

Cultivating Connections

Marriage Conference 2021

Apostolic Christian Counseling & Family Services

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Flourishing
through Transitions

Redemptive Qualities

1. Transitions give us the opportunity to bless others.
2. Transitions help us realize we are not a product of our circumstances.
3. Transitions elicit worship.
4. Transitions help us understand ourselves.

Redemptive Quality #1

Transitions give us the opportunity to bless others.

Model the Gospel to Each Other

- God leaves enough brokenness in our lives so that the Gospel needs to be shared between us.
- Satan wants us to be harmed through trials, while God wants us to grow closer to Him and bring Him glory through them.
 - We must encourage each other to look to Jesus for grace, strength, and guidance as we go through trials.
- Showing Christian love to another person takes time, effort, and self-sacrifice...the kind of self-sacrifice Jesus exemplified on the cross.

Fight or Flight or Freeze

When we feel emotionally or physically threatened, human beings have rapid emotional and physical responses that lead us to:

1. **Fight** – we emotionally or physically defend ourselves.
2. **Flight** – we get away from the situation as quick as we can.
3. **Freeze** – we feel emotionally helpless and paralyzed.

Reacting Versus Responding

Reacting

- Emotions drive: Fight or Flight
- Assume our perspective is correct.
- Assume negative motives for others.
- Win-lose or lose-lose mindset.

Responding

- Gentle, easily entreated. (*James 3:17*)
- Speak the truth in love. (*Ephesians 4:15*)
- Listens, clarifies, and seeks to understand. (*James 1:19*)
- Seek win-win solutions – esteems others higher. (*Philippians 2:3*)

James 3:13-18

13. *“Who is a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.*
14. *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.*
15. *This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.*
16. *For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*
17. *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*
18. *And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”*

Separating Events from Issues

- There are two layers to most conversations:
 - **Events** – the topic at hand.
 - **Issues** – the “under-the-surface” feelings, meanings, and goals.
- Always seek to communicate on the same issue.
- Many conflicts are never solved because the people talking are actually arguing about different hidden issues.
- It is a loving act (though often a challenge) to work at understanding why another person is reacting to an issue the way he/she is.

Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg *Fighting for Your Marriage*



God gives us grace as we need it, in the amount we need.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10, “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

Give Grace to One Another

- Under significant stress people can become irritable, rigid, and even irrational.
 - All-or-nothing thinking
- Do your best to not taking things too personally.
- Take comments that people say and let them “roll off” as much as possible.
 - Suggested prayer, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they just said.”
- Seek forgiveness for times when you act in a way that doesn’t represent Christ well to one another.

A New Version of the Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change, the courage to change the one I can, and the wisdom to know its ME.

Lord, grant me the strength to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and forgiveness when I finally snap.



ROTTENCARDS

Lord,
Grant me the serenity to accept stupid people the way they are, courage to maintain my self-control, and wisdom to know that if I act on it, I will go to jail!



Redemptive Quality #2

Transitions help us realize we are not a product of our circumstances.

Christ is the Solid Rock in Transition

- Our identity in Christ is challenged and settled in transitions.
- We are not defined by our surroundings.
- We are not perfected by our surroundings.
- When our sense of well-being is over-identified with our circumstances, we will tend to either:
 - Look for a “savior” or a “silver bullet” to fix our circumstances.
 - Get highly anxious and feel like the “sky is falling.”

Faith is practiced in Transitions

During transitions, we often struggle because we can't see the bigger picture.

The question is, “**How do I think and live like Christ, right here, right now in these circumstances?**”

- As humans, we are heavily invested in feeling certain about our circumstances.
- God, however, **is not** invested in us feeling certain about our circumstances.
- He **is** invested in us walking by faith; fully certain of Who it is in whom we believe (**2 Timothy 1:12**).

Redemptive Quality #3

Transitions elicit worship.

Worship or No?

Welcome Transitions

Marriage
Retirement
Births
Graduations
Career hires
Favorable move

Unwelcome Transitions

- Death
- Divorce
- Loss of health
- Illness
- Unfavorable move

Worship is directional and since God is the recipient, it can originate from any circumstance. Worship requires we see the sovereign hand of God over our circumstance.

3 Phases of Grief

1. Protest

- Shock, confusion, denial; anger at others, anger at self, anger at God; lowered self-esteem.
- Crying, pain, weakness, nausea, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, etc.

2. Despair

- Agony, grief, anguish, depression.
- Bargaining and “urge to recover” that which was lost; slowed thinking and actions; continuing physical symptoms.

3. Detachment

- Apathy, indifference, loss of interest; desire to withdraw or “give up”.
- Decreased socialization, no new friendships; bland expression, absent spontaneity.

Hebrews 4:15-16

15. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Redemptive Quality #4

Transitions help us understand ourselves.

Needs During Stress & Transition

Thinkers

1. Logic and emotional distance
2. Information and facts
3. Assistance in problem-solving from people they see as competent.
4. Assistance with re-establishing healthy control to move forward.

Feelers

1. To share their feelings and experiences.
2. Acceptance as they sometimes “vent” and pour out their emotions.
3. Others to empathetically listen and allow time for their emotions to settle.
4. Want to be understood.

Planning Versus “Future-Tripping”

Planning

1. Considering options for prudent action.
2. Based on stewardship, priorities, and values.
3. Focuses on what is in one's personal control today.
4. High awareness of God's grace and provision in the future.

“Future-Tripping”

1. Mentally playing out possible future scenarios about what could go wrong.
2. Based in worry, uncertainty, and anxiety.
3. Focuses on what is not in one's personal control.
4. Has a limited awareness of God's grace and provision for the future.

Remembering Versus “Dredging”

Remembering

1. Can consider the past without being consumed by it.
2. Is able to remember both positive and painful events.
3. Learns from past events and uses what is helpful.
4. Does not bind the person's identity to the past (failures, setbacks, or pain).

“Dredging”

1. Over-focuses on the negative or painful aspects of the past.
2. Regret and “if only...” mindset to the past.
3. Allows the past to “haunt” our present and to fuel anxiety about the future.
4. Is tied to discouragement and depression.

Share Questions and
Experiences