



Learning Community Nine

Leading Transition

20-30
minutes

Personal Check-in:

Facilitator Instructions: Use the questions below to stimulate group sharing and involvement. Give everyone a few minutes to reflect and jot down some ideas. Then have everyone discuss their answers. After the discussion and sharing, spend some time in pairs praying for one another.

Sharing Questions:

1. Which biblical leaders handled transition particularly well? Is there a passage that illustrates your point?
2. Share about a time when a transition didn't go all that well in your own life.
3. What has been most challenging to you personally in leading your church through this current transition to become more externally focused?
4. How can we pray specifically for you today?



15-30
minutes

Homework Debrief:

Instructions: Below is a list of the homework assignments from the last meeting. Ask each pastor to update the group on how they responded to each of the items. After everyone has checked in regarding the homework, take some time to talk about lessons that are being learned so far. Capture the discussion on a whiteboard or a flipchart.

1. **Option A:** To help your congregation “see and feel the need for a transformation” as Kotter describes in this chapter, you can create your own video like the one of the unhappy customer in the “Change of Heart” story or you can make a visual aid similar to the “stack of gloves”.

First, come up with a checklist of membership cards that people commonly carry in their wallets, such as auto club, library, insurance, or health club. Interview at least six people from your neighborhood, telling them that you are trying to learn about what organizations are providing valuable services and why. Ask them if they have a membership card for each organization on your list. For each yes answer, ask the person to tell the most important reason they are a member. Add to the list “Member of a local church” and if they indicate that they are, ask why. If the answer is “no”, feel free to ask why not if they are receptive.

If the person is open, feel free to ask if they know of your church and what their impression of it is. You can video tape the interview, take a snapshot of each interviewee to use as a “stack of gloves” visual aid, or simply make a display of various kinds of membership cards.

Show the video to your small group or church, or go through the photos or membership cards, possibly in a PowerPoint presentation, reading aloud the name of the interviewee, what their membership card is, and their reason(s) for being a card-carrying member. Discuss why your church is like each of these clubs in your sermon or as part of a small group discussion. For example: “Our church is much more than a club, but there are needs that these clubs meet that motivate people to join them that are similar to some of the needs our church meets. Could we say our church is like the auto club because you can call us for a lift if you run out of gas—spiritually or physically?”

Option B: Print out some business-size cards with the name of your church and its information on one side. Pass out one card to each person and ask that they turn them over and write at least one important reason for being a card-carrying member of your church. If used in a small group, you can discuss what each person wrote. If used in a church service, instruct the people to put the card in their wallet or purse for future reference when someone asks them why they go to your church or as a reminder to invite someone to visit. Alternately, you could ask people to write up two cards and collect one to read through with your leadership team to see what people would tell others about their membership in your church.

2. Read *Managing Transitions* by William Bridges and complete the Book Review Questions.



6. What would it look like for you to set up a “Transition Monitoring Team” per Bridges’ suggestion (Appendix C)?

7. How were you personally challenged by *Managing Transitions*?

8. What are your five most important take-away insights from the book?

9. What are two of your favorite quotes about managing transitions from the book?



45-60
minutes

Case Study Interaction:

Instructions: If a pastor is lined up for this meeting, give him 10-15 minutes to talk about his church. With the remaining time, ask the group to give feedback on the following questions and to spend time interacting with the pastor about the following:

- 1. Please share the prescriptions you received from the Weekend Consultation.**

- 2. What progress have you made toward implementing the prescriptions?**

- 3. What are the most significant challenges you are facing in implementing the prescriptions?**

- 4. Have you done your time study? What did you learn about your use of time? What are you doing to make changes in your use of time? How are you getting these changes rooted in your life for the long term?**

- 5. What leadership skills are you focused on developing? Share your sense of progress and your challenges.**

- 6. Have you built new bridges into the community? If not, why not? If so, how? What are the results so far? How can you improve your vision casting for reaching the community?**

- 7. What are you doing each week to create a sense of urgency? Are you seeing an increase in Sunday worship attendance?**

