

Family Seasons **Preparing for Change**

Lesson #3 for April 20, 2019

Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; 13:4-8; 15:24-26; Genesis 2:24; 1 Samuel 1:27; Psalm 71; 85:13.

1. One would have to be blind not to recognize that our lives are full of change. Change is everywhere. Television news is all about change. Many of these changes are unexpected; but, some come with warning signs. In this lesson we will focus on four major changes that affect most of us in one way or another: Marriage, children, old age, and death. We need to recognize these changes that affect us; they affect others around us as well, just as changes affecting them affect us.
2. The Bible is full of the good and righteous as well as the bad or sinful experiences of its heroes. It does not pretend like they had no problems. This makes it absolutely unique in the records of ancient history.
3. But, there should be no question in our minds about our true status.

Romans 3:23: Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Romans 3:23). New York: American Bible Society.

4. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. What should we say about the fact that the experiences of the children of Israel from the time they left Mount Sinai until they finally entered Canaan 40 years later were filled with serious departures from God's will? Three thousand died while still at the foot of Mount Sinai; 23,000 died later on the plains of Moab. But, through it all, despite having to let the children of Israel suffer the consequences of their own foolishness, God was faithful.
5. So, how do we deal with change? Are we faithful and firm to the principles that God has laid down?

The greatest want of the world is the want of men [and women]-men [and women] who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 57.3; *SD** 214.4. [Content in brackets is added.]

6. Surely, these words are as true today as they were long ago.
7. Read Acts 5:1-10; Genesis 16:1-2,5-6; and Matthew 20:20-22. In these passages we see that Ananias and Sapphira tried to lie to Peter and to God. Sarai/Sarah was not willing to wait patiently on God and recommended that Abram/Abraham take Hagar to be a second wife. The consequences for them and for the rest of the history of this world have been enormous. James and John tried to manipulate their way into the best positions in the upcoming kingdom which they believed would take place almost immediately. But, it never happened. They wanted to race ahead of God. Why is it so hard to be patient and wait for God?
8. One of the biggest changes that affects the lives of many living on earth is the choice to marry. Would that all marriages today were as ideal as was the marriage of Adam and Eve! Read Genesis 2:24. Compare Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7; and Ephesians 5:31. Why is it important for a man to leave his father and mother and to cling to his wife? Did Adam need to do that? God intends for marriages to be independent units. By that, we mean that while they should be willing to listen to the wise advice of their parents and grandparents, they need to recognize that they are taking personal responsibility for what happens to them and their children.
9. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 and Galatians 5:22-23. In these passages the apostle Paul spelled

out some of the most important characteristics of a true Christian. While they do not apply specifically and solely to getting married, think how incredibly different our world would be if every couple before getting married developed these Christian traits!

10. How many of us come even close to those ideals before we get married? How many individuals in preparation for marriage think more about how they can make their partner happy than they do about how their partner can make them happy?
11. Often, before getting married, young men and young women make lists of the characteristics they hope to find in a future partner. How many of them make a list for themselves to determine if they are fit and ready for marriage?
12. Read Proverbs 24:30-34; 22:24; 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; and Proverbs 11:14; 3:5-6. What would happen if each young man before getting married insisted that his wife fulfill the criteria found in Proverbs 31:10-31? There certainly would be a lot fewer marriages, and the population of our world would probably decline dramatically! But, we should at least determine whether or not that favored person is: 1) Ambitious and willing to work, 2) One that does not have a hot and violent temper, 3) A faithful Christian committed to the ideals that God has set down for us, and 4) Willing to accept and follow wise counsel.
13. Many of us know some examples of fairly good marriages. What makes them good? Having a Christian character, kindness, submission, etc. When we choose to get married, how often are we willing to enter that relationship with a truly unselfish attitude?
14. Often, fairly soon after getting married, the question arises about children. In ancient times, children were a great blessing because they helped to do the work needed on the farm. In our day when most of us do not live on farms, that issue is not so important.
15. Getting married and learning how to relate to a spouse and then, in turn, raising a child is a huge challenge. It is one of the most important ways God uses to teach us about the difficulties that God has experienced in dealing with us, His children.
16. So, how do we prepare for that potential child? Read 1 Samuel 1:27; Judges 13:7; Luke 1:6,13-17,39-55,76-79. Clearly, the parents of Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist, and Jesus were unusual. God went to extraordinary lengths to make sure that those mothers provided the very best possible intrauterine environment for their children and, in turn, provided the best possible upbringing for their sons. So, why do you think God chose those particular sets of parents to do the work He needed to have done in each case? It has been proven repeatedly that the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of the mother during her pregnancy has many, very important effects on a child. So, why do you think God chose an unmarried, teenaged woman, living in the despised city of Nazareth to be the mother of His Son? (John 1:46) Was Nazareth the best place for Jesus to grow up? How could that have been the best possible environment for Jesus to grow up in? And yet, each of those four sons ended up being prophets—one the forerunner of the promised Messiah, and one the Messiah Himself!

