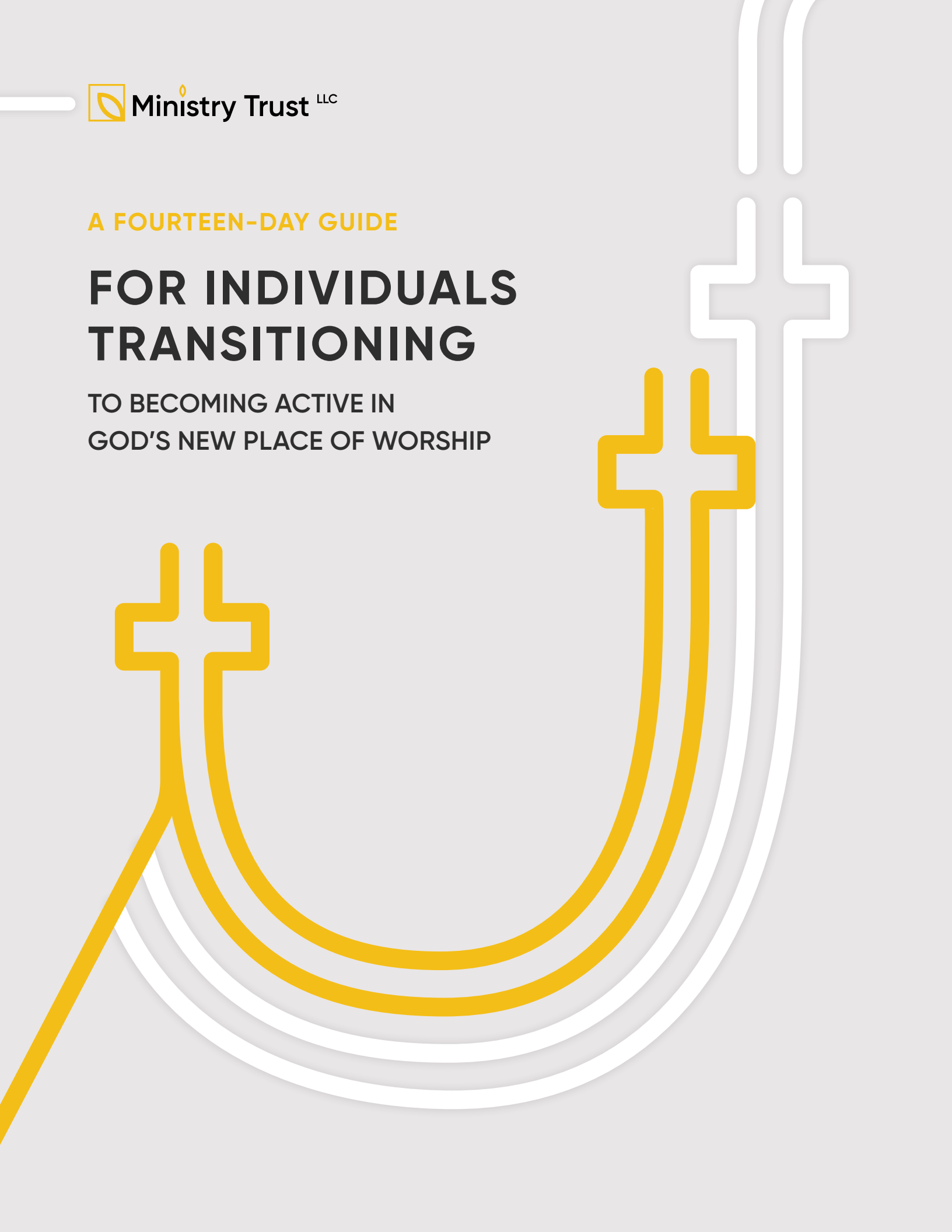


A FOURTEEN-DAY GUIDE

FOR INDIVIDUALS TRANSITIONING

TO BECOMING ACTIVE IN
GOD'S NEW PLACE OF WORSHIP



INTRODUCTION

Transitions are never easy, but oftentimes necessary. As a church body faces their future, there are needed times of evaluation and contemplation which sometimes lead to frustration. The same is true for individuals who are facing transition and change.

