

Jesus Christ can
Change
Your
Life

A butterfly with orange and black wings is perched on a cluster of purple flowers. The background is a dark green gradient.

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Forward

Life is full of changes, and few things remain stable. The Israelites were constantly moving through the desert. They were able to handle change only because God's presence in the tabernacle was always with them.

The portable tabernacle signified God and his people moving together. Changing locations won't change God's will. We must learn to face the source of our problems. Moving to escape problems only makes solving them more difficult.

Problems rooted in us are not solved by a change of scenery. A change in location or job may only distract us from the need for us to change our heart.

We often expect quick changes in our lives and quick victories over sin. But our journey with God is a lifelong process, and the changes and victories may take time.

It is easy to grow impatient with God and feel like giving up hope because things are moving too slowly. When we are close to a situation, it is difficult to see progress. But when we look back we can see that God never stopped working.

Throughout this study, we will see the changes that took place with Israel and how we must deal with change in our own lives.

Be faithful. The needed change may be just ahead.

Chapter 1

God patiently waits for us to change.

Genesis 6:3

And the Lord said, my spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

“His days will be a hundred and twenty years” means that God was allowing the people of Noah’s day 120 years to change their sinful ways.

God shows his great patience with us as well. He is giving us time to quit living our way and begin living his way, the way he shows us in his Word. While 120 years seems like a long time, eventually the time ran out and the floodwaters swept across the earth.

Your time also may be running out. Turn to God to forgive your sins. You can’t see the stopwatch of God’s patience, and there is no bargaining for additional time.

Joseph tried to see if his brothers had changed.

Genesis 42:7

And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spoke roughly unto them; and he said unto them, whence come ye? And they said, from the land of Canaan to buy food.

Joseph could have revealed his identity to his brothers at once. But Joseph's last memory of them was of staring in horror at their faces as slave traders carried him away. Were his brothers still evil and treacherous, or had they changed over the years? Joseph decided to put them through a few tests to find out.

God can work a change in even the hardest heart.

Genesis 44:16-34

And Judah said, what shall we say unto my lord?

What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.

And he said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh.

My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord,

We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.

And thou said unto thy servants, bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

And we said unto my lord, the lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

And thou said unto thy servants, except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food.

And we said, we cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us.

And thy servant my father said unto us, you know that my wife bare me two sons:

And the one went out from me, and I said, surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since:

And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad is not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;

It shall come to pass, when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, if I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father forever

.

Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad is not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

When Judah was younger, he showed no regard for his brother Joseph or his father, Jacob. First he convinced his brothers to sell Joseph as a slave (Genesis 37:27); then he joined his brothers in lying to his father about Joseph's fate (Genesis 37:32).

But what a change had taken place in Judah! The man who sold one favored little brother into slavery now offered to become a slave himself to save another favored little brother.

He was so concerned for his father and younger brother that he was willing to die for them.

When you are ready to give up hope on yourself or others, remember that God can work a complete change in even the most selfish personality.

Judah finally could take no more and stepped forward to plead their case.

This was risky because Joseph could have had him killed. But Judah courageously defended himself and his brothers and pled for mercy. And he offered to put himself in Benjamin's place.

There are times when we should be silent, but there are also times when we should speak up, even if there could be serious repercussions. When faced with a situation that needs a strong voice and courageous action, remember Judah, and speak up.

Judah had promised Jacob that he would guarantee young Benjamin's safety (Genesis 43:9). Now Judah had a chance to keep that promise.

Becoming a slave was a terrible fate, but Judah was determined to keep his word to his father.

He showed great courage in carrying out his promise. Accepting a responsibility means carrying it out with determination and courage, regardless of the personal sacrifice.

Joseph wanted to see if his brothers' attitudes had changed for the better, so he tested the way they treated each other. Judah, the brother who had stepped forward with the plan to sell Joseph (Genesis 37:27), now stepped forward to take Benjamin's punishment so that Benjamin could return to their father.

This courageous act convinced Joseph that his brothers had dramatically changed for the better.

