

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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Meredith: Hello, friends. Welcome to the Proverbs 31 Ministries podcast, where we share biblical truth for any girl in any season. I'm your host, Meredith Brock, and today I am here with two super fun people. So I'm going to spoil the surprise right now. I want to welcome Hannah Schindler from our First 5 team, and Joel Muddamalle, our theological extraordinaire here at Proverbs 31 Ministries. Welcome to the show, friends.

Hannah: Thank you for having us.

Joel: So good to be here.

Meredith: I'm so excited about today.

Hannah: I am, too.

Meredith: Now, the reason I've got ... I get to share! The reason I've got these two people here with me today is something really special that we've been working on for a very long time here at Proverbs 31. And I finally convinced everyone to give me permission to tell our friends here on the podcast. So, Hannah.

Hannah: Yeah, that's right. Meredith. And so again, we have been so excited about this for a long time. We've been working on something for almost a year, and it's going to be so special. So usually when you hear us talk about our study options, like First 5 or Online Bible Studies, we're talking about two different departments within Proverbs 31 that kind of do their own thing throughout the year. And in First 5, we're app based, and go through a book of the Bible at a time, focusing on a passage of Scripture, or a few verses of, for each day. And Online Bible Studies is a community of women who do five to six topical book studies a year, and their content is delivered mainly through the study blog on the Proverbs 31 website. But, drumroll please.

Meredith: Oh, tell us!

Hannah: For the first time ever, both First 5 and Online Bible Studies are going to study the same thing, so that we are all growing in our knowledge and experience of Scripture together.

Joel: This feels like a dream.

Meredith: It's amazing. We have been working towards this for so long, you guys.

Hannah: For so long.

Meredith: And I am really, really excited to tell our listeners the name of the study. And it is called *The Answers to Your Deepest Longings: 40 Days Through the Bible*. Now, for some of you right now, you just stopped breathing a little bit —

Joel: Panic.

Meredith: Because you're like, "Oh my gosh, are you going to make me read through the whole Bible in 40 days? But y'all, don't worry. We're not going to read through the whole Bible in 40 days; we are going to take 40 days to understand the overarching storyline and narrative of the entire Bible in 40 days. And so if you've ever felt confused about, wait a minute, what happened back there in Genesis, and why in the world does it have anything to do with over here in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? And then there's all these books in between and it's very confusing, and what do they all have to do with each other? This is the study for you. It's going to be fantastic.

Hannah: Yes, absolutely. And so the coolest thing about this study is we are going to be unpacking what we titled as longings, and they're going to be these eight identified longings that Jesus ultimately fulfills. So yes, we will get an overview of the Bible, but we'll also spend time focusing on a specific longing, like a desire, on how we ultimately find all satisfaction in Jesus. And I just cannot wait for that.

So this is going to be our largest study ever, and our teams have worked so hard on writing the content and creating an experience that works specifically for you. So you can either use the First 5 app to participate like all my First 5 friends or sign up to receive daily emails from Online Bible Studies. No matter which way you choose to participate, there will be one joint community group on Facebook for everyone to access. So to find out more, go to Proverbs31.org/study, and this study starts on September seventh, so go ahead and register for free today.

Meredith: I really can't wait to have our whole ministry going through the Bible together for 40 days. I just know the Lord's going to move in a really powerful way during this time. And honestly, with the season we've collectively been in as a nation, and the world, really, there's never been a better time to be unified through the Word of God. This is going to be a really, really special thing. So friends, my podcast friends, don't miss out! Go sign up. I want to see you hanging out in that Facebook group with us.

Hannah: I know. It's going to be so great. And so like Meredith said as well, I'm not the only person here. We have Joel hanging out with us today because we wanted him to spend a little time digging into this theme of longing. Joel, I know it's something we've been talking about for what feels like a year now. And so can you help us unpack this theological standpoint so that we have a good foundation for this upcoming study? And while you do that, Joel, we have a few questions that we are going to ask you. So I hope you're ready.

Joel: Let's go for it.

Hannah: Okay. So the first question Joel is, what was the Garden of Eden like before the fall? Because ultimately it really doesn't seem real, or obviously any reality that we can connect with today.

