

LIFE IN TRANSITION: RICK MCKINNEY

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Good morning, Hosanna! How's everybody doing today? Great! It's good to see your smiling faces! Well.. your smiling eyes. And I agree with Tony and Jo Ann that it's weird to not be able to give you a hug or give you a smiley face stamp on your hand. This is strange, isn't it? But we're back together again and this is life in transition isn't it? Yeah, it is.

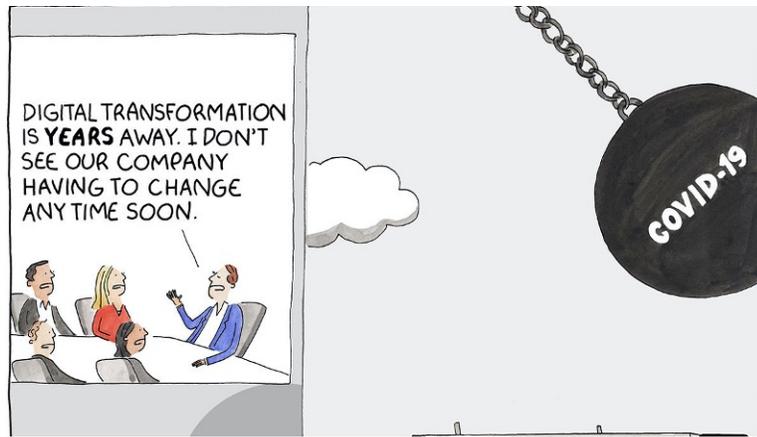
The glasses that I wear have lenses that are called transition lenses. Some of you have the same thing. For those of you who don't know, if I took a minute or two and had you just sit here quietly and I went outside and then came back in, my glasses would be dark because they transition from clear to dark. How many of you have some of those? Actually, a lot of you - quite a few of you do. Those of you who don't wear glasses, maybe you had no idea that that's what we're talking about, but these transitions, you know, from inside outside, from dark to light and back to dark again, so we think about a transition.

WHAT IS TRANSITION?

Transition is a passage from one state, a stage, a subject, or a place to another (Merriam Webster Dictionary). So how many of you have experienced a period of transition during the last four months? Everybody can raise your hand, right? All the transitions have been different. For some of us, transitions have meant working from home. For some of the people that I either work with or who are my customers, their transitions have been trying to balance working from home with 4-year-olds and 2-year-olds at home, or 9-year-olds at home. It's hard to do that! It's really tough! I talked to one of my clients who, she and her husband have a 2 and a 4 year old and every night - they both work from home now - and every night they would look at their calendars and they would figure out which two hour period one of them got to work and the other one had to take care of the kids and they would switch back and forth: 2 hours here and 2 hours there, and it was really tough.

So you know, there are a lot of transitions. I have a transition in addition to that that's happening: I turned 70 on July 3rd, and I told the people at work that I was going to retire in June and they said, "Ohhh... can you stay around a little bit?", so I said, "Okay, okay, I'll stay around half time", so I'm semi-retired as of July the 1st. That means I'm working 20 hours a week. I work a full day on Monday, half a day Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and every Friday have a full day off and started doing that in June as far as the Friday is concerned. So Beth and I are joking with each other we now have two Saturdays: Friday is our first Saturday and Saturday is our second Saturday. So she has one Saturday and we do whatever she wants to do, and I get the other Saturday - we do whatever I want to do, so you know, that's kind of a transition. Now, one of the things that I wanted to be able to do in transition, and most of you know this, was drive for Uber and Lyft and have some fun talking to people. I haven't done that for months

and I don't know when I'm gonna start doing it. So that's a transition that didn't quite turn out the way I thought and hoped that it might.



I found this on the internet. "Digital transformation is years away. I don't see our company having to change any time soon." Anybody who was saying that four months ago? Yeah... some of my clients that I work with have found that they had shut down stores and their e-commerce business, their online business, which might have been about this much, grew *that* much

because that's where they were selling, so yeah, it was kind of a cute little comic there.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT TRANSITIONS.

