

Changing of the Seasons

(written Fall 2006)

Dear Friends,

The fall colors always remind me that our lives are constantly in a state of change. I went on a beautiful drive yesterday with my dear friend Peggy. I realized that what we were seeing yesterday might look very different just one week from now. Some more leaves would have changed color, and a lot more leaves would have fallen off the trees. Those fallen leaves, especially the brightly colored ones, are like little treasures to me. As I walk through the college campus, I've been collecting a few every day. They're decorating my house, plus I've been using them in making some gifts for my friends and family.

I recently learned, thanks to something my mom told me, that leaves are pushed off by something inside the branches. That reminded me of how we sometimes need to be gently pushed by our Branch, Jesus Christ. Otherwise, we might become complacent. Taking a leap can be scary at times, but if we fall among other leaves who understand what we're going through, we'll have a soft landing. That's what our Brothers and Sisters in Christ are there for--to soften the blows in life. Thank you for sometimes being the one to give me a gentle push, too, when I need it. As a cautious person, if I were never pushed, I might stay in the same place forever and might never grow in the process.

What I've discovered from some lessons I've learned this week is that the one thing you can always count on is for your plans to change. As a planner, I'm always trying to schedule in my week as fully as possible so no time is wasted. Everything went out the window this week as I had problems with my plumbing, an appointment was canceled, and some plans with a friend were called off. I found that I was actually able to go with the flow through all this. I've wanted to learn to be more spontaneous and to accept the little surprises in life. Wow-- maybe I'm changing!

One thing we can definitely change in our lives is our attitude. The following verses read from the platform at church today really jumped out at me: "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; **to be made new in the attitude of your minds**; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:22-23-NIV). We can change our way of thinking by becoming more aware of what is going on in our heads and making a conscious effort to change it. I know it's tough--I struggle within my own head daily, always questioning everything I've done or said. I am trying to learn to be more present and in the moment. When I have a negative thought, I'm trying to consciously stop it and change it into something positive.

Change is often a good thing. I have a poster above my computer that reads, "Change is ... to give up what we are ... to become what we could be." Remember how fun it was to build a pile of leaves, to run, and to jump into it? (My sister Tina and I had a lot of fun doing this when we were kids.) When we are hesitant to make a positive change in our life, even though it's scary, we can join hands and take the plunge together, praying for a soft landing.

Now, as I'm about to go tackle the many leaves in my yard, I'll keep repeating to myself, "They're beautiful treasures from God who have taken the plunge. Be gentle with them."

May Jesus gently push me off when I need to be pushed, and may I find a soft spot to land among my loved ones. I'll be there to catch you when you fall.

Grace and peace in Jesus,
Jen