

Don't Freak Out When You're in Transition

Three years ago this month, my wife and I packed our belongings and made the biggest move of our lives. After living in Florida for 24 years, we pulled up our roots and relocated to Georgia. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done because I'm a sentimental guy who gets very attached to people and places. Yet I found extra grace for this transition because I knew I was following the Holy Spirit.

Counselors say relocation is one of the most stressful things in life—ranking right up there with the death of a loved one. It's a huge combination of stressors—selling a house, buying or renting a new house, hiring movers, leaving friends and stepping into the dark unknown. Not fun!

Little did I know that the stress of this transition would be made worse by the loss of my father in 2018 and the loss of my wife's mother just two weeks ago. To make things worse, my own mother is in hospice care now. Deaths or illness of family members can make us feel rootless and unsettled.

Perhaps you are about to step into a transition—or are already in the middle of one. I'm comforted by the fact that the Bible is full of people who were directed by God to move. Abraham, the father of our faith, began his spiritual odyssey when the Lord said: "Go from your country ... to the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1b).

When God wanted to do something really important, like start a new nation that would serve Him, it began with a relocation. Spiritual blessings often aren't realized until someone moves! Moses had to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. David had to move to Jerusalem. And Jesus' last words to His disciples were about moving to foreign countries.

If you are in a season of transition, consider these helpful steps:

1. **Be brave.** When Joshua was preparing to relocate the people of Israel to Canaan, God said three times: “Be strong and courageous” (Josh. 1:6a, a7, 9b). Moving requires a leap of faith, and doubters always get cold feet. Has God given you a big promise about the land you are about to possess? Don’t be surprised if the devil tries to make you fearful. Take a deep breath, resist fear and forge ahead.
2. **Take one step at a time.** Moving isn’t just one decision; it’s a tangled mess of many decisions that can overwhelm you. You don’t have to handle everything at once. The Bible says you are not on your own; you don’t have to figure out your relocation plan by yourself. You have a Shepherd, and He is good. He leads you “beside still waters” and He guides you “in paths of righteousness” (Ps. 23:2-3). Trust your Shepherd’s leading. He will make your transition peaceful.
3. **Let go of the old.** When God wanted to bless Naomi, He told her to leave the forsaken land of Moab and move to Bethlehem. Her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth pledged to go with her, but her other daughter-in-law, Orpah, stayed behind. Orpah couldn’t tear herself away from her culture, even though God was doing good things for His people in Bethlehem (Ruth 1:14-16).

Sometimes when God calls us to a new place in the Spirit, we discover that we are hindered by many soulish distractions. You must love Jesus more than you love your comfort zone. It’s good to have roots in a place, but you must never let those roots become stronger than your willingness to follow God anywhere.

I have also learned that since I began putting down roots in my new town, the process of “settling” takes time. You don’t

immediately find the right church and the right relationships. Don't let feelings of unsettledness cause you to rush and make wrong choices. Be expectant. God has new things for you, but you must wait patiently for Him.

4. **Cry if you need to.** The day I left Florida in 2016, I walked through my house one last time and locked the front door. Then I sobbed in my car as I remembered playing with my young daughters in the backyard, hanging Christmas decorations on the shrubs and burying our family dog in the backyard. Then, after my father died, I cried again when I sold my parent's home and said goodbye to all those memories. It's totally normal to feel sadness when we move. The best way to process your feelings is to let the tears flow.
5. **Be open to God's detours.** One important lesson I learned in my transition is that we must never lock ourselves into "our" plan. You may sense the Lord leading you to leave where you are, but when you begin moving to your new destination, God may redirect you. The apostle Paul was heading to Rome to preach the gospel, but a shipwreck took him to Malta—where he led an unscheduled revival. Don't be so headstrong about your destination that God can't gently nudge you in a different direction.
6. **Expect miracles.** When I knew for sure God was calling my wife and I to Georgia, we asked our friends to pray with us. I shared seven specific prayer requests, and the first item on the list was: "Quick sale of our house." Guess what? Our house sold in less than 24 hours—to the first people who walked in the door! Since then, all but the last request on my list has been answered.

Moving can be a thrilling adventure when you invite God into the process. When the Holy Spirit says go, He goes with you. When He calls you to leave the old and step into the new, He

propels you to a new spiritual level. {eo}