

Working with Change and Transitions in a Positive Way

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Change is an inevitable part of life. There are varying levels of change throughout an individual's life, ranging from the minor, regular changes in the seasons and the time changes, to major transitions such as losing one's job or entering retirement. Some people fear change, while others embrace it. It all boils down to one's attitude. We can see change as a negative disruption to our life, or we can look at it as an opportunity for growth. If a person can learn to manage change in a positive way, no matter how large or small the change, he or she will be better off in the long run.

Let's take a look at those little changes in life first of all. Say you've made some plans for the evening with friends, which get thrown out the window. You could pout or even throw a little tantrum. On the other hand, you could see this now free evening as an opportunity to spend some quality time with your spouse or to get some things done around the house. I've written in the past about "letting go and going with the flow," and this would be a good time to do so. Having a positive attitude can make all the difference in the world to yourself and those in your life.

The bigger changes and transitions in life are a bit more of a challenge. Some examples of transitions are losing a job, getting divorced, going through "the change" or retiring. These changes can rock one's world and be very stressful. They can also be life altering in a very positive way. When one door closes, sometimes another much better door opens. We often don't ask for these transitions, especially ones such as losing a spouse or a job. We may ask God "Why has this happened to me?" It may not make sense now, and we may never know the answer, but I believe there is a grand scheme at work.

I'll give one major transition in my life as an example of how something seemingly tragic can turn into something wonderful. I went through a divorce 12 years ago. Experiencing the demise of my former marriage was the worst thing that had happened to me in my life. My self-esteem was at rock bottom during that time. Throughout my former marriage, I was continually molding myself into what I thought my ex-husband wanted me to be. Once my marriage was over, I had no idea who the real me was. It took me about three years to figure it out. After I had done so, I learned to be very comfortable with myself and much more self-accepting. As I look back, I realize that God had someone much more suited for me than my ex-husband. My husband Eric loves me for the person I am, faults and all. He doesn't try to change me, and I'm holding onto my individuality and my faith to get me through any future transitions that may come.

What I would recommend to those of you who are going through a major change of some kind in your life are to do the following: 1) Trust that God will provide; 2) Be the "real" you; 3) Take care of yourself; and 4) Allow others in your life to help you. Be yourself, but don't be an island to yourself. Allow the Lord and those who love you to surround you with support. You will get through this, and at the end of the rain may be a spectacular rainbow, with sunny skies ahead.