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TRANSITION

**GOD'S
UNFOLDING
GLORY IN THE
HUMAN STORY**

“

**THE CHIEF END OF ALL
PEOPLE IS TO GLORIFY GOD
AND ENJOY HIM FOREVER.**

— THE WESTMINSTER
Catechism

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Prologue

I hope this little ebook will inspire you to welcome seasons of transition in your life and offer some helpful instructions for navigating such seasons. I have four purposes for this book. They are:

1. No One Is Immune
2. Change and Transition are not the Same Things
3. Why do We Experience Transition?
4. Fruitful Transition Needs a Healthy Environment

This book does not thoroughly examine the topic of transition or change. The book is based on a series of messages given at Gateway Christian Fellowship in May 2023.

Prayer: King Jesus, you are the author and perfecter of our faith. You have begun a good work in us, and we declare our trust in you to complete this work. Help me cooperate with you in every season of life so that I may bear fruit that glorifies God, our Father. Amen.

Chapter 1: No One Is Immune

"Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely."
— Karen Kaiser Clark

The axiom is that the only constant is change. The running joke is that the biblical character, Peter is getting his business cards printed to read, "*Simon the Fisherman*," only to be with Jesus later in the day and have his name changed to **Peter**. Change happens to everyone. Everyone reading this book has this in common. Leadership expert John Maxwell says that transition succeeds change. No one is immune to transition; more specifically, our life is not resistant to change and transition.

As a man, husband, father, grandfather, pastor, leader, and sibling, I can tell you that change and transition are constant. When I look to the Bible for direction on how to respond and live during times of transition, I find five words that summarize the essence of change and transition.

In the book of Joshua, we read:
"Moses is dead. Now then..." [1]

Using this statement, fill in the blanks.

" _____ is _____. Now then..."

Let's look at a few examples:

The pregnancy test is negative. Now then...

My health is declining. Now then...

The promotion is approved. Now then...

Your college application has been accepted. Now then...

The divorce papers are final. Now then...

We know that change happens to everyone, and when we reflect on our lives, we can see that it's true. Prophet Isaiah declares to Judah, "*Forget what happened in the past and do not dwell on events from long ago. I am going to do something new. It is already happening. Don't you recognize it?*" [2] We find this urging in Apostle Paul's writing to the Philippians - "*But I focus on this one thing: forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead...*" [3]

Recently, as I was scrolling through Instagram, I came across a story by @biglifejournal about how a mom helped her son discover the power of focus. The son could only see the negative in every

situation and this was exhausting for him and his mother. One day, as the mom was driving her son to school, she asked him to count how many white cars he saw on the way to school. When they arrived at school, he told her that he saw thirty white cars. She then asked him, "How many silver cars did you see?" He could not answer the question because he focused only on white cars. I share this story because when you and I go through change and transition, everything we focus on is in upheaval, contributes to disruption, or helps us navigate upheaval.

Let's look at some stories from the Bible on change and transition -

1. Abraham: Transitioned from his homeland to Canaan, from Canaan to Egypt, and then back to Canaan.
2. Joseph: Transitioned from being sold as a slave by his brothers to becoming a trusted servant in Potiphar's house, then being falsely accused and imprisoned, and finally becoming second in command in Egypt.
3. Moses: Transitioned from living in Pharaoh's palace as an Egyptian prince to fleeing to Midian after killing an Egyptian, then being

called by God to return to Egypt to lead the Israelites out of slavery.

4. David: Transitioned from being a shepherd boy to becoming a warrior, and eventually king of Israel.
5. Esther: Transitioned from being a Jewish orphan to becoming the queen of Persia and saving her people from genocide.
6. Peter: Transitioned from being a fisherman to becoming a disciple of Jesus, then denying Jesus three times before eventually becoming a leader in the early Christian Church.
7. Paul: Transitioned from being a persecutor of Christians to becoming a follower of Christ and one of the most influential apostles.
8. Mary: Transitioned from being a young Jewish girl to becoming the mother of Jesus, the world's Savior.

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As we immunize ourselves to transition, let's learn to choose wisely and utilize change and transition as growth moments.

