

- Last week was the first of three weeks speaking about transition.
- This series is precipitated by the upcoming transition at Hope Chapel. As Yvonne and I move into the next season of life that God has invited us into, so will Hope Chapel. Since you are a part of the church, this transition involves you.
- And since transition is a common experience, not just in church the way we are going to experience it, but in our own lives as well, we decided to talk about how to do it well.
- It is how you respond that will determine how our church comes through this transition. You get to decide what this transition looks like.
- The same is true of any transitions in your own life, whether with regards to family, work, finances, relationships or even health.
- The overall idea behind these three weeks is this: **Transition is more than an intermission.**
- Transition is not when we sit back, get passive, take a wait and see attitude or just check out to try something new. Transition is a season when we need to move. Prepare. Listen to God.
- It is a crucial time, as life changes, that decides what the next stage of life will look like.
- Transition is how we adapt when God or life requires us to move from one state of being to another. Since change and transition is inevitable, we want to do it well.
- How can we lean into this so that we make the most of it?
- Last week we looked at the importance of God's presence. He is ahead of us and doing the hard work in the space in front of us and is preparing it for our arrival. We don't have to worry because he is with us in it. We are to boldly walk into transition, knowing it is a season of movement.
- Next week we will look at some practical action steps you can take to keep transition from simply being an intermission.
- But today, I want to have a conversation about how we decide on what matters in transition.
- What takes priority? Does it matter? Should I just be focused on myself and my own good? How do I keep from getting trapped in my own head? How can I engage in this process?
- The time when Jesus left earth for good was a time of tremendous transition.
- We cannot imagine how the life of this small group of people who had invested their lives in Jesus.
- They had just spent 3 years following Jesus. Full time, fully invested. They pinned their hopes for a brighter future, a world where Rome wasn't in charge, a world where Israel was restored, on Jesus.
- Just when their hopes built to a crescendo, Jesus died. Their entire world was shattered. It was all for nothing. Not only that, but they were, to some degree, wanted men & women.
- But as we learned last week, God was going ahead of them. All was not lost.
- Jesus came back to life. They were shocked. Elated. So excited.
- Luke, the doctor/historian, wrote down what happened.

Acts 1:1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

- They were all eager for Jesus to now do what they had expected him to do all along.
 - Hey Jesus, is this when you are going to be king. You came back from the dead – you can do anything. Everyone will flock to your banner. This is it!
 - So imagine their surprise when after a month, Jesus told them he couldn't stay.
- 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." 9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*
- Can you imagine? He was leaving. He wasn't going to be there to lead them.
 - They were facing a massive transition. From having Jesus teach and lead them for 3 years, to never seeing him face to face again. No visits. No dinners. No more late night talks.
 - Some of them might be afraid. What now? Jesus had left and their protection left with him.
 - Some might have been confused. Jesus told us what to do, but did not give us details on how to do it.
 - Others might have decided it was time to check out for good. We can't do what you've asked us to do. It's too big.
 - In order for this transition not to simply be an intermission, they had to do two things.
 - First, they had to deal with the loss and change.
 - Second, they had to orient themselves to what was important. Let's look at each.

I. Grieve loss and change.

- We could spend an entire seminar on this (I actually led our Hope Chapel leadership team through this) but I wanted to touch on it because it's important.
- Change always involved loss and transition is when we feel the loss and have to deal with it.
- There is **material loss**. This is the loss of the familiar. Of what you know. It is the comfortable surroundings that you have gotten used to. It could be physical (like leaving a job or house where you have been for years) or mental/emotional.
- When a pastor leaves, this is a real thing. How he teaches, leads or does things are gone and the next person is unfamiliar.
- For the disciples, they were so used to sitting around and eating with, seeing and listening to Jesus. Now he was gone.
- There is **relationship loss**. This is obvious in change. When the kids finally leave home. When a relationship ends. When you leave a job and all your co-workers.
- In our Hope Chapel transition, someone who was involved in your lives is lost. If they were someone you could pick up the phone and talk through issues with, now that may not be available. Friendships are ended.
- The followers of Jesus were losing their close friend and Savior.
- There is the **loss of what could have been**. When there is change and transition, often we had dreams of what we pictured happening that are now in jeopardy or fully lost.
- The disciples had visions of what Israel was going to be. How the nation would rise to prominence. All those dreams of what they thought was going to happen was lost.
- This is true when we change jobs, leave a company, or even when something like a marriage ends or a crisis happens. It can also happen in a church. In a ministry.
- This can lead to **loss of a role**. The disciples had a picture in their heads of what their role in this new dream was, and now it was dashed. They would not be Jesus right-hand men. They were not going to be leaders in the new nation. They were not even sure what they were supposed to do next.
- In any church transition, people are left feeling a little adrift. Wondering how they will fit in. Will their role change. Or not. Will they have to fight to keep it?