Joel: Yeah. I think that's such a good question. And if you have been hanging out with us at Proverbs 31 Ministries or with our friend, Lysa TerKeurst, or just been with her on the podcast for any bit of time, you know that somehow we always go back to the Garden of Eden.

Hannah: This is true.

Meredith: Always.

Joel: Genesis 2 and 3 might be literally falling off of my Bible because I just keep going back there. And yet, Hannah and Meredith, one of the things that I think we find often is when we think about how we think about those first three chapters of Genesis... When we think about those first three chapters of the book of Genesis, often our minds go directly to creation, right? But we think about it at a 30,000-foot level, right? And then it goes right to this anticipation of the fall.

And I know myself, I don't often pause and slow down and think about what was the reality of the Garden of Eden, and how would Adam and Eve lived? What would have their relationship been like with the Lord? Because we're so quick to get to the fall, and it's not that we shouldn't get to the fall, but I think there's something very instructive for us to really think about what the Garden was like prior to the fall. Because honestly, it gives us a sense of assurance and hope for what eternity is going to look like with Jesus.

And so a couple, really quick, just things that I think pop up to me. One is that when God creates Adam and Eve in the garden, Genesis 1, Genesis 2, he gives them a command. They're told to name the animals. They're told to cultivate or to keep, it's the Hebrew word *shâmar*; it means to guard or to protect Eden. This is Genesis 2:15. They are given a vocation prior to the fall. And so it seems like the Garden of Eden is not some ethereal place that just people are maybe floating around in. And —

Meredith: Because that's totally how I envision it. Just so you know, when I think about the Garden of Eden, definitely people are not walking. They're floating, and they're all in white robes. That's how I envision it. And if our listeners could see us right now, I'm flapping my arms like I am some kind of ethereal being.

Hannah: Right, exactly. And yet that is totally not the picture, the language. I mean, it really seems like this is a very literal place, the description of rivers, of trees, of animals. And so it seems that prior to the fall, the Garden of Eden was really paradise. It was a place to live, but the thing that made it so beautiful was the presence of God. And the thing that made it so, I'm going to say magical, but the thing that made it so magnificent is that God and His people lived in relationship together with a purpose.

And so it seems like there was this train. This is the illustration that I use, there was a train, and God had created this brilliant railroad track. If you ever crossed over railroad tracks, and there's this destination that you know you're going to get to, and God has taken Adam and Eve like a train and put them on the railroad track. And He said, "Let's go." And then as you're going, somehow this detour took place and we don't quite know where the detour is going to go. And in Genesis 3, what I believe takes place is not a destruction or a total denial of God's purpose for Adam and Eve. There was this detour that took place. And so from Genesis 3, all the way through Revelation, we find the Lord actually building the railroad track to take us back to that original destination. And we're going to see that Eden has a crucial role in that.

I love that. Joel. I feel like that brings so much more clarity to what many of us, I think, were taught in Sunday school, right? Where it's like, you jump over all this context of what was actually happening in the Garden. And why did God ... It kind of almost feels like when you're little, it kind of felt mean, what God did to Adam and Eve, by bringing them to this earth and then throwing them out of the car, and you disobedient little meanies. When that's not at all, like you said, He had them on a destination, and now we're in the middle of the detour, guys.

Joel: Yeah.

Hannah: It's pretty wild.

Joel: And there were actually pleasurable things in that destination. The fruit, all of the fruit, y'all. All of the fruit, not just one little tiny piece of fruit, all of the fruit — this brilliant orchard that is planted. All of it was good and pleasant to them. So it seems like even Adam and Eve are eating prior to the fall, because God says literally, "Yo, by the way, all this fruit is here. The water is here, the planet. I mean, you can enjoy the goodness of my creation." So what was Eden like before? It seems like just brilliant.

Hannah: Yeah. Like a more beautiful whole earth.

Joel: Absolutely.

Meredith: Okay. So you touched on something there that I think is maybe ... Maybe it's just me. Adam and Eve were eating, which means they were fully human. Is that right?

Joel: Yeah. Yeah, that's such good question. So I'm going to use two phrases for us. One is fully human, and the second one is truly human. Okay? So this is going to feel semantical-

Meredith: Interesting!

Joel: Right? I know. But —

Meredith: Both of our heads turned.