Chapter 2: Change And Transition Are Not The Same

Knowing, understanding, and accepting the difference between change and transition is necessary. The following chart can help us navigate the differences:

Change	Transition
An event; a moment in time	An emotional, spiritual, relational, psychological process; A before, during, and after the change
External	Internal
Examples: job loss, marriage, new home, new pet, graduation, entering kindergarten, health diagnosis, new policy, new boss	Examples: surprise, confusion, anger, relief, uncertainty, hopeful, disillusioned, clarity
Not always controllable	We can surrender to God and cooperate with our growth and how we respond to change

"Change is the essence of life; be willing to surrender what you are for what you could become." — Reinhold Niebuhr

William Bridges, in his book, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, writes, *"Transition is simply how one's life moves on and unfolds."* Change is what happens outside the heart. Transition is what happens in the heart.

In 2013 my wife and I moved from Texas to Connecticut to assume the position of leading a local church. The logistics of selling a home, moving our 8-year-old to a new state, renting a new home, applying for a new driver's license, establishing an account with a new local utility company, etc., were all changes we had to go through. They needed to happen to put roots down in a new state. The internal emotions of leaving home was a struggle. We grieved, saying goodbye to friends and losing the nearness of those we love. The excitement of a new opportunity and the stimulated imagination was a part of the transition. One minute my wife and I were questioning what we had done, and the next minute, we were like kids in a candy store,

dreaming about all the possibilities that awaited us. Our life was moving in a direction and unfolding in a way that we did not imagine.

Transition happens in three stages:

1. Departure
2. Disorientation
3. Destination

Also, transition can be described as:

1. The Long Goodbye
2. The Messy Middle
3. New Beginnings

The essence of transition can be described spiritually as:

1. Death
2. Burial
3. Resurrection

Whatever language and imagery you use, the truth remains the same. We must -

1. Let go
2. Be unsure
3. Grab the new

As followers of Jesus, change and transition are core discipleship issues because transition challenges our comfort, trust in Jesus, family rhythms, idolatry, etc. God initiates change, and transition follows.

During transition, it's common to experience fear, loss, sadness, confusion, anger, or shock. Therefore, we must remind ourselves to share love, lamentation, trust, hope, and wisdom. Remember, transition is an emotional and noisy time. Silence and solitude are counterintuitive to our control reflexes.

Matthew Kelly reminds us of C.S. Lewis's prophetic intuition when he writes in *The Screwtape Letters* about the need for noise in the life of a Jesus follower - *"Let go (of your concerns)! Then you will know that I am God. I rule the nations. I rule the Earth."* [4]

"And after the fire, there was a quiet, whispering voice. When Elijah heard it..." [5]

In both of these passages, the command is to let go and listen to God's whisper. As we listen, our

soul is uplifted, our spirit is strengthened, our hope is fortified, and our confidence in change and transition is reinforced. Transition is a decisive moment when we step into an upgrade in our relationship with King Jesus.

Knowing the difference between change and transition is important because if we miss transition, then we miss the opportunity to strengthen our inner being. Our calling will be tested. Our character will be refined. Our charisma will be matured. Our competency will be expanded.

As we encounter transition, my hope for us is to lead healthy, fulfilling lives in service to others; deepen our trust in God; experience all that God is and offers; be godly examples, honor King Jesus through our attitudes and actions, and leave a spiritual legacy for our loved ones.

Chapter 3: Why Do We Experience Transition?

"We need to develop the spiritual habit of a biblical response to the trials of life so that the enemy cannot find any opening through which he can bring afflictions." — Randy Clark

The life we are living is not always the life we expected. In the popular online series, *The Chosen*, which is a contemporary dramatized version of the life of Jesus, there is a scene where Jesus calls Matthew, the tax collector, to follow Him. Peter tells Jesus that things are different and that He should not be inviting a tax collector to follow Him. Jesus, played by Jonathan Roumie, says to Peter, *"Get used to different."* That is an accurate summary of change and transition. We are to get used to *different*. Instinctively, most of us want to hang on to the familiar, to what we know and are comfortable with. *"Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead"* ^[3] is crucial to decide how long we will transition. The length of our transition depends on how quickly we let go of what we have known to enter the unknown and discern when the new emerges.

