



Welcome. We all experience change and transition in life, from births to deaths, graduation to moves, relationship changes and job changes. In this last season we have gone through huge changes because of the pandemic and new changes will come in the months ahead because of it as well.

We believe that these times of change and transition can be powerful moments in our lives for meeting God and being formed by him. We also recognize that this doesn't happen from merely understanding in our heads what is happening but processing in our hearts what God is doing in our lives. This requires conversations, reflection, and prayer.

To help facilitate this we created this reflection guide that goes along with the themes and Scriptures of this teaching series. Don't feel pressure to fill in every space or answer every question. The goal is to engage what you hear in the sermons and through the Scriptures with the real stuff of your life. Talk about these questions with your small group or housemates. Spend time writing and journaling over the issues raised. Make time for prayer and conversation with God on these things.

Our prayer for you is that God shapes you in the times of transition in your life and equips you to care well for others in the times of transition they face. And may God lead us as a church family through the time of transitions we will go through together in the months ahead.

In Him,

Tim and Kristi Knipp



## April 11: Endings

### Key terms:

- *Change*: The **external change** or significant event that happens outside of you.
- *Transition*: The **internal process** you go through in response to the external change.

### Reflection:

- What are some significant changes you've gone through in your life?
- What transition did these cause in you?
- How did those transitions affect you?
- How did God meet you in those times of change and transition?

### Key concepts:

- Three Phases (William Bridges):
  - *Endings* - we experience a significant event that meaningfully alters our life, often seasons of loss or celebration or both. Endings launch us into processes of transition.
  - *Neutral Zone* - the in-between time. A season of creativity and unknown. The normal markers of life often feel gone and we are searching, moving towards a new normal.
  - *New Beginnings* - life takes on a more regular and routine shape, we feel more settled and stable.



### **Reflection on Endings:**

- What are examples of a change that led to things ending in your life? What are some examples of endings that may have been “hidden” or not obvious at first glance?
- Describe what images or emotions you associate with Endings.

### **Scripture:**

- Read Matthew 3:11 - 17
  - What is the external change John the Baptist is going through?
  - What would be ending for John the Baptist?
  - What is the external change Jesus is going through here?
  - What would be ending for Jesus?
  - How does Jesus mark this change in his life?

### **Big Idea:**

- When an external change happens things end within us that need to be noticed and named with gratitude and grief.
  - What needs to be named or noticed from the most recent change in your life?



### **Further reflection:**

Giving words and language for Endings can be extremely beneficial. We invite you to use these additional questions as one way to name and process the Endings in your life. We have provided many questions so feel welcomed to think or talk or write through answers to the questions that feel most meaningful to you.

### **Questions to ask during/after an Ending:**

- What is the current change or changes you are facing? What little and big changes are happening to cause an ending in your life?
- How will life be and feel different moving forward?
- What feelings are you experiencing in the Ending or in anticipation of the Ending?
- Do you have any regrets as you go through this Ending? What are they?
- What will you miss? Naming the hidden and more seen losses.
- In this Ending what are you being invited to let go of?
- Are there any conversations you feel invited to have as you go through this Ending? What would be your hope(s) for these conversations?
- Looking back on the season that is ending, what are you grateful for?
- Not all Endings are dominated by grief - some are marked by celebration - what are you celebrating in this Ending?
- What actions are you being invited into to mark this Ending?  
How will you mark this Ending?
- If you were writing a book about your life, what would be the title for this most recent chapter?
- How have you seen God shape your identity in this season that is Ending?
- God's faithful love, steadfast character and comforting presence are some examples of sources of reassurance during seasons of transitions. In this ending what aspect of God's character do you feel invited to remember and focus on? What truth are you holding onto?
- Feel welcomed to write a prayer to God sharing with Him about this Ending and asking for His \_\_\_\_\_.
- We face change and Endings in our individual lives but also in community. What changes are happening in your community (external situations/circumstances)?  
How as a community can we mark this Ending?
- As you think about our community what longings or aches come to the surface as you think about this season of Ending?
- As you think about our community entering a slow season of Ending  
- what hopes do you have?



## April 18: Neutral Zone

### Key terms:

- *Neutral Zone*: The in-between time. When the old identity, the old ways of operating, the old sense of place are taken apart, but the new thing isn't put together yet.

### Reflection:

- What's an example of a time you've been in the neutral zone?
- Describe what images, words, or emotions you associate with the neutral zone-
- When has been a time that God powerfully used a Wilderness/Neutral Zone season in your life?
- How did God meet you and shape you in that time of in-between?