This Prayer Guide offers the opportunity to do more than to contemplate change; it provides a two-week discovery period to help determine God's direction into the future. Your spiritual preparation is not optional; it is essential as you transition into a new worship setting.

This fourteen-day journey is a guided prompt for daily prayer, undergirded with scriptural truths. It is intended to provide church members with a coordinated study, reinforced through the Holy Spirit as He leads you into your new place of service. The options for your church body in transition have already been determined; now is the time for you to hear God's personal perspective, to avoid making hurried decisions which could lead to unexpected consequences.

No prayer, no power – little prayer, little power – MUCH PRAYER, much power!

John C. Bryan

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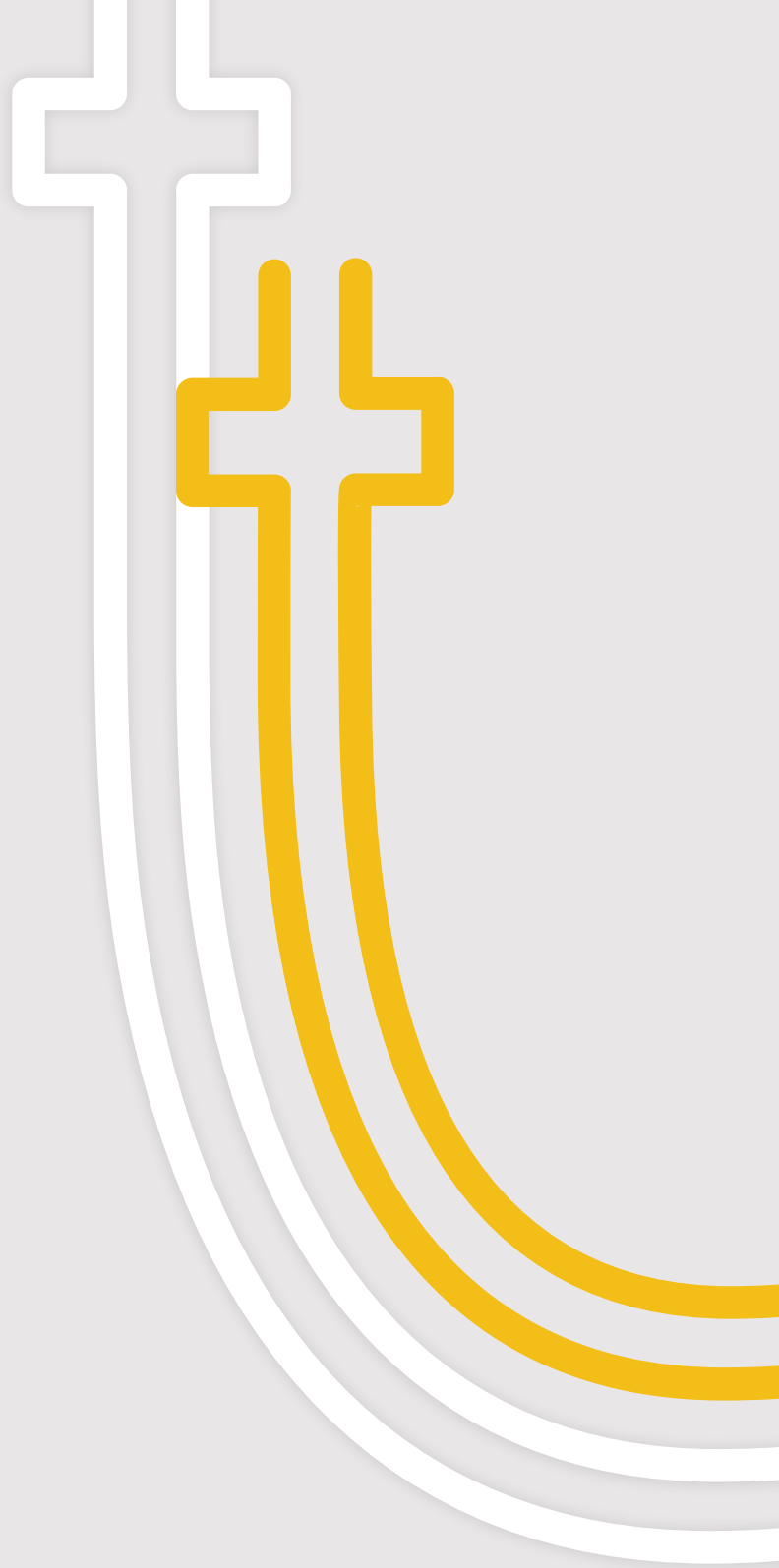
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WEEK 1

WHERE DO I
GO FROM HERE?

