



TRANSITIONS

STUDY GUIDE

TRANSITIONS—WHEN THE END IS A BEGINNING

A Note from Pastor Jeff Greenway

“There’s a time and purpose for every matter under heaven...” (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

As you know, I will soon be transitioning from your Lead Pastor at Reynoldsburg Community Church to become the full-time President Pro Tempore of our Annual Conference at the end of June. This transition was communicated last October, but I’ve been personally thinking about, leading toward, and preaching to prepare you for this moment for the last several years. My original plan was to serve here an additional year before retiring from active ministry, but I believe God has called me to transition at this time because the church is ready, Pastor Bill Weaver is ready, and the Allegheny West Conference needs my leadership.

Our church is ready for this transition. Our church hasn’t been this strong and healthy in a very long time. Over the last eighteen years, we’ve overcome a great deal—including healing from deep hurts from the past, a successful building project, a global pandemic, a denominational divorce, and the birth of a new denomination. We may be a smaller congregation than we were 18 years ago, but I would contend we’re deeper and stronger in our faith. I’m excited to see what our church will do after I’m gone. Some have asked me what I think my legacy will be: it’s you. I won’t know the full extent of that legacy, however, until long after I’m gone. It’s time for you to live into everything I’ve been trying to teach you for the last 18 years. I love you—and I will continue to pray for you every day.

Pastor Bill is ready for this transition. During the last seven years, I’ve watched Bill grow in the visible ways you all see, but also in the more important leadership areas you may not see. He has completed his Master’s Degree and been ordained—and he is once again deepening his knowledge and increasing his skills as a doctoral student. Bill is an exceptional communicator and has risen to the challenge each time he’s been given a new responsibility. He has made mistakes—as we all do—and has learned from them. He will make more mistakes—because there are some things you simply don’t know until you sit in the first chair—and he will learn from them as well. I love Bill—and I’ll be praying for him, Kimberly, Reese, and Sophia every day. I encourage you to love him and his family the way you have loved Beth and me—and continue to pray for him every day.

The Allegheny West Conference needs my full time attention. I’ve been deeply involved in building our new denomination for the last eight years—and there have been a few seasons over that time period when it’s been like having two jobs, especially the last two years. Someone asked me what it’s been like, to which I said in reply, “It’s like driving a late model car down a gravel road at 90 miles per hour—everything is shimmying and shaking, and I’m trying to keep it out of the ditch.” The pace has been unsustainable. Let me be clear: I’m not leaving Reynoldsburg because I think the Conference is a better job or a promotion—there’s no better job than serving here at this church. I’m leaving as an act of obedience to God. I believe the God who brought us here 18 years ago is going ahead of us there—and because God doesn’t waste a thing, He’ll use and multiply the gifts He’s given me in that role. Thank you for loving us—and please pray for us every day.

Since I'm having a much-delayed, right knee replacement on May 28, my last Sunday preaching will be May 26—which makes this the last message series I'm preparing as one of your pastors. I'm calling it **TRANSITIONS—WHEN THE END IS A BEGINNING**. During this series, we'll be looking at four different transitions in leadership in the Bible: Paul to Timothy—Elijah to Elisha—Moses to Joshua—and Paul to the Philippians.

It's scientifically proven that change is one of the most feared events human beings will encounter. We resist it with every fiber of our beings. We love stability. We prefer things to remain as they are, but the inevitable aspect of life is change. One person said, "The only thing constant is change." Another said, "The only person who likes change is a baby with a dirty diaper—and even they're not always wild about it."

We don't like change, but it's impossible to get from where we are to where we're going without making a transition. I feel a greater part of our success as a Christian—and as a Church—will be determined by how we manage transition. We need to learn how to function and ultimately be successful in seasons of transition.

We need to understand the nature of transition. Transition is a change or shift from one state, subject, person, or place to another. Transition isn't change for the sake of change—rather, transition is moving from one point to another. It's essentially moving forward. To change is to make a difference or transform; and transformation is a process, not an event.

Those of us who would call ourselves Christians begin to encounter transition when things begin to get shaky and unfamiliar. In those moments, we need to realize God is taking us somewhere. He's repositioning us. There are some things that just will not happen if you stay where you are. God wants to strategically position you so you'll be able to access things you could never get by staying where you are.

When asked how they're doing, many people will respond, "I'm in transition." I think that's code for, "My life is falling apart, and I don't know what the heck is going on!" Of course, we don't want to admit that—so we mask our response by simply replying, "I'm in transition."