The well-being of the child will be affected by the habits of the mother. Her appetites and passions are to be controlled by principle. There is something for her to shun, something for her to work against, if she fulfills God's purpose for her in giving her a child. If before the birth of her child she is self-indulgent, if she is selfish, impatient, and exacting, these traits will be reflected in the disposition of the child. Thus many children have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil.—Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing** 372.4; *Counsels on Diet and Foods** 217.2.

17. Newer research shows that even before a woman gets pregnant, she needs to make sure that her nutrition is as good as possible. For example, a vitamin known as *folic acid* is essential in the development of the sperm from the father and the egg and the developing zygote and fetus in the mother. That vitamin helps to prevent problems with the development of the spinal cord.

18. So, what can we do to prepare for that potential child? Certainly, we should try to maximize the healthful condition of physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects of our lives. That can be done best through prayer, Bible study, and constant dependence on God's guidance.
19. How should we prepare for old age? Read Psalms 90:10.

Psalms 90:10: Seventy years is all we have—

eighty years, if we are strong;

yet all they bring us is trouble and sorrow;

life is soon over, and we are gone.—*Good News Bible*.*

20. Notice that these words in the book of Psalms were actually written by Moses who only began his major work in life at the age of 80! Apparently, Moses needed 80 years of training in preparation for those years that came after his 80th! At 120 years of age, it was said of him:

Deuteronomy 34:7: Moses was 120 years old when he died; he was as strong as ever, and his eyesight was still good.—*Good News Bible*.*

21. Read Psalm 71. We do not know how old David was when he wrote this psalm. But, he talked about three important lessons.

1. Develop a deep, personal knowledge of God. From his youth (*Ps. 71:17*), God was his strong refuge (*Ps. 71:1, 7*) and his Savior (*Ps. 71:2*). God is a rock and fortress (*Ps. 71:3*), his hope and confidence (*Ps. 71:5*). He speaks of God's mighty deeds (*Ps. 71:16, 17*), His strength and power (*Ps. 71:18*), and all the great things He has done (*Ps. 71:19*). Ultimately he shouts, "O God, who is like You?" (*Ps. 71:19, NKJV*). Those daily conversations with God, as we study His Word and as we pause to reflect on all He does for us, will deepen our experience with Him.

2. Develop good habits. Good nutrition, exercise, water, sunshine, rest, et cetera will help us enjoy life longer and better. Take special note as to how the psalmist refers to the habits of trust (*Ps. 71:3*), praise (*Ps. 71:6*), and hope (*Ps. 71:14*).

3. Develop a passion for God's mission. The person in Psalm 71 was not looking forward to being idle in his old age. Even in his retirement he wanted to continue praising God (*Ps. 71:8*) and telling others about Him (*Ps. 71:15-18*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, April 17. [Bold type is added; italic type is in the source.]

22. Are there any advantages to getting older? Have you learned some things that you could share with those who are younger? Years of experience often yield new perspectives. And then there are the benefits of having grandchildren and the many friends that have developed over the years. And finally, there is retirement which can be the golden years.
23. Can we—or should we—prepare for death? Read 1 Corinthians 15:24-26. No matter what happens between now and the second coming of Christ, resurrection or translation of those who are faithful to Him are the guaranteed results of living Christlike lives. How does that make you feel? Are we fortunate that we have a clear understanding of what happens beyond the grave? Do you have any questions about what the Bible tells us about death and "the beyond"?
24. Only God knows what is waiting for us beyond death. But, it is something that every person will experience—sooner or later—if Jesus does not come first. Our understanding about the nature of man and the state of the dead makes things so much easier as we face death. Think of how things changed for the disciples after crucifixion weekend. That weekend began with

the terrible events of the arrest, trial, beatings, and crucifixion of Jesus. How many of the disciples actually witnessed any of those events? They were certain that they would be next. But, when Sunday came and they realized that Jesus was alive and had conquered death once and for all, they became bold even in the face of the Jewish leaders who had arrested them. (See Acts 4:13.) They were no longer afraid to die. We should have the same hope that sustained them even though it is likely that all of them except John died martyrs' deaths.

