

## Navigating Transition Pastor David Briggs<sup>1</sup>

What you are about to read was derived from a sermon preached by my good friend, Pastor David Briggs. Listening to him, I was struck by the value of transition. We all experience many transitions as part of our lives. The lesson below will strike a cord in your heart if you allow it to speak to you. Pastor Briggs began with this statement:

*“Your transitional journey begins at an ending  
and ends at a beginning.”*

Since we all experience transition, it's important to understand what it is and how to navigate through it successfully. Change is a way of life. It happens to everyone, whether expected or not. Let's begin the study with words of wisdom from Ecclesiastes:

*Ecclesiastes 7:8-10 (NKJV)*

*“The end of a thing is better than its beginning. The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. {9} Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools. {10} Do not say, “Why were the former days better than these?” For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.”*

In Solomon's wisdom, he warned not to succumb to anger. Pastor Briggs said, *“Anger is the first emotional sign of powerlessness.”* There's a tendency to say what was in the past was better than what's in our futures. This is because we get nervous and even fearful when we don't know what's going to happen, when it's going to happen, or why. (This is essentially a lack of peace that stems from not trusting God for our futures. Change is part of God's plan for our lives. We must understand that we are in His hands. Psalm 91:2 is a confession upon which we all should stand. It can define a pattern of life that says our trust is in the Lord, regardless of the changes we may face.

*Ecclesiastes 8:5 (NKJV)*

*“He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful;  
And a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment,”*

*Psalms 91:2 (NKJV)*

*“I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress;  
My God, in Him I will trust.”*

---

<sup>1</sup> Preached by Pastor Briggs at Trinity Church International, Lake Worth, Florida on 03/23/2013

## Kinds of Change

Pastor Briggs listed nine changes that we may encounter:

### 1. Forced Changes

These occur when circumstances give us no choice. These changes will force us to move from the season we have been in and begin the next season of our lives. The changes may seem good or not so good, but they will cause us to leave what was comfortable and move on.

### 2. Changes Because of Age

These are inevitable changes as time marches on. Pastor Briggs gave the example that in his earlier years, it was not difficult to run, but now with increased age, he finds himself walking. As with age, health may also be a factor. We may want to maintain the health we have or to restore it to what it was. I (Dr. Abramson) have found that my own health issues as I grew older caused me to radically change my diet and take a more healthy approach to what I ate and how I exercised.

### 3. Changes That Time Makes For You

We often procrastinate when there are decisions to be made. There are a myriad of reasons for this, some make sense and others come from doubt or fear. With time, many decisions necessary to make certain changes can be taken out of our hands. When time runs out, our options may too. This may be uncomfortable and could be bad, but it may also be a result of refusing to be pressured into a decision. Thus, it might be a good thing. Most of us have experienced changes over which we lost control because time ran out. The rest of us certainly will sometime in our lives.

### 4. Changes Made By Those Who Outrank You

These are changes forced upon you by a superior in an organization to which you belong. Sometimes, we will not know whether they are good until the new season has begun. Many years ago, I (Dr. Abramson) was a United States Marine, stationed in Hawaii. Life was good. Then, my superiors ordered me to spend the next year on a hill in the countryside of Vietnam. It was 1968 and the Vietnam war was at its height. I am glad I served, but it was not a comfortable or safe time. My superiors demanded that I go, and so I went. It was not my choice to go, but it was an experience that molded me into a very different, and I believe, a far better person. In the midst of this, God had a plan and He saw me safely through. Looking back, I can see how God watched over me, even before I knew and served Him. He was a very present help, even when I was not aware of His loving care for me.

*Psalm 46:1 (NKJV)*

*“God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.”*

## 5. Changes Made When You Are Outvoted

For those of us who live in a democracy, or are part of a group that makes decision by majority consensus, we may experience changes that we would not have voted for but go along with because we respect the value the democratic ways that govern us. This may yield what we consider good results, or may be quite the opposite. In either case, we accept the decision to change as part of the system to which we belong.

## 5. Intentional Changes Within Our Control

When God created humankind, He gave our first parents, Adam and Eve the gift of freewill. Of course, we know this resulted in original sin, but it also provided us the inherent ability to make decisions that would affect our live in positive ways. The greatest of these decisions is to accept Christ as our Lord and Savior. This choice is in our control and cannot be stopped if we desire it. It's a choice of the heart.

## 6. Behavioral Changes

These changes may occur as a result of being forced into them. They may also happen because something in our hearts and minds has changed and affected our perspective on who we are. These changes may also occur because we have changed our opinions on what is worthy of value. Pastor Briggs talked about his and directed his listeners to Romans 12:1-2. These two verses contain not just a plea from Paul to change, but an explanation of the value of changing. Paul defines these changes by labeling them a *“living sacrifice.”* He ties them into the will of God (which should always be the deciding factor in a Christian's decisions to change).

### *Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)*

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

## 7. Changes Into Which You Lead Others

These changes can weigh heavily on a leader, a parent or a superior in an organization. They carry with them the responsibility for the well-being and success of others for whom you hold leadership responsibility. They will be proven to be correct if (similarly to the choices spoken of in Romans 12:1-2) they successfully find the will of God as their targets.

## 8. Mutual Changes In Agreement With Others

These are choices made in concert with others with whom you are partnering. They are built on agreement and consensus. They will reflect the greater good of two or more who agree to make the changes. Perhaps the best example of this, and Pastor Briggs astutely used this illustration, is his forty-two years of marriage. He spoke of the successes he and his wife have had, by finding value in agreeing on the major decisions of their

lives and family issues.

