

## **Matthew 6:25-34**

‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ‘So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

### **KEEPING OUR FAITH IN A CHANGING WORLD**

**May 4, 2008**

**Changes in Our Lives**

**Tess Stackhouse**

Loving father, we are reminded that you are always with us, through every stage of life. We are never alone, for you dwell in our hearts and in our minds. In times of worry or pain, in times of confusion, all we must do is look inside and we will find you. And yet, when we feel our hearts swell during times of joy, that too is your spirit. Your love for us is eternal, and we feel this love in your everlasting presence. We pray for those amongst us, young and old, and those in between, who are feeling alone and missing that presence. We open our hearts to them, and we pray that through us the Holy Spirit can reach out and remind them that we are one in the name of the Lord. We thank you, Father, for this morning as we attempt to gain new insights into our faith. We are grateful for this opportunity, and as we come together today, across generations and across traditions, fill our hearts with this presence and let your love join us as followers of Christ so that we can learn and grow with one another. Let us continue to pray as you taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

**Changes in Our Faith**

**Brooke Jostad**

Good morning. My name is Brooke and I’m a junior at Poudre High School.

Think of a current issue that you genuinely care about. It might have something to do with the environment, or non-violence, or fighting poverty, or promoting international education. All of us have that one spark that we've always been genuinely interested in. But it's easy to sit here and think about it in the peacefulness and the comfort of a church pew, with our family and friends surrounding us, and it's really easy to think about what we can do to change it when we're in our comfort zone, and we're just looking at it and not actually there. But what happens when that solid ground or that gravity of support that holds us down is whipped out from under us. Our immediate instinct is to run.

Ever since I was younger, I've always had a desire to create social change in the world, but that desire has always been empty until it was put to the test. Last year when I was a sophomore, I was working on a fund-raiser to purchase car seats for the Department of Social Services, and people kept telling me that the easiest route would be to look at my school community and get funds that way. And although that was helpful, I always felt like I was treading water, trying to do that, because it wasn't as satisfying and it wasn't teaching me anything. And so I realized that the only reason I wasn't getting where I wanted to go was because I was afraid to step into the unknown about non-profits and 501c3s and all this stuff I'd never heard about. But when I stopped treading water and I started to jump into that whole idea, I felt like I was actually creating change, and I actually was getting somewhere.

Last summer I worked at the Core Center to tutor English, teach English as a second language, and I remember a couple of the people were skeptical at first, because a lot of the methods that they use for teaching English were visual, and I remember people wondering how I was going to do it since the pictures wouldn't help me teach them much. But when we realized that we all had the same goal, we were just working to teach and it didn't really matter what obstacles we had to face. All that mattered was the common goal of teaching English. The challenge was for us to open our minds and lead the way from that obstacle. It was only when I let myself be led by the unknown, with only knowledge of my final destination, that I finally started making headway.

When I was thinking about what I wanted to say today, and different examples, somehow I thought of Theodore Roosevelt, and how he made his speech when he was trying to get re-elected, right after he had gotten shot, and he made that comment about how it takes more than a bullet to stop a bull moose, I was thinking about that and how the bullet or the obstacle that tries to stop us isn't enough to stop us if we genuinely care about something. The challenges and the negative change only force us to realize that, yeah, we have faith, but how far are we going to let it lead us? If we don't work through the obstacles, how do we expect to be strong? It's then that we realize it's not about what happens, it's about what we do with it. It brings us back to the meaning of Easter. Jesus was crucified, but he was resurrected. Because of this, we're untouchable. It's hard to look through the paper baring our minds to the war and poverty that's threatening to dominate our world, but, as our opening hymn says, it's hard to dance with the world on our back. But because of faith, because of that constant, negative change will only fuel us to be the change we want to see in the world, and turn it to what we want it to be, and let faith be our guide. So think about that issue again, that passion. What's getting in the

way? Maybe the lack of the right screwdriver is holding you back from finishing that bench you've always wanted to build. Maybe the lack of support for a campaign has got you thinking you're the only one in the world with that same passion. Maybe a certain disability has got people thinking you're incapable of making change. But all these factors force us to look at our alternatives, to face the unknown. And when we do this, when we look for the perfect screwdriver or see the people who support us in a crowd or make the modifications for our endeavors so that the disability works to our advantage, it's easy to imagine and we can face those challenges and bring change in the world. We'll do it. We'll get there. There's no doubt about that. So all we need to do right now is close our eyes and leap.

### **Changes in Our Church** **JanaLee Janzen**

Good morning. My name is Jana Lee Janzen and I'm a senior at Rocky Mountain High School. This is strange to me, that I was chosen by YLT to speak about changes in the church because first of all, and especially when I was younger, I had a hard time deciding if this church would ever belong to me, or if I would always feel like I was an invited guest about to outstay their welcome. I was invited here, in the fourth grade, to Sunday school, by my good friend Sarah. She was always happy to bring me, because in those days, she got 20 Sunday school points a week for bringing a guest. Which could earn you some pretty cool prizes in the Sunday School store. I think they stopped giving her those 20 points a week when I started earning my own Sunday School points. But I was bonded and became another member of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade class and became another member of the Sunday School, eventually starting Youth Group, where, in my seven years of participation, we've been under the leadership of three very different and very exceptional adults. As Michael Fry and T. Lewis say in their comic strip, "The more things change, the more they remain insane." And trust me, they have.

With Don, the youth group was only slightly above the level of organized chaos, and I mean that in the most loving way possible. The memories of the two years I spent with him are a little cloudy now, but I do remember laughing a lot, and singing a lot, and going on many trips, and being fueled by Dr. Pepper. Like it is now, I really think Don let the youth leadership team control our group and determine every week's activities. All topics were very relatable for all of us, and everything was very in touch with what we were going through in our daily lives. Most of the memories I have from those years are more about being young, not necessarily about Don being our leader, like how I was always fascinated by what was going on here and to find a place like this where we all laughed constantly, had tons of fun, and were at church. It was cool, and I think Don created this atmosphere where it was the cool thing to do, to come to Youth Group.