25. What would you do if you knew that you had only a few months to live? David had some very interesting words to say about that point in his life. Review what you know about the life of David. As a result of that life, four of David's most prominent sons ultimately died untimely deaths in one way or another. See 2 Samuel 12:1-15.

1 Kings 2:1-4: When David was about to die, he called his son Solomon and gave him his last instructions: ²"My time to die has come. Be confident and determined, ³and do what the LORD your God orders you to do. Obey all his laws and commands, as written in the Law of Moses, so that wherever you go you may prosper in everything you do. ⁴**If you obey him, the LORD will keep the promise he made when he told me that my descendants would rule Israel as long as they were careful to obey his commands faithfully with all their heart and soul.**"—*Good News Bible*.* [Bold type is added.]

26. Think of all we know about David's life and all that we do not know. And yet, there he was near his death, speaking to Solomon the second son of his relationship with Uriah's wife. David had learned some very hard lessons from the results of that mistake. But, he did give some very good advice to his son Solomon.

27. However, how should we feel about the rest of David's advice?

1 Kings 2:5-9: ⁵ "There is something else. You remember what Joab did to me by killing the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. You remember how he murdered them in time of peace in revenge for deaths they had caused in time of war. He killed innocent men and now I bear the responsibility for what he did, and I suffer the consequences. ⁶You know what to do; you must not let him die a natural death.

⁷"But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai from Gilead and take care of them, because they were kind to me when I was fleeing from your brother Absalom.

⁸ "There is also Shimei son of Gera, from the town of Bahurim in Benjamin. He cursed me bitterly the day I went to Mahanaim, but when he met me at the River Jordan, I gave him my solemn promise in the name of the LORD that I would not have him killed. ⁹But you must not let him go unpunished. You know what to do, and you must see to it that he is put to death."—*Good News Bible*.*

28. What about the banishment of Abiathar? And the death of Adonijah? (See 1 Kings 2.) How many of David's final instructions were what God wanted? Remember that Cain killed Abel!
29. Moses had been told by God that he would not live to cross over the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land. It was because of his mistake of misrepresenting God at Kadesh Barnea. But, during those final months of his life as they camped on the plains of Moab, he gave those three famous final sermons recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses ended up in the heavenly Canaan!
30. Read Deuteronomy 4:3-14. In these verses we see the terrible consequences that resulted in the deaths of 23,000 of the children of Israel. Moses then contrasted that with what happened at the foot of Mount Sinai. What a marvelous relationship the children of Israel had the opportunity of having with their all-seeing, all-knowing, all-powerful God. And God clearly instructed them to share that knowledge with generations to come and people of other nations.

31. Think of how blessed we as Seventh-day Adventists are at this point in human history. No other generation has been blessed with so much truth available to them. What are we doing with all that information? How many of us have even read a major part of it?

The crime that brought the judgments of God upon Israel was that of licentiousness. The forwardness of women to entrap souls did not end at Baal-peor.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* May 17, 1887, par. 7; *The Adventist Home** 326.3; CC* 115.2.

32. Who was mainly at fault at Baal-Peor? The women of Moab and Midian? Or, the men of Israel? Or, both? Yes!
33. There are clearly two ways to look into the future. One can be prepared; or, one can be unprepared. Which sounds better?
34. We have already noted that living healthy, God-fearing lives is the best way to prepare for each of these life changes.

The Bible is rare among ancient literature in that it does not gloss over the failures of its heroes nor exaggerate their successes. The lesson authors highlight the fact that Scripture portrays life in an uncensored fashion. The mistakes of others are in the Bible for all to see, and, if taken seriously, serve as warning beacons. In addition, the testimonies of people's lives all around us confirm the truthfulness and timeliness of Bible principles.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 39.

35. Most of us have had to face the fact that someone close to us or even related to us has died. It makes us want to think about what we can do about that eventuality in our own lives.
36. A recent report lists 17 risk factors related to death and disability. See: U.S. Burden of Disease Collaborators, "The State of U.S. Health, 1990-2010 Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 310, no. 6 [2013]: 600, doi:10.1001/jama.2013.13805.