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IT'S TIME TO PRAY (LISTEN)

JAMES 4:2

"You do not have because you do not ask God."

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Prayer is not a last resort during life transitions, it is our first response. However, in praying, we must not focus on telling God what we want next; it's time to listen for divine guidance.

***GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS WORD** – pray using God's scriptures as a basis of your petition for guidance.

***GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS SPIRIT** – conviction is more than a feeling, it is God's tool of wooing you and warning you as you move ahead to another chapter of spiritual service.

***GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS PEOPLE** – carefully listen to those whom God has surrounded about you. If their advice aligns with His Word and His Spirit, consider their voices to be confirming for your next steps of faith.

Grief is a normal response to change. Be careful that you do not allow this emotion to stall or stop your advance. The Comforter of Christ is also the Guide from God. Be persistent in prayer, resistant to negative emotions, and consistent in listening to the voice from above.

Jesus modeled that the way out is the way up for us.

PRAY

- Thank God that he listens to your prayers.
- Ask God to speak specifically to your requests.
- Act on God's directions as he speaks to you.

IT'S TIME TO PROCESS (THINK/DISCERN)

PSALM 119:125

"I am your servant, give me discernment that I may understand your statutes."

Taking your time to process major decisions is not a delay tactic, it's a practical act of discernment. Hurried response to change in life is not a requirement. Many times it creates chaos.

After you have prayed for God to guide you to what and where your next steps may lead, it's time to wait and watch for His answer. Weigh your possibilities carefully, look and listen to your leanings, and think through the consequences surrounding your decisions.

A rebound response may be temporarily satisfying as you seek to settle in quickly to a new church environment, however, consider that it may also prove to be restrictive while creating unnecessary obligations. Refuse to replace a thoughtful processing of a God-led, God-timed commitment to His new church home.

Balance is the key. Visit new options in worship and for the study of God's Word. Carefully discern where the Lord may be guiding you. If you jump too quickly based on feelings or even a friend's persuasion, you might be opting for a hurried conclusion to your decision by short-cutting God's process of experiencing and gaining His leadership.

A large part of effective processing is accumulation. As you gather information about churches and add it to your spiritual impressions, your ability for discernment will increase. Thoughtful filtering of experiences will take you to your goal and will prove to be better than succumbing to pressure to surrender the process. Jesus never made a hurried choice; He discerned and obeyed the Father's leadership.

PRAY

- Ask God if you are following His pace and not your own.
- Purposefully seek God's process and observe carefully what He shows you.
- Thank the Lord that He never hurried with you.

IT'S TIME TO PROCURE (GAIN)

MARK 8:36

"What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"

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The world's ways teach us to get what we want, hold onto it, and protect it so that others don't get more. Biblical procurement is never for selfish gain—it's about serving others and learning to share.

Transitions are most always tough, especially when you journey into the unknown. Our natural inclination is to hold on, duplicate past experiences, and be cautious (maybe even suspicious) about whatever is new. However, Jesus taught that giving up, and even dying to self, is the purest way to advance. It's not just a good thing, it's a God thing.

After praying through next steps and wading through the process of carefully choosing your path, you need to press on. It may be tempting to float from church to church until you get the perfect feeling, but that will never happen. Believers walk by faith, not feelings.

If you have come to the point where you strongly sense God's leading, keep walking with confidence until or if He redirects you. Start by doing more than attending worship and Bible Study—start to volunteer. Go to church conference or business meeting to observe the operational and spiritual climate of the leaders. Ask for a meeting with the pastor and don't be afraid to ask tough and probing questions.

What you will discover in this new adventure can serve to guide you and lead you to gain more understanding, knowledge, and insight into where you need to be serving in the months and years ahead.

