

Hope for the uprooted woman

Three essential steps in every life transition

by Susan Miller



It's been nearly 30 years since I wrote *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* and eight years since the updated edition was released. Next year Just Moved Ministry will turn 30 years old! Make plans to join us in the spring of 2025 for a big celebration!

Through many of those years, my beloved husband, Bill, was my cheerleader and support as I pursued writing the book and creating a curriculum for the *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* study that millions of women turn to in pursuit of encouragement and reassurance when they've been uprooted by a move.

In 2009 I lost Bill to cancer. Numb and exhausted from grief and care-giving, I didn't know how to begin life again.

When I wrote the three-step process for movers—**let go, start over, move forward**—I never thought about how these principles would become part of my healing process in the biggest life change I would ever face.

At some point, I had to choose to let go, start over, and begin to move forward with life after losing Bill. I reread my own book and, gradually, my heart began to rest in the biblical principles and Scripture passages I found there.

I soon realized that it was God's plan all along for those three steps to apply to other changes and losses that women face.

Your blueprint for navigating change

You might be experiencing the pain of loss by a different name. Perhaps it's the loss of your health, your marriage, a job, a relationship, a pregnancy, a dream to have children, a parent to Alzheimer's, a child to disease, a teen to drugs. Perhaps you've gone through a difficult move. *You too, at some point, will have to choose to let go, start over, and begin to move forward with life.* Hard words to hear, but a reality we all have to face.

As you know, there are many uncertainties in a major life-change. But this I'm sure of—you, my friend, are wrapped in God's comfort and strength each day. He covers you with His grace and mercy as you push on to survive.

Everything you have ever learned, experienced, and know about Jesus gives you strength for a time such as this. And if you don't know Jesus, you better not waste a minute getting to know Him now, because you need Him like crazy.

You can rest in His promises and rely on His word for the days ahead.

You may be living with brokenness, but you can also live with a peace that is beyond understanding and a hope that is anchored in Christ.

There isn't a life change so traumatic that God cannot restore you, no pain so deep that God cannot bring you comfort, and no circumstance that is without God's presence.

Within these pages we have summarized the principles of letting go, starting over, and moving forward. Let them be your blueprint for responding to the many life changes you will navigate in your life.

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The essential resource for the uprooted woman



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Bloom is published three times a year and provides inspiration as you seek to grow and thrive.
This issue and past issues are online at justmoved.org/encouragement-for-uprooted/bloom



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What steps can I take to let go?

- Keep a journal of your thoughts and feelings.
- Don't expect things to be the way they used to be.
- Focus on what you *have*, not on what you *had*.
- Invest in a church and a small group there.
- Dwell on the positive, not the negative.
- Plant flowers, bulbs, or seeds to remind you that you're putting down new roots.
- Pray about everything.

Let go

Release your grip on the past

Are you *clinging* to or *cherishing* the past?

To cherish means "to hold in the mind, to treasure, to hold dear, to value highly." To cling means "to clutch, to cleave, to hold on to, to grab hold of."

Let's apply those definitions to life change

- Cherish what was—memories, a way of life, the past.
- Cling to what is and to what never changes—God, your Bible, God's promises.
- Cherish what you left behind—a place, friends, a job or house you loved.
- Cling to what you brought with you—your faith, hope, prayer, optimism, loved ones.

Identify your emotions

Strong emotions can often get stuffed away. Who's got time for processing emotions when there's so much to be done?! But unprocessed emotions have a way of showing up later in life. Are you struggling with anger, fear, grief, loss of identity, or other myriad emotions that can come with major life change? Leave this burden at the feet of Jesus. *Daily* let it go. *Daily* remind yourself that you do not have to face this battle alone.

What are you holding onto that is keeping you from moving forward? You owe it to yourself and to your family to begin the process of letting go.



What steps can I take to start over?

- Turn to God as your strength to face loneliness.
- Invest time and attention into your home to make it an inviting sanctuary for all.
- A life change is a good time to make new choices. Take time to assess the way you spend your time.
- Worn out? Ask for or hire help.
- Invest in yourself through exercise, relaxation, and developing an interest or skill.
- Volunteer. Open your home for meetings.

Start Over

Be bold to begin again

It's normal to feel some reluctance to settle into a new way of life. There's something so *final* about hanging pictures in a new home, getting a new driver's license, going alone into social situations, or accepting unwanted limitations. But each time you choose to make a step toward *accepting* your new life, you're one step closer to *embracing* your new life.

An inner makeover

As you embark on a new stage in life, take an inventory of your mind and spirit. Need a makeover? God offers to remodel and redecorate with the fruit of His Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). The cost? Full access to your "home" - who you are on the *inside*. God will work in you to bring about a Christlikeness in your life, and that Christlikeness will ultimately be reflected in the home you live in.

Start blooming!

Garden soil surrounds a plant, providing the support and nourishment needed for growth. Much like soil is life-giving to a plant, God is life-giving to us. He surrounds us with His love, provides support through His people, nourishes us through His word, and, in Him, our roots can grow deep. Like a plant, we, too, have the capability to bloom.