It turns out that there is one particular risk factor topping the charts for *both* death and disability. Let that sink in for a moment. The same risk factor related to the most deaths in the U.S. and the most years lost because of disability (and death) are the same. Any guesses? One might think the number one risk factor was alcohol, tobacco smoking, being overweight, or being inactive. Good guesses but wrong ones. The number one risk factor is what we put in our mouths every day: it is the food we eat. Don't be fooled by food labeled "organic," "vegan," "gluten-free," "vegetarian," "natural," etc. There is now a consensus among a number of health professionals that a diet consisting of primarily whole, unrefined plant foods, such as grains, beans, fruits, and vegetables, substantially reduces one's risk for numerous common diseases. Such luminaries in preventive health as Caldwell B. Esselstyn Jr., T. Colin Campbell, Dean Ornish, and John A. McDougall are in agreement with the above assessment on the role of diet on health. Neal Barnard and Michael Greger are recent advocates, as well. Each of these men holds medical degrees or PhDs in nutrition. For further information, their presence is ubiquitous on the Internet. Ellen White, ahead of her time as usual, stated more than a hundred years ago that [the Bible Study Guide then quotes the first sentence of the following Ellen G. White statement].—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 40-41. [Italic type is in source; content in brackets is added.]

Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator. These foods, prepared in as simple and natural a manner as possible, are the most healthful and nourishing. They impart a strength, a power of

endurance, and a vigor of intellect, that are not afforded by a more complex and stimulating diet.—Ellen G. White, *Pacific Health Journal*,* July 1, 1905, par. 5; *The Ministry of Healing** 296.1; *CDF** 81.2; 310.2.

Few of us like to be told what to eat! Some even say, “I’d rather eat what I want and die happy.” But, people who eat what they want often do not die happy. Frequently they end up with long, drawn out debilitating diseases such as diabetes, stroke, heart disease, or even kidney failure. Dr. Kim Williams, president of the American College of Cardiology chooses to live a healthy life, avoiding alcohol, cigarettes, and all animal products. He said: “I don’t mind dying; I just don’t want it to be my fault.”—Jason Kelly, “Heal Thyself,” *The University of Chicago Magazine*.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 41].

37. But, none of us can predict exactly how we will die. It could be suddenly and tragically as in an automobile accident. Or, it could be a long drawn out fight with cancer or kidney failure. The famous journalist Malcolm Muggeridge who ended up living most of his life in not a very healthy way later came to Christ. What follows are his concluding words.

“I may, I suppose, regard myself as a relatively successful man. People occasionally stare at me in the streets; that’s fame. I can fairly easily earn enough money to qualify for admission to the higher slopes of the Internal Revenue Service. That’s success. Furnished with money and a little fame, even the elderly, if they care to, may partake of friendly diversions. That’s pleasure. It might happen once in a while that something I said or wrote was sufficiently heeded for me to persuade myself that it represented a serious impact on our time. That’s fulfillment. Yet, I say to you, and I beg you to believe me, multiply these tiny triumphs by millions, add them all up together, and they are nothing, less than nothing. Indeed, a positive impediment measured against one drop of that living water Christ offers to the spiritually thirsty, irrespective of who or what they are.”—In Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 1994), p. 116.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 42].

38. We probably all know of elderly people in their 70s or 80s who are still climbing mountains. We probably also know of others in that age group and much younger who are bedridden or can hardly climb a flight of stairs. What makes the difference?
39. What is not recognized by many is that one can add up to 10 years of life by eating a healthy diet and avoiding the bad habits so common in our world today. This has been proven by many years of careful research done by those performing the Adventist Health Studies. See <https://publichealth.llu.edu/adventist-health-studies/findings/findings-ahs-2> for a list of hundreds of peer-reviewed, scientific papers which have documented these findings. Many of the studies have been funded by the United States Government.
40. As mentioned above, many young people say they do not really care to add years to the end of their lives. But, what they do not realize is that most of the years that are added by following those health principles are in mid-life, the best years of one’s life. We are able to live more years at the peak of our productive and happy lives. People who do not follow these guidelines begin to deteriorate in health years earlier than those who follow the guidelines.
41. Are we prepared to deal with the changes that will inevitably affect us in life? Are our preparations consistent with God’s plan for our lives?

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