

- Almost five months ago, I announced that God was leading me to move to my next assignment.
- There is a new season for Hope Chapel and a new season for my wife and I.
- The following months have certainly not turned out the way any of us could have anticipated, right?
- 2020 has been weirder, more difficult and unanticipated than anyone could have pictured.
- It took our anticipated transition at Hope Chapel and moved it out a little.
- But transition is occurring nonetheless, and as you all know, June 30th will be my last day at Hope Chapel
- We won't be able to gather fully before then, but hopefully there will be more chances to connect and say goodbye in the months ahead.
- In the meantime, you've already met Dan Gay this morning, who will be acting as our transition pastor until we find the next lead pastor, which is still moving along.
- If you want to know Dan a little better, there will be a video interview (8 min long) that I will be posting to the FB page this afternoon that should help you know and work with Dan.
- There is a reason that Dan is a transition pastor and not an interim pastor.
- We use that word because of the purpose of transition.
- A lot of times we see transition in life as a break, a stop, the time when we step back.
- Yet that is not transition.
- **Transition is more than an intermission.**
- Transition is a period of preparation, both personally and corporately.
- We desire to transition well as a church. That is true, but we also frequently go through transitions in life and we need to transition well because it is more than an intermission.
- Transition is the process when God or life requires us to move from one state of being to another. In other words, transition is how we deal with the process of change.
- There are transitions in relationship. From single to dating, dating to engaged, engaged to married, and in some cases, married back to single.
- There are transitions in employment. Moving from one role to a different one. Or from your current company to another.
- Some transitions involve our kids, from infant to toddler, toddler to school to teenager to college student to working and sometimes to back living at home.
- We have health transitions, from one stage to the next.
- And there are transitions at church, when we move from one season to the next, from one pastor or leader to the next.
- There are those who enjoy transition – they seem to move into it regularly. Some of you are in that position.
- There are others though, who don't particularly like having to transition but find themselves involved with them regularly.
- You wonder, "Good grief, when does this stop so I can get some stability?"
- Others get all exhausted even thinking about change and transition.
- So what do we do? How can we make the most of transition?
- **Transition is more than an intermission.**
- Some transitions we choose some are thrust on us.
- Success or failure in life is often determined by how we handle the transitions of life, whether individually or as an organization or group of people.
- Over the next three weeks, I want to look at three stories from Scripture, each one about transition, and hopefully when we put them all together it will direct us in how to use transition as preparation and not an intermission.
- This week we're going to examine the the most important consideration in transition.

- Next week we'll look at how to keep what's important front and center without dismissing our past experiences.
- Finally, we will look at some practical action steps you can take to keep transition from simply being an intermission.
- This means looking at our spiritual, mental/emotional and physical.
- Because **transition is more than an intermission.**

- The nation of Israel faced numerous transitions, but one of the most challenging was when they transitioned from a group of people wandering the desert to a people that was supposed to enter the land God had promised and take it as their own.
- Many of you are familiar with the story. They had been delivered miraculously from Egypt. God had led them through the desert as an entire nation for 40 years.
- There had been so many ups and downs in this journey, but now they stood on the shores of the Jordan river, ready to cross into what had been the goal all that time.
- This was a huge transition
- They were going to go from being fed by manna to having to do their own work to provide.
- They had to go from wandering people to be a settled people.
- They had to become a nation that was expert at warfare, something they had only scratched the surface of.
- They had followed a cloud and pillar of fire for 40 years and this was about to disappear.
- The land itself that they were going into was different, strange and new.
- On top of all of this, the leader they had followed for the past 40 years was not going to be with them in it.

Deut 31:2 "I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross the Jordan.'

- Moses was not allowed by God to enter the Promised Land because he had rebelled and sinned against God at a crucial juncture in their desert wanderings.
- So the man whom had been God's spokesperson, the one God spoke to face to face, the one that interceded for them, taught them, led them, helped them, was not going to be with them in this time.
- The most critical position was ALSO going to be in transition.
- What was even worse was that Moses was not an ordinary leader.

Deut 34:10 Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11 who did all those signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt – to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. 12 For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

- How would you like to follow that!? What would you do with that kind of transition and change? If you were in the multitudes of people of Israel, what would be thinking? I'm sure some were excited and totally ready to get into it. Others were probably completely fearful and timid, and everything in between.
- They could not treat this transition like an intermission.
- They couldn't go back. They couldn't stay. They had to move.
- In his parting words to the people, Moses gives the keys to transition. He tells them how they can successfully navigate the transition.
- He explained to them how they could make sure that this transition was not an intermission.

Deut 31:2 "I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross the Jordan.'

- I won't be with you, but . . .

