

Encouraging One Another Through Major Transitions

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Theme Verse

**John
13:34-35**

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Does This Presentation Apply To You?

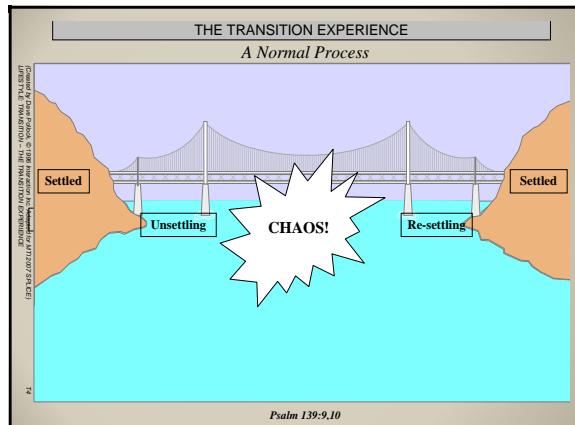
- Have you experienced any big changes in your life in the last few years?
- Have you felt uncertain about what was happening, what happened, or what was going to happen in your family, church, business, or community?
- Have you felt circumstances that occurred led you to an unsteady feeling or like the "rug got pulled out" from underneath you?
- If you or someone you know has felt stress, angst, or anxiety about any of the above, then this presentation is for you!!

Why This Topic?

1. Understanding transition stress can greatly reduce conflict that promotes ongoing stress and distress.
2. Awareness of how others cope allows us to be more in-tune with each other and increases empathy.
3. Having an understanding of ourselves increases our ability to manage personal stewardship.
4. Lowering negative reactions to each other is a key goal in coming together to serve Christ in a common purpose and mission.

TRANSITION STRESS

Individual Differences in How People Respond to Stress



Transitions Often Create “Saturday” Periods

- Think of Good Friday through Easter Sunday.
 - **Friday** - The Disciples experienced a shocking transition on Good Friday.
 - **Saturday** - They spent Saturday in hiding and in shock; not knowing how to make sense of what was happening or what to do next.
 - **Sunday** - Resurrection Sunday brought great joy, new meaning, and purpose for the Disciples.

Adapted from Ortberg Friday, Saturday, Sunday

What Does God Want From Us in Transition?

- When we are in the “Saturday” periods of our lives, we often struggle because we can’t see the bigger picture.
- The question is, “**How do I think and live like Christ, right here, right now in these circumstances?**”
 - As humans, we are heavily invested in feeling certain about our circumstances.
 - God, however, **is not** invested in us feeling certain about our circumstances.
 - He **is** invested in us walking by faith; fully certain of Who it is in whom we believe (**2 Timothy 1:12**).

For Reflection...

Isaiah 26:3 says, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”

C.S. Lewis said, “God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.”

Question: How can I do better at fixing my mind on God while I am working through my circumstances?

Question: Where in my life am I seeking to find happiness and peace in circumstances and people instead of Christ?

EFFECTS OF TRANSITION STRESS

Physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual

Things That Affect How People Cope

- History of previous loss(es) and trauma(s)
- Emotional coping skills
- Information
 - Accurate?
 - Unknowns?
- Social support
- Spiritual foundation
- Personality
- Ability to adapt to change
- Experience with dealing with difficult circumstances.

Physical Effects

- Difficulty sleeping or wanting to oversleep
- Loss of appetite or over-eating
- Feeling “keyed up” or “on edge” OR feeling sluggish and slowed down
- Transient physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, muscle aches, gastrointestinal issues, lowered immune system functioning)

Emotional Effects

- Feeling like you are riding an emotional roller-coaster
- Emotional intensity or numbness
- Feelings of helplessness and/or hopelessness
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Irritability
- Anxiety and/or depression

Emotional Effects Cont'd.

- Rumination
 - Replaying things over and over in your mind focusing on the negatives and difficulty seeing blessings
- Poor concentration
- Worry and your mind is filled with “What ifs?”

Relational Effects

- Clinginess
- Detachment
- Irritability or “Short-fuse” with others
- Isolating from others
- Distrust
- Suspiciousness

Spiritual Effects

- Clinging to faith (positive)
 - “God, I need You now more than ever.”
- Connecting with others (positive)
 - “Bear ye one another's burdens...”
- Spiritual questions
 - “Why, God?”
- Disillusionment
 - “I give up... I quit.”

How Long Does It Take to “Get Over It?”

- Some individuals rebound very quickly while others may deal with issues on a ongoing chronic basis.
- The most intense effects of stressors tend to peak during and shortly after the event occurs.
- Some people function well during the most intense parts of the stress, but they have symptoms emerge once things start to settle down.
- Repeated transitions and stresses can have a **cumulative effect**.