One type of transition is a **voluntary transition**. In other words, you make a choice. You make a decision. And you say this is what's going to happen. This is what I'm going to do. One of those is getting married. Most people, at least in our culture don't get married because somebody says you're going to marry this person, you're gonna marry them. Now, it can happen in other cultures, but in our culture, basically it's a decision you say "I'm going to get married" and you make that choice. Another choice for most of us is, you know, if you're married and you want to have a baby, you're deciding, "when do we want to have a child?". Or buying a house. Maybe if you're renting a house and you want to *buy* a house. These are all voluntary choices that you make and voluntary transitions, and there are some people in the Bible who made some voluntary choices and some voluntary decisions.

Abraham was one. So we think about Abraham who left the land of Ur in which he was living and he chose to move to the land which God was giving him so it was a voluntary choice.

Another choice was Moses. Moses had a voice when he went to that burning bush and God said, "I want you to lead my people." What was the first thing he did? "Oh yeah, God, I'm ready to go!"? No. He started arguing with him, didn't he. He started saying, "Uh, you got the wrong guy here. You know I'm a shepherd, pretty much? I can't speak well. I don't do well. You got the wrong guy." He kept giving a couple of arguments, but finally, what did he do? He made a choice to accept that which God had put before him so he had a voluntary transition.

And then Jesus' father Joseph. He was betrothed, engaged to Mary, and the angel came and told him that Mary was going to be with child. He had a choice: he could

choose to go forward with the marriage, or not. So some of us - you know, think about in your past. You've had choices, you've had voluntary choices that you decided to do something, whatever that is.

Some transitions, though, are just the opposite, aren't they? They are like calling them **involuntary**. In other words, somebody else makes a decision and you don't have any choice, and there's a transition as a result of that decision. You get fired from a job, you get laid off. Again, let's go back to where we are right now in the last four months, there were a lot of people who had jobs doing certain things, whatever they may be. Think about the people in sports who worked in selling food and other things, you know, in the commissaries and all that, and they didn't have any choice and got laid off. Restaurants, they didn't have a choice. They got laid off. It was totally involuntary. Some of you in the last four months may have had a transition that was a result of a decision that was made by someone else. It was completely involuntary.

A couple of Biblical examples again:

Joseph, who in the Old Testament, his brothers sold him into slavery. Obviously, that wasn't his choice. He didn't want to go into slavery, but yet he had to and there was that transition to being a slave.

Paul and Silas in jail. They're preaching the gospel and they get put into jail and it was an involuntary transition. It was not something they wanted to happen.

There's another type of transition, and that's what we call **life events**. Now it's not a decision made by anybody. It's something that happens to you and again we come back to the last four months. There have been a lot of people who got sick. It was a life event. There are people who have died. It's a life event, and it affected their family members. So, some of these transitions are life events. Another example in the Bible would be Mary and Martha and Lazarus. That's another example of an involuntary or a life event.

Let's think about how quickly some transitions happen. Some happen very quickly. Think about having a baby. Now, you have nine months to prepare for it, right? And when the baby comes, even if it's a long labor, even if it's 24 or 48 hours, when you think about the overall context of things when that baby is born, it happens. You know it's a quick event. So there are some events in our lives that are quick. Starting a new job - you know, one day you're not at that job and the next day, you are. Again, buying a house - one day you're living someplace, and the next day you're living someplace else. So some are happening quickly.



But you know, some transitions are rather slow. **Some transitions happen slowly.** Look who this is! Rick and Beth, almost 49 years ago. But something happened slowly over 49 years. They got older.



Now look at that. There we are with my family. Some transitions happen so much over time that their gradual. Inside, I'm not seven years old. Inside, I'm maybe 25 or 30. But you try to get me to help pick up a lot of heavy stuff when we move, my muscles say I'm not 35. My muscles say I'm 70. But how did that happen? Any of you recognize that in your own life? How did it happen? I mean, I

didn't wake up one day and all of a sudden it was there. Somethings the gradual transitions, you don't really see them usually, and then one day you wake up and all of a sudden you realize there's been a transition. Aging's probably not the only one, but it's a really good example for all of us.

