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"DAY 39 AND COUNTING "

Theme: Growing with change

Characters:

GOD wearing white robe, headband and tennis shoes, sitting
in a director's chair on top of a platform

MARTHA Noah's wife-looks disheveled, smudged apron, dirt
streak on her face. Wears sackcloth with a colorful
rainbow caftan underneath

MARTHA: God, what are you doing down here, looking like that?

GOD: Who said God had to be up in heaven?

MARTHA: By the way, what's with the headband and tennis shoes? I wasn't expecting you to be up on that platform in a director's chair, either.

GOD: (aside to the audience) Isn't this special? Martha, you know your body is a temple and it's your responsibility to keep it in the best shape possible. Besides, I think that from time to time everyone should be up on a pedestal and given some recognition.

MARTHA: Well, if that's your plan, why have you brought me to this particular low point in my life?

MARTHA: Have you got a while, God?

GOD: . As a matter of fact, Martha, I've got all the time in the world. And you have at least one more day of rain, so you might as well get it all off your chest.

MARTHA: Well.... to start with, this "cruise" that you sent me on is the pits. Most women invited on an ocean-going voyage get to pack up their best outfits and look forward to several weeks of luxurious living. What did I get? Forget luxury! Because Noah's got to build the boat first, I got my back yard torn up for weeks. I lost my flowers, my peace and quiet, and my happy home. Now, do-it-yourself projects are fine. At least Noah wasn't down at the local tavern. But after a while, you should have heard the neighbors! What's wrong with Noah? Is he out to lunch? Is he one brick short of a load? Rowing with only one oar in the water? Little did we know it'd eventually be no oars and lots of water!

And my bridge club! All the little hints and questions: Noah planning a fishing trip? You two taking separate vacations this year? He building his own dog house out there? I'm sure the grapevine had us ready to split up at any moment.

GOD: Martha, Martha, surely you wouldn't let a little gossip or name-calling bother you that much. After all, sticks and stones may break your bones, but words can never hurt you.
(getting a brainstorm) Boy! That's a good line. I'll have to remember to write it down in my book! No, on second thought, that's not very Christian.

MARTHA: What's "Christian," God?

GOD: Never mind, Martha. That's another story we don't have time for today. Besides, this ark wasn't Noah's idea; I told him to do it. I gave him specific directions, in fact. Didn't he tell you?

MARTHA: No, he never tells me anything until he has to. Oh, well, now that I think about it, he's had a secret yearning to be a sailor....used to mention something about wanting to win the Old Testament Cup or set a new time for the Genesis Book of Records. I suppose it appeals to the little boy in him. But building this ark was just the start of my problem. By the way, do you

have an aspirin, God? Rainy weather always makes my sinuses act up. Today is definitely Excedrin Headache Number 39!

GOD: No aspirin yet, Martha. You'll have to wait a few thousand years for that. How about just sitting down for a few minutes with your feet up? That helps sometimes.

MARTHA: That's easy for you to say, God. You obviously haven't had to live on an ark with a husband who keeps playing with doves, three sons, two daughters-in-law, a servant girl and Wild Kingdom.

GOD: Come on, now, Martha, It can't be that bad. In the beginning I created the heaven and the earth... and I saw that it was good. Surely you can appreciate the magnificence of my creation and see how clever my plan is for saving the earth.

MARTHA: Yes, God, but you didn't have to save it all under one roof -- mine! I've got one daughter-in-law who can't cook, and I just have to sit there and keep my mouth shut. I've got another daughter-in-law who is so dumb she tries to hang out the laundry in the room where the birds are all flying around. I've got a servant girl who hasn't got time to do the chores because she's too busy flirting with my teenage son Shem, who is so macho that he's got to show off for her by trying to dribble up and down the ark with the armadillo or take golf swings using the pink flamingo.

GOD: Minor annoyances, Martha. Where is your patience? It is a virtue, you know.

MARTHA: Well, it doesn't happen to be one of mine. You know how you're always saying something like "Train up a child In the way that he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it"? I'd like to see what you could do with these sons you gave me. Ham is always down with the animals and never, but never, wipes his feet or washes his hands before coming to dinner. He keeps mumbling something about trying to corner the fertilizer market so that when we

finally land, if we ever do, he'll make a million. And that dummy Japheth can't understand why we won't let him take one of the worms to go fishing! Honestly, God, when you were passing out brains, these men of mine must have thought you said "trains" and went to the station by mistake. And then what did you put us on? A boat. Honestly!

GOD: Martha, it's not how many brains a person has, but the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom. (suddenly is impressed by what he's just said) Another good one! I really must get started with that book. I don't suppose you've been taking notes on our conversations, have you?

MARTHA: No, I didn't think I was expected to be a secretary along with everything else.

GOD: All I really expect from my creatures is a little fear, love and respect.

MARTHA: I wish, God, you hadn't put quite so much fear into Noah about this whole project. If you hadn't been so specific about taking two of everything, he might have had the sense to skip over the mosquitoes, flies and snakes. He also wouldn't have had to take off in such a hurry without giving me time to collect my pet unicorn and a few other things I didn't have time to pack. He's ready, you send one little drop of rain, and do my wishes matter? No. We have to leave right now!

GOD: Martha, Martha, Martha. I think you have forgotten that I put women in the world to bring love. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it does not insist on its own

way; It is not irritable or resentful.... It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. So faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

MARTHA: God, that's beautiful. When you write your book, please don't forget to put that part in. It's really helped. I'll tell you right now, though: I may be able to handle the love part better after this little pep talk, but I'm not too sure about having any faith or hope for the future.