- And there is a **loss of the system**. A church is a social system. People have their place in it. They are familiar with how it works. In transition and change, the dynamic changes. Things are not the same. The current system is gone forever. Lost.
- When our kids left home, the entire way the household worked changed. It was different and new.
- The entire way of living changed for the disciples. It was not them sitting at Jesus feet and watching him lead. He wasn't there. He had been murdered by the religious authorities. Everything had changed. Now they were going to have to step up.
- These losses are real.
- As our church transitions (or in the transitions in your life) you will experience these losses and you will respond in different ways. When these happen, pay attention. These are normal in seasons of transition.
- **Sadness/Tears**: the obvious result of the loss of something good.
- **Anger**: there is frustration about a decision that you did not even participate in. There are feelings of abandonment and anger at the person leaving.
- **Guilt**: the thought that maybe I should have done something different.
- **Anxiety/worry**: will we like the new guy? What will our church look like? Will it survive?
- **Denial**: Men are really good at this, although I have noticed it in some women as well. It's all good. There is no problem. Change is a part of life. No big deal. Nothing of significance has really happened.
- **Preoccupation**: obsession with what got you here. Spending time exclusively in the past, living in the past. Throwing yourself into a hobby or something comfortable to deal with it.
- **Yearning**: wanting those good old days back. The feeling that what was is better than what is now. There is a desire to recapture something.
- **Tiredness/Apathy**: the desire to withdraw. This can be overwhelming. It can happen during the transition or right after the transition time is done. It is my time to rest. I will wait and see. I will check out or try something new.
- The followers of Jesus had to face all these in some form or another.
- What did they do? Those are the ways we think and feel during transition. They are normal. We cannot ignore them. We cannot stay in that place forever.
- Let me give you some things to practice in any transition, whether with the church or something else.
- **Practice thankfulness**: It is easy to blame, feel sorry for ourselves. Be thankful for past seasons. For example, when someone significant in your life dies, part of the transition is learning to remember with thankfulness the past.
- **Don't withdraw**: It is so easy to follow the tendency to isolate. Introspection is fine, reflection is healthy, but isolation is not. A church is a family so often the sense of loss is greater than simply losing a co-worker. Stay in relationship. Stay engaged. Reach out.
- **Communicate**: Talk. Process the change. Listen well. Ask questions. Sometimes information feels scarce during transition or change or it feels like no one cares. Communicate.
- **Pray more**: Let's be honest – this should always be an emphasis, but there is something about change and transition that should spur us to increased levels of seeking God's presence.
- In order to keep **transition from being an intermission**, we need to deal with our feelings and thoughts during transition. This includes looking back and grieving loss well but it is equally important in terms of how we look forward. In transition, we must:

II. Orient to the priority of the gospel.

- So, the followers of Jesus were in transition. They had to deal with their loss and their grief. What did they do?

12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. 13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. . . 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

- They got together and they prayed. A little bit later we read this.
2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

- So this raises a couple of questions for me. What were they praying about? What was the focus of their prayers? It says they prayed constantly. They devoted themselves to prayer. Was this just a constant prayer asking God to comfort them and be with them? Was it self-focused or was there something more?
- The other question comes from the verse that says they were devoted to the disciples teaching. What was the teaching? The NT had not yet been written. They had the OT but Jesus had instituted a new covenant.
- What was the focus of all their prayers and all their teaching?
- We actually have a pretty good idea. It was way back in the beginning of what we read today.

