

September 8, 2019

## **Title: Transitions**

### **[Slide 1]**

**Text: Deuteronomy 31:1-8**

### **End of an era**

#### **Change and Transition:**

Change: it happens all the time. We put a child on the bus for the very first time. We drop that same young person off at college for her freshman year. We lose a job; we get a new job. We sell a house; we buy a house. Things change.

But at the same time, something much more profound is going on inside us: we're experiencing a *transition*. Change is situational. Transition is personal: it affects our thoughts and feelings. It keeps us up at night. It makes us excited, nervous, scared. *Transition* is how we process change.

The bigger the change, the bigger the process of transition from the old to the new.

#### **Moses' message:**

Camped on the outskirts of the Promised Land after 40 long years in the desert, Israel was about to face both change and transition. It came in the form of an announcement from their leader, Moses:

### **[Slide 2]**

*Deuteronomy 31:1-2 NIV*

*Then Moses went out and spoke these words to all Israel: "I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross the Jordan.'"*

Talk about dropping a bombshell! Moses had been their leader from long before most of them had even been born. He was the one who had stood toe to toe with the great Pharaoh. He had called down the 10 plagues that caused Pharaoh to finally let Israel leave Egypt. He had parted the Red Sea

and had been used by God to bring manna for bread and water from the rock. He was, most of all, the Lawgiver who had met with God on Mt. Sinai.

And now Moses was saying: "My work is done. I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD told me I'm not crossing over into the Promised Land."

### **End of an era:**

I wonder what that felt like? Sure, every Israelite could see that Moses was a very old man. They knew that he wasn't going to live forever. But still, it must have come as quite a shock that his work was finished *now*. It was the end of an era!

Change: Moses was hanging up his spurs. His work was done.

Transition: "What does that mean for us?" "Who is going to provide our daily needs?" "Who is going to tell us what God is saying?"

Egypt was long ago, in a time virtually none of them could remember. The Promised Land was still just that – a *promise*. And here they were stuck in the middle.

### **New opportunities**

#### **God is still present:**

In the face of all this uncertainty, Moses reminds them of what *hasn't changed*. God is still present to lead and bring them to victory:

#### **[Slide 3]**

*Deuteronomy 31:3a NIV*

*"The LORD your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you will take possession of their land."*

Moses may no longer be with them, but God isn't going anywhere. This whole journey was His idea, after all. He initiated it. He promised to bring Israel to the Promised Land. He is faithful.

The LORD Himself will lead the way, as He has done all along. And He will conquer Israel's enemies so that they can take possession of the land. Moses was God's servant for the 40 years in the desert. But God is the One who is in charge.

**New Leader:**

The second thing Moses tells the Israelites is that God has raised up a new leader for a new time and new challenges:

**[Slide 4]**

*Deuteronomy 31:3b NIV*

*"Joshua also will cross over ahead of you, as the LORD said."*

God had already provided the next person to lead Israel. Now God's wisdom and power will rest upon Joshua. He will be the commanding general for the conquest of the Promised Land.

**No fear:**

38 years earlier Israel had found itself on the border of the Promised Land. God told them to go in and take possession of the land, but they had failed to do so. Why? Fear, pure and simple. They had checked out the land, with its fortified cities and its well-armed warriors. The spies they sent out returned with reports of giants in the land. So, they disobeyed God's command to invade the Promised Land. Instead, they doomed themselves to a full 40 years of wandering around in the desert.

Now, a new generation found itself standing on the border of the same Promised Land. How would they respond?

Moses challenges them to never give in to fear:

**[Slide 5]**

*Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV*

*"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."*

They are *not* to focus on the problems; they are to keep their eyes on the LORD who goes with them.

Moses gives the same instructions to Joshua:

**[Slide 6]**

*Deuteronomy 31:7-8 NIV*

*Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."*

This time there will be no turning back.

**Transitions****Tools for transitions:**

The tools for navigating a major transition that Moses offered his people are just as important to you and me as we face change and navigate our own transitions:

- Know that the Lord is with you every step of the way.

**[Slide 7]**

*Deuteronomy 31:8 NIV*

*"The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you or forsake you."*

- God has new people and new resources for new times.
- Let God fight the battles.

**[Slide 8]**

*Psalms 20:7 NIV*

*Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.*

- Give no place to fear!

**[Slide 9]**

*Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV*

*"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you...."*

**Our journey as a church together:**

Personal story of transition:

- Suzanne and I have decided that I will retire from full time ministry next spring.
- I have been discussing this plan with the elders over the past year or so, and we are announcing my retirement now so that the church can begin a search for our next senior pastor.
- I will continue to serve as senior pastor until the new pastor is ready to come on board.
- We plan to stay in the area and offer our assistance to the church and future pastor.
- We know that God is going before us and our church. We know that He has a future pastor who will continue the mission of COTR. We know He has this whole transition under control. We're excited to see what God is going to do in this next stage of the journey!

**Prayer for the journey:**

Invite the elders to come and pray; time for questions and answers after the service.