Joel: Yeah. And so again, we're going to use these mile markers, Genesis 1 and 2, and then we're going to look at Genesis 3, and then I want to look at the incarnation, when Jesus comes. Right? So in Genesis 1 and 2, Adam and Eve are fully human. Fully human. And yet, like what we just talked about, they still have things to do. They still are to grow. They're still to mature. God tells them to not build in Eden massive walls, and create a monastic society where they hide away from the rest of the chaos of the world. No, actually what God says is, "By the way, my image that I have given you is supposed to be multiplied and spread to the ends of the Earth."

And so the glory of God would be spread out to the ends of the Earth. So the idea is, Adam and Eve are a type of, this is what an old Testament scholar, Gordon Wenham, says. He says they're a type of vice regents, they're a type of royalty. And they were the agents of God, who is King. And they're actually designed and destined to spread the kingdom to the ends of the Earth, right? So we see all of this imagery. Now, what happens at the fall in Genesis 3 is that they still remain fully human. However, the fall disrupts their nature. So their humanity actually is broken. Their humanity is disrupted, and yet they still retain the full image of God. And yet they don't cease to be human. They're not subhuman. And so this is a bit of a mystery here, but at the same time I think it's really important for us as we think about mankind. That we don't think of mankind as something less than, but we see mankind as no longer being able to meet the goal that God had given them.

And so there's a problem. There's a massive problem. And this is where enter Jesus. Jesus picks up where the first Adam and the first Eve left off. They are unable to meet the standards of God's design and purpose, and yet Jesus is what I would call truly human. Jesus isn't just fully human, He is truly human. And in fact, He is now the goal for the rest of us. So in Christ, you and I, when we put our faith in Jesus, when we submit ourselves to the kingship of the Lord, we actually regain our full humanity. And so sanctification, this idea of becoming more and more like Jesus, is where not only are we fully human, but we learn how to become truly human. And if we want to know what it means to be truly human, we look at King Jesus.

Meredith: Wow. That is so good.

Hannah: That is so good. So, okay. Keep on this concept of Adam and Eve talking about, okay, we now know that they were fully human and truly human. What about before the fall, Joel? Did they have longings when they had full access to God in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2.

Meredith: Before we, before we jump into that question, I feel like we need to address the word "longings."

Hannah: Yeah.

Meredith: Because that's a weird word, right?

Hannah: Yeah.

Joel: Yeah.

Meredith: Like, I want our listeners to think about when you maybe ... and you guys help me unpack this a little bit, because I know you've been studying this much more than I have ... but that's not a word we necessarily use all the time in everyday conversation, right?

Hannah: Yeah.

Meredith: But as we really looked to title this study, we realized that all of us are really driven by desires inside of us.

Joel: Something, yeah.

Hannah: Yes.

Meredith: And so maybe right now our listeners are longing. Maybe you're a single woman and you're longing to get married, and to meet that guy, and to start a family. That's that desire that we're talking about, right? That thing deep down inside that you want. It's more than wanting a chocolate bar. It's something deeper. It's like I've said to Joel a couple of times recently of, there's something missing from my life. That's the sentence that I would use if I weren't going to use the word "longings" because of studying for this for a while now. I would say, there's something missing from my life. And that is the thing that I'm longing for, that I have this desire, this ache. And ultimately, I think that's where I've learned how often do we ask ourselves or say that to ourselves, but knowing Jesus is the only one who really can fulfill whatever that something missing, that ache is?

Hannah: That ache is. Yeah.

Meredith: And so I think it's important for us to identify that, because you see why it might be kind of weird to think that Adam and Eve had longings, right? Did they, if they were in this perfect, amazing place, did they have longings?

Joel: Yeah, I think so, absolutely they had longings. So here's, I'm going to pull from an ancient church father, an African Bishop by the name of Saint Augustine, and he's one of my favorites. He wrote a brilliant-

Meredith: [crosstalk] Augustine.

Joel: Come on, Augustine. And Augustine uses this illustration. He says that prior to the fall that Adam and Eve have this heart, God gives them this heart. And this heart is a pump, and the pump, it pumps out love. And yet at the fall, the pump doesn't become disabled.

Meredith: Right.

Hannah: Right.