- 8. What are your plans for the next three months?**



20
minutes

Learning Activity: Leading Transition

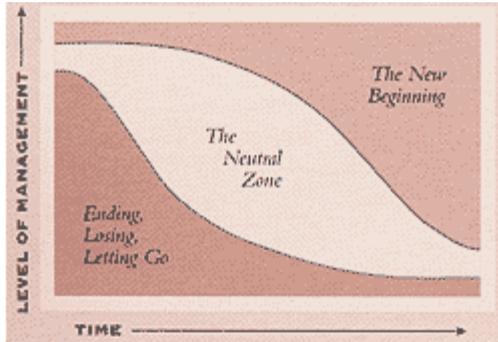
Facilitator Instructions: Point everyone to the article entitled “Leading Transition.” Ask everyone to read the article slowly and to highlight ideas that seem important to them. After everyone has read break the group into twos and threes to discuss the questions at the end of the article. If you have time, bring the whole group together at the end to discuss a few of the questions.

Leading Transition

Several important differences between change and transition are overlooked when people think of transition as simply gradual or unfinished change or when they use change and transition interchangeably. With a change, you naturally focus on the outcome that the change produces. If you move from California to New York City, the change involves crossing the country and then learning your way around the Big Apple. The same is true of your organization’s change to a service culture or its reorganization into a regionally based sales force. In such cases the affected people have to understand the new arrangements and how they’ll be affected by these changes.

Transition is different. The starting point for dealing with transition is not the outcome but the ending that you’ll have to make to leave the old situation behind. Situational change hinges on the new thing, but psychological transition depends on letting go of the old reality and the old identity you had before the change took place. Organizations overlook that letting-go process completely, however, and do nothing about the feelings of loss that it generates. And in overlooking those effects, they nearly guarantee that the transition will be mismanaged and that, as a result, the change will go badly. Unmanaged transition makes change unmanageable. (from *Managing Transitions* by William Bridges)

Leading God-followers through times of transition is demanding. As Bridges suggests in his helpful work *Managing Transitions*, leaders need to help people move through three very predictable but challenging phases. Moses and the people of Israel will be used as a case study as we consider the leadership implications of each portion of the transition process.



Bridges' Transition Model

Managing endings (*Egypt*)

Moses must have been surprised at how difficult it was to get “Egypt out of the people.” Egypt represented so many distasteful things to the people of Israel and yet time and time again the people longed for the “good old days.” Moses was consistently faced with anger, rebellion, complaints, and backlash to his leadership as he sought to lead the people into the Promised Land.

Egypt could represent any number of things to your congregation as you try to lead them toward a new day. The wise leader considers how difficult it is to leave “Egypt.” Egypt is a place of safety and certainty. No one is rocking my boat in Egypt. I may not fully enjoy what is happening in Egypt but at least I know what to expect. Bridges reminds us that “the single biggest reason organizational changes fail is that no one has thought about the endings or planned to manage their impact on people. Naturally concerned about the future, planners and implementers all too often forget that people have to let go of the present first.” Becoming a more inviting and outreach oriented congregation will be passionately embraced by some. They will welcome a move toward the Promised Land and the possibility of making a greater impact in your community. For others this initiative will be most unwelcomed. Join hands with Moses as you experience push-back and resistance as you ask others to leave old habits behind.

As you consider asking the people in your congregation to leave Egypt, ask yourself these questions:

- What will this change cause people to lose?
- What will the emotional impact of these losses be?
- What impact will leaving Egypt have on me as the leader?
- Have I created ways of acknowledging how people are feeling and their sense of loss? Am I allowing people to grieve?
- Do people understand at an emotional level why we are leaving Egypt?



Leading through the Neutral Zone *(the Wilderness)*

“It’s not so much that we’re afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it’s that place in between that we fear...It’s like being between trapezes. It’s Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There’s nothing to hold on to.” -Marilyn Ferguson

Once you are out of your Egypt, it takes a tremendous amount of energy to get people to let go of the old ways. You can fool yourself into thinking your job is done. But leaving Egypt is just the start. You and your congregation are now entering a precarious “in-between” time. You have let go of the trapeze and you are now hanging in mid-air as you anticipate grabbing onto the other bar at some point in the future.

