

## THE TRANSITION ZONE

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**I remember years ago, every Tuesday night at a certain time, something weird would happen on the TV.** First there would be some spooky black and white images (this was in the days of black and white TV, so no extra points there), then there would be some spooky music (na-na, na-na, na-na, na-na), then a spooky guy named Rod Serling would appear on my TV screen and say "You have just crossed over into the Twilight Zone ...where nothing is really as it seems..." I suppose that somewhere in the world of cable television reruns, you can still find those "Twilight Zone" images and occurrences on your TV. But let me tell you about another weird and spooky place that you are likely to experience..... ***Let me welcome you to the "Transition Zone.....where nothing is really as it seems!"***

**God normally directs and moves people in seasons of life and ministry, with times or seasons of transition between the seasons of ministry.** When we are in or entering one of those recurring "in-between" times we are in the "Transition Zone." *The Transition Zone is potentially very dangerous for Christians.*

**The Grace of God begins to lift from our current situation, we begin to experience friction and frustration (both internal and external).** The things that used to satisfy no longer do. One's heart begins to withdraw from present activities and responsibilities. Creativity and energy level drops. Everyday details of responsibility begin to produce irritation and an "attitude" develops. ***It seems as if there's no passion and no way to get the pilot light lit again.***

**When change is thrown at us by season or circumstance or by the decisions or actions of others, we can feel a loss of control, and find ourselves in an emotional tailspin.** ***We may feel as if we've been robbed or assaulted or "mugged!"***

**Before attempting to deal with the negativity and frustration we may feel, we've got to determine if it is Transition or Transgression.** This is the time to ask the Holy Spirit to examine your heart and expose hidden faults. These must be dealt with through repentance, confession, and cleansing as they are exposed. Once it is clear that it is transition and not merely transgression, it's time for Transition Management. ***Transition must be managed. It cannot be avoided.***

**The time of Transition is a crucial time of being responsible but letting go.** Move too fast, you become irresponsible. You let people down, violate your own integrity. Move too slow, you become irritable, then irascible. You lose respect for those you serve, perhaps even begin to tear down what you have labored to build.

**If you find yourself in the Transition Zone, the next step is to identify the situation; determine what needs to be done, what steps to take, what resources are required. *God supplies resources for what He purposes for us to do.***

**Once again, Welcome to the Transition Zone! *Here are some things about the Transition Zone that every visitor needs to know.***

1. **Nothing is really as it seems.** In the Transition Zone, problems seem larger and blessings seem smaller than they actually are. You must "Magnify The Lord" to get things into proper perspective. ***These are some of the feelings and perceptions that occur in the Transition Zone:***
  - **"I look like a fool and feel like an idiot.** I left in a blaze of glory to go and make my fortune in a distant land and now I have nothing to tell the people back on the other shore who told me I shouldn't go. I'm stuck here in a kind of limbo. What will they think? How will I vindicate myself?"
  - **"Maybe I was wrong to take that step.** Maybe I should have just accepted things as they were and learned to live with it. Maybe I should think about going back. Maybe I really blew it and as a result, life as I have known it is over." (This part is true! Life as you have known it is over! Life as God wants you to know it is ahead in the fog somewhere!)
  - **"I have committed the unpardonable sin in leaving a place of security, as frustrating as it had become.** There will never again be a place for me to really function in ministry and service. The only place God could really use me is in that particular place and situation." (See, it's good to look at this in print. It looks really silly when you write it out, doesn't it?)
  - **"I left a good situation in a place I was really happy (In Egypt we were having such a good time!)"** "You want fries with that?" So now God is going to punish me for leaving what He had provided." Actually, God is going to check your attitudes and reasons and then provide for you where you are now. He is the God of Things as They Are. (Note: You didn't leave a good situation in a place where you were really happy. You left a place of growing frustration to follow God and your heart and took a step of faith to start a new life. So start a new life!)
2. **Anything Can Happen.** The purpose of the Transition Zone is to take you to a place where things can happen that could not happen where you were before. Remember how you felt when you first became aware of God's call and purpose

for your life. You were so confident that "Anything Can Happen!" It still can. But it is partly in your hands and partly in God's hands. Put yourself entirely in God's hands and then you will be better able to deal with the part that is in your hands. Don't insist that everything be set in concrete too soon. As soon as the next step occurs, the "Anything" that can happen narrows down to "Certain Things" can happen. ***This is the season of opportunity. Let God run it His way.***