Chapter 2

Trusting God when tough circumstances don't change.

Exodus 6:9-12

And Moses spoke so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying,

Go in, speak unto Pharaoh King of Egypt, which he let the children of Israel go out of his land.

And Moses spoke before the Lord, saying, Behold, and the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?

When Moses gave God's message to the people, they were too discouraged to listen. The Hebrews didn't want to hear any more about God and his promises because the last time they listened to Moses, all they got was more work and greater suffering.

Sometimes a clear message from God is followed by a period when no change in the situation is apparent. During that time, seeming setbacks may turn people away from wanting to hear more about God.

If you are a leader, don't give up. Keep bringing people God's message as Moses did. By focusing on God who must be obeyed rather than on the results to be achieved, good leaders see beyond temporary setbacks and reversals.

Think how hard it must have been for Moses to bring God's message to Pharaoh when his own people had trouble believing it. Eventually the Hebrews believed that God had sent Moses, but for a time he must have felt very alone. Moses obeyed God, however, and what a difference it made! When the chances for success appear slim, remember that anyone can obey God when the task is easy and everyone is behind it. Only those with persistent faith can obey when the task seems impossible.

Don't just pretend to change.

Exodus 9:27-34

And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and my people and I are wicked.

Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thundering and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.

And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that you may know how that the earth is the Lord's.

But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God. And the flax and the barley were smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled.

But the wheat and the rye were not smitten: for they were not grown up.

And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands unto the Lord: and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.

And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

After promising to let the Hebrews go, Pharaoh immediately broke his promise and brought even more trouble upon the land. His actions reveal that his repentance was not real.

We do damage to ourselves and to others if we pretend to change but don't mean it.

Chapter 3

Prayer can change things.

Exodus 32:9-14

And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people:

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, for mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou spare by thine own self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.

And the Lord repented of the evil that he thought to do unto his people.

God was ready to destroy the whole nation because of their sin. But Moses pleaded for mercy, and God spared them. This is one of the countless examples in the Bible of God's mercy.

Although we deserve his anger, he is willing to forgive and restore us to himself. We can receive God's forgiveness from sin by asking him.

Like Moses, we can pray that he will forgive others and use us to bring them the message of his mercy.

How could God relent? God did not change his mind in the same way that a parent decides not to discipline a child. Instead, God changed his behavior to remain consistent with his nature.

When God first wanted to destroy the people, he was acting consistently with his justice.

When Moses interceded for the people, God relented in order to act consistently with his mercy. God had often told the people that if they changed their ways, he would not condemn them. They changed, and God did as he promised.

God's presence helps us handle change.

Numbers 10:21

And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and the other did set up the tabernacle against them came.

Those who travel, move, or face new challenges know what it is to be uprooted.

Life is full of changes, and few things remain stable. The Israelites were constantly moving through the desert.

They were able to handle change only because God's presence in the tabernacle was always with them.

The portable tabernacle signified God and his people moving together. For us, stability does not mean lack of change, but moving with God in every circumstance.

Problems often solved by change of heart.

Numbers 23:27

And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou may curse me them from thence.

Balak took Balaam to several places to try to entice him to curse the Israelites. He thought a change of scenery might help change Balaam's mind.

But changing locations won't change God's will. We must learn to face the source of our problems. Moving to escape problems only makes solving them more difficult.

Problems rooted in us are not solved by a change of scenery. A change in location or job may only distract us from the need for us to change our heart.

Chapter 4

Change doesn't always come quickly.

Joshua 11:18

Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

The conquest of much of the land of Canaan seems to have happened quickly (we can read about it in one sitting), but it actually took seven years.

We often expect quick changes in our lives and quick victories over sin. But our journey with God is a lifelong process, and the changes and victories may take time.

It is easy to grow impatient with God and feel like giving up hope because things are moving too slowly. When we are close to a situation, it is difficult to see progress. But when we look back we can see that God never stopped working.

Chapter 5

God is our foundation in midst of change

1 Samuel 2:2

There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.

