



EVERYTHING CAN CHANGE IN FORTY DAYS

A Journey of Transformation through Christ

JEAN WATSON

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For Mark—
my husband, encourager, editor-in-chief, and best friend

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This book is lovingly dedicated to every parent
who has prayed for a child in the middle of the night,
to every husband or wife who has wept for a marriage
to be restored, to every addict who has longed to be free,
to anyone who has desperately hoped for change,

“For with God nothing will be impossible.”

—Luke 1:37

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INTRODUCTION

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I stumbled upon the divine experiment quite unexpectedly. For more than a decade I had traveled around the world praying with people who desperately wanted to see change in their lives. I believed we were praying according to God's will as we asked the Lord for deliverance from addictions, salvation of family members, and healing in bodies, minds, and spirits. I fully expected to receive the answers we prayed for and, thankfully, we often did! However, there were other times when nothing seemed to change. I went back to the same places year after year only to find many I had prayed for no different than they were the year before.

I was also puzzled by the lack of transformation in my own life. God was using me to sing and speak of His love to many people, and I saw His power at work! He was restoring my family, and there was peace in my home. Still, I wasn't experiencing joy and peace on a regular basis. Once my daughter Katharine even joked that the words "What?" and "Oh no!"

should be emblazoned on my tombstone when I die. Funny as her words were at the time, they cut me to the core. This was not the testimony I wanted to leave my children! This was not the abundant life I read about in the Gospels.

What was I missing? I fully believed that through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, I should have access to the riches of heaven here on earth. I preached, "Thy kingdom come," but hadn't fully experienced God's kingdom for myself. I studied the Gospels and saw Jesus spreading joy, peace, healing, and freedom everywhere He went. In the book of Acts, I read about the apostles continuing to spread the gospel message in word and in power. They saw heaven coming through their hands and knew it was Christ in them doing the work! As Paul said: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20a).

I decided to try an experiment. What would happen if I lived like I really believed that the God who raised Jesus from the dead was dwelling inside my body? If the Spirit of the Lord was living in me all the time, my natural response would be to worship Him . . . all the time. What would happen if I stopped trying to continually fix myself and simply lived a lifestyle of worship?

I can't remember the exact date things started changing, *but things started changing!* As I began to focus on God rather than myself, the Lord began to transform my heart and my life. He taught me to see myself as He sees me and to catch His

vision for my future. He set me free from the limitations of my mind that were holding me back. He gave me the courage to look at patterns of sin in my life. He taught me to pray and not give up. Most importantly, He taught me that the only thing that really matters every day is to love Him and love the one in front of me. As I stopped trying to do this faith thing on my own and let Him be God in me, my ministry grew in effectiveness. It wasn't me who spoke, sang, or played music anymore, but it was Him and I knew it. The Holy Spirit began showing up in meetings and moving hearts without me saying a word! I continued to pray for people, but I also began teaching them what I was learning about becoming the vessel that can receive God's life-transforming power. Transformation is not a magic pill we can take; it's a process of surrendering ourselves to God. Our job is to simply worship the Lord and let Him change us into the image of His Son so He can change the world through us!

The divine experiment is the kingdom of heaven coming in earthly vessels. Anything is possible for the one who is willing to say, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done . . . in me!" As we offer ourselves completely to God, He offers all of Himself to us.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18)

PART ONE



READY FOR CHANGE

DAY ONE

FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS

.....

Hello, new friend! Though we've never met, I can just imagine you sitting across my kitchen table relaxing with a cup of tea or French-press Columbian coffee. (OK, yes, I am a coffee snob!) Anyway, I would love to hear your story and get to know your heart. I wish I could be there to laugh with you in your joys and cry with you when your heart aches. Most of all, it would be wonderful to pray with you when you suffer because in some ways, we all suffer. Until we get to heaven life will never be perfect! We long to see change in ourselves, in those we love, and in the world around us.

Sometimes it's hard to believe that real transformation is possible. We try to fix ourselves, and we end up feeling helpless and defeated. At times our prayers seem to go unanswered. Though we might not want to admit it, sometimes it's difficult to believe that we serve a God who listens and cares.