PRAY

- Plead heaven for a strong sense of gaining more glory for Jesus in your journey.
- Express gratitude to God for good choices you can make though they may be difficult.
- Believe that there are churches which need your spiritual giftedness to advance God's Kingdom.

IT'S TIME TO PARTICIPATE (DO IT)

JAMES 1:22

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

Hesitation is human, however not taking action when we know that we should, is doomed for delay and disappointment. We all wish that life could be easier and that decisions were simple. Not so!

The Old Scottish proverb of 1628 states, "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride."

As you look for your new place in worship and service, be active in your pursuit and participate in the journey. Look at the process as an opportunity and not a requirement. Just as God has guided your church to make tough decisions, you must do the same.

Believe and participate in the crafting of your future. Refuse to allow persuasion and pressure to stall your activity. Of course, you must balance your decisions between inactivity and over-activity. There is a divine pace for you to follow. The rhythm is experienced through your initiative in moving from the listening stage to the doing stage.

As God speaks into your choices, respond to His words. Sometimes athletes need to get off the playing field to rest, but this is only for a short time. The intent of resting is to ready yourself for the next step in life and service for Christ.

PRAY

- Ask God to help you to do what He is asking.
- Trust Jesus in the process of participation to the next step and place in your life.
- Thank God that you are not alone in decision-making.

IT'S TIME TO PONDER

PSALM 119:15

"I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways."

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The verb "ponder" is derived from an Old French word meaning "to weigh," consider, and reflect. It is closely related to the word "meditate" which is a combination of reviewing, repeating, reflecting, analyzing, feeling, and even enjoying. These activities involve physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual exercise.

Our western culture has dismissed meditation as an eastern religious practice, however Scripture uses the term frequently. Our meditation is on the one true God and not on mystical hopelessness. Some have explained meditation like a cow chewing cud. As crude as that may appear, it illustrates the point.

Catherine Winkworth translated an old German hymn - Praise to the Lord the Almighty. This song contains one of the most powerful stanzas which remind us to:
*Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
Who with His love doth befriend you.*

As you are making a life-changing decision regarding worship and service within the Christian community, it is important to develop the following disciplines. They can lead you to greater clarity.

- Take time to read a specific scripture passage over and over repeatedly.
- Memorize a truth which God has revealed to you.
- Listen for the Holy Spirit to speak into your life.
- Consider your choices carefully.
- Concentrate on the direction where God is leading toward your next steps.

PRAY

- Start your prayer with meditating on God's Word.
- Respond to the truth which God has revealed in the passage.
- Ask Jesus to show you the principles found in the passage which you need to make wise decisions.

IT'S TIME TO PAUSE

PSALM 27:14

"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

It is so hard to wait—for anything. It's especially hard to wait for the things that matter most. Finding a place where you belong in a spiritual context is a vital and lasting decision. What we want to happen quickly may take more time than our patience allows.

If you have prayed through the process and looked at what you have to gain through pondering the possibilities that lie ahead, now may be the time to push pause before plunging ahead. Sometimes we must let go of the life we have planned, in order to accept the one that is waiting for us. The prospect of a new day, a fresh try, one more start is waiting for you.

How good are you at waiting? Patience is not simply the ability to wait—it's how we behave while we're waiting. A critical part of pausing is taking inventory of where God has brought you and thanking Him for where he will take you next. A complaining attitude while waiting only prolongs the process.

Patience is power. We must remember that patience is not an absence of action; rather, it is waiting on God's timing. Waiting on the right time to act, by aligning with the right principles, in the right way, brings progress.

PRAY

- Thank God that He will show you when and where to go.
- Ask God to give you persistence through your patience in the process.
- Reveal your innermost frustrations to the Lord and trust Him to reveal his timing.

IT'S TIME TO PROCEED (GO)

ISAIAH 55:12

"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

Traffic signals help to monitor our behavior, however many times we are bothered by them. Red means stop. Yellow means slow. But green means GO!

If you have ever been distracted by your car radio or cell phone or a conversation when the traffic signal turns green, there are usually outside reminders for you to proceed. Horns will blast from adjacent automobiles, faces sometimes shout at you and hands will gesture you to go ahead or get out of the way.

