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a resource in:

Sunday School

Change & Transition Lessons High School



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Change & Transition

Life Changes, But God Stays the Same

Recommended Age/Class: **High School** (9th-12th grade)

Lesson Objectives:

1. The student will understand transitions are when you move from one familiar place in life to something unfamiliar.
2. The student will understand some transitions are welcomed, whereas others are unwelcome and hard to accept.
3. The student will understand any change can be unsettling, because it is moving from something known to something unfamiliar.
4. The student will understand we can put our trust in God to help us in any type of change.

Scripture:

Deuteronomy 31:8, "And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed."

Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

Malachi 3:6a, "For I [am] the Lord, I change not."

Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever."

Content:

- Transitions are moving from where you currently are to a new place in life.
- Transition involves resetting what is normal, or moving from what is familiar to what is unfamiliar.
- Transitions are often unsettling as people naturally desire the familiar, or a road map to a new place.
- Transitions are a formative time in one's life, as people seek to navigate the unknown and find a new normal.
- Transitions can be welcome and those we anticipate (e.g., learning to drive, new level of school, marriage, birth of a child, back to school after the summer, getting a job).
- Transitions can also be unwelcome or those we find hard to accept (e.g, aging parents, loss of a loved one, friends moving away).
- Some transitions take a while to work through, whereas others are more immediate.
- We can have assurance God never changes – He is always the same.
- We can trust God to help us through any change.
- God gives us strength and courage to go through changes in life.

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Discussion Questions:

1. What does the word “transition” mean to you?
2. How do you feel when something changes in your life?
3. What are examples of life transitions? What are life transitions you have experienced recently or are about to experience?
4. What are transitions or changes you want to experience in life?
5. What are transitions or changes we need to experience in life? (e.g., growing up, moving on from high school to college or a job)
6. What are transitions we might not welcome? Why not?
7. How do you feel when the next part of life seems unknown to you? Why might this make you feel uncomfortable?
8. What are promises God gives us to help us put our trust in Him during times of transitions?
9. There is a saying “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.” What might be a more biblical way to say this thought? (e.g., Don’t Worry, Trust God or Don’t Worry, God is in Control).
10. Give an example of a time when God helped you do something you found hard to do.

Activity:

1. **Activity 1: A Time for the Word**
 - a. Have students read *Ecclesiastes 3:1-11* out loud while listening for all the times of life in the verses.
 - b. After reading it once, ask them to individually recall how many seasons in life they can remember from the verses.
 - c. Together create a list on the board with the title “A time to...” and list all the seasons mentioned in these verses.
 - d. After writing them, discuss what each one means and the seasons of life that God would want us to experience or share with others as part of His plan for our lives.
 - e. As students feel comfortable, have them share examples from their own personal lives of times they have experienced the various seasons listed on the board.
2. **Activity 2: Faith Statements**
 - a. Have students read *Hebrews 11* and notice the phrase that repeats for each person’s narrative: “By faith...”
 - b. Discuss how each character encountered transitions in their lives as they followed God’s plan for them.
 - c. Have students write their own faith statements for a transition they are currently facing, or will soon be facing in their life. Have them start this with the phrase “By faith I...” and include what transition they will trust God with and what they will do to demonstrate their trust in Him. For example, if they will soon be graduating and going to college, they could write a faith statement beginning like this: “By faith I trust God to lead me and guide me as I graduate from high school and will soon begin college. I know that He will be with me every step of the way and that I can trust Him as I choose my career path in ...”