Some transitions occur every day. How many of you went to sleep last night? I hope most of you did. How many of you woke up this morning? Well, you're here, so obviously you did. So that transition from sleeping to waking and back to sleeping again back and forth, for most of us that should be a daily occurrence. If it's not daily, then there's a little bit of a problem. Let's think about whether that's voluntary or involuntary for a minute. So how many of you last night, whatever time it was - whether it was 8, 9 o'clock, whether it was late, 10, 11, or midnight - got in bed, rolled over, closed your eyes, and you made a choice to go to sleep? Now, whether you went to sleep immediately or not - maybe you did; maybe you didn't - but you made a choice to go to sleep and then maybe you set an alarm. I set an alarm. I'm not an early person, but sometimes I feel like I need to get up early because of what I gotta do, so I set the alarm and I got up at 6 o'clock this morning. I chose to do that, and I chose last night to go to sleep. There are times in the evening I'm watching TV - you know where I'm going with this don't you? Okay, yeah, everybody know where I'm going with this. I'm not *choosing* to go to sleep... wait, did I go to sleep there?

So quick story. When I was probably 20 years old or so, I was the organist at our church and we had a youth choir that sang at the 8:30 service, and then there was an adult choir that sang at the 11 o'clock service. Saturday nights, I did not go to bed early. I would be out until midnight maybe, or 1 o'clock, and then I had a morning paper route and I was supposed to deliver my papers around 4 o'clock in the morning. There was many a Sunday morning that my district manager would call me on the phone - "Are you coming or not?!" "Oh thank you for waking me up!". And I'd go and get rid of my papers, come home with ink all over my hands, clean up, take a shower, be at the church building by 8 o'clock. We'd practice a few minutes, have the service, and during the message, I'm sitting on the front pew and our pastor gives the same message both services, and I'm sitting there on the front pew. Fortunately, I didn't snore! Well, he never told me I snored. And in the second service, I could always tell where I went to sleep, because since he read his messages, I didn't hear that in the first service so that must have been the period when I was asleep.

So some transitions happen to be every day, and then finally one thing I want to think about transitions as far as what they are is the fact that **all transitions contain unknowns**. Think about that for a minute. You start a new job. You have an idea of what that job is gonna be, but guess what? You've never worked for that boss before. You've never worked with those people before, and there are an awful lot of unknowns. You may or may not know how to do the job, even if you know how to do the job, there are still gonna be unknowns in that new job.

When you get married - I mean, Beth and I had known each other for a year, year and a half. Most of you know we dated for six weeks, were engaged for three. We knew each other so well! Talk about unknowns! There were a lot of unknowns. There are still a few, but not as many.

So the thing about transitions:

- They can be voluntary
- They can be involuntary
- They can result from life itself
- Some happen quickly
- Some happen slowly
- Some occur every day
- All contain unknowns

SO HOW DO WE RESPOND TO TRANSITIONS IN OUR LIVES?

Well, one way that we sometimes respond is through **resistance**: I am NOT going to do that. Or you ever hear the story about the little boy whose mom told him to sit down and he wouldn't sit down, and she told him again to sit down and he wouldn't sit down. She finally told him, "If you don't sit down, you're going to get in trouble." So he sat down. You remember what he said? "I'm standing up on the inside." Sometimes that's how we are. There are times that I've resisted change or whatever needed to happen, and we may go along with it. We may go ahead and do it, but we're still standing up on the inside, aren't we? Because we don't want that transition, whatever it may be.

Another way we can respond to transition is **anger**. Now, resistance and anger can go hand-in-hand in a way. You can resist without being angry, but sometimes you're going to stomp your foot. You get mad about the fact of what's going on. Just a couple of examples:

If you get sick, or if you lose a loved one, people get angry. And you know who they get angry with, don't you? They get angry with God. And sometimes, you know, it's just a human emotion. When someone dies who's close to you that was unexpected, you can even be mad at them and say that's not fair that you did this to me, even though they didn't do it, and you know it in your head, but there's that emotion, there's that anger.