Hannah praised God for his answer to her prayer for a son.

The theme of her poetic prayer is her confidence in God's sovereignty and her thankfulness for everything he had done.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, modeled her own praise song, called the Magnificent, after Hannah's prayer (Luke 1:46-55).

Like Hannah and Mary, we should be confident of God's ultimate control over the events in our lives, and we should be thankful for the ways God has blessed us. By praising God for all good gifts, we acknowledge his ultimate control over all the affairs of life.

Hannah praised God for being a Rock—firm, strong, and unchanging.

In our fast-paced world, friends come and go, and circumstances change. It's difficult to find a solid foundation that will not change.

Those who devote their lives to achievements, causes, or possessions have as their security that which is finite and changeable.

The possessions that we work so hard to obtain will all pass away. But God is always present. Hope in him. He will never fail.

No doubt as Hannah said these words, she was thinking of Pennant's arrogance and chiding. Hannah did not have to get even with Pennant. She knew that God is all knowing, and that he will judge all sin and pride. Hannah wisely left judgment up to God. Resist the temptation to take justice into your own hands. God will weigh your deeds as well as those who have wronged you.

Because we live in a world where evil abounds and a nuclear holocaust always threatens, we may forget that God is in control.

Hannah saw God as

- (1) Solid as a rock (1 Samuel 2:2),
- (2) The one who knows what we do (1 Samuel 2:3),
- (3) Sovereign over all the affairs of people (1 Samuel 2:4-8), and
- (4) The supreme judge who administers perfect justice (1 Samuel 2:10).

Remembering God's sovereign control helps us put both world and personal events in perspective.

Have you gone far enough in changing your actions?

2 Kings 12:2

And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him.

Joash didn't go far enough in removing sin from the nation, but he did much that was good and right.

When we aren't sure if we've gone far enough in correcting our actions, we can ask:

- (1) Does the Bible expressly prohibit this action?
- (2) Does this action take me away from loving, worshiping, or serving God?
- (3) Does it make me its slave?
- (4) Is it bringing out the best in me, consistent with God's purpose?
- (5) Does it benefit other believers?

Repentance is changing behavior that produces sin.

2 Kings 22:19

Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when you hear what I spoke against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard you, said the Lord.

When Josiah realized how corrupt his nation had become, he tore his robes and wept before God. Then God had mercy on him. Josiah used the customs of his day to show his repentance. When we repent today, we are unlikely to tear our clothing, but weeping, fasting, making restitution or

apologies (if our sin has involved others) demonstrate our sincerity when we repent. The hardest part of repentance is changing the attitudes that originally produced the sinful behavior.

Inner change leads to faithful action.

Ezra 1:5

Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.

Cyrus was king over the entire region that had once been Assyria and Babylon.

Assyria had deported the Israelites from the northern kingdom (Israel) in 722 B.C. Babylon, the next world power, had taken Israelites captive from the southern kingdom (Judah) in 586 B.C.

Therefore, when the Medo-Persian Empire came to power, King Cyrus's proclamation of freedom went to all the original 12 tribes, but only Judah and Benjamin responded and returned to rebuild God's temple.

The ten tribes of the northern kingdom had been so fractured and dispersed by Assyria, and so much time had elapsed since their captivity, that many might have been unsure of their real heritage.

Thus they were unwilling to share in the vision of rebuilding the temple.

God moved the hearts of the leaders, family heads, priests, and Levites and gave them a great desire to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Major changes begin on the inside as God works on our attitudes, beliefs, and desires.

These inner changes lead to faithful actions. After 48 years of captivity, the arrogant Jewish nation had been humbled.

When the people's attitudes and desires changed, God ended their punishment and gave them another opportunity to go home and try again.

Paul reminds us that "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13).

Doing God's will begins with your desires. Are you willing to be humble, to be open to his opportunities, and to move at his direction?

Ask God to give you the desire to follow him more closely.

Many Jews chose to go to Jerusalem, but many more chose to remain in Babylon rather than return to their homeland.