Well, although we can't see each other right now, I hope you know that I'm in your corner. I may not know your name or understand your pain, but I know the One who does. If we invite Him to join us at the table, He will change the atmosphere of the room and even the atmosphere of our hearts! Our coffee hour can become an altar of worship as we turn to the Lord in our time of need.

As we seek God instead of focusing on our problems, He will begin to do that which He does best—transformation! However, before He can make our messy lives look a little more like heaven, He must prepare our hearts to *receive* the change He desires to bring. Will you join with me and set aside the next forty days to seek the Lord? Let's ask Him to make us into new wineskins (see Mark 2:22) so that He can fill us with His new wine!

In the Bible, God often brought change in forty days, forty weeks, or forty years. It rained forty days and nights during the great flood. Noah waited another forty days before opening a window in the ark. Moses was on the mountain for forty days seeking God, and his face shone for forty days after he came down. The Israelites spent forty years in the wilderness, one year for each day they explored the promised land. Jesus fasted for forty days in the desert, was in the tomb for forty hours after His crucifixion, and was seen on the earth forty days after His resurrection. Even a baby spends forty

weeks in the womb growing from an embryo into a fully formed human being!

In each of these scenarios the Lord used forty days, weeks, or years to bring new birth, vision, and transformation. Though there is no magic in any number, if we commit ourselves to seeking God earnestly for the next forty days, He will cleanse our hearts and bring transformation exactly where we need it. He can and He will make all things new!

Let's ask the Lord to join us at the table . . .

: *Father, I am tired of living at a level that is so much lower*
: *than You created me to live. I've tried, but I just can't seem to*
: *change myself or those around me! Sometimes there is little I*
: *can do to change my circumstances. Lord, please prepare my*
: *heart for the change You long to bring in me and through me!*
: *In Jesus' name, amen.*

1. We have asked the Lord to prepare us for change. What are some things we can do to prepare our hearts for this change?
2. Sometimes, we just need to know that we are not alone and that others have gone through what we are experiencing.

How can we be an encouragement to someone else who is struggling today?

3. Make a list of the areas where you would like to see transformation in your life. Will you commit to praying for these things every day for the next forty days?

DAY TWO

HOLY GROUND

.....

Imagine that Jesus is standing in front of you at this very moment. “What would you like me to do for you?” He asks.

What would you say? If anything were possible, what would you ask Jesus to change about your life? I have asked this question many times in my travels and have yet to find anyone who does not have an answer. Even those who don’t call themselves Christians somehow recognize that the name of Jesus is an invitation to believe in the impossible!

A few years ago, my brother blessed my children and me with a trip to Chicago. We enjoyed shopping (or at least window shopping) on the exclusive Magnificent Mile. We shared lovely meals and took in breathtaking views of Lake Michigan. However, all along the way we were distracted by the beggars who seemed to be constantly underfoot.

I tried to ignore them and look the other way, but soon I began to feel uneasy. So with my children pretending not to know me, I cautiously approached an older gentleman standing in front of a grocery store. He was selling magazines and holding a tin bucket that simply read, "Please help, God bless." Putting a dollar in his bucket, I looked into his eyes that were yellowed from years of alcoholism.

"What's your name?" I began.

"George," he answered.

"George, if Jesus were standing in front of you, what would you ask Him to do for you?"

There was no hesitation in his response. "I wouldn't ask Him for anything," George said. "I got saved just two weeks ago. The Lord has forgiven my sins and given me a fresh start in life. He's taught me that all I need to do is acknowledge Him every day, and He will take care of me!"

Tears welled up in my eyes and at that moment I could no longer remember the sermon I had planned to preach. The one in front of me was doing the preaching! George had chosen to seek the Lord above earthly things. Oh that my heart could be as content with nothing but God!

I then prayed a simple prayer asking God to bless him and turned to walk away. However, as I tried to leave, the Holy Spirit stopped me. "*You* go back and bless him." I knew what the Lord was saying. Reaching into my wallet, I pulled out all of my

cash and handed it to him. As he looked at the roll of bills that I pressed into his hand, he wept and laughed at the same time.

