

Spirituality of Transitions

By Mark Charboneau

Main Premise:

Transitions are gifts from God. Do all you can to get the most out of this experience. Some people rush through transitions, fight them, or just get stuck. On the other hand, transitions are where God might do His best work. Perhaps, this is because they disrupt the status quo, call for faith, and require courage.

The following were notes from a time of discernment I went through, as well as from a book called *Stuck* by Terry Walling.

Discussion questions:

- Describe what you've felt during the last few months.
- List some key words that seem to characterize what's going on right now.
- What's happening between you and God?
- Do you have a sense that there's something more going on right now? If so, what?

These might be the questions that God will have you discover. The three main questions of discernment:

1. Do you understand what I (God) have done in and through your life?
2. Do you understand what it means?
3. Do you understand how to use it in the future?

More than anything else, what God wants from your life is who you are becoming.

Transitions are thresholds we walk through not only to get where we need to be, but also to become who God longs for us to be.

Study the Parable of the Talents Matt 25:14-30.

- What fueled the servant's desire to bury the treasure?
- Consider how dreams and callings in our life are like the treasure entrusted to the servants from the master.
- What is the word spoken to the servant who risked the money in the market? What is the reward?

- What is the word spoken to the servant who buried the money? What was the reward?
- Speak aloud what you believe God has entrusted you.
 - Entrusted resources
 - Entrusted lessons
 - Entrusted gifts
 - Entrusted dreams

Bonnie Ware is a nurse who typically works with people who are in their last chapter of life. From her experiences, she has written a book detailing the top regrets of the dying. Do you know what #1 is? “I wish I’d had the courage to live a life true to myself...” This was the most common. Most people did not honor the dreams that God gave them. They knew that following their dream would take an abundance of determination, some heartache, and a hard long road.

I’ve never met someone who, in their last moments of life said, “I wish I would have played it safer.” It is always the opposite. We were designed to be risk taking, courageous people.

Transitions are often filled with far more questions than answers. Consider these questions:

- Why have I lost my passion?
 - Why can’t I shake this restlessness?
 - Why do I feel isolated?
 - Why do I keep rehearsing tapes from the past?
 - What would happen if I step out?
 - What if I fail?
- Which of these questions sound familiar?
 - If there’s another question you wrestle with, what is it?
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God uses transitions to help followers press into greater clarity about who they are. Self-knowledge is essential for emotional health and coming to terms with one's unique contribution. For these reasons, transitions often include struggles with:

- self-confidence,
- relational tensions with family and friends,
- struggles with self-worth and acceptance, and
- struggles with fear and inadequacy.

- Which of those struggles sound familiar?

- Is there a part of who you are (OR, if applicable) a part of who you are as a couple that is laying dormant? (a dream, a gift, an ability, etc.)

- Consider a transition from your past. As you retrieve this, consider how you felt, what you struggled with, how you got through it, and what God did.

There are usually four stages of a transition:

1. Entry Stage: characterized by emotions of restlessness, confusion, etc. Conflict begins to build. There is a plateau of growth and excitement. The person begins to fulfill roles in life out of obligation and historical knowledge and not from passion or vision.

2. Evaluation Stage: The person looks back. Christ begins a process of bringing redemptive meaning to the past.

3. Alignment Stage: The person surrenders to God's sovereign will and agenda. This is marked by humility, intimacy, and reconnection with God (and spouse).

4. Direction Stage: a way forward begins to break forward. There is a convergence of lessons from the past, dreams for the future, and a way forward.

- Where are you in this cycle? What has God been saying to you?
 - What issues are beginning to surface? What has your response been?
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Four categories to help evaluate:

What's right?

- Where do you sense God's blessing?
- Where have you been affirmed?
- Where do you see God at work right now?

What's wrong?

- Where are you experiencing your greatest struggle?
- Where do you need to focus greater effort?
- Where are you in your journey with God?
- Where do you find yourself resisting God?

What's confusing?

- Where do you feel most bewildered?
- Where are the pieces not coming together?
- Where is the greatest dissonance coming from?

What's missing?

- Where is the greatest gap between problems and answers?
 - Where do you feel free? Where do you feel most bound?
 - Where do you need the greatest help?
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Processing Tools:

There are several tools that might be helpful for you to discern and process what God might be up to in your life together. Consider the following processing tools:

Obedience checks. There might be smaller situations and items that you will feel compelled to surrender. This is an obedience check that will move you into deeper dependence and trust of God. (Example: Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac)

Integrity checks. There might be areas in your life that you need to bring to the light. These checks also might be seen in finding greater temptations in your life. In obedience and faithfulness, you will be moved to greater intimacy with God and one another. (Example: Daniel 1:8-19)

Word checks. During this time, you will need to depend more deeply upon God's Word. As you return to it, God will speak to you in a way that will provide opportunities to follow Him. God will also use this time to build in you a spiritual attentiveness, discernment, and life application. (Example: Ps 119:105, Joshua 1:1-10)

Divine contacts. God might draw you into a new relationship or back into old relationships to provide companionship, wise counsel, and spiritual direction. (Example: Barnabas for Paul in Acts 11:22-26)

Abandonment. Perhaps during this season, it might seem as if God leaves the stage for a while. This is your opportunity to place your trust in God without immediate gratification or response. It's here where you'll grow in maturity, as well as in worship of God.

- Which of these tools do you feel like God wants you to use currently?
 - Which of these tools has God used with you in the past?
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Important! Transitions are sacred places.

God is in no hurry for you to leave this place. Don't resist this. See this as a unique opportunity to uniquely commune with God.

Consider your life five years from now in a place that seems God-ordained.

- What do you wish you would have experienced during this season?
- What do you think will help you best transition?
- If married: What will you want for your marriage?