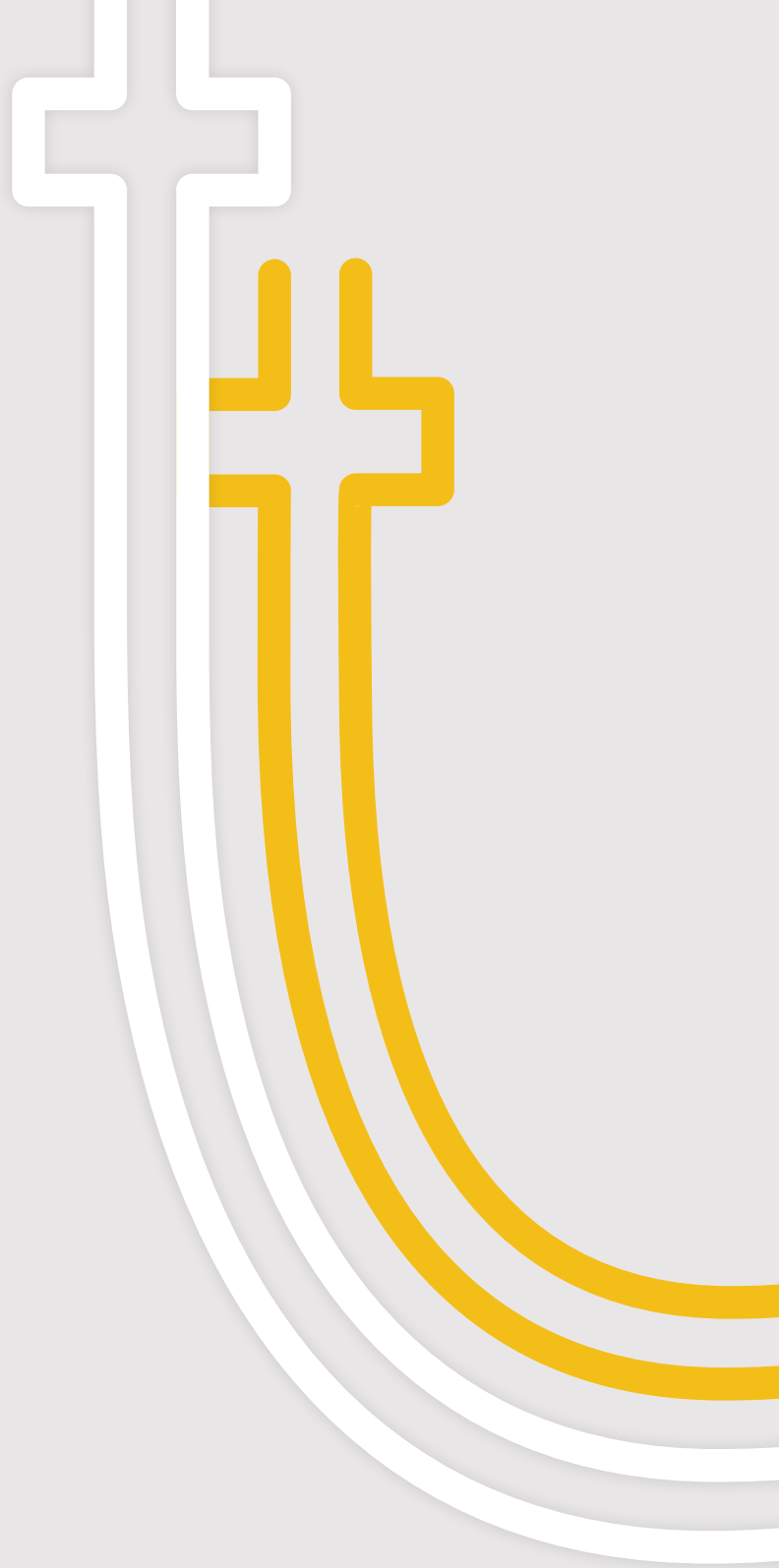
When you get the green light from God, it's not time to put your life into park or neutral. You must move ahead so as to discover what is next and not to block the path of others. Undoubtedly, there are people who are waiting for you to move on.