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3. **Activity 3:** Unchanging Attributes of God

Additional resource: <http://dg4kids.com/bible-time/day-one-god-never-changes/index.html>

- a. Discuss how it is important that we change, but that God does not change.
- b. Have students list attributes of God as you write them on a board/piece of paper.
- c. Talk about each attribute and the related Bible verse. Discuss why it is important that God does not change in this regard. See examples below:
 - i. Personal Savior and Father
 1. *Isaiah 43:1, Acts 17:27*
 2. If this changed, God would not want a personal relationship with us.
 - ii. All Powerful
 1. *Matthew 19:26, Jeremiah 32:17*
 2. If this changed, God would be weaker than others.
 - iii. Omniscient
 1. *1 John 3:20*
 2. If this changed, God would not know what is happening to us or forget things.
 - iv. Holy
 1. *1 Samuel 2:2, Isaiah 6:3*
 2. If this changed, God would not be perfect or righteous, and thus, unable to save us from our sins.
 - v. Omnipresent
 1. *Psalms 139:7-10*
 2. If this changed, God could not be with us wherever we are and unable to help us in time of need.
 - vi. Always Honest
 1. *Numbers 23:19, Titus 1:2*
 2. If this changed, God might tell a lie.
 - vii. Merciful
 1. *Lamentations 3:21-23*
 2. If this changed, God could choose who or when to show mercy.
 - viii. Faithful
 1. *2 Peter 3:9*
 2. If this changed, God might not fulfill His promises.
 - ix. Just
 1. *Isaiah 30:18*
 2. If this changed, God could be unfair or choose favorites.

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4. **Object Lesson 1:** Worry and Trust Don't Mix

Materials needed: 1 large container, 2 smaller containers, water, cooking oil, food coloring, masking tape, sharpie marker

- a. Talk to students about how when we face transitions in life, we choose to either worry or trust in God. Ask students what is a more natural choice for them to make – worry or trust. Put masking tape on one smaller container and label it “worry.” Put masking tape on another container and label it “trust.”
- b. Pour some of the cooking oil into the worry container. Pour some water into the trust container and put in a few drops of food coloring.
- c. Ask students if they think we can trust in God when we are worrying about how life is different or changing. Pour both the worry and trust liquids into the larger container. At first it will look like they mix and then they will separate. Talk about how we cannot trust in God when we are worrying about transitions in our lives. God wants us to trust Him completely because we know He cares for us.

5. **Object Lesson 2:** Trusting God through Anything

Materials needed: Plastic quart Ziploc bag, pitcher of water, 3-5 round sharpened pencils [not hexagonal pencils], towel, shower cap

- a. Practice ahead of the lesson: Fill the bag with water and poke sharpened pencils quickly through the entire bag. The water should not leak through the bag.
- b. To begin the lesson, ask students if they trust you. Ask for a volunteer to come and help with the lesson. Have the student help fill the bag with water.
- c. Tell them that you will be poking pencils through the bag of water and they will not get wet. Hold the bag over their head and poke the pencils through the bag of water.
- d. Talk about how God asks us to trust Him even when we are facing a transition and the future looks unknown.
- e. Show the towel and shower cap. Discuss if it would have been fully trusting in God if the volunteer used the towel and shower cap during the experiment. Compare this to how we might tell God we trust Him, but we do things to protect ourselves or avoid going through something because we worry instead. Encourage students to remember that God will take care of them and they can always trust Him no matter what they are facing in life.

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Redeeming Transitions- Part 1

Recommended Age/Class: **High School** (9th-12th grade)

Lesson Objectives:

1. The student will understand God wants to redeem our transitions for something greater.
2. The student will understand life transitions are not experienced in isolation, but in interactions with others.
3. The student will understand transitions can be used to bless others.
4. The student will understand transitions teach us we are not a product of our circumstances, but our identity is in Christ.

Scripture:

Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

2 Corinthians 12:9-10, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Ephesians 4:15, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

Colossians 3:12-14, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

2 Timothy 1:12, "For the which cause I also suffer those things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

James 3:17, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Content:

- Redeem means to buy back or recover something.
- God wants to redeem our life transitions for something greater.
- For transitions to be redeemed for something good, we must give the transition to the right person – God – who is able to redeem it.
- Our life transitions are not experienced in isolation, but rather within the interaction and involvement of others.
- To bless others during times of transition, we can look away from our self to how we can support or minister to those around us.
- Reacting means we let our emotions drive us, we assume our perspective is correct, and assume negative motives for others.