Christ’s Mission

Luke 4:18-19

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

The Implications of Christ's Mission

- In addition to sharing the Gospel, caring for others is part of Christ's mission AND our mission.
- Satan wants us to be harmed through trials, while God wants us to grow closer to Him and to bring Him glory through them.
 - We must encourage each other to look to Jesus for grace, strength, and guidance as we go through trials.
- Showing Christian love to another person takes time, effort, and self-sacrifice....self-sacrifice Jesus exemplified on the cross.

REACTIVITY

13. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.
14. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.
15. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.
16. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.
17. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.
18. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." **James 3:13-18**

Fight or Flight or Freeze

- When we feel emotionally or physically threatened, human beings have rapid emotional and physical responses that lead us to:
 1. **Fight** – we emotionally or physically defend ourselves.
 2. **Flight** – we get away from the situation as quick as we can.
 3. **Freeze** – we feel emotionally helpless and paralyzed.

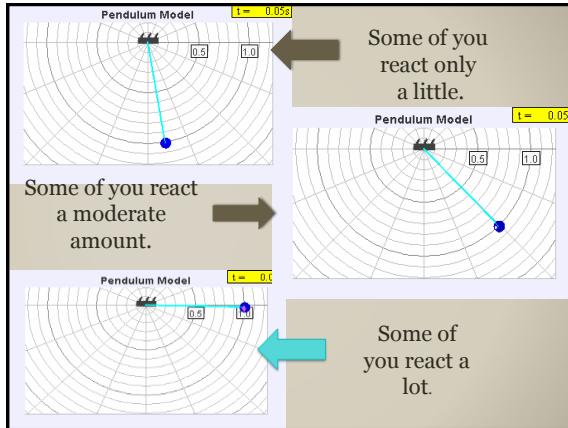
Fight or Flight or Freeze Cont'd.

- Individuals respond to stress, trauma, and loss very differently from each other.
- When multiple individuals in a family, church, or community go through something they often times tend to "bounce off each other" or react to each other's reactions.

Accidentally Creating a Downward Spiral

- As stressed individuals start reacting to each other, they accidentally start bringing out the worst in each other.
- In doing so, they start confirming their own worst fears, react, and then start the cycle over.





Remember!!

A reaction to a reaction
is an over-reaction.

Reacting Versus Responding

Reacting

- Emotions drive: Fight or Flight
- Assume our perspective is correct.
- Assume negative motives for others.
- Win-lose or lose-lose mindset.

Responding

- Gentle, easily entreated. (*James 3:17*)
- Speak the truth in love. (*Ephesians 4:15*)
- Listens, clarifies, and seeks to understand. (*James 1:19*)
- Seek win-win solutions – esteems others higher. (*Philippians 2:3*)



Red, Yellow, or Green: It Matters Spiritually

- The higher our tension level, the more opportunities Satan has to get an advantage with us.
 - In what zone are you more likely to say something you regret later?
 - In what zone are you more likely to do something impulsive and not care about the consequences?
 - In what zone are your emotions more likely to “run the show” rather than you being in submission to the Holy Spirit?

Red, Yellow, or Green: It Matters, Cont'd.

- **It happens to everyone.**
 - Momentary ups and downs are normal and expected.
- **Pray for each other.**
 - Remember Satan doesn't give a struggling person ANY breaks. He is going to try to kick you when you are down.
- **Emotions tend to come in “waves.”**
 - Sometimes a wave of emotion will knock you over. Other times you will feel like you are handling things well. This is normal.

Ephesians 6:11-13

Do you believe these verses?

Do you act like you believe these verses when you are dealing with others in your life?

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

TWO TYPES OF PROBLEM SOLVING

Problem Processing Styles

Individuals tend to work through their problems in one of two main ways:

1. **Thinkers:** Cope primarily by thinking things through.
 2. **Feelers:** Cope primarily by working through emotions.
- Neither style is wrong.
• Both have strengths and weaknesses.

Millon, Grossman, Meagher, Millon & Everly, 1999

Acceptance is Key

- **Romans 12:5**, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."
- **Romans 15:7**, "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."

Thinkers

- Tend to need the following to work through stress, crisis, and transitions:
 1. Emotional distance
 2. Information and facts
 3. Assistance in problem-solving from people they see as competent.
 4. Assistance with re-establishing healthy control.

Feelers

- Tend to need the following to work through stress and crisis:
 1. To share their feelings and experiences.
 2. Acceptance as they sometimes "vent" and poor out their emotions.
 3. Others to empathetically listen and allow time for their emotions to settle.
 4. Want to be understood.

EVENTS AND ISSUES

What are we really talking about?



Event or Topic

Hidden Issues

Separating Events from Issues

- There are two layers to most conversations:
 - **Events** – the topic at hand
 - **Issues** – the “under-the-surface” feelings, meanings, and goals
- Always seek to communicate on the same issue.
- Many conflicts are never solved because the people talking are actually arguing about different hidden issues.
- It is a loving act (though often a challenge) to work at understanding why another person is reacting to an issue the way he or she is.

Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg Fighting for Your Marriage

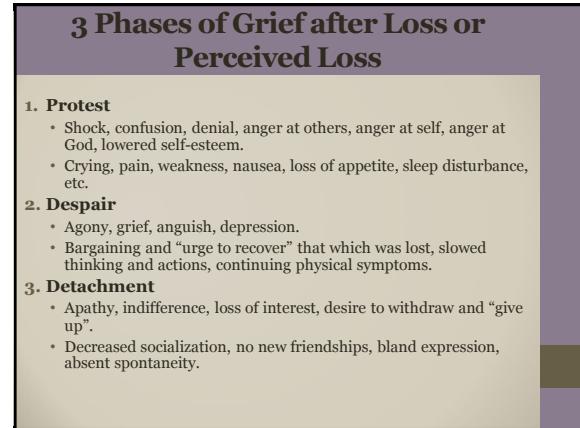
TRANSITIONS AND LOSS

Galatians 6:2

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Types of Losses

- Transitions always involve loss(es)
 - Some are welcome losses while others catch us by surprise.
- Physical - Symbolic
- Acknowledged - Unacknowledged



Hebrews 4:15-16

15. *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

16. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

STAGES IN THE JOURNEY

The ups and downs of groups trying to work together.

Stages of Development

- Groups go through predictable stages of development as they come together, try to organize, and then come together for a shared mission and purpose.
- Don't be surprised if it feels like your group seems to vacillate between “We're doing well!” and “It feels like the wheels just fell off!”

Tuckman's Group Development Model

Stages of Development Cont'd

- **Forming:** people come together around a common purpose.
- **Storming:** details and snags emerge leading to conflict.
- **Norming:** the new normal starts to form and conflict subsides.
- **Performing:** the group functions well as it pursues its mission.

Tuckman's Group Development Model

UNDERSTANDING TRIANGLES

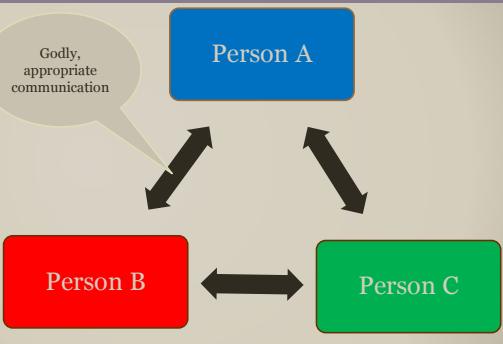
Common Communication Traps

Dealing with Conflict

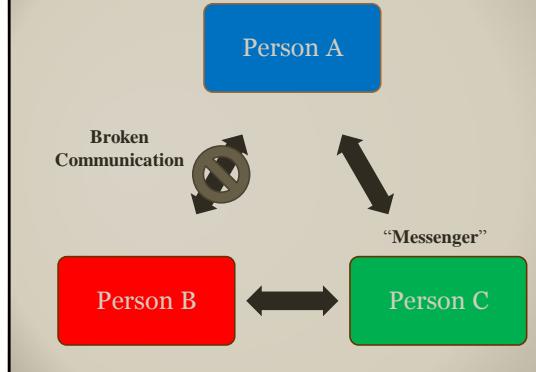
- Work through conflicts and grievances as quickly as possible.

Colossians 3:12-14. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”

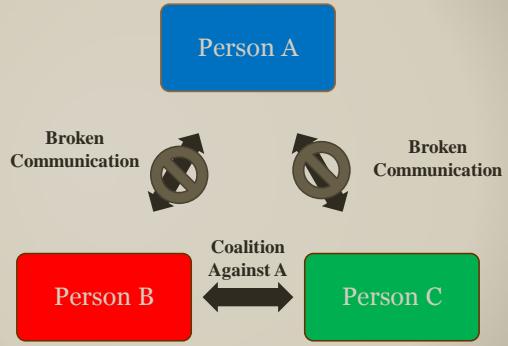
Healthy Communication Loop



Unhealthy Triangle #1



Unhealthy Triangle #2



How Does Matthew 18 Apply?

Matthew 18:15-17

15. “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.
16. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.
17. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

A New Version of the Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, the courage to change the one I can, and the wisdom to know its ME.

“Cut each other some slack”

- Under significant stress people can become irritable, rigid, and even irrational.
- Avoid taking things too personally.
- Take comments that people say and let them “roll off” as much as possible.
- Suggested prayer, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they just said.”

Christ-like Perspective

- **1 Corinthians 12:26-27**, “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”
- **Romans 12:15**, “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”
- **Luke 6:31**, “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.”

God’s Grace

- God gives us grace as we need it, in the amount we need.
- 2 Corinthians 12:9-10**, “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

HANDOUT: 11 RULES FOR RESPECT AND OPEN COMMUNICATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

Practical application of biblical relationships principles