

The Grief and Joys of Change



BY AMY STARR REDWINE

I had been in hard labor with my second child for about an hour when, just after a particularly strong contraction had subsided, I began to cry. My husband looked up in alarm and said, “Are you okay? Should I call the midwife?” I swiped at my tears and wailed, “I miss Sarah! I don’t think I can have another baby!”

Of course, it was much too late for such second thoughts and there was really no question that we wanted this new child to join our family. But for that moment, I was terrified of the changes a new baby would bring: in the comfortable routines we had established to care for our daughter Sarah; in Sarah, when she realized how much attention this tiny baby would require from her previously doting parents; in our sleep habits, which would make caring for two children all the more challenging.

A Mix of Emotions

A few hours later, when a slippery baby boy was placed in my arms, I knew only the deepest joy and contentment (and relief that labor was over!), but those feelings that hit me in the middle of labor rather accurately foretold the changes to come.

A friend of mine who is a pastoral counselor has a saying: “Life is a series of changes, and all change causes grief; to live life to the fullest we must learn to process our grief.” I find this sentiment both totally depressing and surprisingly uplifting. Most of us don’t need permission to enjoy life or acknowledge the goodness in it, but often we do need help allowing our-



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selves to grieve. And usually the events that cause the most grief are also those that bring us great joy: the birth of a child, marriage, a move to a new place, the start of a new job. These things bring grief because they require us to let go of a life we had previously known, and open ourselves up to new people and opportunities.

Risks and Blessings

Nuclear families aren’t the only ones who face challenges when a

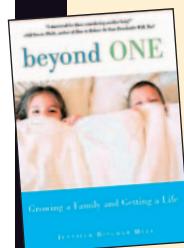
newcomer arrives, whether through marriage, birth or friendship. Church families struggle, too, to meet the needs of visitors and new members. In families and churches, we must strike a balance between maintaining traditions and welcoming new people and practices. And that isn’t easy.

Opening our doors to strangers—whether at home or at church—is a risk, but it also is our calling. After all, we follow a Savior who did not permit his disciples to interact only with fellow believers, but rather, commissioned them to spread the good news to the far corners of the world. And there is always the chance that introducing change into our lives will offer not only the grief of letting go of old ways but the unanticipated joys that new life so often brings.

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Resource



Beyond One: Growing a Family and Getting a Life

by Jennifer Bingham Hull

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In *Beyond One*, Jennifer Bingham Hull chronicles the first three years of life with two children, providing tips, insights, and plenty of comic relief for parents who not only want to grow a family, but get a life.