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- Responding means we let the Spirit guide us, listen to others to understand their perspective, and look for solutions that benefit all.
- Within these times of stress and tension, we can share the Gospel with others by how we respond and give grace to others.
- Transitions also teach us we are not a product of our circumstances or environment, but rather we have a constant identity in Christ.
- If our sense of identity is over-defined by our circumstances, we experience difficulty transitioning from what life used to be like to what it now is.
- If our sense of identity is over-defined by our circumstances, we may either become anxious or look for an easy solution to fix our current circumstances.
- Our sense of happiness and peace comes only from God and dwelling in His presence.
- God wants us to live by faith, rather than certainty in our circumstances.
- We can model faith to others by how we handle transitions in our lives.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does redeem mean?
2. How can God redeem transitions we experience in life?
3. What are transitions you are facing currently in your life? Who is affected besides yourself in these transitions?
4. How does looking away from ourselves help us to bless others during times of transition?
5. What are differences between reacting and responding to others?
6. How can we share the Gospel through times of transition?
7. Who does God want us to place our identity in?
8. What can happen if we over-identify with our circumstances?
9. What happens if we place our identity in God?
10. What could be the difference between faith being a part of your life or faith being your life?
11. Where in your life might you be seeking to find happiness and peace in circumstances and people instead of Christ?
12. How can you do better at fixing your mind on God while working through your circumstances?

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Activity:

1. Activity 1: Jacob's Transition

Materials needed: Redeeming Transitions *Genesis 28:10-22* handout

- a. Have students read *Genesis 28:10-22* out loud while listening for the types of transitions Jacob is making in his life.
- b. Discuss the transitions he is making in life and talk about how some of these might be similar to ones students or people currently experience.
- c. Discuss how Jacob is feeling uncomfortable and this is not a planned for transition (verses 10-1). However, God comes to him in this transition and encourages him that He will redeem it (verses 12-13).
- d. Turn the discussion to how God can redeem transitions by blessing others (verse 14) and helping us put our identity in Christ rather than our circumstances (verses 15-16).
- e. Apply Jacob's experience to the students' lives – have them discuss how they can purposefully bless others in current transitions and how they are learning to place their identity in Christ, rather than their life circumstances.

2. Activity 2: Reacting versus Responding

Materials needed: Copies of Responding/Reacting Charts for students

- a. Review/teach Responding & Reacting concepts from above concepts list.
- b. Have students fill in notes for the appropriate side of the chart as learned in this lesson for reacting versus responding based on Jacob's life.
- c. Read the following verses and add additional notes about how we can be guided by the Spirit as we respond to others:
 - i. Gentle, easily entreated: *James 3:17*
 - ii. Speak the truth in love: *Ephesians 4:15*
 - iii. Listens, clarifies, and seeks to understand: *James 1:19*
 - iv. Seeks win-win solutions while esteeming others higher: *Philippians 2:3*
- d. Optional: Have students share a/n (appropriate) time they reacted poorly and would love to have a different, "do-over" response.

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3. Object Lesson: Identity in Christ

Materials needed: small plastic containers, pitcher of water, labels, marker

- a. Before the lesson prepare the labels by writing possible identities that the students might see as important in their lives (e.g., brother/sister, student, friend, son/daughter, athlete, musician, etc. . . use titles as you see fit). Place one label on each plastic container. Label one container “child of God.”
- b. Talk about how we all have ways we think of ourselves that fit our current circumstances. Share the labels you have placed on the containers and ask the students which ones they identify with.
- c. Pour a little water into each container. Talk about how although these might be good activities or ways to think of ourselves, life can change or give transitions that cause these to change. For each one, give a possible way in which it could change (see examples below). As you discuss each change, shake the container so that some water spills out.
 - i. brother/sister – they grow up or make their own friends
 - ii. student – you graduate from high school, or you are having a harder class than you did before
 - iii. son/daughter – you grow up and leave the house, a parent becomes elderly or passes away
 - iv. friend – your friend moves away or they make other friends
 - v. athlete – you experience a physical injury and can’t play the sport you enjoy
 - vi. musician – you start a new job and don’t have as much time for musical groups you were a part of before
- d. Pour a little water into a different container with a label of “child of God.” Talk about how if we have placed our faith in God and are redeemed through Christ’s shed blood, we can identify as a “child of God”. Put a lid on the container and shake the container. Explain that when life brings changes or even difficult times, if we place our faith in God and are His child, He is always with us. This identity is never lost or changes if we remain in Him.