The journey back to Jerusalem was difficult, dangerous, and expensive, lasting over four months. Travel conditions were poor; Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside were in ruins; and the people living in the area were hostile.

Persian records indicate that many Jews in captivity had accumulated great wealth. Returning to Jerusalem would have meant giving up everything they had and starting over.

Many people couldn't bring themselves to do that; they preferred wealth and security to the sacrifice that God's work would require.

Their priorities were upside down (Mark 4:18-19).

We must not let our comfort, security, or material possessions prevent us from doing what God wants.

Chapter 6

God never changes.

Psalm 59:10

The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies.

Those whose love had turned to jealousy hunted David, and this was driving them to try to murder him.

Trusted friends, and even his son, had turned against him. What changeable love! But David knew that God's love for him was *changeless*. "His love endures forever" (Psalm 100:5).

God's mercy to all who trust him is just as permanent as his mercy to David. When the love of others fails or disappoints us, we can rest in God's enduring love.

Mark 13:31

Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

In Jesus' day the world seemed concrete, dependable, and permanent. These days many people fear its destruction by nuclear war.

Jesus tells us, however, that even if the earth passes away, the truth of his words will never be changed or abolished.

God and his Word provide the only stability in our unstable world. How shortsighted people are who spend their time learning about this temporary world and accumulating its possessions, while neglecting the Bible and its eternal truths!

Jesus may ask you to change life's direction.

Matthew 2:12

And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

After finding Jesus and worshiping him, the Magi were warned by God not to return through Jerusalem as they had intended.

Finding Jesus may mean that your life must take a different direction, one that is responsive and obedient to God's Word. Are you willing to be led a different way?

A changed life is the result of true repentance.

Matthew 3:8

Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

John the Baptist called people to more than words or ritual; he told them to change their behavior. "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance"

means that God looks beyond our words and religious activities to see if our conduct backs up what we say, and he judges our words by the actions that accompany them.

Do your actions match your words?

Luke 3:7

Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

What motivates your faith—fear of the future, or a desire to be a better person in a better world?

Some people wanted to be baptized by John so they could escape eternal punishment, but they didn't turn to God for salvation.

John had harsh words for such people. He knew that God values reformation above ritual. Is your faith motivated by a desire for a new, changed life, or is it only like a vaccination or insurance policy against possible disaster?

Chapter 7

God changes people we consider unchangeable.

Matthew 9:22

But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

This woman had suffered for 12 years with bleeding (perhaps a menstrual disorder). In our times of desperation, we don't have to worry about the correct way to reach out to God. Like this woman, we can simply reach out in faith. He will respond.

God changed a situation that had been a problem for years.

Like the leper and the demon-possessed men, this diseased woman was considered unclean.

For 12 years, she too had been one of the "untouchables" and had not been able to lead a normal life. But Jesus changed that and restored her.

Sometimes we are tempted to give up on people or situations that have not changed for many years. God can change what seems unchangeable, giving new purpose and hope.

Have you changed on the inside?

Matthew 15:16-20

And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?

Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things, which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies: These are the things that defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man.

We work hard to keep our outward appearance attractive, but what is in our hearts is even more important. The way we are deep down (where others can't see) matters much to God. What are you like inside?

When people become Christians, God makes them different on the inside.

He will continue the process of change inside them if they only ask. God wants us to seek healthy thoughts and motives, not just healthy food and exercise.

Chapter 8

Christ is changeless

Hebrews 1:11-12

They shall perish; but thou remains; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

Because the readers of Hebrews had experienced the rejection of their fellow Jews, they often felt isolated.

Many were tempted to exchange the changeless Christ for their familiar old faith.

The writer of Hebrews warned them not to do this: Christ is our *only* security in a changing world. Whatever may happen in this world, Christ remains forever changeless.

If we trust him, we are absolutely secure, because we stand on the firmest foundation in the universe—Jesus Christ. A famous hymn captures this truth: “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

What does it mean that Christ is changeless (“you remain the same”)? It means that Christ’s character will never change. He persistently shows his love to us.