3 The LORD your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua also will cross over ahead of you, as the LORD said. 4 And the LORD will do to them what he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, whom he destroyed along with their land. 5 The LORD will deliver them to you, and you must do to them all that I have commanded you. 6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for **the LORD your God goes with you;** he will never leave you nor forsake you.” 7 Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. 8 **The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.** Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

I. God is ahead of you during transition.

- For the people of Israel, they did not have a clue what was going to happen.
- They were faced tremendous transition and they did not know how things were going to play out.
- Once again, it helps to put yourselves in the place of the Israelites.
- Even though this was a new generation, they had heard the stories of how powerful the people of this land were. It was fear of this that caused their parents to not enter the Promised Land.
- They had experienced God’s discipline as they wandered the desert. They may have been wondering if this would happen while they were trying to conquer this new land. When would they step wrong? Would God punish them again?
- On top of this, they are looking at a land that they know very little about. They did not have Google Maps, drones, reconnaissance. They were facing the unknown.
- They could easily go to worst case.
- What if it all falls apart? What if we die in battle?
- During times of transition, the future looks confusing. Daunting. We don’t know what will happen next. We see all the uncertainties.
- This summer, there are a lot of uncertainties in the midst of transition at Hope.
- What you know will change. There is a change in people. Coronavirus means that gatherings will not be like they were for some time, and there is no guarantee on when and how this will return to normal, despite the best plans we have.
- There will be a new lead pastor and we don’t even know yet who that will be.
- It is easy to be overwhelmed with all of this. But listen to what Moses told the Israelites.

3 *The LORD your God himself will cross over ahead of you.*

- Then a little later he says it again.

8 *The LORD himself goes before you*

- God is in this. God is ahead of you. Even though you don’t know what is ahead, God does.
- Where we get bogged down sometimes is that we know in our heads that God knows everything, that he understands our future. But Moses’ statement is not one of knowledge. It’s one of action.
- Israel, you are not on your own. God knows what is happening. He is actually going to lead you into this and do all the hardest work. He will be the one who drives out the nations and gives them the land.
- In our transitions, God is doing the hard work. He is ahead of you.
- But it is better than that. Because that is not the end of it. God is not simply out in front of you like a minesweeper, doing the hard work so that you can now walk through transition on your own.

8 The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

II. God is with you during transition.

- Moses tells the people two things.
- One, he is going ahead of you, but oh, by the way, his presence is going to go with you.
- He is going to be alongside of you.
- Now as I was studying this week, this is one of those things that seemed too obvious.
- It's something that Christ-followers say.
- Jesus is with you.
- We learn it. We sing it. We teach it.
- What does it have to do with transition?
- Transitions are times when we feel discombobulated.
- It is easy to feel isolated. To feel like we are alone.
- When transition occurs in an organization, the feelings of uncertainty and difference lead us to have a tendency to get passive, to disengage.
- Moses wanted the Israelites to know they did not need to fear transition because God was with them. He was their advocate. He was in this for their good and for the good of the nation.
- In the mini-series Band of Brothers, one of the episodes does a masterful job of contrasting two commanders. One, Commander Winters, was loved by his men. He would fight with them, be with them, talk to them, listen to them, give them direction and command that could be trusted. The other, Lieutenant Dike, was despised by his men. He was absent and would prefer to be in a foxhole than with the men. During a key assault, he froze up, got some men killed as a result and had to be relieved from command.
- Moses wanted the Israelites to know God was actively with them. He was for them.
- Transition is more than an intermission. There is something about having a person who is for you, looking out for you, challenging you while loving you.

III. Transition is a season of movement.

- In his comments, Moses indicates why God's presence is so important.
6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you.
8 The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."
- The biggest challenge facing the Israelites in this transition was fear. A fear that would cause them to shrink back. A fear that would cause them to not take chances. To play it safe.
- But God knew that he could not get them where they needed to go by them playing it safe and passive. God had a great plan for them and it required them to engage in that plan.
- His solution? To remind them of his presence.
- My friends, during any transition, whether it is with our church, in your own life, with your job, one of the greatest temptations is to push "pause."
- That is the worst thing you can do. Transition is a time of preparation.
- It does not mean that you never slow down to listen, rest or re-evaluate. But it is NOT a time to check out.
- That is transition. It is that time between the last season the next one.

- It is a time to be engaged with God. It means fighting back on fear, worry, discouragement and apathy.
- It means that there is something ahead of you that is good. God is already there. He is already working. And he will walk with you into it.
- BUT . . . you have to be willing.
- Transition and change can push you towards fear, Jesus tells you don't be afraid and don't worry.
- Transition and change can get you down because things are not what they used to be. Jesus reminds you to not get discouraged.
- Transition and change can lead you to step back. To focus on yourself. Jesus reminds you that this is a season of movement, so don't fear but step out.
- **Transition is more than an intermission.** My friends, in the months ahead, I urge you to seek the presence of God.
- Pray more. Talk to him more.
- Know that he is fully engaged in our church transition. He is calling the next leader. He knows what you need, what the church needs, what our town needs. He knows how the kingdom can advance and he is already doing the hard work ahead of us.
- He is also with you. He is walking alongside of you. He is for you. He is working in you. He is challenging your thoughts and your ideas. He might be opening up the door to things you have long ignored or overlooked in your own heart and life.
- So don't worry. Don't fear. Don't retreat. You have the presence of God with you for any and every transition.
- If you worry, fear or hang back, it says more about what you believe about God than anything else.
- Let's do transition well, because **transition is more than an intermission**, and if you treat it as simply an intermission, you are doing a disservice to yourself, the group of people you are a part of (including Hope Chapel) and God himself whose presence goes ahead of you and with you.
- Ask yourself this question: "How would someone who is like you (in your circumstances in your transition) act if they were totally confident that God was with them." [REPEAT]
- Seek his presence. Act courageously. Why wouldn't you?