

# Necessary Endings

## Acts 15:36

**INTRODUCTION:** Dr. Henry Cloud, “*The key to achieving God’s best for tomorrow is knowing what to END today*”. - *I want to talk to you about Necessary Endings.*

*Perhaps one of the best things that can come out of the season of rest and reflection - is a careful evaluation of not only what we want to start, but what we need to stop.*

**Ecclesiastes 3:1–11 (NASB95) NOTE the ending phrases...**

<sup>1</sup> There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven— <sup>2</sup> A time to give birth and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. <sup>3</sup> A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build up. <sup>4</sup> A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance. <sup>5</sup> A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones; **A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing.** <sup>6</sup> A time to search and a time to give up as lost; A time to keep and a time to throw away.

There comes a time for a necessary ending. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, presents life as a series of seasons.

To everything there is a SEASON. Seasons are supposed to end.

**Dr. David Jeremiah said it this way,** “*You have to give up, to go up*”.

- Abram had to **let go** of UR to go into the Promised land.
- God called the Hebrew to **come out** of Egypt to get in to Israel.
- Lot was called to **leave** Sodom and DON’T LOOK BACK.

There must be a clear ending before a NEW beginning.

**CONTEXT:** So far we have gotten to know Paul pretty well, we have seen Paul the Preacher, Paul the Theologian, Paul the Church Planter. But today we see a side of Paul that perhaps was the key to his great success. Today we will see PAUL THE LEADER

Remember last time we saw that Paul and Barnabas had concluded their first missionary journey back in Antioch at their great home church.

**TEXT: Acts 15:36–16:2 (NASB95)**

<sup>36</sup> After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see how they are.*”

Paul understood that the great commission is not to make **decisions** but to make **disciples** of Jesus Christ. Decisions are made in a day, Disciples take time. His plan was to revisit and strengthen the churches he had planted.

He understood that his best ministry would happen when he could see the people face to face.

I read this verse this week and thought how appropriate it was during this season -  
**1 Thessalonians 2:17 (NASB95)**

<sup>17</sup> But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face.

I hope you are feeling what I'm feeling an eager desire to see each other face to face.

What **John Maxwell** said was so true, "*You **impress** people at a distance but you **impact** them up close*".

*It was then that Paul had to make the difficult decision to let go of something.* It revolved around the person of John Mark.

Remember last week we read in **Acts 13:13** <sup>13</sup> Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but **John** left them and returned to Jerusalem.

Remember we said that the area of **Pisidion Antioch** to which they were going was like the Wild West. It was the most untamed portion of the Roman Empire.

It was there at this difficult place in the journey that John Mark defected and went home.

Now it was time to go on missionary journey **number two** and the question arises, "Can John Mark tag along?"

<sup>37</sup> Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. <sup>38</sup> But Paul **thought best** not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

Notice it does not say, "Paul thought it RIGHT, or Paul thought it BIBLICAL, but **Paul thought it BEST**". You see this is where many arguments begin. It's not in the area of **absolutes** but in the arena of **principles**.

There is **ONE** situation and there are **TWO** equally valid ways that it can be handled.

There was no scriptural mandate one way or the other. Some of our decisions are governed by explicit biblical commands—thou shalt not commit adultery! But **most** of

our decisions in life are an effort to apply biblical principles to situations that the Bible does not deal with explicitly.

There is no passage in Scripture that says, "When a young missionary has forsaken the work on his first journey, you shall give him a second chance after 18 months of faithful service." And no biblical text says, "One strike and you are out of the ministry".

Instead we have principles such as,

- **The Principle of Encouragement** - "Encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all."
- **The Principle of Qualification** - And we have principles which say that leaders in the church should be above reproach, and well-tested.
- The First principle stresses the glory of God's *mercy*.
- The Second principle stresses the glory of God's *calling*.
- One principle accents the *forgiveness* of God.
- The other principle accents the *holiness* of God.