Joel: It doesn't stop. It doesn't stop pumping out love — actually, sin like a sledgehammer comes and knocks this pump off kilter. And so now, the pump at one point had an orientation, and it pointed towards the object of its affection, which is Jesus, which is God, right, prior to the fall. And then at the fall, it gets knocked off kilter. And then this love pump begins to pump and to seek after lesser loves. Things that actually could never truly fulfill them the way that the Lord could absolutely fulfill them.

And so what we find with Adam and Eve is that prior to the fall, they're still motivated. They're still living, and they're still loving, and they're still acting, and they're still doing. And yet what takes place is, at the fall, that desire, that longing to be obedient and to act out of the goodness of what they've experienced from God Himself, it becomes disrupted and it gets knocked off kilter. And humanity ever since ... I love the example of the chocolate bar, Meredith, because even if we think of something like a chocolate bar, we'd be like, a chocolate bar, you know? But I always want to do thought experiments. I'm like, well, what is it underneath the chocolate bar, that is underneath that? And I'm trying to, I want to do this —

Meredith: Right, right, right.

And I'm try to, I want to do this —

Hannah: [Crosstalk] driving right to that chocolate bar.

Joel: Right, right, because I am about, listen y'all —

Hannah: It's like, why do you want a Snickers?

Joel: A Snickers bar.

Hannah: I know it. Yep.

Joel: Hannah knows me too well. She knows me too well. If you look at my study, I've got this little bag. People notice it on IG sometimes. It's a Starburst bag. I've got a ... And that's my little, but why is it that I have a Starburst? What is the longing there? And I'm just going to let you know, sometimes I hit something theologically and my head just wants ... And you know, the greatest feeling is reaching over to the little star and grabbing all ... They're Flav Reds, you know? So it's a bag full of all ... But there's something deep down; there's a longing; there's a desire.

And even in that silly example, it's still a shadow of a greater example that says actually, Joel, the longing that you're looking for, the feeling of you just hit something and you can't explain it? Instead of going for a fleeting pleasure, like a pink Starburst, which is amazing, turn really to Jesus. And I should actually thank the Lord, so don't hear me mystify this too much. I actually want to thank God for the common grace of a pink Starburst, that is present in that moment to get my mind off of that. You know? And so yeah, I think absolutely they have longing. Absolutely, they have desire. It's just that the heart has been knocked off kilter.

Meredith: So if you were to boil that down, really Adam and Eve, when they were in the Garden, their longing was to glorify God.

Joel: To do God's will.

Meredith: Right. To be fully obedient to Him, and being fully obedient to Him, pumped out love to all of creation. And that was their longing, was to fully reflect Him. And in doing that love all of creation, their fellow humans and their fellow Earth, the Earth itself, and the animals that filled it.

Hannah: That's beautiful. That is really beautiful.

Joel: Yeah. Yeah, vertical and horizontal.

Meredith: Yes, I love it. I think we have one more question. Is that right?

Hannah: Yeah. Go ahead.

Meredith: Okay. Let's drop it on him and see what he's got.

Hannah: Perfect. So Joel, why did they long for the fruit, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil before they actually sinned?

Meredith: Oh, good question. I would not want to answer that.

Joel: My mom's calling me, guys.

Meredith: You've got to go?

Joel: I've got to go. No, this is again, such a good question. And one of the things that I've been thinking about is why the presence of the tree. Why?

Meredith: Oh, man.

Joel: If you love us so much...

Hannah: Why put it there?

Joel: Why? And y'all I think, so I've been studying a little bit about this. And so here's what's interesting. In Genesis 1 and 2, we have the presence of the tree, and then you have Eden that is guarded. When Adam and Eve, who are actually guards, they're supposed to protect Eden, they leave, they're sent out as actually a means of grace. Lysa, our friend, teaches this brilliantly in her teaching series, and it's actually an act of love that God sends them out, because if they eat of the fruit, after they fall, they will live in eternal separation from God.

God says, "No, I cannot have that happen." And so, but why is that tree there? We find Eden, and this tree show back up, I mean from Genesis 3 on, right. There's some images and illustrations throughout the Bible, but we profoundly find, I want you to go two places. In Revelation 2:7, here's what John, who's an exile in Patmos, says. He says, "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches, to the one who conquers,*" listen to this: "*I will grant to eat of what the Tree of Life, which is in the paradise of God.*" Right?