Bruce Feiler, in his Ted Talk, *The Secret to Mastering Life's Biggest Transitions*, offers powerful insight into why we experience transition. After 1000 interviews in all 50 states, with 6000 pages of transcripts, Mr. Feiler notes that over 80% of transition is personal. Statistically, we are in transition for 25 years of our life. So, how do we leverage these two and a half decades to work to our advantage while we live in service to others?

Firstly, we welcome the testing of our calling. "*Many are called, but few are chosen.*" [6] King Jesus invites everyone to walk in their calling and opportunities. Unfortunately, not everyone will respond to God's call as He expects. In my early 20s, I kept questioning what I believed to be the purpose and calling for my life. One particular Sunday, while at Church, a man I did not personally know, prayed for me saying, "*Lord, I thank you that this young man is called to be a minister and a pastor.*" That one sentence hit me deeply because it settled my uncertainty and recalibrated my anxious heart toward a more apparent purpose and calling. Even years after that moment, I have often felt unsure. I still recall that day, standing in front of a church in a small town in Arkansas. I

reassure myself that God knows us, has a call and purpose for us, and will allow transition to be a testing season for us. Our calling is not about our brand or accomplishments, but it is to love others, share the gospel, minister with compassion, and see the Kingdom of God positively influence and affect people, places, purposes, and problems through our lives.

Secondly, our character is refined. What do I mean by character? Yes, traditionally, I am referencing our behavior. Let's go deeper than that. Character is the reality of who God says we are and stepping into that heavenly, relational identity when we are born again. Character is the formation of our inner person through the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. Each day, we posture ourselves in joyful surrender to the goodness of God, and from that place, we enter the world. Character is not just the gritty work of doing what we don't want. Character formation is deeply affected and influenced by the relationships we foster, the emotions we experience, and how we regulate ourselves when walking through suffering, difficulty, and pressure.

Thirdly, our charisma is matured. When I speak of charisma, I am talking about the gifts God gives us, in real-time, for a unique situation. More broadly, I include the natural talents and passions that we have, and also our professional and academic training. The combination of all of these is the summation of charisma. Our ego tempts us to utilize our gifts for personal gratification. Modern science teaches us that when our personal social media accounts have likes and shares, our body experiences dopamine. We become addicted to social media, new stories, clickbait content, etc. Is it surprising that people live with higher anxiety, fewer attention spans, diminished social and people skills, and overall cynicism about truth and integrity? I struggle with these same realities. Therefore, my hope for each of us is that during times of transition, we are confronted by the immaturity and selfishness of our love, and we mature into a charisma that adds value to others.

Lastly, our competency is expanded. What we all know to be true is that the desire to grow, to be healthy, to connect with others, and to experience the joy of serving is baked into our DNA. Of course, family systems, the social structure of our

upbringing, our peer group, traumatic situations, etc., all play a part in developing or hindering these natural tendencies. I'm a natural learner because I need to learn in order to experience professional growth and opportunities. The other reason is that, I want to help others push the boundaries of their potential and imagination. When we experience transition, we are positioned to learn something new. We are allowed to upgrade our mentoring relationships and broaden our understanding.

So, as our calling is tested, character refined, charisma matured, and competency expanded, let's view transition as an invitation, preparation, formation, and demonstration.

"We need to develop the spiritual habit of a biblical response to the trials of life so that the enemy cannot find any opening through which he can bring afflictions."

- Randy Clark

Transition is the classroom where we learn, mature, and express our transformed lives in service to others.

Chapter 4: Fruitful Transition Needs A Healthy Environment

"Handling endings and transitions are important because they help us enter into and embrace God's new beginnings."

— Pete Scazzero.

When I was in my mid to late 20s, I was married with two toddler-age children. We lived in Orlando, Florida. I had no college education, so my job opportunities were limited, or so I believed. Even in my insecurities, I believed that I had a calling to make a positive and powerful difference in the lives of others. The simplest way I could describe my calling is this - I wanted to help people know God and know who God says they are.