3. **The rules have all been changed.** You no longer "have to..": Get up in the morning at a certain time, be somewhere at a certain time, go to the hall on Saturday and set up for Sunday church. In fact, you no longer "have to.." do anything. Now the big question is, "What do you do when you don't 'have to..' do anything?" How you handle yourself when the rules are taken away determines what the next set of rules needs to be. ***How you handle yourself now will figure significantly in what you will be doing ten years from now.***
4. **The Transition Zone is not in colour nor is it in black and white... It's grey.** At first grey makes it seem featureless and even hopeless. There is no clear sense of direction (very much like the London sky most of the time!) But keep in mind that anything God wants to show you will stand out very clearly against a grey background. Keep your eyes open. You'll have to watch out for the danger of eyes being focussed only on the TV, a paper-back book, or a web page. ***Watch out for the tendency to only look down at your feet when walking in fog. Keep your head up!***
5. **What was is no longer and what will be is not yet.** Before you entered the Transition Zone, it seemed as if you would be only too glad to be rid of what had been and that what would be was just around the corner. That's because when God is leading you forward, He somehow seems to forget to mention the Transition Zone. (Moses - 40 years, Joseph - 13 years, David - 13 years, need I mention others?) ***Remember that the very purpose the Transition Zone exists, the reason you entered it, was so that what was would be no longer and what will be can be!***
6. **It's easy to become confused and lose your way in the Transition Zone.** You must not lose sight of why you entered the Transition Zone. Your ability to remain calm depends on it. Accept the fact that the Transition Zone is a grey, foggy, confusing place with no sign posts or beacons, not even a map. But there is a reason you entered and there is a way out. You must stay calm and apply to yourself all the lessons you have learned previously. Some of those lessons you have experienced, others you only know intellectually. This is the proving ground. ***But whatever you feel, whatever you experience remember...THE ONLY WAY OUT IS FORWARD.***

7. **There is no way to predict how long you will be in the Transition Zone.** It depends on factors you have no way of knowing. Some of the factors depend on you: lessons you apply, principles you operate, disciplines you exercise, attitudes you develop and maintain. Some of the factors depend on circumstances: timing, job openings, people God brings your way, opportunities that have reached maturity, tests God has determined to apply. ***Do your part as well as you can. God will do His part perfectly!***
8. **Determine to make the best of the time you have in the Transition Zone.** Once it is over and you are in "What will be," you won't find it easy to have time for some of the things you need to establish as disciplines and patterns. ***If you establish them now it will be easier to maintain them when you are in "What will be."***
- **Daily Bible Reading.** Follow a plan. Minimum of Through the Bible in a Year. Do it at a set time each day. No excuses!
  - **Keep a journal of thoughts, feelings, and events in the Transition Zone.** Enter some info each day. You and others will need the insights you gain later.
  - **Get up and go to bed at a set time each day.** Don't let day run into night and night run into day. Set your own schedule. If God is going to be able to use you effectively in full-time ministry or in any task where you don't have external controls, you need to develop this kind of discipline while you can.
  - **Set yourself projects with schedules and deadlines.** Job search, fixing up the house, exercise, creative computing or writing, getting acquainted with the community, getting into church, make your own list.
  - **Take a walk.** Walk 30 minutes a day and gradually increase it to an hour a day. Use the exercise to feel better and the time and distance to talk and pray.

#### **Some additional Transition Zone thoughts:**

- I. **Transition from A > to > B.** Moving from one clearly defined position or role to another. This is hard. But it's easiest to explain to others and to vindicate yourself to your adoring public.
- II. **Transition from A > to 0 to > B.** Moving from a clearly defined position or role to another more or less clearly defined role but with a delay in between.

This is harder. Harder to explain, harder to maintain your dignity in your own eyes and the eyes of others.

- III. **Transition from A > to 0 while waiting for B to be revealed.** Moving from a clearly defined position or role to a period of no role, but with the expectation that God will reveal His will in His time. This is hardest. It's impossible to explain. It looks like failure. It is humiliating. It can be financially embarrassing. Think of Elijah moving from the victory at Carmel to the wilderness, the tree, the gentle whisper and the new anointing. (1 Kings 19; James 4:10; John 5:41, 44).

***The Type III transition is not only difficult but loaded with danger, in that the feelings of uncertainty can lead to making rash decisions or making rash statements or commitments.***

**When one is going through any transition, it is important to have people near who are more or less objective;** who care, who know us, but who can see the situation apart from the emotional state we're in. If it is a Type III transition, it is imperative to have someone to help us monitor the process and to avoid dangerous errors.

**One of the good things about a Type III transition is that whatever ministry you do from this point onward will be uniquely you.** It won't be shaped by the responsibilities and expectations of a role, but will emerge from within,. It will be developed out of the desires and concerns of your heart, the unique gifts and skills God has given you, and the relationships you have developed and will develop.

**This little article grew as I was writing it.** It is written from experience, both in how the Transition Zone feels, how to deal with it, and how to come out of it. Please bear in mind that we all are pilgrims who are seeking God's city and we all spend some time (even time after time) in the Transition Zone as well. So there is no pride or sense of superiority in anything here presented. We are all facing the realities of season, circumstance, and transition. ***Welcome to the Transition Zone. Enjoy your stay, but don't settle here! Grace and Peace, Jim Stephens***