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Redeeming Transitions- Part 2

Recommended Age/Class: **High School** (9th-12th grade)

Lesson Objectives:

1. The student will understand transitions can lead us to deeper worship of God.
2. The student will understand transitions can help teach us about ourselves.
3. The student will understand people process transitions differently.
4. The student will understand transitions can become spiritual markers along one's life timeline.

Scripture:

Psalm 42:11, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Isaiah 25:1, "O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth."

Jeremiah 20:13, "Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers."

Hebrews 4:15-16, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

1 Timothy 6:8, "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

Philippians 4:11-12, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Content:

- The goal of transitions is to move toward acceptance of God's sovereignty, which is a preliminary step for worship.
- Within life transitions, worship points us to God and His goodness rather than ourselves.
- Worship helps us recognize God for His greatness, grace, and salvation.
- We can worship God even through difficult times when we feel broken, because God becomes the center of our thoughts and heart.
- Even if we view circumstances or life transitions differently from others who are involved, worshipping God together draws us to a common agreement that helps us navigate the transition.
- Transitions can help us reset our perspective of who we are and what we truly need, rather than a focus on our wants.

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- A sense of entitlement for things and circumstances can take us away from the simplicity of contentment in God, food, and clothes.
- We tend to either process transitions as thinkers or feelers. Both have their strengths and weaknesses.
- Thinkers tend to think logically (if this ➡ then that), whereas feelers consider how it impacts emotions and feelings of connectedness to others.
- Fixating in the past hinders movement through transitions to acceptance of the present.
- Rather than thinking of the what ifs, God wants us to remember that He is there and already in the future.
- Life transitions can become spiritual markers in our life timeline that help us remember how God provided for us and helped us grow in our spiritual maturity.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why must we see God's sovereign hand in our life circumstances in order to worship Him?
2. How does worship help us during difficult times or points of change in our lives?
3. How does the example of Paul and Silas singing in the jail demonstrate worship that drew them away from focusing on self to God? (*Acts 16*)
4. How could worshipping God together with others who are involved in our transitions help us better work through them peacefully and in agreement?
5. What are our basic needs?
6. How can transitions help us reset our perspective on who we are and what we need?
7. Reflect on your current perspective in life. Do you see yourself as being content with basic needs or leaning toward entitlement of things and circumstances? How do you know?
8. How could contentment with current life circumstances differ from the contentment God wants us to have?
9. Identify yourself as a thinker or feeler. Give an example of how you know.
10. What is the difference between remembering the past and dredging the past?
11. What could we do to remember God is here in the present and in the future when worries or "what ifs" come to our mind?
12. What are life transitions you have experienced so far that could become spiritual markers or points along your life's timeline?
13. How can we share our transitions in life as spiritual markers to comfort and strengthen others?

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Activity:

1. Activity 1: Jacob's Transition

Materials needed: Redeeming Transitions *Genesis 28:10-22* handout

- a. Review what was discussed last week on the types of transitions Jacob was making in his life and how God shows him how they will be used to bless others (verse 14) and place his identity in God rather than his circumstances (verses 15-16).
- b. Turn the discussion to how Jacob's transition elicited worship (verse 18) and how he changed his perspective of himself (verse 20).
- c. Apply Jacob's experience to the students' lives – have them discuss how they can draw closer to God during transitions in their lives by worshipping God when life is difficult. Additionally, discuss how transitions can help them reset their perspective to how God sees them and what basic needs are rather than desires.
- d. Discuss how transitions can become spiritual markers of how God has worked in their lives (verse 22) and points they come back to as moments along their life timeline. Encourage students to journal, underline or take notes in one's Bible, or find other ways to “mark” their life transitions as Jacob marked his.