The journey through the Neutral Zone is the lengthy period of time where the old and no longer appropriate habits are discarded and newly appropriate patterns of thought and action are initiated. As you lead people through this challenging time there are a few specific actions you can take to keep the “transition momentum” alive and well.

Give people glimpses of the Promised Land

In the Wilderness, it’s important that the congregation sees examples of what life in the Promised Land might look like. Consider setting one or two short-term goals that will highlight the kind of thinking and behaviors you are asking them to embrace. Is there an outreach initiative that you could begin that will give you and the congregation a sense of a “quick win?”

Highlight success stories

This is also a time to celebrate those in the congregation that are modeling Promised Land living. These are the folks that get it and are trying to live differently. These are the people who have embraced the challenge of becoming a church for the new person. Sermons are a great opportunity to highlight parishioners who are making a difference. If you don’t have a story to tell in your own setting, than tell someone else’s story. Cast vision repetitively through the retelling of contagious Christianity in action.

Foster Creativity

The Wilderness is also a time to experiment and to innovate. The old ways of Egypt have been left behind, and getting to the Promised Land will require new ideas, approaches, and methods. This is a time to tinker, to get the white board out, and to dream about some new possibilities. Once people are given permission to think outside the box, you’ll be surprised at what might emerge. The point is: the Neutral Zone can be a time of exceptional creativity if it is nurtured and encouraged.

Equip

In addition, anchoring Promised Land thinking and behaviors in people’s



lives will require equipping. The Wilderness is a time for training and re-tooling. As you consider leading through transition, thoughtfully plan equipping opportunities that reinforce and stimulate the congregation.

Use Teamwork

Lastly, Bridges recommends setting up some kind of transition monitoring team. This could be a task force or an already existing team in your church structure. Leaders need others to assess progress, plans, priorities, and problems. Who should and can help you to keep the pulse on how the transition process is going? Once assembled this team should help you to answer these four questions:

- What progress have we made recently in our transition?
- What problems are we encountering?
- What priorities do we need to focus on next?
- What is our plan to focus on these priorities?

New Beginnings *(the Promised Land)*

John Kotter calls this phase in the transition journey “anchoring new behaviors.” An anchor is a robust metaphor because the Promised Land is about organizational traction. We want to embed new ways of thinking and behaving in people’s lives. With this in mind, we have to be careful that we do not declare victory too early. Bridges is helpful once again as he suggests a few rules for the Promised Land.

Rule #1: Be Consistent

Attention Deficit Disorder afflicts many pastors. Ministry is chaotic at times and the various tasks that come with pastoral work are never “fully done.” That being said, the congregation will need to hear a consistent message for it to eventually sink in. Resist the temptation to alter the course when a new program or approach hits the streets. A steady and repetitive theme is what your congregation needs. Transitioning to an outward focus must be the beat that is drummed for months and perhaps years.

Rule #2: Be an Encourager

The Wilderness can be lonely, tiring, and frustrating. And the in-between time of the Neutral Zone can be emotionally exhausting. Questions about your leadership will inevitably surface during the journey to the Promised Land. It might sound quaint, but you must be determined to “be better, not bitter.” Take every opportunity to compliment, to praise, and to speak a word of appreciation as the new beginning emerges.

Rule #3: Celebrate

Take time to smell the roses! The Promised Land is a place that you are meant to enjoy and to celebrate. You had to celebrate in the Neutral Zone...



but this celebrating is a bit different. The New Beginnings phase is a time to catch people doing the right thing. You might not have had any stories to tell in the Wilderness but now you should have some great stories to share and to affirm.