GOD: Come on, Martha, it's time to grow up. When you were a child, you spoke like a child, thought like a child, reasoned like a child. When you became a woman, you gave up childish ways. For now you see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now you know in part; then you shall understand fully. (an aside to the audience) Actually, I'm really saving these lines for the Corinthians, but I thought they might help Martha out right now.

MARTHA: Well, I can try, but this has definitely not been easy.

GOD: Hang in there, Martha; you've come a long way. I understand that this has been a very difficult series of changes for you to go through.

MARTHA: Change? That's an understatement. And speaking of change, (referring to hotflashes) is it getting hot in here? I'm too old for all this....

GOD: You'll manage, Martha. Women always do. You'll grow from this experience.

MARTHA: Talk about growing, I'm afraid there's a population explosion going on in this boat.

GOD: What do you mean?

MARTHA: I mean that Noah wasn't very observant when he picked out his pairs of animals. Some must have been pregnant when they came on board. In the last week I've been midwife to the birth of an elephant, a giraffe, an alligator, and I've lost count of how many rabbits we have now.

GOD: How exciting for you! What an opportunity to witness new life!

MARTHA: I wasn't really looking at it as an opportunity. It seemed to me like more clean-up duty and late night hours.

GOD: Being present at birth is a privilege. I know how I felt when I placed the sun and the moon and the stars in the sky. It was good. I know how I felt when I filled the oceans and land with beautiful animals. It was good. I know how I felt when I first saw Adam and Eve. It was good! Birth of any kind is always cause to rejoice.

MARTHA: I forget to look at it that way sometimes. . . . I just think about not being able to sleep through the night. I don't think that male elephant gave two honks that his mate was giving birth. And to think that female elephant was pregnant for two years! Nine months is long enough, thank you very much.

GOD: You're welcome. Oh, and Martha? About that male elephant. He cares. He's just a little thick-skinned.

MARTHA: You know, God.... giving birth really hurts.

GOD: (with an understanding look) I know.

MARTHA: Why couldn't you let men give birth instead of women?

GOD:- Let me put it this way. When Noah was building the ark, what happened when he would hit his thumb with the hammer?

MARTHA: (looking amused) I see your point.... I always thought of giving birth as a woman's burden. It never occurred to me that it celebrates women's strength.

GOD: It's all in the way you look at it. It's your choice to look at it any way you please.

MARTHA: Ok. I'll try to have a more positive outlook. But, God, you're going to have to help me with this brand new life in a brand new world. I don't think I'm going to find this change an easy one. In the beginning, Eve at least didn't know anything different.

GOD: I know, but I chose you because you're strong and resourceful. You'll manage just fine. I know you will. It's all in the attitude you choose.

MARTHA: But I'm scared.

GOD: Of course you are. This is a big change, a very great challenge. You have a right to be scared.

MARTHA: I hate change. It upsets things. It's stressful. I feel out of control.

GOD: That's how you choose to look at change. You can fix that fear, fix that stress, and fix that loss of control.

MARTHA: How?

GOD: By regarding every change in your life as a chance to grow come out bigger, braver, and more beautiful.

MARTHA: I don't understand, God.

GOD: Why not look at every change in your life in terms of butterflies? '

MARTHA: You've got to be kidding. I'm tired of looking at animals.

GOD: I'm not kidding. I pride myself on having a sense of humor; after all, I made the hippopotamus, church potlucks, two year olds, and teenagers. But, this time I'm being serious.

MARTHA: Go on.

GOD: Well, when you first encounter a change, you might start out by plodding along like the many-footed caterpillar.

MARTHA: (dubious, but listening) Yeessss....

GOD: Then, you get busy and energetic and start doing something, just like the caterpillar starts weaving its cocoon. You do what you, have to do. You prepare to meet your challenge.

MARTHA: Ok. Then what?

GOD: Then the caterpillar turns into a pupa and rests in its quiet dark cocoon.

MARTHA: Rest? Rest! I'm getting no rest around here. Take last night, for example. The weasel bit the pig. The pig screeched. That woke up the rhino and that made the ostrich squawk. It was all downhill from there.

GOD.: Stick to the point, Martha. (talks to Martha plus it's an aside to the audience) We all need to take a retreat once in a while. We need to make our own cocoons. We need to find a time and a space to be quite and think, to pray about the changes in our lives.

MARTHA: You make change sound so wonderful....

GOD: It is! Don't forget. I built a randomness into your world when I created Adam and Eve. Change is there for you to embrace - not to push away. It's there to strengthen you beyond what you are right now. It's there to make you wiser, more compassionate, more open-minded. And

because I am unchanging, I will be here as an anchor for you as you face change in order to continue growing.

MARTHA: And this luxury cruise with Marlin Perkins is supposed to do all that for me?

GOD: It will - if you don't stay in your cocoon.

MARTHA: How do I get out of my cocoon? (under her breath she adds) How do I get off this ark? (she is so disgusted she takes off her apron and throws it down at her feet)

GOD: (very assertively) Resolve - right now - to take a positive attitude. Look for the good in change, not the bad. And you'll emerge beautiful and free-like the butterfly. (a very long pause needed here for the information to sink in; then say softly....) Stretch your wings, Martha..

MARTHA: (removes sackcloth, revealing multi-colored caftan underneath; she reaches her arms toward the sky and gets an excited look on her face)

I think I see a rainbow, Lord!

GOD: (coming down the ladder, walking toward Martha, smiling) The rainbow is my promise to you - that lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age. (clasps hands with Martha or embraces her) I love you !