Which side we choose is often determined by the way we are wired, the way God has gifted us. Because of that fact, good and godly people will come to different conclusions either of which may be correct.

BUT - The fact was Paul was the God ordained authority. He was the Apostle. Barnabus should have differed to Paul and allowed God to do His work.

Notice what Paul did...

## 1. REMOVE

**Good leadership includes the ability to know when to say no. Perhaps the ability to say, "NO" is the most important aspect in leadership.**

Paul had to decide that the principle he was upholding was significant enough that it was worth losing not only John Mark, but also Barnabas.

### Hebrews 12:1 (NASB95)

1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Some things are not sins... but they are encumbrances.

In the Greek Games a the runner wanted achieve **maximum efficiency** in his running, having no article of clothing to impede his progress. So he would lay aside every hinderance.

**QUESTION: Is there anything in your life today that will keep you from reaching your potential for Christ tomorrow?** I know there may be sins, but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about encumbrances.

**It could be:**

- a person or a relationship
- a ministry you are involved in that's good but not the best
- It could be your job
- It could be your hobby

**Is there anything in your life today that will keep you from reaching your potential for Christ tomorrow?**

You must learn how to REMOVE.

**For Paul there were 3 things clearly telling him that it was time to move on.**

### **a. Significant Differences**

<sup>37</sup> Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. <sup>38</sup> But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along

**Think about it - who was right?** Was it best to discipline John Mark and make him set the bench or to show mercy and bring him along? Luke really doesn't tell us explicitly. However Paul was the Apostle and Barnabas was not - Paul had to make the decision. And Barnabas should have honored Paul's leadership.

The prophet **Amos** asked the question, "How can two walk together less they be agreed?" What's his point? You can't go on a journey if one person is set on going east and you are set on going west.

Sometimes things need to end because **significant differences** have developed.

**ILLUSTRATION:** In our first Church there was a staff member who had basically decided that he wanted our church to be very non-confrontational, seeker friends, sort of chicken soup for the christian soul. Well if you know me, that is not at all my vision for bible preaching or the local church. He felt strongly about his way, I felt a strong conviction about mine. I was called to lead the church. Eventually it became personal and I along with the lay leadership in the church asked him to leave.

Sometimes significant difference means it's time to REMOVE.

### **b. Serious Development**

37b. who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

This wasn't just a personality clash this decision had history to it. John Mark deserted the missionaries when they needed him the most.

The was very serious.

Sometimes major problems arise to cause you to make a decision that you probably should have made months or years earlier.

**You've heard it said that,** *"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."*

*Perhaps this season of quarantine will lend a perspective to you that you couldn't see before.*

*Significant difference, this serious development ultimately developed into a...*

### **c. Sharp Disagreement**

<sup>39</sup> And there occurred such a **sharp disagreement** that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

This was not a difference that could be amicably resolved. It was sharp. In the Greek it is the word **Par-ox-us-mos** - it speaks of violent emotions contained in these two men.

When things are getting personal it's time to move on.

Whether it has gone that far or not, there are most likely some encumbrances in your life that you need to lay aside. There are some limbs and twigs that you need to PRUNE.

**ILLUSTRATION: Rose bushes**, when you pruning a rose bush, you do it in 3 contexts.

1. **To many buds** - it can't sustain it all, they aren't all the best, the gardner must choose the best that will make it to full fruition of what a rose should be.

- a. To many ministries, you become a jack of all trades and the master of none.
- b. To many people counting on you - you find yourself over committing and underperforming.

2. **Dying** - *Sick and not getting well - Some you fertilize, water, talk to them, and it DOES NO GOOD.*

They are set in their ways, they are fiercely committed to mediocrity. Nothing you can do will change that. There comes a time when you have to part ways.

Some of you need to Prune the bush.

3. **Some are Dead** - buy dead horses.