Another option along with resistance and anger is to have **a poor attitude**, and it's all kind of wrapping together. We can maybe not say, "I'm standing up on the inside", but we just be really still upset and maybe not do what needs to be done the way that it should be because of our attitude.

So we can have resistance, anger, poor attitude, and, moving to the positive, there can be **acceptance**. Sometimes, though, acceptance might just be resignation. Acceptance really is a positive thing that says, "Okay, I am willing to accept this transition, even if it's not something that I would prefer to happen." Sometimes, though, instead of really acceptance, it's more of a resignation. You've been there before, haven't you? You're resigned to what's going to happen. You really might not have any choice, and you're going to go ahead and go along with it.

You know the best thing that can happen, though, is to have **joy, happiness, and expectancy**. Now, we can't always be that way, but sometimes there's a sense of joy, happiness, and expectancy. Again, talking about a new job, talking about a new baby, talking about a new house, just a variety of things, sometimes we can have all of that.



Now, this next slide says something that's really important: Transition is in your future. For a lot of us it's today, but I'm going to guarantee you - by the way, I don't like fortune cookies. I don't eat them; I think they taste gross. How many of you like to eat fortune cookies here? Oh, you poor people. [laughter]. Anytime I get one, I'll call you and you can have it!

But! Transition is in our future. It's a fact of life. So the question is: How can we manage and how can we handle transitions, and what I want us to think about is that there's a story and it's kind of interesting. It kind of goes along with what Tony was saying earlier, but there's a story in the Old Testament.

Moses led the children of Israel for forty years to the wilderness. At the end of that time, there was a transition time, and there was a transition from Moses to Joshua. Now, can you imagine following a leader like Moses? If you were Joshua, how would you feel? Moses is the top! I mean, he wasn't perfect, but the people followed him even when they argued and even when they complained. And by the way, I don't know if you know this or not, but there were probably a couple of *million* people. That's a lot of folks, and so this is what God said to Joshua: *This is my command - be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.* (Joshua 1:9)

So the first thing for us to recognize is we don't have to be afraid of transitions, got that? *We don't have to be afraid of transitions.* You know what fear is? Fear is being worried that something undesirable will occur or be done, or it's being unwilling or reluctant to do something for fear of the consequences. And we might also put the word "anxiety" in here, because sometimes anxiety and fear kind of go together.

Have you ever been faced with a transition where you were afraid of what the results were going to be? And if you were, what does that do to you in the pit of your stomach? Yeah, it can make you physically sick, can't it? Absolutely. And anxiety can do the exact same thing. One of the things that fear and anxiety can do for us or to us - it can literally paralyze us. There are times that if there's a transition getting ready to happen, instead of doing what we need to do to facilitate it or to be a part of it or to move forward with it, if there's fear or anxiety, we might just not do anything, and sometimes that's the worst thing that can happen.

And God was saying to Joshua basically, "Moses is leaving. You are now going to be the leader. You do not need to be afraid. Not only do you not need to be afraid, but you don't need to be discouraged.

WHAT IS DISCOURAGEMENT?

Having lost confidence or enthusiasm. When you're discouraged, we'll not be very enthusiastic. Discouragement and depression can go hand-in-hand, can't it? And if you're discouraged about a transition, then again, you're not gonna be looking forward to it. You're not gonna be moving into it. You're not gonna be watching and finding out work ideas for what's going on. And God says we don't need to be discouraged.

You know, when the Hebrews nation went into the promised land, although God said "don't be discouraged", God did not just give it to them. They had to fight. You remember that? They had a lot of battles and in the midst of those battles, it would be easy to be discouraged and forget that God was there. So God says "I'll be with you". He says "Don't be discouraged", and the next thing is **we can have confidence**: the

feeling of belief that one can rely on someone or something; firm trust. Stay steady knowing that God is with you. That is exactly what God told Joshua. He said, "I will be with you wherever you go".