Prior to this, my wife, Darlene and I lived in Central Texas, and on the July 4th weekend of 1997, we packed up our tiny home and moved to Orlando. I took a landscaping job at a large church while Darlene was hired to work in the for-profit nursery. Landscaping was not my dream job, but it paid the bills and allowed me to work at a church that God was using to improve my life.

I share this story because it's where I learned about healthy environments. The church I worked at owned a lot of property and had much land that needed constant landscape maintenance. I do not have a green thumb. My ability to grow things is so bad that I can even kill fake plants. So, putting me in charge of nurturing flowers, fertilizing azaleas, repairing irrigation breaks, and maintaining lawn equipment was risky. What I learned though has proven to encourage me over the last two decades.

Early spring, the director of our landscape team would take me to a local flower farm where we would buy flower seedlings and we would transport these seedlings to the local greenhouse behind our maintenance barn. We would gently place the pallets of seedlings in the greenhouse, check the irrigation, monitor sunlight and shade to maintain a suitable temperature, and test the soil for proper nutrients. This process aimed not to beautify the greenhouse but to grow healthy, intense flowers in a controlled environment so that they can grow and flourish in an uncontrolled environment later. Over the following weeks, our director of landscaping would check the flowers,

and the ones that grew more slowly would be checked for proper hydration, soil enrichment, etc. We controlled everything to give each seedling the best chance to reach its potential. We had no control over the quality of the seed, but we could control the environment in which the seed begins its early growth.

This greenhouse lesson is an appropriate metaphor for what we need during change and transition. The question is not **IF** you will have an environment. The question is, **what kind** of environment will you have? Listen, you can do many things to contribute to the quality of your greenhouse where you grow during times of transition. Just as we did what we could to strengthen the seedlings; you can manage certain aspects of your environment to help yourself grow during times of transition. Let me be clear - I am not suggesting that just our willpower is enough and our wisdom and brilliance are all-sufficient. It's not. The person led by God's Spirit will be given wisdom and the ability to manage themselves. We need to cooperate with God's purpose by building a personal greenhouse where we can grow and

nurture ourselves in a controlled environment until we can flourish in an uncontrolled environment.

In Luke 24, we read about Jesus interacting with two men and His disciples. This interaction occurs after His resurrection and moments before His ascension into heaven. This is an historic moment of transition - it's a transition from the Jesus Age (where Jesus was alive and on the Earth) to the Church Age (when Jesus ascends into heaven, baptizes His followers in the Holy Spirit, and establishes the Church).

In the second half of Luke 24, we can identify several features of a greenhouse that enabled the disciples to flourish and be ready for this significant transition.

1. Regularly talk about Jesus. (v. 36)
2. Guard your peace. (v. 36)
3. Acknowledge your doubts & troubles. (v. 38)
4. Treasure your experiences with Jesus. (v. 39)
5. Expect joy and amazement. (v. 41)
6. Take care of yourself physically. (v. 42)
7. Count on understanding God's word. (v. 45)
8. Remember your testimonies. (v. 48)
9. Wait patiently. (v. 49, 53)

10. Declare you are blessed. (v. 51)

11. Trust in Jesus' Authority. (v. 51)

12. Worship Excessively. (v. 52)

Dr. Margaret Nagib (@margaretnagib) tells us that our brains prioritize experiences rich with emotion. The more we focus on these negative experiences, our neural pathways are strengthened. So, it becomes more difficult to break these neural pathways, therefore causing us to be more vulnerable to future triggers. We are not left without hope. When we shift our focus towards the goodness of God and what He is doing in our lives, we create new neural connections that will "sprout, grow, and mature."

Michael Hendricks, in his book, *The Other Half of Church*, writes, "Our brains draw life from our strongest relational attachments to grow our character and develop our identity. **Who we love shapes who we are.**"

About the Author

Lance Bane has been married for over thirty years with three kids and three grandkids. With over 25 years of leadership experience, his passions include spending time with his family, playing golf, learning and reading, and encouraging others to grow and develop. You can utilize his resources and leadership podcast by visiting www.lancebane.com.

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[1] Joshua 1:2

[2] Isaiah 43:18-19

[3] Philippians 3:13

[4] Psalm 46:10

[5] 1 Kings 19:12

[6] Matthew 22:14