Nothing grows without change—nothing. Transitions aren't always easy. In fact, most of the time they're painful—because nothing moves without friction. But transition is also necessary. It's a vital, inevitable part of our lives. The laws of the universe teach us that everything is in a constant state of transition. So, we need to know how to navigate through times of transition with peaceful grace and dignity.

God moves in seasons. The Apostle Paul said in II Corinthians 3:18 that we're transitioning into Christ's image from "glory to glory." Jeremiah told the nation of Moab that, unlike Israel, they hadn't transitioned from "vessel to vessel" and, therefore, retained a sinful taste and scent before God (Jeremiah 48:11).

To the Philippians, Paul said, “Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13, 14). Paul understood that transition was a necessary part for his lifelong journey towards the prize.

But transitions can be difficult! They force us from the familiar into the unknown. And often, we go kicking and screaming. But in the end, we still go—whether we like it or not.

So we might as well embrace transition and make the best of it. If it’s going to happen anyway, let’s learn how to make transitions work for us. The first step is identifying why we often resist transition. Understanding this can help us avoid making those same mistakes again.

I recently read an article that shared three major mindsets that keep us from transitioning into something new:

Mindset #1: COMFORT. This is especially prevalent among Western Christians. We often opt for comfort and convenience over the challenge of transition. People know that in order to transition, they’ll have to get off the couch and get into the game. So they refuse to move forward—choosing instead to remain in their comfort zone.

Mindset #2: FEAR. People fear the unknown. A movie isn’t suspenseful if you know what happens next. After you’ve already seen the movie, the suspenseful scenes lose their ability to frighten you. Because transition carries an element of the unknown, people shrink back in fear.

As people of faith, it’s important for us to remember: there’s no place we can go that God’s not already there, and He’ll *“turn everything together for good for those who love Him and live as called according to His purpose”* (Romans 8:28).

Mindset #3: SENTIMENTALITY. Some people don’t transition because they would rather live in yesterday’s familiar revelation than search for a new one. They’re content to live in yesterday’s victory rather than having to fight for one today. Many mature Christians who have fought and won many battles in their lifetimes are plagued by this concept. At some point, they fight harder in defense against their critics than they fight to receive new revelation. This kind of sentimentality is a form of idolatry—in which we worship g.o.d. (the “good old days”). *“So forget what lies behind and reach forward to what is ahead...”* (Philippians 3:13).

That same article shared four action steps to help people who are preparing for a transition in their life or who are presently experiencing transition right now:

1. **ACCEPT** the fact that transition is inevitable. It’s going to happen whether you like it or not, so you might as well make the best of it.

2. **EMBRACE** the risk. Risk is an inevitable part of the transition process. See this time as an opportunity to display your faith. See it as God's way of surprising you with something better.
3. **EXPECT** negative consequences. It's going to happen. Don't let this catch you off-guard. People are going to be critical. There'll be a time of chaos when you're traveling between what has been and what will be. Expect some anxiety and confusion to sneak in. These are necessary parts of the process. Without these things, there would be no victory.
4. **MOVE** forward in spite of it all. There's only one way to go through transition—and that's to go through it! Never stop. Never give in. Keep going. I'm reminded of the repetitive words of Sir Winston Churchill, the former Prime Minister of Great Britain, which serve as good words for us when experiencing transition:

"Never give up. Never give up! Never give up!! Never, never, never, never, never give up!"

The next time you or someone else says, "I'm going through transition," you can do so without any cover-up. Say it with enthusiasm. Say it with excitement. You're about to enter into a new season of greater glory!

WEEK ONE – MAY 5

PAUL AND TIMOTHY



Begin by praying—asking the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your time together, to open God’s Word to you, to grow in your walk with the Lord and with each other, and to show you how you might apply what you learn in your daily discipleship.

THEME: In his two letters to his young protégé, Timothy, the Apostle Paul gives sound instruction for this young leader who’s called to lead the church in Ephesus.

SUMMARY: The Apostle Paul was a great mentor to young Christian leaders like Timothy—perhaps because he remembered what it was like to have someone invest in him (Ananias and Barnabas). Timothy (as well as others like Silas, Titus, Luke, and Gaius) often traveled with Paul on his missionary journeys. In their travels, Paul often gave these young missionaries assignments—like delivering letters, collecting offerings for the poor, going to serve and help square away a troubled church. The letters he wrote to Timothy were full of instruction and encouragement as he led the church in Ephesus. Paul also wrote a letter to the church (the letter to the Ephesians).