Now is the time to think about the kind of soil you want for your life as you're putting down roots. When you go through a big life change, you have the opportunity to start over and make different choices. Be in God's word, gather with believers who will encourage you and pray for you, and trust God when old patterns must fall away (necessary pruning!).

Trust God with your loneliness

Loneliness can be the hardest thing to deal with when you've gone through a big life change.

Keep your focus on God. It's tempting to focus on filling our lives with people, things, or activities to escape from loneliness. Look to God to fill all the lonely places and spaces in your heart and mind. Through this, you will begin to build a deeper relationship with God. Then, you will come out the other side of loneliness a stronger, more confident, and fulfilled woman.

Your identity: lost in life change, found in Christ

It's easy to find our identity in our roles - what we DO. When a big life change uproots us from those roles, we can feel lost and aimless. God will use this time to draw you to Himself. Let Him tell you who you are. Allow Him to show you who He made you to be. Your true identity is found in Christ, not in your appearance, your performance or your status. Let Him reveal it to you.



What steps can I take to move forward?

- Be available. Let people know you have the time and desire to help out. They won't know if you don't tell them.
- Be aware. Be sensitive to what is going on in people's lives.
- Ask, don't assume. Ask what the specific need is, how you can help, or when is best to get together.
- Be accepting. Don't judge a person from the outside until you know her on the inside. No one has it all together.
- Take action. If God nudges you to do something, do it. Don't put it off and end up regretting that you did nothing or find that it's too late to do anything.

Move Forward

With greater contentment, peace, and joy

Contentment may seem like a distant dream, but don't lose hope! The key lies in making a choice to live above your circumstances.

You live above your circumstances when you...

...**focus on God and His word** (Read it like it was written to you personally - because it was.),

...**allow God to use your struggles to transform you** (Expect God to redeem hardship - because He will.),

...**embrace God's presence** (Talk to God like He's there with you - because He is.),

...and **recognize that life is more than your circumstances**. Then you will know the contentment, peace, and joy that come from an intimate relationship with Him.

Is Jesus enough when everything is taken away?

Reach out

When you're ready to move forward, you're more able to see needs in others. Now's the time to practice hospitality by reaching out and inviting in.

Be aware of the needs around you. Come alongside someone who needs a helping hand in your new community. Encourage someone with an act of kindness or a note of reassurance. Say yes to a request to serve - even if it's out of your comfort zone. Take time to be with someone who is lonely or in a crisis. Be a good listener. Your presence alone can have a big impact.

Learn more about letting go, starting over, and moving forward with your life in *After the Boxes are Unpacked* by Susan Miller. Available at JustMovedShop.com



Moving . . . Again by Dina Matthews

When I landed, THUNK, in the desert, someone directed me to *After The Boxes are Unpacked*. I read the book *and* attended the study with Susan Miller. Let me just admit, I was floored at what I needed to examine, confront, and accept as I learned to trust God through those three principles: Let Go, Start Over and Move Forward.

I had a decision to make. I could hold on to my fears, anger, and sadness, or I could start giving it to God. The best choice I've ever made was to hand all that over to Christ and that choice happened because of Susan's study and the way I saw Christ reflected in the leaders of that group.

Since attending the study, periodically I've needed to let go, start over, and move forward in my heart about various transitions in life, and those lessons from my study have served me well.

But we're moving again. This time we leave two children behind—each in different universities in different states. Then I'll limp myself and my youngest child to join my husband in a third, entirely different state. Oh, and my elderly father will be coming to live with us as well. Yep.

Awesome. This move feels like a volcanic explosion. With such gargantuan change coming again, you bet your biscuits I am reading this book again. What a blessing to have the book to read right this very minute, nestled inside my volcano.

God is already pouring those scriptures and the comfort of others' moving stories over me! It's my time to remember that I'm not crazy and I'm not (that) horrible and I'm not alone.

"Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD" (Psalm 31:24, NIV).

This book reminds me again to take heart and hope. God, You are so, so good. To You be the glory.

Occasionally we reach into the archives to share a witty and wise piece of writing by Dina Matthews. She was a treasured member of the Just Moved Ministry staff and her gift of communication, deep compassion for others, and great sense of humor are missed! Texas is lucky to have her!

Find your "happy place" when you join an *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* study group!

An *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* study group connects you to other women who have been uprooted by a move, gets the conversation going about emotional realities, and offers practical ideas and paths to spiritual growth as you begin a new stage of life in a new town. Going through the study with others who understand what you're going through is a lifeline when you're new in town. Inquire today about a virtual or in-person study!

Learn more at justmoved.org/after-the-boxes-study



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Sign up for the Just Moved Community at justmoved.org/just-moved-community



Connect with other uprooted women at facebook.com/groups/JustMovedCommunity

THE essential resource for every woman who's been uprooted by a move

For almost 30 years, *After the Boxes are Unpacked* has helped thousands of uprooted women face a move with greater peace, hope, and trust in God.

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