Jenny came in the summer after my 7<sup>th</sup> grade year to fill the position of Youth Director while Don was still here being our Youth Pastor. She was younger than Don, and a girl, so that was new and fun. Jenny often got mistaken for a youth while she was our leader, something she always took in stride and never let bother her too much. The group did grow smaller in those years, and we all became a very close group of friends, Jenny

included. Because Jenny hadn't received a master in divinity, things were different than how they were before. While God and faith were always discussed, we took a much less Biblical and traditional approach to it, and to Youth Group. We read a lot of Chicken Soup stories in those years, and it was a little less structured, and a lot of open-ended discussion. I remember coming to Youth Group then, and immediately kicking off my shoes and getting comfy on some couch. Youth Group was such a laid-back environment then, and maybe because with Jenny it was less like having an adult there, and someone more just like us.

PJ came back to us the summer after my freshman year. Of course he was Joel then, testing the waters with his very eccentric and especially tight group of kids. The drink of choice these days is Mountain Dew, all those Dr. Pepper cans a distant memory. Since Joel was here before, he brought some things back with him, like songs and games we used to play, reminding me a lot of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade. But before since Don had been running the program for so long and since Jenny was kind of an in-between position, Youth Group ran along on tradition of what had always been. Joel has really reinvented us, he's thought of ideas like renovating the youth basement, and the Advent Dinner Theater, and let us just run with them. He gives us so much control with what's going on, and really wants to show the Youth Group program off to the rest of the congregation. Joel challenges us to think about and question our faith every week. He gives us Scripture, movies, real-life experiences, and countless other examples of where to find God, and lets us determine what faith means to each of us.

Youth Group is about gathering as friends, and helping each other figure out our world and ourselves. Joel has made it this way. But even with all these changes in leadership, with their different styles of doing things and different topics, one thing has never changed. I kept coming, and now I have more faith than I could ever have imagined myself having and all thanks to this place, this place that I was invited to and that, surprisingly, I've watched growing physically, with things such as new Sunday School rooms, a remodeled sanctuary and south entrance and an elevator. I've watched not only the leadership in the youth program change, but also throughout our whole church, making it a very different place from what I remember nine years ago. Our church's programs are different. We're trying to bring back the Wesleyan Foundation here, and a renewed and complete dedication to fighting things such as poverty and hunger, locally and globally.

And I know I've changed and grown. My faith has gone through so many sieges and evolved so much over the years. I like to think I'm somewhat wiser and have a better understanding of the world around me now, and I'm certainly a little taller. Like we say every Sunday, welcome to this very active and alive church. We are a living entity constantly looking to change and to better ourselves, individually and as a congregation. We all have so much faith in what we are doing here, faith in ourselves and in God keeps us coming back every week. Change is scary, we all know that, but we as a church have embraced it fully, and this summer, when I move away for three-fourths of the year, and leave high school, Youth Group, and all of what I've known so far in life, I want to keep that spirit and embrace change like I've seen here. I have to trust that God provides a

place for me to continue growing, but I have faith in that. I have faith in the change, and my church has taught me that.

### **Changes in Our Paths** **Jordan Raab**

Good morning. My name's Jordan, and right now I'm thirteen school days away from graduating from Fort Collins High School as a senior. I can't wait. So naturally I've been making some decisions, along with all my peers, that will affect the rest of my life. One major decision has already changed my lifepath. Just recently I found out that I did not get admission into the College of Architecture at Kansas State University. Ever since I was a little kid, it's been my lifelong dream to become an architect, from the days of Legos to Sims on the computer where you build a house. It's just always been something that I've loved doing, and hearing that I didn't get in was a devastating blow to me. But after a lot of thought and consideration, I decided to go to Colorado State University here in Fort Collins. There are many things I was frustrated with during my time deciding what I was going to do. What major should I pursue? Who will I room with? Am I still going to continue with architecture after CSU?

One day I was thinking about the bigger scheme of things, and I realized that God had something to do with this. Even if it wasn't my first choice in schools, or the major that I wanted to do, God's got something in store for me here at CSU that I've yet to learn about. Whether it be someone having a significant influence on my life or me changing someone else's, I think it will be important for the rest of my life. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans for you" declared the Lord. "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future." I'm going to read that again. "For I know the plans for you" declared the Lord. "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future." When I read that, it gives me a sense of security, knowing that God knows what he's doing with my life. I know that wherever I go, he'll be there beside me every step of the way, guiding me in the direction that I know will suit me best.

I've observed another family that has learned to cope with change, and watching them has helped me understand God's direction in our lives. Joel and Abby Kershaw have shown amazing abilities to deal with change, in my eyes. When their son Jack was born with a physical disability, they showed incredible strength in working through the heartache of the challenges Jack and his family had to face ahead of them. Jack is now the life of the party and lightens the mood in every room he comes into, and he even steals all the attention away from Joel when he's talking to the youth group. They're such an inspiration to me, and there should be to everyone who knows their family. So when you're in the mindset thinking about a life-changing event, it makes it easier to cope knowing that God is on our side. God knows what he's doing with every single one of our lives. He knows that things will change, and he knows that it will be difficult for us to deal with. But he is the one that is always with us, always listening to us when we want to talk, and he is the one who will never forsake us. Change is something everyone deals with in life. You can choose to worry about it, and not enjoy your time, or you can look at it as a challenge that

God has something better in store for you. When you leave today, ask yourself, when change happens in your life, how will you deal with it?