Isn't that a neat picture? My little six-year-old Quinn and I got to kayak together about a week ago. It was a lot of fun and you know what? She's out there on the water, and is she afraid? No. And what's one reason she's not afraid? I am with her.

God is our confidence in the midst of transition. We don't know what's going to happen because there are a lot of unknowns. The transitions we are in may not have been transitions of our choosing, although in the midst of this, there may be some choices that we can make as far as transitions are concerned. We don't have to be afraid; we don't have to be discouraged. Because God is with us. You know, He was with Moses. He was with Joshua. He was with Abraham. He was with Joseph. And you know what I want you to say just to yourself? "He is with me." These words are easy and confident, but confidence and confidence even with God usually comes from experience.

How many of you when you first learned how to drive learned how to drive with a stick shift? When you first learned how to drive with a stick shift, did it go a little bit jerky, and did the person who was riding next to you and teaching you try to be very patient, but maybe wasn't always very patient? But hopefully, after a few days or weeks, or maybe months, you became more confident. Now maybe if you were up on a hill, you still had a problem! But if you were on the flat and even, you could start off okay and you could shift gears okay because you had experience. And that's the way it is with just about anything that we do.

Now, Beth bought me a drone for my birthday. I'm learning how to fly it. Am I extremely confident now? No. But over time will I be? You can count on it, absolutely. Now, confidence with God, it's kind of similar. What do you mean, Rick? We look at our experience and where has He been in the past. Has He been with us in the past? And as we move forward, I'll tell you this: God's been gracious to us in a lot of ways in the sense that there are a lot of bad things that haven't happened in our life. I mean, we've experienced some tough times as well as all of you have at one point or another. I'm confident, though, that if something - an involuntary transition that I did not want to happen and didn't like - if it happened in my life, I would know deep down inside that God would get me through it, and then in the end I would be able to look back and see

where God was in the midst of it all. Why can I say that? Because I can go back a little bit and I can see God was here with me when that happened. He was here with me with this happened. He was here with me when I lost a job. He was here when my job changed to where I didn't want it to change. He was here with me when this happened and when that happened and He's never going to leave me. So I know that I have that confidence.

Something else: **God will equip you during transitions.** When Moses became a leader of the Hebrew nation, God gave him his staff that he could throw down and it became a snake. God equipped him. He said, "I'm not a good speaker". God said, "I'm gonna give you your brother. He will speak for you." When Elisha became the prophet after Elijah, he got Elijah's cloak. God said, "I'm giving you a double portion of what Elijah had." God promises that whatever we're going to go through, He's going to equip us. And by the way, some of that equipment is just friends helping us. It's not because that means you're gonna know everything you need to know or every step of the way you need to, but that equipment is going to be there to help us get through that situation. God promises us that.

Finally, **the Christian life is a life of transition**, and the Christian life might be the greatest transition of all. Isn't it beautiful? Think about this: Is this a voluntary or involuntary? It's voluntary, because you made the choice, didn't you? You chose to follow God. And when you chose to follow Him, you moved from darkness into what? Light. You moved from death into what? Life. Now, and of you who are perfect here raise your hands. Okay, I don't see any hands. Any of you who aren't perfect, raise your hands. Ask Beth, she'll tell you that I'm not perfect. So, part of the Christian life is not making us *better*. You don't need to be better. But there is a transition into holiness, and what I mean by that is there are certain things that you may have done and acted in certain ways when you became a Christian that might not have been the best, and God begins to work some of that stuff out of you so that the holiness that is in you begins to come out in ways that it didn't before.

Folks, all of life is a transition. The Christian life is the best transition of all. And in the midst of that, many more transitions are in your future. I can promise you that. And the joy of it all is God's there with us. We don't have to be afraid, we don't have to be discouraged. Life is good even when it's bad. Do you understand what I mean by that? Life is good even when it's bad because God is with us, and we can count on that.

CLOSING BENEDICTION

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.
Numbers 6:24-26 NIV*