Life is about moving on, accepting changes, and looking forward to what makes you stronger and more complete. Growth is painful. Change is painful. But nothing is as painful as staying stuck somewhere you don't belong. Remember, if you're brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello. You can't start the next chapter of your life by re-reading the last one.

Trust the transition – God's got you.

PRAY

- Thank God for His green light to urge your advance.
- Trust God to take you to the place of greater opportunity and service.
- Ask God to help you to help others who may be stalled by fear.



WEEK 2

HOW DO I GO ON FROM HERE?

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BE INTUITIVE (INSIGHTFUL)

PROVERBS 7:4

"Say to wisdom, "You are my sister, and to insight, "You are my relative."

Spiritual intuition is not a simple hunch or just a possible lead forged by a gut feeling.

It's a guided insight to respond in such a way as to glorify God and influence others likewise.

Intuition and insight are twin guides to show you how to move forward. Most likely, you have enough experience in life to help direct you to advance. Trust your senses; rely on your God-given insights.

We have five natural senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. However, there is a sixth sense that must be exercised by every believer in Christ—BELIEF. The Holy Spirit will give this gift of faith to you. Ask Him.

Many times our physical senses can lead to fear, but faith guides us to venture into the unknown, to journey beyond our past experiences. Be a person who displays wisdom and insight. Show yourself faithful and others will follow.

If God has shown you where you are to go, then how you are to go is equally important. Through spiritual intuition and godly insight, you will portray true integrity to God and others.

PRAY

- Ask God for spiritual insight.
- Trust God with your Spirit-led intuition.
- Thank God for past experiences which have helped lead you into the future.

BE EXPECTANT (ANTICIPATORY)

I CORINTHIANS 8:5

"And they exceeded our expectations: they gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us."

Wisdom consists of the anticipation of consequences. As God guides how you choose to go from this point in life, be expectant! Believe that His guidance is for your good and anticipate the positive results.

There is much you can be taught through your past experience, but the sense of expectant anticipation must be invited – it's not taught, but learned.

Expectant mothers are rarely comfortable with their nine month gestation period prior to birth. However, the thrill and potential of a newborn child overshadows the pain. You too are birthing a new relationship. Take time to look forward to the many possibilities which await you.

Today's scripture passage acknowledges the results of a generous church. Their gifts to God's work exceeded the expectations of the Apostle Paul. They responded to the need in the midst of their own severe trial. This made it even more appreciated. You can do the same through your attitude of expectancy.

Jesus never ministered without expecting God to bring results.

PRAY

- Ask The Lord to give you great expectation for the future.
- Thank God for the unknown times ahead as this deepens your trust.
- Call on Christ to remove any negative attitude of dread and replace it with willing anticipation.

BE ENCOURAGED (CHEERED ON)

HEBREWS 12:1

"Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Cheerleaders have an incredible responsibility. Their main objective is not just to stimulate noise, but to stir up encouragement for fans and players alike.

Sometimes we feel alone on the battlefield of life. If we look down and lose hope, we have failed to look around and listen to the many who have gone before us. They cheer us ahead; they become encouragers for us to follow.

The writer of Hebrews draws a powerful picture of the many faithful followers of Christ. They have laid a foundation on which we must build. The scripture states that we are surrounded by their witness and encouraged by their steadfastness. They are cheering for you right now!

Be reminded that one word of encouragement during a setback is worth more than an hour of praise after success. Difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations. John Wesley once wrote, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can... to all the people you can."

We would do well to make a list of our cheerleaders—let's call them "blessers." God has placed them around you purposely. Don't ignore them; they are there to help you to know how you are to go on to the next step.

PRAY

- Ask God to show you your cheerleaders.
- Petition heaven to give you more encouragers for your journey.
- Thank God that there are "blessers" in your life who care enough to cheer you on, right now.

BE INSTRUCTED (TEACHABLE)

MATTHEW 21:6

"The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them."

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty years of age. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The goal in making progress on your life's journey is to keep your mind and heart young through ongoing instruction which leads to application. Remember, you're never too smart to reject being taught.

While education is a key component to understanding, it is a poor substitute for wisdom. As modern disciples of Christ, we should always strive to be postured to receive and apply God's teachings. They become life's lessons.

