

**Book Review on Managing Transitions**

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**Summarize the main ideas the author is communicating**

The author of *Managing Transitions* is William Bridges. In this reading the author starts by clarifying first that change is different from transitions. The author states that change is situational which involves the move to a new site, retirement of a founder, the reorganization of the roles on the team. As transition is psychological which involves a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about. Changes normally occurs fast compared to transition which takes a slower process.

The main idea the author is communicating in his reading is the three components that involves in transitions. Endings (how to get people to let go), the Neutral Zone, and the New Beginning. The key propositions that Bridges state is that, “the starting point for dealing with transition is not the outcome, but the ending you will have to make to leave the old situation behind” (p.27). People normally become attached to the old ways, so the transition can be initially marked by people becoming angry, sad, frightened, depressed, anxious, confused, and exhibiting bargaining behaviors. Bridges states that, Endings can be managed by treating the past with respect, helping compensate for losses, giving people plenty of the right information, marking the endings, and helping define what is over and what isn’t (p.33-34).

The next phase is the neutral zone. Bridge states that, the neutral zone is the place of both risk and opportunity. It becomes risky because people are unsure of the process being made and may become anxious, during which time productivity may fall. There are also dangers in this stage. Old weaknesses, compensation for in the old arrangements, may rise to the surface. People begins to have mixed signals between the old regime and the new, and people may also become polarized one way or the other, leading to tension and discord. Transitions through the neutral

zone needs to be managed carefully (p.46-47). People can deal with understandable change if it is part of the bigger one. Unrelated, unexpected change may be the straw that will break the camel's back. Bridges provide several mechanisms for this, including creating temporary support systems and short-term goals and redefinition of the activity in the neutral zone in terms of more familiar activity or metaphors. The neutral zone is also, however, a point of creative opportunity: as people and systems "unfreeze" from the old systems and have not yet "freezed" back into the new systems, there is tremendous opportunity to identify and realize changes and find new ways of doing things.

The final step that Bridges states in the transition stage is the "new beginning." Bridges talks about the 4 P's. The Purpose (explain why), Picture (share vision of how it will look and feel), Plan (lay out a detailed step-by-step), and Part (give people a part to play in the transition and the new beginning) (p.68). Bridges distinguishes between "starts" and "beginnings." A start occurs when people start doing new things, when they start enacting the changes. A beginning only occurs, however, when the personal psychological and behavioral change takes place and people take on new behaviors and identities. Bridge concludes by stating that to manage the new beginning one must be consistent, ensure quick successes, symbolize new identity, and celebrate successes (p.78-81).

**What is one concept that stood out to you in this book?**

The one concept that stood with me in the reading is the space that Bridges gives for Endings and letting go to be part of his transition phase. I believe giving people the room to grief about what they are losing is one of the biggest things to do when a company or church is transition to another phase. When people are giving the chance to go through the ending phase, it helps them to transition better than not given them a chance at all. These reminds me of when ATS was moving from Nyack campus to the city. Most of the student just heard about the change and within a twinkling of an eye, we were moved to the city campus. These cause a lot of pain in peoples life and some had to leave the campus and find another school, because they did not give enough time for people to process and think about what they will be missing or a time to access their life, or the family and communities that had been built in Nyack. Even though that not everyone is willing to move on with a change, there still needs to be a space where people can be given the chance to grief and think of what they are giving up. When a company is moving its corporation into another state, it needs to give is employees a time to access their life and what they are giving up for the next transition. Some may be giving up relationship that were formed in their neighborhood, children will be struggle with entering a new school and having to start all over again. With all these in mind, the best way for a new start to occur is to end the ending well and give people room to end what they started before. When this occurs, there is a better chance for someone to transition smoother.

**What implications does this concept have for leading in a church context?**

The implication that this concept has for leading a church context is that, the same people that work in the corporate world are those that also come to church. The church also has a building structure, leaderships, and people that come in. For a church to change, they also need

to follow the concept of the transition that Bridges gives in his book. There needs to be the three-step process of transition, Ending, Neutral Zone, and New Beginning. When ever a church is planning a transition, it needs to give space for people to grief about an end of a journey. Something they have become accustomed to. They need to be giving the chance to sit down for everyone to have the opportunity to talk and lay out what they will miss about what is been change. I have been in a church that the national board changed a great pastor from the church without letting the church members know about the change and this cause a big division in the church while many people left the church. I believe if the leaders came to the church and informed them of the change and why they were making the change and what to expect, it will had helped the church move forward smoothly. The church needs to know how to organize transition smoother, so that it will be easy for the members to come on board. When Bridges states are used in a church, I believe it will help smoothen the transition much better. With giving a chance to end, and leading people through the neutral zone by taking everything one step at a time and concluding with the new beginning, it helps all to walk down the path together, rather than alone in the shadows not knowing what's going on.

### **What needs to change in your life as a result?**

Reading this book, what I have come to learn is that, transition from one thing to another takes time and is never a slow process. Been the youth pastor in my church, I have sometimes wanted change in the church and did not look at what needs to happen or what will take place when the change happens. I have sometimes rushed into a change that did not benefit the congregation. I have learnt that, for a transition to happen, we need to give people enough room for them to know what the move is about, what's taking place, what are they giving up, what will be better than it was before and also to remember to have them playing a role in it.