1:1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

- In his last 40 days on earth Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God. His last teaching, his last words, were to remind them about everything he had spent three years teaching them. We know that his entire ministry was teaching the good news about the kingdom of God.
- So what did the followers of Jesus orient themselves to? The kingdom of God.
- In the midst of transition, of not knowing, or change, they prayed about, talked about, learned about and practiced the life of being in the kingdom of God. It drove all their values and priorities.
- What is the "kingdom of God?" Jesus came so that his rule and his reign would begin. His kingdom. His value system. His way of thinking. The kingdom of God is living according to that. It means being a follower of Jesus.
- BTW, that is why I have used the term Christ-follower for the last 11 years. Because being a follower of Jesus is described so clearly in Scripture. You can be religious, a good person, even a "christian" and it can mean different things to different people.
- But being a Christ-following, kingdom of God person is crystal clear. Scary clear.
- Why is this important? We bombarded all the time with challenges to our priorities and in times of change and transition, this is increased. During any transition, you will have a choice. Will you shift your priorities to yourself? Will you run away? Will you disengage? Will you ignore the Holy Spirit to indulge in what feels good? Or will you be Christ-following, kingdom of God people?
- What did that look like for the disciples and what does it look like for us? Jesus described what it looked like that left no wiggle room.
- Treat those around you well and do good to them, even if they have hurt you.
- Forgive someone else without expecting them to make it right.
- Instead of judging, examine yourself first so that you can love them better.

- Live up to all your commitments.
- If someone treats you unfairly, give them grace and help them again. Go over and above for those who are not like you or who have treated you badly.
- Be generous to the needy, even if the needy might abuse your generosity.
- Pray and fast constantly, asking God to show you what's next.
- Don't get caught up in stuff. Settle for less and give more away.
- Confess and repent the second you know you have done something wrong – don't wait for them. Own all your own stuff.
- Love others actively, giving yourself up the same way Jesus gave himself up for you, even when you were his enemy.
- Be an influence for Jesus wherever you go, doing all of these things.
- That describes a Jesus-following, kingdom of God person
- When Jesus told his followers just before he left and just before they entered this transition period "Go and make disciples of all nations", he was telling them to model and teach the gospel of the kingdom of God.
- And so when they hit the transition time, they prayed. They gathered. They talked. They shared. Because this kingdom mission was their greatest priority.
- They oriented themselves towards the kingdom because they knew the goal of seeing God's kingdom advance and they wanted the prize of experiencing his presence and power.
- So . . . as we enter transition as a church. With a transition pastor and then a new lead pastor.
- Or as you go through your relationship transition. Your job transition. Your health transition. Your financial transition.
- Grieve well what you've lost. Don't minimize it. Don't ignore it. Practice celebration and thankfulness in the midst of your transition.
- And while you do, keep the priority of the kingdom front and center. That means living and acting towards others and within the church the way Jesus commanded it.
- It is not optional.
- **Transition is not an intermission.**
- Transition and change is an opportunity to examine your own priorities and check them with God's kingdom mission.
- Perhaps this transition is a season to seek his presence more.
- Maybe this is a time to lean into and not away from relationship. Maybe this is when you should finally pull the trigger and get into a DF.
- Perhaps transition is when you ask God what your role is in it and do it!
- Maybe, just maybe, transition is an opportunity for you to trust God more, love others increasingly and see how to impact the people around you.
- Those early Jesus followers oriented to Jesus and his kingdom. And listen how they came out of their transition.

43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

- This can be us.
- **Transition is not an intermission.**

- So don't settle for just being religious, or good, or even a "Christian." Be a follower of Jesus. One who is willing to give it up for his agenda.
- In the weeks and months ahead, seek God and ask him how you can live your part of expanding his kingdom. And if this is difficult, ask yourself, "What's stopping me?"
- Because if you choose to not pursue God's kingdom, to check out and withdraw during transition, at least be honest with yourself that this is what you are doing.
- But my prayer for you and for me is that we be people for whom transition is not just an intermission.