Sometimes He speaks through others whom He has placed around us. Sometimes we hear His instruction through heartaches and hurts. He always helps us to learn by following His words found in Scripture. God's instructions lead us to inspiration for our advancement.

Jesus chose to teach His disciples through involvement. Benjamin Franklin said it well, "Tell me and I'll forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I'll learn." Many of us should confess that we are willing to learn, but not always willing to be taught, and maybe even more reluctant to do.

Like walking on a flagstone path, take one step at a time while learning not to trip along the way.

PRAY

- Request God to reveal your level of willingness to be instructed.
- Confess any resistance you may have in following instruction from others.
- Thank God for the opportunity to learn and grow while helping others to do the same.

BE INVOLVED (INCLUSIONARY)

PHILIPPIANS 1:27

"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then... I will know that you stand firm in one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel."

Your faith journey is not a solo act—it's meant to include others. As you transition from your past church experience to a new venture, check to be certain you are involved and engaged with multiple sources. This effort will keep you balanced.

Reach out to those who have had similar challenges. Include their wisdom with your own. Ask God to speak through each encounter and inquiry which you make as you travel into new spiritual territory. You are not alone on this discovery path.

The willingness that you share is reciprocal. Not only will you benefit by including others, you will be able to bless them as well. As the Apostle Paul admonished the Philippian church—we strive *together* as one for the faith of the gospel.

No involvement means no commitment—no exception. Jesus always brought others with Him on His spiritual journeys. His desire was for inclusion into the body of believers.

PRAY

- Express gratitude for the privilege of involving others in your new spiritual adventure.
- Remind yourself, out loud, that you are never alone.
- Take a minute to reflect on all the people God has provided for your counsel to advance to a new level of spiritual service.

BE INSPIRED (REJOICING)

COLOSSIANS 3:17

"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father through him."

It has been said what you get by achieving your goals is not near as important as what you become by achieving those goals. Spiritual inspiration is a driving force which pushes us out of the ordinary and into the extraordinary; from the sublime to that which is superior. We become motivated to be and to do more for the glory of God.

What or who inspires you? If it's based solely upon a feeling, then the inspiration may soon dissipate. You must rely on the fact that God is guiding your process while rearranging your assignment. This might be triggered by a feeling, however feelings can fool you and not necessarily be the fuel to keep you moving ahead.

Too often we are influenced by others who mean well, but they may not have our best interests in mind. It is easy to get off track if we are more concerned about pleasing people than by pleasing God through our choices and actions. Genuine and lasting inspiration comes from above.

Now that your church has made a move, so must you. Rejoice in knowing where are you are going and do it by giving thanks to your Heavenly Father. He is not dragging you to a new place of service; He is leading you.

PRAY

- Ask God to help you discern the difference between His inspiration and your own feelings.
- Take time to thank God that he has your best interests in heart and mind.
- Seek ways to please the Father by balancing your feelings with the truths of Scripture.

BE INCLUDED (ENGAGED)

HEBREWS 10:25

"Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Do you enjoy working with puzzles? Every piece has a place where it fits—together. It may look like a mess when you spill out the odd-shaped contents from the box, but you always know there is a way to make it all come together.

It's easy to trust that a puzzle box will include all the pieces essential to make the intended picture become reality. Why, then, do we sometimes doubt that God has not supplied all the right people to fit together at the right time to serve His right purpose?

As you find where you best fit in your newly arranged place of worship, know that there are others waiting for you to join them to complete the picture. To withdraw from serving, giving, and sharing would be neglecting God's perfect design for His church. We were created to encourage one another and to gather with each other.

The body of Christ is made up of many parts and people. It cannot function as a group of soloists; it's a choir designed to sing in harmony under the leadership of the Almighty.

Engaging with others in worship and service is preparation for the coming again of Christ. The "Day" is quickly approaching where we will be forever engaged with all believers of all time under the direction of the Lord Jesus Himself. Let's get ready!

PRAY

- Ask God to reveal your shape and size to help you fit into His new picture and plan.
- Thank God for new ways to expand your effectiveness for Kingdom service with others.
- Plead heaven for new friends as you discover new ways to encourage new people.