Meredith: Yeah. Yeah, wait, so I want our listeners to listen to this again. Joel is currently in Revelation. So this is the last book of the Bible. This is the end.

Joel: A lot has happened.

Meredith: This is the end, y'all, and we're back.

Hannah: At the Tree of Life.

Meredith: And he's talking about the tree again, and we're back in the Garden again.

Joel: Yeah. And notice the description, "It's in the paradise of God." It's the dwelling of God. Well, where does God dwell in Genesis 1 and 2? In Eden with His people, right?

Hannah: That's right.

Joel: Right?

Hannah: That's right.

Joel: Now, check this out. Revelation 22:2. "*Through the middle...*" The imagery is so brilliant. "*Through the middle of the street of the city,*" I feel like I'm in New York or Chicago, right? "*Through the middle of the street of the city, also on either side of the river.*" So there's this brilliant city, but then there's a river that's running through the entire thing.

Hannah: That sounds awesome.

Joel: That sounds amazing.

Meredith: I want to go there.

Joel: I can go fly fishing, right? The Tree of Life... So I'm going to read that again. "*Through the middle of the street of the city, also on either side of the river, the Tree of Life with,*" catch this, "*its 12 kinds of fruit. Yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree...*" Listen, unbelievable. "*The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*"

Hannah: Wow.

Joel: So I just, I want to pause on that. What is the purpose of the Tree of Life? We've always thought of the Tree of Life as granting the gift of eternal life. Yes, absolutely. But notice in Revelation 22, that we know that in Genesis 3, in particular, in Genesis 11, with Babel that the nations are dispersed, right? And the people groups actually form as a result of Genesis 11 and Genesis 12. We have this thing called the table of nations where all the nations are actually named. I think this is so magnificent that one of the purposes of the Tree of Life is that the leaves itself like a balm will actually heal the nations.

Hannah: Wow.

Joel: And this is something I know that we're desperately longing for today. We want healing to take place amongst people groups, amongst people that we love, even within our own families. And we see indication that God even had a destiny for the Tree of Life there. And now we're still stuck with this question, Lord. Why? Why is it —

Hannah: Why did you put this other sneaky tree up in there?

Joel: What in the world? And here's the thought, there's a difference, I'm going to say between temptation and sin. All right. So just because the presence of the tree in the garden of Eden, in Genesis 1 and 2, was there. And just because Adam and Eve looked at it, the presence of a temptation doesn't naturally instantly mean that they sin. The sin happens at a moment where they see a temptation, then it's almost like this simultaneous thing where the heart shifts its affection towards that temptation and then the heart and the action meet together and they reach out and they bite.

So all those things are happening at the same place. But here's what I actually think is the purpose of the tree. I think that the tree is present in Eden, again, Gordon Wenham is the one who really suggests this — that the tree is actually present because it was going to be a gift that was given to Adam and Eve, because they had a purpose. They were actually supposed to go out and to spread the glory of God. And I think as a reward at the very end, if they go and they do it, they're going to experience to eat of the tree, because they have done the good work. And I love that Revelation 22:2. It's, again, that railroad track. It has been built, and now the train is leading us into the garden city of Eden. And at the smack center of the garden city is this brilliant river, which we know the imagery of life. And then here's the tree. And then here are these leaves, fruit, and I will finally be able to partake in this.

And so it was always God's vision for Adam and Eve to partake, and to eat, and to enjoy it. But it's all about timing. It's all about patience. And there is something about obedience. And so I think that's something instructive for us.

Meredith: I think that's really good. Joel. I did a little bit of reading on this cause I really was, there was a season of my life when I was like, that was just mean, God. Why did You do that? Why did You put it there, and then all of humanity just fell apart? And this perfect world, if you wouldn't have just put the tree there. And I can't remember authors, like you remember authors, so everybody, all my podcast friends, please forgive me. But in my reading, I found that where you were saying it was, it was a matter of timing. It was

a matter of patience. I think it was also a matter of maturity, where God was saying He was like a father, y'all. When I realized this ... I have two kids, and guys, I am not going to take the parental guidance off my computers for my 8-year-old little boy.