Timothy was perhaps Paul’s most trusted assistant. The New Testament depicts their relationship over some 20 years—witnessing to both its professional and personal dimensions—including professional teamwork, mentorship, and succession in ministry.

Every leader needs mentors and models—typically other leaders just ahead of where they are in their growth and journeys. Every leader also needs to be mentoring and modeling those just behind them. In this way, discipleship takes on the multi-generational nature described by Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2:

“You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others” (NLT).

In order to both mentor and be mentored effectively, it’s important to see the three phases that developed over time in the relationship between Paul and Timothy:

Phase 1—Parenthood: We’re part of something that’s been around a lot longer than us!

In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, he addresses him as *“my true son in the faith.”* (1 Timothy 1:2) We first meet Timothy in Acts chapter 16 when Paul is heading out on his second missionary journey. He stops in Lystra to pick up a young disciple who accompanies him, assists him, and serves as an apprentice under him. Timothy’s biological father was Greek, but there’s no evidence in Scripture that he was a Christian. So, Paul filled the role of spiritual father to Timothy. Who have been and who are your spiritual parents?

Phase 2—Pace-setter: We need someone to set the pace for us to chase.

The second phase of our ministry mentoring is pace-setting—being the example of what mature ministry looks like. In Paul’s second letter to Timothy, he points out that, *“you know what I teach, and how I live, and what my purpose in life is. You know my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance”* (2 Timothy 3:10, 11 NLT). Paul sets the pace with his life and challenges Timothy to learn by keeping up and emulating his lifestyle. Paul was willing to invest in and give Timothy opportunities that others might never have given him.

No generation is exempt from the call to fulfill The Great Commission or to serve God’s purposes as fully as possible. The next generation is always watching, so we get to set the pace. How have others set the pace for you?

Phase 3—Partnering: life is always best when shared in partnership with others.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul makes a somewhat obscure reference to Timothy in chapter 16, verse 21: *“Timothy, my fellow worker, sends you, his greetings.”* Timothy progressed from being a son to a student and then to a colleague and co-laborer. We spend plenty of time desiring and praying for more laborers—but perhaps we don’t spend enough time investing in those with the potential to become our partners in the mission.

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul reminds us that we serve today because of the repetition of this three-phase process for centuries. It didn’t stop with Timothy. The baton has been passed to us—and it’s our responsibility to be parents, pacesetters, and partners with the next generation until Jesus comes!

Who’s your Paul? Who’s your Timothy?

READ: 1 Timothy 4:11-16, 1 Timothy 6:11-16, and 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8

TEACHING POINTS:

- BE DILIGENT IN YOUR WITNESS (1 Timothy 4:11-16)
- TAKE HOLD OF A RIGHTEOUS AND HOLY LIFE (1 Timothy 5:11-16)
- ENDURE PERSECUTION WHEN IT OCCURS (2 Timothy 3:10-13)
- STAND ON THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE (2 Timothy 3:14-17)
- STAY FAITHFUL TO SCRIPTURE (2 Timothy 4:1-5)
- REMEMBER THE PRIZE THAT AWAITS US (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

RESPOND & DISCUSS:

- Who was/is your Paul—an example in faith and conduct?
- Who is your Timothy—a person in whom you're investing to grow?
- Are you being diligent in living your faith and using your gifts for Jesus?
- How are you being asked to fight the good fight of our faith?
- What does it mean for you to take hold of eternal life?
- Have you ever been persecuted for what you believe?
- Do you believe the Bible contains truth—or is truth?
- How are you being tempted to diminish or change Scripture?
- Are you confident in your future?
- What's your takeaway from this week's lesson?
- What is your "I will..." statement as you consider this week's teaching?
- How might your spiritual gifts help you live out your statement?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?

WEEK TWO – MAY 12

ELIJAH AND ELISHA



Begin by praying—asking the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your time together, to open God’s Word to you, to grow in your walk with the Lord and with each other, and to show you how you might apply what you learn in your daily discipleship.

How did you do with your “I will...” statement from last week? How were you able to utilize your spiritual gifts in seeking to live it out?