2. Activity 2: Spiritual Markers

- a. Review instances in which people of faith created spiritual markers in their lives:
 - i. Noah building an altar after the flood (*Genesis 6-8*).
 - ii. Abraham building an altar after God promised to make of him a nation (*Genesis 12:1-8* and *Genesis 13:1-18*).
 - iii. Joshua building a stone memorial with the Israelites after the parting of the Jordan River (*Joshua 4:21-23*).
 - iv. Gideon building an altar after the battle (*Judges 6:11-24*).
 - v. Samuel reminding people about God helping them overcome their enemies (*1 Samuel 7:1-12*).
- b. Have students think of possible events in their lives or anticipated ones in the future that come become spiritual markers.
- c. Discuss how these spiritual markers have the following characteristics:
 - i. Significant because they have changed our lives in major ways.
 - ii. Some were anticipated and some could not be predicted.
 - iii. Reminders of God's work in our lives.
 - iv. Help us recall how God fulfilled His promises to us.
 - v. Can become a testimony to others of the goodness of God.
 - vi. Point us to God and strengthen our faith in Him.

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3. **Activity 3:** God is our Rock

Materials needed: 5 smooth stones for each person in the group and for an example; permanent markers to write on the stones

- a. Discuss *1 Samuel 17:1-51* for the point of how when David focused on God, he was able to meet the challenge of Goliath and win the battle. In this manner, he focused on who God is, what God had done in the past, and what God could do in the future – rather than what Goliath thought he could do or even what he could do in his own strength.
- b. Make a list of attributes of God that we can praise Him for in the midst of life transitions. For example: God is good. God cares for us. God watches over us. God protects us. God prepares us. God gives us joy. God forgives us. God strengthens us.
- c. Give each student five smooth stones. Remind them of how David picked up five stones when he went to face Goliath. Ask students what stones of faith God might want them to pick up to face transitions they are experiencing currently or those that might come in their lives. For example: God’s care, God’s protection, God’s compassion, God’s preparation, God’s love, God’s forgiveness, God’s grace, etc. Have them mark their stones with the beliefs they want to remember to “pick up.”
- d. Encourage students to place these stones in a place they will see them often at home, so when they are facing changes or experiences that seem difficult they can remember to look to God and praise Him for the blessings He gives us to walk through any life transition.

4. **Object Lesson:** The Whole Picture

Materials needed: 2 copies of a famous painting such as the Mona Lisa – one copy is the complete picture, another copy is only a small portion of it that is hard to tell what it is; Cross-stitch or embroidery to show the back.

- a. Show them the partial picture of the famous painting. Ask them if they would like to hang this painting in their house. Show them the back of the cross-stich and ask if they would like to hang this in their house. Then show them the full picture of the famous painting and the front of the cross-stich. Discuss how these are beautiful pieces of art that we would treasure and consider valuable.
- b. Talk with students about how sometimes it can be difficult when life changes or we don’t understand the plan God has in our lives – we don’t see the full picture, and sometimes it can look pretty messy just like the threads on the back of the cross-stitch. However, God can see the whole picture of our lives. He knows what this moment in time is intended to accomplish in us and will help us grow into the person He created us to be. We must put our trust in Him to work it for good.

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Redeeming Transitions - Genesis 28:10-22 Handout

¹⁰ *And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.*

¹¹ *And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.*

¹² *And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.*

¹³ *And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;*

¹⁴ *And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

¹⁵ *And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

¹⁶ *And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.*

¹⁷ *And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*

¹⁸ *And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.*

¹⁹ *And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.*

²⁰ *And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,*

²¹ *So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:*

²² *And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*

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Reacting	Responding