importance of oneness in the body of Christ as we face the struggles of life. Understanding all these things will result in a strong faith that produces confidence and boldness, out of which comes victory.

As we read Ephesians 1, Paul hardly takes a breath as He recites the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ:

- God chose us long before the world existed to be holy and blameless in His sight through Christ. (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9) From eternity He planned that we should be among those who would be His own.
- God settled His love on us and determined to adopt us as His children according to His fixed purpose. (Ephesians 1:5)
- Because of God's kindness, He has freely bestowed His glorious grace on us. Eph. 1:6
- In Christ we have been redeemed. That means we have been released from the blame or debt of sin we owe because of the blood of Jesus Christ. His blood paid the ransom for our sin. Eph. 1:7a; Rom. 6:23; Rev. 5:9
- In Christ, we have forgiveness of sin because of God's extravagant grace. Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:22; Mat. 26:28
- In Christ, God has revealed to us the knowledge of His great plan and purposes. (Eph. 1:8-9) God's plan of redemption includes any and all — Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free — who put their faith in Jesus Christ.
- We have been marked and sealed with the promised Holy Spirit and

our eternal inheritance and our position in Christ is guaranteed and confirmed. Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:3-5

As children of God and by His grace, we have been given an exalted position and purpose in Christ that is secure in the heavenly realms. Eph. 2:4-6

Our blessings in Christ are the richest, rarest and the most enduring blessings. And our salvation in Christ is God's work from beginning to end. (John 6:44-45; John 15:16) We can sum up the first 14 verses of this chapter of Ephesians like this: God planned our redemption, Christ paid for it and the Holy Spirit confirms it.

Then, like a cherry on top, there is the glorious promise that not only is He our resurrected Savior but He is sovereign over all things and we are one with Him. We have a living connection with Christ and can live in the fullness of Christ because we are part of His body — the Church. Eph. 1:20-23; 1 Cor. 12:12-13

No words can adequately describe the amazing truths in this chapter. It is truly a breathtaking description of who God says we are and all that is ours in Christ. As a result, our hearts should burst forth in praise, just like Paul. And our lives should call attention to the magnificent glory of God. (Eph. 1:6; 1:12; and 1:14)

Prayer

Lord God, I am overwhelmed by the spiritual blessings You have given me in Christ. I praise You for Your sovereign plan of salvation put into place before the world began. Thank You for the riches of Your grace and the blessings of redemption and forgiveness that You have given me and all who believe in Christ. Lord, thank You for lavishing Your love upon me and for blessing me with everything I need in Christ. Help me to live each day to the praise of Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

NOTE: I chose to share this study with you because the minute I read it, I thought of YOU! No matter where we are in our walk with God, we can always use a simple reminder of who, and whose, we are. — Coach Adams