“You just bought me off the street today. I can go home to my wife and pay our bills. *Thank you!*”

No amount of money could have purchased the joy I shared with George on that day. The Lord was a burning bush in our midst, and together we worshiped Him right there amid the crowd of hurried shoppers. It was a holy moment.

Instead of focusing on past failures or present circumstances, George was worshiping the One who saved him . . . *even if nothing changed*. Because his heart was seeking the Lord above his own desires, God was blessing him with peace, joy, and contentment that could never be taken away. At the same time, Jesus was also providing for his earthly needs while changing his life!

So often we seek the Lord because of what He can do for us rather than worshiping Him simply for being God. As George had discovered, placing our hope in anything or anyone but the Lord usually brings pain and emptiness. Only when we surrender to our Master’s plans can our hearts be truly satisfied. Whenever we say yes to the *anything* of God, we make room in our hearts for His *everything*.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matt. 6:33)

Will you have the courage to take a moment and worship the Lord right where you are? He has an abundant life prepared for us in Christ, but most of us settle for less than His best. Today may we lay down our expectations of what we want God to do for us and ask Him for the fullness of *Christ in us, the hope of glory*.

· *Father, forgive me for loving my own life more than I love You.*
· *Forgive me for seeking gifts rather than seeking the Giver of all*
· *good gifts. Today I surrender my hopes, my dreams, and my*
· *desires to You and receive Your hopes, Your dreams, and Your*
· *desires for my life. In Jesus' name, amen.*

1. In Jesus' first public sermon, He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). What does it mean to be poor in spirit?
2. Why was Jesus able to do more miracles among the poor and destitute than among those who had wealth and stature?
3. Make a list of any dreams or desires that would be hard to give to the Lord if He asked for them. Pray for the grace to surrender everything to Him so that you may receive His very best.

DAY THREE

RECEIVING THE KINGDOM

.....

When I noticed George on that street corner in Chicago, I had compassion on him. I had no idea what had led him to such a state of desperation, but I knew what desperation felt like. As a young violinist, I dreamed of playing in a symphony and perhaps teaching at a university, but then I made choices that were not God's best for my life. Many years later, I found my dreams unfulfilled and God's plan for my life unrealized. Instead of achieving my created purpose, I was living in a rented house as a single, divorced mother of four young children. Life was simply about survival as I struggled financially, emotionally, and spiritually.

Depression overwhelmed me and just getting through the day was a chore. As I laid in bed at night, I would imagine myself holding onto Jesus' robe and every morning I awoke with tear stains on my pillow. It was in that place of desperation

that I finally hit rock bottom. Reaching for the Bible on my nightstand, I opened it and immediately saw the words, “LORD, save me!” (Ps. 116:4 NIV). Knowing I could pray that prayer, I quietly said, “God, I can’t help myself because I am at zero right now. I need you to be my 100-percent God.”

At that very moment, I was startled by the ringing of the phone. Picking it up, I heard a kind man ask if my name was Jean Watson and if I played the violin. This man said he had heard my name mentioned in a restaurant the night before and had begun calling all of the Watsons in the phone book until he found me. I confirmed who I was and his next words stunned me, “I want to hear you play.” This chance phone call from the concertmaster of the symphony eventually led to a job as a violinist and the beginning of a new life. Although I didn’t know it at the time, God was giving me a future that would not only sustain my family but also fulfill my childhood dreams!

Like George, I held out my bucket asking for help and the Lord was there ready to fill it with much more than I could have possibly asked. God longs to bring the change we so desperately need if we will only ask Him! In His first public words about Himself, Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah:

*The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted,*

*To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD
(Luke 4:18–19)*

Jesus fulfilled these prophetic words as He healed the sick, raised the dead, delivered those in bondage, and saved the lost. He showed us what heaven looks like and then gave us access to all of its possibilities as we pray, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Transformation in our lives is not dependent on the strength of our faith. Instead, change comes when we call upon the Lord and then have the courage to answer the phone!