THEME: Change and transition is difficult, but we can bravely face them with God’s help. The leadership transition from Elijah to Elisha reminds us to be ready for change, to seek the filling of the Holy Spirit, and to courageously take up the task given us. This encounter records the transfer of power and spiritual authority from one generation of prophetic leadership to another. Elisha knows his master Elijah is leaving—and Elisha desires a double portion of Elijah’s spirit.

SUMMARY: Every story has a backstory—and the story of Elijah and Elisha begins with Elijah (one of, if not the greatest prophet in the Old Testament). In 1 Kings chapter 18, Elijah took on the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel with incredible faith. But when Queen Jezebel threatened to kill him, Elijah retreats to Mt. Horeb—depleted and exhausted, thinking he was all alone. At the start of his journey, Elijah was tired (1 Kings 18:45, 46), afraid (1 Kings 19:1-3a), and depressed (1 Kings 19:3b-5). Then, an angel feeds him and gives him the energy to travel 40 days and nights to Mt. Horeb.

While in Horeb, God asks him, *“Elijah, what are you doing here?”* Elijah responds, in essence saying, *“Everyone in Israel has rejected your covenant, but I’ve been faithful for you—and I’m the only one left and they’re trying to kill me!”* God tells Elijah to stand at the face of the cave in the presence of the Lord—for He is about to pass by. Elijah experienced a mountain-tumbling wind, a rock-splitting earthquake, and a consuming fire—but God wasn’t heard or found in any of these.

After the display, Elijah heard a still, small whisper, covered his face, and went back into the cave—where God asked him, *“Elijah, why are you here?”* for the second time. And for the second time, Elijah professes Israel’s unfaithfulness and complains he’s the only one left who hasn’t worshiped the pagan Baals—and they want to kill him.

God then sent Elijah back the way he came—to the desert of Damascus. He instructed him to anoint Hazael king of Aram, Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and Elisha to succeed him as prophet. Jehu will kill anyone who escaped the sword of Hazael (which will attack Israel), and Elisha will kill anyone who escapes Jehu. And then God leaves Elijah with this promise: *“Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him”* (1 Kings 19:18).

In 1 Kings 19:19-21, we read the record of the anointing of Elisha—who was found driving 12 yoke of oxen. Elijah threw his cloak around Elisha (symbolic of his authority)—thus calling him a prophet. Elisha says goodbye to his father and mother, slaughters his oxen and burns them and his plow as an offering to God—feeding the people—and he becomes Elijah’s attendant (a prophet in training). From chapter 20 of 1 Kings through the first chapter of 2 Kings, we don’t read much about Elisha, the apprentice—but things change in 2 Kings chapter 2.

What can we learn from Elijah and Elisha about transitioning well? Here are some things for us to consider and take to heart:

1) Be ready for change.

- This may sound obvious, but you’d be surprised how often we ignore change—pretending it’s not happening. Change is difficult. We don’t like when friends move away. We don’t like saying good-bye. We have trouble facing a terminal illness, changes in our workplace or families—and the list goes on.
- Elijah and Elisha faced their great transition head-on—a change in command for the lead prophet of Israel. Elijah traveled to Gilgal and Bethel and Jericho. He was saying good-bye to all of his “sons” in the faith.
- As Elisha contemplated the loss of his great mentor and friend, he was understandably a little raw in emotion. This is evident when he snapped at each group as they asked him if he knew about Elijah’s imminent departure. Change is difficult! On a positive note, Elisha refused to leave Elijah’s side. Elijah offered three times for Elisha to stay behind, and three times Elisha adamantly refused. Elisha wanted every last possible moment with his mentor.
- Pay attention to the change happening around you. Express appreciation to one who is stepping down from leadership. Build up the one taking on new tasks. Be sure to say good-bye to friends who move away. (I’m reminded of Paul’s tearful good-bye on the seashore with the elders of Ephesus, recorded in Acts 20.) Don’t ignore the change happening; embrace it, even when it hurts, because behind the hurt is love.

2) Seek the filling of the Holy Spirit.

- In verse 9, Elijah asked Elisha, *“Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?”* Elisha replied, *“Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit.”* What was Elisha asking here? He used the language of Hebrew inheritance law. The firstborn always received a double portion over all the other offspring. Elisha was basically saying, *“I want to be your firstborn. If I’m going to be able to step into your shoes, I’m going to need twice as much of your spirit as anyone else would need!”*
- Elisha knew he would need the very power of God, a double helping of the same spirit at work in Elijah’s life—the Holy Spirit Himself. Perhaps you’ve been desperate for God’s strength to accomplish a task. It’s a scary place, but it’s also a great opportunity to build your faith. You realize you need God to see you through that health challenge, to lead you through turbulent times. Perhaps you need God’s presence to make peace in your family—or to risk ministering in new ways. God promises He will come through as you depend on Him.