He is always fair, just, and merciful to us who are so undeserving. Be thankful that Christ is changeless—he will always help you when you need it and offer forgiveness when you fall.

Four people changed at Jesus' death

John 19:38-39

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight.

Four people were changed in the process of Jesus' death.

The criminal, dying on the cross beside Jesus, asked Jesus to include him in his kingdom (Luke 23:39-43).

The Roman centurion proclaimed that surely Jesus was the Son of God (Mark 15:39).

Joseph and Nicodemus, members of the Jewish council and secret followers of Jesus (John 7:50-52), came out of hiding.

These men were changed more by Jesus' death than by his life. They realized who Jesus was, and that realization brought out their belief, proclamation, and action. When confronted with Jesus and his death, we should be changed—to believe, proclaim, and act.

Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus were secret followers of Jesus. They were afraid to make this allegiance known because of their positions in the Jewish community.

Joseph was a leader and honored member of the Jewish council. Nicodemus, also a member of the council, had come to Jesus by night (John 3:1) and later tried to defend him before the other religious leaders (John 7:50-52). Yet they risked their reputations to provide for Jesus' burial.

Are you a secret believer? Do you hide your faith from your friends and fellow workers? This is an appropriate time to step out of hiding and let others know whom you follow.

Chapter 9

Don't ignore needed change in your life

Acts 13:50

But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

Instead of accepting the truth, the Jewish leaders stirred up opposition and ran Paul and Barnabas out of town. When confronted by a disturbing truth, people often turn away and refuse to listen. When God's Spirit points out needed changes in our lives, we must listen to him. Otherwise we may be pushing the truth so far away that it no longer affects us.

How the gospel transforms lives.

Acts 17:6

And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

We don't know much about Jason except that he evidently was the local host and sponsor of Paul and Silas; thus he took the heat for all the problems. Jason is just one of many "unsung heroes" who faithfully

played their part to help spread the gospel. Because of Jason's courage, Paul and Silas were able to minister more effectively.

You may not receive much attention (in fact you may receive only grief) for your service for Christ. But God wants to use you. Lives will be changed because of your courage and faithfulness.

What a reputation these early Christians had! The power of the gospel revolutionized lives, broke down all social barriers, threw open prison doors, caused people to care deeply for one another, and stirred them to worship God.

Our world needs to be turned upside down, to be transformed. The gospel is not in the business of merely improving programs and encouraging good conduct, but of dynamically transforming lives.

Take courage and ask God how you can help spread his Good News all over *your* world.

Should becoming a Christian make you change jobs?

1 Cor. 7:20

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

Often we are so concerned about what we *could* be doing for God somewhere else that we miss great opportunities right where we are.

Paul says that when someone becomes a Christian, he or she should usually continue with the work he or she has previously been doing—provided it isn't immoral or unethical.

Every job can become Christian work when you realize that the purpose of your life is to honor, serve, and speak out for Christ. Because God has placed you where you are, look carefully for opportunities to serve him there.

How to prepare for change

2 Tim. 1:13-14

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love that is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost that dwells in us.

Timothy was in a time of transition. He had been Paul's bright young helper; soon he would be on his own as leader of a church in a difficult environment.

Although his responsibilities were changing, Timothy was not without help. He had everything he needed to face the future, if he would hold on tightly to the Lord's resources.

When you are facing difficult transitions, it is good to follow Paul's advice to Timothy and look back at your experience.

Who is the foundation of your faith? How can you build on that foundation?

What gifts has the Holy Spirit given you? Use the gifts you have already been given.

Christ can make a great change in a relationship

Philemon 1:25

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with your spirit. Amen.

Paul urged Philemon to be reconciled to his slave, receiving him as a brother and fellow member of God's family. *Reconciliation* means reestablishing relationship. Christ has reconciled us to God and to others. Many barriers come between people—race, social status, sex, and personality differences—but Christ can break down these barriers.

Jesus Christ changed Onesimus's relationship to Philemon from slave to brother. Christ can transform our most hopeless relationships into deep and loving friendships.

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