Some Concluding thoughts about Leading Transitions

We underestimate transition. Moses certainly would have liked to have turbo-charged the walk in the wilderness. Note from Bridges' model that the three phases have some measure of overlap to them. Leaving Egypt will eventually give way to the walk in the Wilderness which in turn will give way to the New Beginnings. The phases are curving and slanting because each of the three processes starts before the preceding one is totally finished. This makes it quite possible to be in more than one of these phases at the same time.

May the Lord bless you in leading your people from Egypt through the Wilderness and into the Promised Land!

Discussion Questions:

1. Which ideas from "Leading Transition" stood out to you and why?
2. What principles from the article are you most challenged by and why?
3. What would stand in the way of you putting into practice some of the ideas that were shared?



20
minutes

Learning Activity: Re-Creating Transition Model

Facilitator Instructions: With a partner and the book of Numbers and Deuteronomy, practice re-creating Bridges' Transition Model through the eyes of Moses and the people of Israel. As time allows, bring the whole group back together to share insights.

<i>Examples from Deut. and Numbers</i>	<i>How Moses Led through this Phase</i>
Examples of Endings	
Examples of the Neutral Zone	
Examples of New Beginnings	



5
minutes

Homework and Wrap-Up

Facilitator Instructions: Close out the session by highlighting the homework assignment.

Homework Assignment:

1. Apply Bridges model of transition to your congregation by filling out the Me and Transition Worksheet below.
2. Watch *Prayerwalking Your Community* and come prepared to discuss your major learnings and personal applications from the DVD (see DVD Review Questions). You can order the DVD from Nelson Searcy at www.churchleaderinsights.com or call 800-264-5129. When going to the website, click on the **Store** button and then type in **Prayerwalking** in the Product Search window. Total running time for the DVD is 23 ½ minutes.

Me and Transition Worksheet

Instructions: On a separate piece of paper, reflect on the following questions related to transition and your church leadership:

1. How is the transition process going for me personally?
2. Where is the church right now in Bridges' Transition Model?
3. What 3-5 issues must I address to successfully manage our transition journey?
4. Where could we get stuck in the transition process?
5. Who in the congregation can help me stay the course and ensure that we make it to the Promised Land?



5. How were you personally challenged by *Prayerwalking*?

6. What barriers or obstacles need to be cleared away to enable you to try prayer walking personally and corporately?

7. What are your five most important take-away insights from the DVD?



LC Evaluation:

Date:

Location:

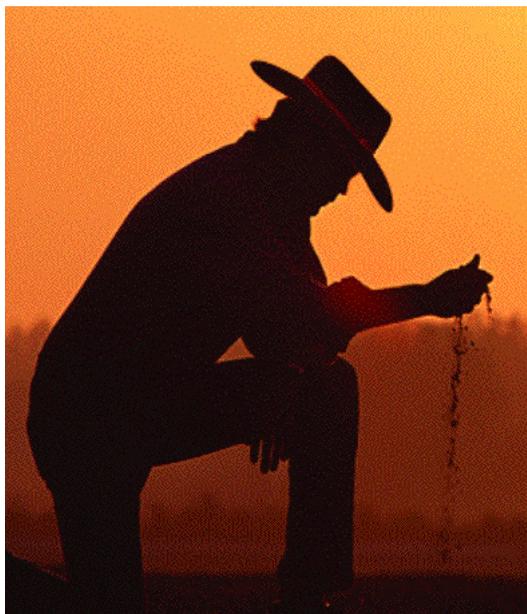
Questions:

1. What did you like most about the homework from the last Learning Community?

2. What did you like least about the homework from the last Learning Community?

3. How could we improve today's Learning Community experience?

4. How can we give you additional support for developing leadership skills in your own life and helping your church turn outward?



Me and the Harvest

1. How committed have I been to praying for people who need Jesus?
2. What have I done in the past month to help someone move closer to Christ?
3. What changes do I need to make in the next month to find time to be more outreach focused?
4. How did I keep the fire burning for outreach in our church this past month?
5. What have I learned about the community needs in this past month that our church could be poised to meet?
6. What's the most important outreach oriented action step I can take in this next month?