I'm just not going to do it because he's not mature enough to handle that yet. But y'all, I'm going to teach him how to be. Over time, and patience, and trust. And as he gets older, I am going to teach him, buddy, you can have access to all these things when your heart and your mind knows how to handle it.

Hannah: Wow.

Meredith: And so I've always gone back to that thought of, God wasn't being mean to us. He was saying, I'm going to mature you in time, and will you trust Me to do it?

Hannah: Yeah. That's so great.

Joel: Yeah. That's so great.

Meredith: And they didn't, because they said, "no, I want that now." And man, look at every day. That's how I feel. I don't want to wait for my maturity. My 8-year-old, if I gave him the chance to drive my car right now, he would do it. He would be like, "Oh yeah, ma, hand me the keys. Let's go." You know? And then what would happen? He would wreck that car, and he would hurt himself, and he would hurt other people. And so it was God's kindness to us. His original plan was that we would be able to handle the knowledge of good and evil, but we weren't ready yet. And we jumped the gun, we grabbed the keys, we jumped in the car, and drove, and whoa did we wreck that car.

Joel: Meredith, I just think about our culture today and how counter-cultural what you just said is to us, in a world where Alexa is a voice away, Siri is...

Meredith: I know.

Joel: Amazon Prime is a day away, maybe same day.

Meredith: I like that.

Joel: Instant gratification, you know?

Meredith: I know.

Joel: And yet what God is doing is "hey, there's something about patience that actually matures you to be able to receive this gift. To be responsible with it." That's so good.

Meredith: It's a beautiful thing. It's a beautiful thing. I even think it comes down to aging, right? Our culture has told us aging is so bad.

Hannah: Yeah.

Meredith: Don't age.

Hannah: Right.

Meredith: Botox that face.

Hannah: Yes. Do it all.

Meredith: Do all the stuff to stop yourself from aging. When I think in the original design, aging is beautiful, because you are maturing. In the original design, as you aged, you would have become more like your Creator. You would have gotten more of His heart and more of His mind. And instead, now our whole culture has told us, "No, no, no. Don't age." It's terrible, which just feeds back into this. But maturity, maturity is what we want.

Hannah: Wow.

Meredith: So good stuff. I could talk about this all day long.

Hannah: Yeah, that's so great.

Meredith: Seriously, all day long, I hope our podcast listeners have enjoyed this, because I certainly have. I really can't wait to dig into this study you guys. There is going to be so much gold in this 40 Days study. I hope our listeners, please don't miss out on this guys. I want to hang out with all of you and talk about all of this stuff in our fun Facebook group.

So, when you're ready, go to register, okay guys? It's at Proverbs31.org/study.

Hannah: Yes. And if I can just add one last thing about this study for the 40 Day experience. And so you'll hear us say the 40 days, that's what we've been calling it for so long. And so we have this beautiful long title, but we call it the 40 day study quite frequently. And so about this study, our teams wrote and designed the entire thing. Even Joel and I got to play a part in even writing some of this. And so for the everyday girl who's listening right now, you are represented in this study and even getting to write it. I'm a college dropout, and got to write a part of this Bible study.

Meredith: I love it, and that's crazy.

Hannah: And then we have Joel, who is not a college dropout.

Meredith: He's keeping us between the lines guys.

Hannah: And so, yes, so many people, so much love went into this study. And so it is available for purchase, and I highly recommend grabbing a copy to use each day, because it's going to enhance your study so, so much.

Meredith: It's true. And I want to make it really clear that the content in the app will be totally free. Right? So if you can't afford a Study Guide, same thing with the online Bible study

friends. Guys, the blog is still going to be hopping over there, right? There'll be daily content in both of those places that are totally free. But if you're ready to dig in, if you're ready to really take your Bible study to the next level and understand the 40 Days, understand the full narrative of the Bible, come on. Grab that Study Guide. Let's go to work, because I'm ready for it. So you can get your study guide at the p31bookstore.com. We're really excited about it, if you guys can't tell. It's going to be awesome, but I think it's time to say goodbye to our podcast friends.

Hannah: I know.

Meredith: Thank you guys so much for listening today, and we really can't wait to see you in this study. We hope that today's podcast helped you know the Truth and live the Truth of God's Word, because when you do, we really believe and know it'll change everything.