If you have faith as a mustard seed . . . nothing will be impossible for you. (Matt. 17:20)

Maybe you have prayed for something and nothing happened. Maybe the idea of hoping again and then being disappointed is just too scary. I can’t promise that God will answer your prayers the way you desire, but I can promise that when you call upon His name, He will answer *in the way that best displays His glory*.

Let’s pray for God to give us the courage to ask for the same healing, freedom, comfort, and joy that Jesus purchased

for us on the cross. May the mustard seed of faith sprout in our hearts and blossom into a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor.

Lord, give me the humility to admit that I need help. Give me the courage to call upon You with childlike faith and receive Your answers. I want to experience the full and abundant life You have for me in Christ! Be glorified in my life so others may know the transforming power of Your love. In Jesus' name, amen.

1. Jesus said in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it will be given to you." Why is it necessary to ask God for help? Why don't His blessings just come automatically?
2. Jesus instructed us to pray for God's kingdom to come "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Is this really possible?
3. What does heaven look like in your life today? Where do you need God's kingdom to come?

DAY FOUR

BROKEN VESSELS

.....

My prayer and the unexpected phone call that followed were just the beginning of the radical changes God brought into my life and the lives of my children. One day in early December, our landlord brought us a Christmas tree. As he dragged the tree into the house, he heard me singing Christmas carols on a recording I had made for a friend. He stopped frozen in his tracks, listened for a moment, and asked, “What is that?”

“Oh, that’s just a gift I made for a friend,” I replied.

“But, who’s singing?” he persisted.

“Well . . . it’s me.”

He sat down on the couch, put his head in his hands, and cried. For some reason, the sound of my voice moved him deeply. Finally, he looked at me through his tears and said, “Jean Watson, I don’t know what you’re doing with your life,

but that's what you're *supposed* to be doing!" He then gave me my rent money back and told me to use it to make a CD.

This act of kindness was the beginning of a new direction and purpose for my life. I took the money he offered, made a CD at a local recording studio, and then gave it away to anyone who would listen. I gave one to the lady at the grocery store, the cashier at the gas station, the teller at the bank, and to all my friends and relatives! Soon I was receiving invitations to sing and speak in churches and coffeehouses. I didn't really have a message in those early days except that I had made mistakes, then cried out to God, and He was changing my life.

As I traveled from town to town playing music and sharing my simple message, strange things began to happen. People had the same response to my music as my landlord. They often wept, and hearts were softened to God as they listened. The Holy Spirit moved powerfully during the concerts, and I saw people healed, saved, and set free from addictions. The kingdom of heaven was coming to earth—through a flawed, violin-playing, divorced mother of four!

So why would God use someone broken and inadequate to reveal the power of His love? Perhaps brokenness was my greatest qualification for ministry. Though I would never want to relive the years I suffered, I am thankful to have walked that

road. It was necessary to be completely broken so that God could use me for His glory and not mine!

God desires to use our pain not to harm us, but rather to bring life. In His hands, pain is a tool He can use to shape us into His image. When we hurt, we can discover the treasure of His comfort even in the dark places. As we trust His love, He will use our broken dreams to bring forth His dream for us!

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (2 Cor. 4:17)

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. (1 Peter 4:12-13)

Take a moment today and give the Lord your past, your mistakes, other peoples' mistakes, your sorrows, and your fears. Ask God to take the broken pieces of your past and use them to bring His glory through every part of your life.

· *Thank You, Lord, that Your love is bigger than my sins and*
· *my failures. Your plan is bigger than the hurt from others,*
· *and Your faithfulness endures forever! I offer You the broken*
· *pieces of my life today and ask You to heal me and make me an*
· *instrument of healing. In Jesus' name, amen.*

1. What is the difference between God causing suffering and God using suffering in our lives?
2. There are many stories about broken things being used in the Bible. Why would God use broken things to show His glory?
3. What are some practical ways you can allow God to shine His light through your cracks today?

DAY FIVE

JARS OF CLAY

.....

Whether we feel ready or not, the Lord doesn't wait until we have it all together before He puts us to work. If He really does choose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, then I must have looked pretty foolish when I started in ministry! In those days the delivery of my message was unpolished, and I sang the same songs over and over again using only background tracks, a keyboard, and a violin.

