



Behold, I make all things new.

Revelation 21:5

Those who know me well would nominate me as “Person Least Likely to Make Changes.” I know I’d win against any slate of contenders. When people greet me with, “What’s new,” they expect my response to be, “Nothing.” Then God speaks from behind the burning bush, and calls, “Surprise!” And it always is.

This year begins with two new things for me: I am a published author and I am working as Marilyn Sharpe Ministries. One year ago, I would not have predicted either new thing.

The book, *For Heaven’s Sake! Parenting Preschoolers Faithfully*, is the culmination of 32 years of journeying with parents every Wednesday of the year in my congregation. These parents, moms and dads, come when they can, for as long as they choose, to share their challenges and triumphs, delights and frustrations, faith and wisdom, love of children and support for one another. They understand parenting as an inherently spiritual journey. This book is a tribute to their lived wisdom and faith and inspiration. Printed in late November, it is now finding its way into the lives of parents, child care providers, teachers, grandparents, and all those Christian adults who understand that they are called to be faith parents.

As with many of you who have faced your own life transitions in this economy, my shift in employment was neither desired nor anticipated. It is, however, another opportunity to wonder what God might be up to with me now. My wondrous husband was the first to hold up a mirror and remind me that this had never been a job, but what God had called and equipped me to do and to be. Others affirmed that understanding, so on I journey, doing the ministries with homes and congregations for which I have such passion.

I know that I am not alone in experiencing change. All of the generations deal with changes. Some changes are welcome, some even eagerly sought - new friends, a trip, developing skills. Some come as a surprise ... and not a welcome one, at that - friendships end, family configurations alter, plans change. This is the time that it makes all the difference to have others travel with us, reassure us, take us seriously.

Transitions are often accompanied by anxiety. Jesus stilled the storm - waves on the lake, and fear and roiling waters inside his followers. Invite Jesus to command the waves to be still, to give you peace. We, too, can support one another to navigate these waters.

We are on the cusp of a new year, in which God reminds us that, indeed, God makes all things new ... and fills it with God’s presence. That is what Jesus promised.

So, “What’s new?” How do you answer this at the beginning of 2010? God is always up to something new with us. Won’t you reach out and embrace all the new things God is up to with you?

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Ask your family, “What’s new in your life today?” Then, really listen.
2. Ask your friends the same question. Listen. Remember, and check back with them. Be alert and sensitive to the transitions and anxiety about change in the lives of others.
3. Wonder what God might be up to with you this year. Invite God to be in it all - then be on the lookout to see and name God’s presence.
4. Make a poster or bulletin board for your family with a packet of seeds and words and/or pictures of the new things God is doing with each of you. Include the things you pray will fill this new year.
5. Be sensitive, not dismissive, of the anxiety your children might face as things change. Listen to their feelings. Affirm them. Reassure them that you will travel with them. Ask what support they need from you. Together, take it to God in prayer.