What happens next bring us to our third point:

3) Take up the task given you.

- Since Elisha had been able to witness Elijah's departure, he knew that the Lord had answered his request. Verses 13 and 14 record what happened next: *"Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. 'Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?' he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over."*
- Earlier, Elijah had struck the water and it parted; now Elisha, his successor, struck the water—and again it parted. God confirmed Elisha's leadership publicly as He did for Joshua so many years before. Remember how Moses parted the Red Sea? After Moses' death, God enabled his successor Joshua to part the Jordan River in the same way as the people first entered the Promised Land. God always confirms His new leader.
- Yet, Elisha had a role here, too. He had to reach down and pick up his mentor's cloak. He had to strike the water in front of all the prophets, not knowing for sure until that moment what would happen. Elisha obeyed the prompting of God—and God rewarded Elisha publicly, stating in effect, *"This is my man now. Follow him!"*
- When God gives you a task, take it up. Do it with all your heart, and watch God honor you for your obedience. Sure, you may be new to your responsibilities. Maybe it was never done the way you're going to do it. But people will follow you as you're obedient to the cause. God says, *"You've got this! I've placed you on the planet at such a time as this!"*
- God did bless Elisha. Remember how Elisha asked for a double portion of God's Spirit? Do you know that scripture records exactly twice as many miracles attributed to him as to Elijah? And when Elisha dies, the King of Israel shouted: *"My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!"* (2 Kings 13:14). Do these words sound familiar? They're the very words Elisha said for his mentor and friend.

May we be ready for the change around us, as we depend on the Holy Spirit and courageously take up the tasks given us!

READ: 2 Kings 2:1-15

TEACHING POINTS:

- STAY CLOSE TO SPIRITUAL MENTORS (2 Kings 2:1-6)
- FOLLOW THOSE WHOSE LIVES SHOW EVIDENCE OF THE FRUIT OF GOD'S PRESENCE (2 Kings 2:7-8)
- ASK FOR AND RECEIVE ALL THEY HAVE TO GIVE YOU (2 Kings 2:9, 10)
- HONOR AND REMEMBER SPIRITUAL MENTORS (2 Kings 2:11-12)
- USE WHAT'S BEEN GIVEN TO YOU (2 Kings 2:13-15)

RESPOND & DISCUSS:

- Who are your spiritual mentors?
- How do you determine who they are?
- How do you stay close to them?
- How do you show them honor?
- Are you prepared for change?
- What are you asking the Holy Spirit to give to you?
- Do you use what's been given or poured into you?
- What will you do with the gifts you have?
- What's your takeaway from this week's lesson?
- What is your "I will..." statement as you consider this week's teaching?
- How might your spiritual gifts help you live out your statement?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?

WEEK THREE – MAY 19

MOSES AND JOSHUA



Begin by praying—asking the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your time together, to open God’s Word to you, to grow in your walk with the Lord and with each other, and to show you how you might apply what you learn in your daily discipleship.

How did you do with your “I will...” statement from last week? How were you able to utilize your spiritual gifts in seeking to live it out?

THEME: God’s instructions to Moses give clear direction for succession planning and mentoring of his soon-to-be-successor, Joshua. Joshua was ready when the time was right—with an appropriate amount of humility about the task set before him.

SUMMARY: By all accounts, Moses was an incredible leader. For forty years, he was raised as a SOMEBODY—a child of Hebrew slaves who was rescued by Pharaoh’s daughter and raised as a prince of Egypt. He spent the next forty years of his life on the run as a NOBODY—after killing an Egyptian guard who was beating a Hebrew slave and hiding the body in the sand. His crime didn’t remain a secret for long. He ran off to Midian where he married, started a family, and spent his life tending his father-in-law’s flocks—that is, until he encountered God and was called to lead the Israelites out of slavery. Moses would spend the last forty years of his life showing the world what God can do with a NOBODY.

Moses listened to God—he went back to Egypt, spoke truth to power, used the gifts God gave him, and led God’s people out of bondage while plundering the Egyptians. While it wasn’t always easy (there were many more Egyptians than Israelites), God used Moses to lead, temper, and teach His people. God led them through the sea on dry land and to Mt. Horeb where God gave them the Ten Commandments. God dealt with their idolatry—and led them to a commitment.