Even in those humble beginnings, though, I began to dream about what God could do through me. I remember asking myself what I would regret not doing if I had only one year left to live. I then remembered a picture I had made in ninth-grade social studies class. It was the cover of a report about Ireland simply crafted from construction paper. Decorated with pictures cut from one of my father's *National Geographic* magazines (without him knowing, of course!), this

faded green memento was the physical representation of a childhood dream.

As a little girl, I was enchanted by the cultures of Great Britain and Ireland. I could even imagine myself being there when I saw pictures of those fascinating, faraway lands. As I thought about the rest of my life, I knew that something within would mourn if I lived life and never set foot on those islands across the pond. So, on a three-by-five card I wrote the words, "Ministry in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales," and for the next three years I carried that card with me everywhere I went! Eventually it became worn and tattered, but as impossible as this dream seemed, I continued to pray daily that God would make a way for it to become reality.

Then out of the blue one day I received an e-mail from some Christian musicians in England who had heard my music. They learned of my heart for their nation and invited me to come share His love with the British people. So after three years of praying, waiting, and believing the words on my card, I packed my bags for London with a violin on my back and a seventy-pound keyboard in tow!

One of my first concerts in England was in a small church in the city of Coventry. This city had been bombed into utter devastation during World War II and had a high rate of homelessness, drug addiction, alcoholism, and suicide. On the day of my performance, the church took a van into the city and picked up homeless men and women by offering them a meal

if they would attend the concert. So that night I found myself on a tiny stage facing a reluctant audience that smelled faintly of alcohol and not so faintly of body odor!

However, the atmosphere of the room changed when I picked up the violin and began to play. A hush fell across the audience, and tears flowed freely. A man sitting in the front row stared intently at me and was first in line for prayer when the music finally ended. "I've been an atheist my whole life, but something happened tonight. I don't understand it, but somehow I know God is real!" he said. This man had come only for a meal but received so much more! He gave his heart to the Lord that night and was given a new life.

Next in the prayer line was a man and his twelve-year-old daughter. He explained that she was losing her hearing and the doctors were baffled. Speaking on her behalf, he emphatically stated, "She believes that Jesus will heal her if you pray."

I remember thinking to myself, *Well, that's probably not going to happen, but people are watching. How can I refuse to pray for her?* So I placed my hands on the girl's ears and asked the Lord to touch her through me. As I prayed, it felt like a million volts of electricity passed through us, causing me to fall backward and land on the floor!

Astonished, I stood up and exclaimed, "Get away from me! . . . I am a sinful woman. I am not worthy!" Later I remembered that Peter had uttered something similar when he realized he was in the presence of Jesus, the Christ (see

Luke 5:8). At that moment there was such intense holiness around the girl that I knew she had been healed.

Several weeks later her parents e-mailed me verification from the doctors showing that, indeed, her hearing had been restored. Absolutely no one was more surprised by her healing than me! If God could perform miracles through my hands, surely He could use anyone. That night the Lord used a broken lady to shine His healing power into broken lives in a broken city. All He asked of me was to show up and be willing.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. (2 Cor. 4:6–7 NIV)

The Greek word for the phrase "jars of clay" in this passage is the word *ostrakinos*, which describes the most common everyday pottery used in that society. Often unglazed, it was full of imperfections and of little value. Yet ordinary vessels are the very ones God chooses to use. The Lord delights in bringing His glory through broken people who know they are nothing without Him. When we give ourselves to the Lord just as we are, He will use us to bring His light into the darkest of places.

.
. *Father, I offer myself to You just as I am. Bring Your light into*
. *my darkness that You might bring Your light through my dark-*
. *ness! Use my jar of clay to display Your glory today. In Jesus'*
. *name, amen.*
.

1. Moses was a murderer, David was an adulterer and a murderer, and Gideon was a coward. Why does God delight in using people who have failed miserably?
2. What does poor in spirit mean to you? What is the difference between humility and low self-esteem?
3. How can we become vessels that God will use more effectively?