## God-pleasing Change is Biblical Process

The Bible is a collection of narratives filled with change. We find examples of people who chose evil and it brought them negative changes. A prime example of this is the wisest man who ever lived, King Solomon. He chose to exchange his allegiance to God for idol worship to his many wives' gods. This wisest of men became one of history's biggest fools because his view of what was valuable and right were changed. We can learn so much from his bad example. God will help us make good choices if we continue to trust in Him, as we decide to help us face change, as a means to fulfill His will. This is a process well illustrated and encouraged in the New Testament.

*1 Timothy 4:3a (NKJV)*

*"For this is the will of God, your sanctification,"*

The word "*sanctification*" means the process of changing to become more like Jesus. Thus, we become more pleasing to God because we have the heartfelt desire to flow with His will and live new lives in Christ. It's an ongoing process. Positive, righteous, God-pleasing change must be processed as a patterned lifestyle! It's a change in thinking that renovates your mind from the world's way of seeing things. It brings your thinking in line with God's own perspective. Do this and you will become a winner and champion for Jesus! Take the time to search the New Testament. It has a great deal to say about this subject.

### The Nature of Transition A Three-Part Process

In his sermon, Pastor Briggs taught that transition is both situational and psychological (or emotional). This requires us to navigate it with wisdom, care and trust in the Lord. It's a three-part process.

#### First Part of the Process

This involves letting go of the past. In doing this, we accept the end of the current season, whether good or bad. At times, we must also accept the loss of what we valued in the current season that's ending. This could range from the passing of a loved one to the loss of the comforts we have enjoyed. It may also mean the loss of what we have worked hard to build that has given us satisfaction. The classic biblical example of someone who had this experience was Abram. He must have been living a comfortable and fulfilling life, but God called him to leave it behind and transition into something new. Abram had no idea of what he would be facing. He only knew what he would be leaving behind. He chose to let go of the past and move into the future.

*Genesis 12:1 (NKJV)*

*“Now the Lord had said to Abram:  
‘Get out of your country,  
From your family  
And from your father’s house,  
To a land that I will show you.  
{2} I will make you a great nation;  
I will bless you  
And make your name great;  
And you shall be a blessing.”*

Making such an unexpected and life-changing move required absolute trust in God and a willingness to move forward in faith. Apparently, at that moment, Abram had both.

### **Second Part of the Process**

Pastor Briggs called this “The neutral zone.” It’s the inbetween time that follows a decision to accept the transition while not knowing where it’s taking you. This is when faith becomes the bridge to take you from your past to a future, filled with the will of God. It’s the most challenging time. You will have to navigate all kinds of emotions and make many decisions without a great deal to go on. It’s a time that builds character and reinforces your faith in God, so it becomes stronger. It also provides, within the process, the opportunity to know God in a more intimate way. Knowing God better means knowing His will more clearly. Abram pursued this process and even in spite of the times his faith failed, he persevered and the outcomes were *“the perfect will of God.”*

### **Third Part of the Process**

This is the experience of getting past the transition and arriving in the new season. Within this season awaits a new and more understandable sense of purpose. It does not stop with your arrival, but like time itself, this new season progresses. You will find yourself in a process of discovery and potential fruitfulness that will build on your life’s experiences and the knowledge that your faith in God has taken you to. You will know that you have gone beyond the peace of mind that we naturally seek, and have transitioned into the peace of God. This becomes the standard by which you can judge your decisions and rightly select those things that you will continue to embrace for change.

This third part of the process of transition (its completion) holds within itself the continuation of sanctification and growth. You will discover that it will lead to new opportunities for further transitions. Understanding these three parts of the process helps you to understand the plans and purposes God has ordained for your life. It is the assurance that things you have yet to see and experience will be good for you and a blessing to you. It is also the assurance that you will be a greater blessing than ever to others whom you

will influence.

When you leave the past, don't leave the treasures of the past. Take what you have learned and the wisdom you have gained with you through the transition and on to the next season. Exodus tells us that, when they were delivered, the children of Israel left Egypt, taking the treasures of the land of their bondage experience with them. They headed for the promise land, loaded down with good stuff. So here's what to do:

1. Get closure. Say goodbye.
2. Move forward by faith, regardless of any emotional uncertainty.
3. Define and rehearse what you are moving forward to; and how you will make the journey.
4. As you go, adjust as necessary. Focus on and accept what you have defined and rehearsed.
5. Mourn what you must, but keep moving forward.

Prayer, worship and the peace of God are the keys to the process. Let's end this lesson with two valuable examples of these keys. The first is the experience of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail (Acts 16). The second comes from two sets of Scriptural instruction from the Book of Isaiah.

*Acts 16:25-26 (NKJV)*

*"But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. {26} Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed."*

*Isaiah 43:18-19 (NKJV)*

*"Do not remember the former things,  
Nor consider the things of old.  
{19} Behold, I will do a new thing,  
Now it shall spring forth;  
Shall you not know it?  
I will even make a road in the wilderness  
And rivers in the desert."*

*Isaiah 40:28-31 (NKJV)*

*"Have you not known?  
Have you not heard?  
The everlasting God, the Lord,  
The Creator of the ends of the earth,  
Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is  
unsearchable.  
{29} He gives power to the weak,  
And to those who have no might He increases strength."*

*{30} Even the youths shall faint and be weary,  
And the young men shall utterly fall,  
{31} But those who wait on the Lord  
Shall renew their strength;  
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
They shall run and not be weary  
They shall walk and not faint.”*