God brought them to the southern border of Canaan and sent out 12 spies to inspect the land God was giving them. Joshua and Caleb gave a faithful and hopeful report and encouraged the people to take the land. Ten other men (whose names we don’t remember) convinced the people the giants in the land were too big for God. So God’s people would spend 40 years wandering from watering hole to watering hole, eating manna and quail, as the disobedient generation died (except Joshua and Caleb). God’s people—his often rebellious and stiff-necked people—learned the valuable lessons of obedience.

For forty years, Moses faithfully led them—obedient at every turn—until one day, he didn’t do what God instructed him to do. Instead, Moses took matters into his own hands—striking the rock at Meribah twice to get water instead of speaking to the rock as he was told. That one act of disobedience would cost Moses the opportunity to enter the Promised Land. He would lead the people to the edge of the Jordan River, but he wasn’t permitted to cross with them.

The people would then need another leader. In Numbers chapter 27, God gives Moses clear instructions for the selection of his successor, Joshua, and how to prepare him to lead God's people. This story is a course in leadership transitions. Joshua became Moses' closest aid—accompanying him up Mt. Horeb, sitting outside the Tent of Meeting, leading the men of Israel in battle. It was an incredible apprenticeship and front row seat to catalytic leadership. Joshua was there at every turn. This text shows the intentionality of Moses preparation.

In Deuteronomy chapter 34, Moses has died—after God takes him to the top of Mt. Nebo and allows him to see the Promised Land all the way to the Great Sea (Mediterranean). There, God buries Moses. Joshua chapter 1 records Joshua's first actions as Moses' successor—which are instructive to those who are given great responsibility.

ONE WORD ABOUT LEADERSHIP LEGACIES: Moses and Joshua demonstrated amazing teamwork and collaboration in doing the Lord's work—but they each had different leadership legacies. Moses was what would be considered a "Level 5" leader. Moses used his leadership role as an opportunity to teach and help Joshua learn the valuable rudiments and priority of his leadership calling. Moses spent time with Joshua for the sake of the next generation. He wanted the next generation of Israelites to have a committed, God-fearing leader—and that was exactly how Moses molded Joshua into his leadership. Moses' behavior is a model for modern-day leadership. We can see how he prioritized the future by empowering a younger leader like Joshua. Simply put, leaders are responsible for future leadership.

On the other hand, Joshua's leadership legacy was far different from Moses. Joshua would be considered a "Level 4" leader. As the book of Judges mentioned in chapter 2:8 "Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110.... That whole generation was also gathered to their ancestors. After them another generation rose up who did not know the Lord or the works He had done for Israel." Why the stark contrast? There's no record of Joshua investing in anyone to ensure the future of the next generation. We don't see him intentionally developing leaders. We don't read of him pouring into others. And the generation after his leadership didn't know the Lord. It's sad to read the only thing Joshua accomplished during his leadership was to secure the well being of his generation. A leader is intended to develop an alter ego for the purpose of ensuring the betterment of the future of the people and ministry—and Joshua failed to deliver on such an area of great concern.

So ask yourself: Will I be like Moses—or like Joshua? Will I invest in others who will ensure that the following generations know the Lord and His gracious works? May the Lord help us and use us to make a difference for our fellow believers.

READ: Numbers 27:12-22 / Joshua 1:1-9

TEACHING POINTS:

- REMEMBER YOU WILL NOT LEAD FOREVER (Numbers 27:12-14)
- BE CONCERNED WITH WHO COMES AFTER YOU (Numbers 27:15-17)
- BE INTENTIONAL IN BLESSING AND SHARING AUTHORITY (Numbers 27:18-22)
- KEEP GOING IN THE SAME DIRECTION (Joshua 1:1, 2)
- TRUST IN THE GOODNESS AND FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (Joshua 1:3-5a)
- BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS—GOD IS WITH YOU (Joshua 1:5b-9)

RESPOND & DISCUSS:

- Who has been a “Level 5” leader in your life?
- How did they share power and give opportunity?
- In whom are you investing?
- Who is someone who comes to mind who would benefit from your investment of time and relationship?
- What’s the next faithful step God’s asking you to take?
- Do you trust God? Do you trust His promises? Do you seek His strength?
- What’s your takeaway from this week’s lesson?
- What is your “I will...” statement as you consider this week’s teaching?
- How might your spiritual gifts help you live out your statement?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?