### The Top-Ten Strategies For Dealing With A Dead Horse.

1. Buy a strong whip.
2. Change riders.
3. Appoint a committee to study the horse.
4. Appoint a team to revive the horse.
5. Send out a memo or email that the horse isn't really dead.
6. Put someone in charge to find "the real problem."
7. Harness several other dead horses together for increased speed and efficiency.
8. Rewrite the standard definition of a live horse.
9. Declare the dead horse as the "way it's always been done."
10. Promote the dead horse to a supervisory position.

Not only must you remove,

## **2. REPLACE**

<sup>40</sup> But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

- Paul didn't become permanently jaded.
- Paul didn't use this as an excuse to quit being a part of a church

He used it as an opportunity to take on new projects, namely a young man named Silas. Later in the same chapter he would take on Timothy.

If you muster the courage to lay something down, quickly discern what you will give your time, attention and focus to.

***As long as you are embracing good enough, you can't take hold of God's best.***

I can't tell you how many Christians were dating people who were not sharpening them spiritually, were not challenging them to grow... but then they obeyed God and broke up... the next thing you know a new guy moves into town.

For some, they know that God has called them to something, he's given them a passion for a new direction, a new project... but they also have bills to pay... sometimes during seasons like this you are forced to let go... but don't just remove - replace... start reading a book about that career you've always wanted.

Not only must remove and replace...

## **3. RETURN**

Paul got back in the saddle and continued doing what God called him to do.

41 And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

There must be a death but there almost must be a resurrection.

Paul went on to do his most successful missionary work in the days ahead. He laid aside the weight... he also ran with endurance.

**NOW THIS MAKES SENCE: It's so simple. God regularly shows you things you need to REMOVE, REPLACE so that you can RETURN better and more effective than ever. This should be the normal part of life.**

- **Why is it so hard for people to say, “No”**
- **Why is it so hard for people to drop poison relationships?**
- **Why is it so hard for people to stop ineffective ministries?**

## **4. RESIST**

That is, resist the temptation to close the door on anybody.

**Nothing brings clarity to a situation like time.**

- **With time emotions cool.**
- **With time people grow.**

You may be shocked at what the Word of God and the Spirit of God can do in the life of a Man or Woman of God over TIME.

This was certainly the case with John Mark.

We don't hear from John Mark for 10 years. That's a significant period of time. Can you imagine how these three men will change in a decade?

Perhaps Paul will Mellow out a bit, Perhaps Barnabas will learn the art of appropriate compromise, perhaps John Mark will mature and grow in courage. It seems all of the above happened...

Paul is in a Roman prison when he wrote this letter. By the way, suffering can change a person.

- In his letter to **Philemon**, verse 23 at the end of that letter, “Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you as do Mark and Luke,” and some others.
- **Colossians 4:10 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him).

How long did this relationship last?

Well the last letter Paul wrote, again from a Roman Prison was 2 Timothy.

**2 Timothy 4:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.

What does it say about John Mark that he was one of the men Paul wanted by his side as he prepared to face certain death?

Oh and by the way - have how many Gospels are there in the New Testament - 4? Matthew, **MARK**, Luke and John.

The Gospel of Mark was penned by non other that the timid deserter himself.

What's the point - TIME is a powerful force for shaping the souls of man.

Just as a simple stream of water can carve through stone, time can carve through a man or woman's soul.

**In our culture of instant gratification we have to fight against the desire to expect instantaneous maturity.**

**You can't microwave sanctification, it's a crock pot meal.**

- **Spouses** need to remember that. You see the person they are today you don't want to be married to, but you may never want to leave the person they are going to be in 5 years, 10 years.
- **Parents** need to remember that. You know what one of my favorite songs was when I was a little boy?

He's still working on me to make me what I ought to be.  
It took Him just a week to make the moon and stars,  
The sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars.  
How loving and patient He must be, He's still working on me.

**IN this season that we find ourselves in -**

- 1. Who are the John Marks you have been tempted to give up on?**
- 2. Who is the Barnabas that you have parted ways with?**
- 3. Or maybe, who is the Paul that you have made life and ministry more difficult for?**

**Reach out, look up - and know that God can change the world in a second, but he takes His time with the souls of men.**