WEEK FOUR – MAY 26

PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS



Begin by praying—asking the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your time together, to open God’s Word to you, to grow in your walk with the Lord and with each other, and to show you how you might apply what you learn in your daily discipleship.

How did you do with your “I will...” statement from last week? How were you able to utilize your spiritual gifts in seeking to live it out?

THEME: The opening verses of the Apostle Paul’s letter to his sweetheart church in Philippi captures the heart of a spiritual parent giving last instructions to his spiritual children.

SUMMARY: The Apostle Paul ministered in Philippi during his second missionary journey, spending about three months in the city. The ministry at Philippi marked Paul’s entrance into Macedonia—which was the result of a vision he had in the city of Troas, just across the northeastern corner of the Aegean Sea from the port city of Neapolis and its close neighbor Philippi (Acts 16:8-12).

During this first stay in Philippi (he later briefly visited the city on his third missionary journey in Acts 20:6), Paul brought people to faith in Christ who would form the core of the rapidly developing congregation in the city. Among them were Lydia—a businesswoman who opened her home to Paul and his coworkers (Acts 16:13-15), and the Philippian jailer—who was converted under Paul’s ministry after an earthquake miraculously broke open the prison (Acts 16:22-34).

Of his four Prison Epistles, Paul likely wrote the letter to the Philippians last—near the end of his Roman imprisonment in A.D. 61 or 62. Paul sent the other three Prison Epistles—Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon—by the hand of Tychicus, as their destinations were near one another. This letter to the Philippians, however, was supposed to be delivered by Epaphroditus—who had come to Paul in Rome with financial help from the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:25; 4:18). But during his time in Rome, Epaphroditus became ill—which delayed his return home, and subsequently the delivery of the letter (Philippians 2:26, 27).

Paul did not write the letter to the Philippians in response to a crisis—as was the case with his letters to the Galatians and the Colossians. Instead, he wrote to express his appreciation and affection for the Philippian believers. More than any other church, the believers in Philippi offered Paul material support for his ministry (2 Corinthians 8:11; Philippians 4:15-18). Paul’s affection for the people of Philippi is clear throughout the letter as he encouraged them to live out their faith in joy and unity (Philippians 1:3-5, 25, 26; 4:1).

This letter to the Philippians is filled with often-quoted passages: *“He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 1:6), *“To live is Christ and to die is gain”* (1:21), and *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13)—just to mention a few.

But the portrait of Jesus Christ as a humble servant serves as the core of Paul's teaching in this letter (Philippians 2:5-11).

Paul's joy at the mere thought of the Philippian church is undeniable in the letter, and it's that same joy that he wanted the recipients to possess as well. To lead the Philippians to this truth, Paul took them directly to Jesus—teaching them that a community of believers living in harmony with one another comes only through mutual humility modeled after the Savior. Paul mentions that he poured out his life as an offering for the sake of Christ, leading him to find great joy and contentment in Christ's service. His letter to the Philippians showed them that, by centering their lives on Christ, they also might live in true joy.

Though we all have much to be thankful for, the pace and the pressure of life often can squeeze the joy from us—and make it difficult to see our way through at times. Desperate, we often search for joy in all kinds of ways—acquiring possessions, visiting places, or seeing people. But none of these can provide lasting joy.

Paul knew, as did the Philippians, that true joy comes only through humble faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ—joining in harmony with His followers and serving others in the name of Christ. This was the life experienced by the Philippian believers, and it is a life available to us today.

We're called to use the joy we find in Christ to keep us from useless quarrels and divisions and to instead guide us into harmonious relationships with God's people.

READ: Philippians 1:3-11

TEACHING POINTS:

- IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER
- HOW WILL WE REMEMBER?
 - WITH THANKS (Philippians 1:3)
 - PRAYING WITH JOY (Philippians 1:4, 5)
 - WITH CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE (Philippians 1:6)
 - WITH LOVE AND BLESSING IN OUR HEARTS (Philippians 1:7-11)

RESPOND & DISCUSS:

- What will you remember?
- How will you remember?
- In what or whom do you find confidence?
- Where do you find joy in the midst of trying circumstances?
- What's your takeaway from this week's lesson?

- What is your “I will...” statement as you consider this week’s teaching?
- How might your spiritual gifts help you live out your statement?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?