### Key concept:

The Neutral Zone is often a season where God does some of His deepest work around our identity, as individuals and communities. In these seasons of in-between when the familiar/known has ended and the new-normal has not yet come into fullness - we have an opportunity to be shaped by God. Old ways of thinking and relating pass away and new ways can be discovered. Questions like, "Who am I? What do I want to spend time doing? What do I deeply value? What am I willing to risk for? What do I want to commit to?" are common in the





Neutral Zone. When we look at the story of Jesus' baptism and the time in the wilderness that follows - we see His identity re-affirmed, His identity tested and remembered. We imagine this event of baptism and season in the Wilderness were significant and purposeful in the area of His identity. God has things He desires to shape in us as well in these seasons of in-between.

**Scripture:**

- Read Matthew 4:1 - 11
  - How is the wilderness an image of the neutral zone? What are the parallels?
  - How do we see the difficulty of the wilderness in this passage?
  - How was Jesus tempted to escape in the wilderness?
  - How was Jesus present and trusting in God while in the Wilderness?

**Big Idea:**

- Jesus invites you to be patient, present, and anchored in God while in the neutral zone.
  - In what ways are you tempted to “escape” while in a wilderness season?
  - What helps you be patient and present to God while in the wilderness?
  - If you are currently in the wilderness, what might God want to do in and through you in this time?

**Further Reflection:**

Giving words and language for the Neutral Zone can be extremely beneficial. We invite you to use these questions as one way to name and process the seasons of Wilderness in your life. We have provided many additional questions so feel welcomed to think or talk or write through answers to the questions that feel most meaningful to you.

**Questions to ask during the Neutral Zone**

- What helps you to be present to God in the Neutral Zone?
- How does God speak to you? What practices or spiritual disciplines help you create space to hear from God?
- Who are you sharing with about your experience in the Neutral Zone?
- How would you describe the discomfort of the Neutral Zone? What healthy or unhealthy ways do you cope with the discomfort of the Neutral Zone?
- In what ways are you tempted to escape or abandon the work God is inviting you into through the Neutral Zone?
- The Neutral Zone involves waiting. What helps you to wait well? What are the challenges?
- In the times of waiting, what gives you hope and stamina?
- What aspect(s) of your identity do you find God adjusting or affirming in this season? Are there things you are feeling invited to leave behind?
- Clinging to God's steadfast character and unshakable love can be powerful truths to find shelter in during seasons of unknown. What aspects of God's character do you feel drawn to hold onto? What truth are you needing to remember and focus on?
- In this Neutral Zone time for our Hillcrest community - what do you hope is left behind? What new identity do you hope God affirms in us?
- What do you find yourself longing for as you think about our community?
- What do you think it could look like for our small groups, friend groups, housemates to seek God together in this time of in-between and creatively engage with Him in the Neutral Zone?

Notes:



## April 25: New Beginning

### Key Term:

- *New Beginning* - the time when life regains shape and rhythm. There is a steadiness and more solid understanding of ourselves - our identity and general wellbeing in this world.

### Reflection:

- What has been a time in your life you came through a neutral zone into a new beginning?
- What words, images, and emotions do you associate with a new beginning?

### Key concept:

After Jesus' time in the wilderness we see him launching into his public ministry. Announcing the kingdom, sharing life with his disciples, and healing diseases become the new normal for him from this point on.

### Scripture:

- Read Matthew 4:1 – 11
  - How is Jesus' identity tested and challenged in the wilderness?
  - How is it strengthened and affirmed?
  - How is Jesus' purpose as the Messiah tested and challenged in the wilderness?
  - How is Jesus' purpose as the Messiah strengthened and affirmed in the wilderness?





**Scripture:**

- Read Matthew 4:12 - 25
  - What are the new beginnings in Jesus' life here?
  - What risks did Jesus have to take in this new beginning?
  - How might Jesus have been tempted to return to the past (to Nazareth)?
  - How might Jesus have been tempted to paths of less resistance?
  - In what ways did Jesus fully commit to this new season of life and ministry?

**Big Idea:**

- In the New Beginning you are invited to bravely live into the re-formed identity and purpose God gives you in the Wilderness.
  - When is a time God re-shaped your identity or a time when God spoke a new word over your identity?
  - If you are moving from the Neutral Zone to a New beginning...
    - What kind of \_\_\_\_\_ are you going to be in this new season?
    - What is the Nazareth you may be tempted to return to or re-create in this season?
    - What is your Capernaum you are meant to move to?

**Further Reflections:**

Giving words and language for our New Beginnings can be extremely beneficial. We invite you to use these questions as one way to name and process the seasons of New Beginnings in your life. We have provided many additional questions so feel welcomed to think or talk or write through answers to the questions that feel most meaningful to you.

**Questions to ask in a New Beginning:**

- What are times in the past that you have gone from a Neutral Zone to a New Beginning?
- What are thoughts/feelings/images that come to mind when you think about past seasons of New Beginnings?
- What signals you that you have reached a New Beginning?
- As you move into this New Beginning what words would you use to describe your old identity? What words would you use to describe your new identity? What stands out as significant change?
- Is there an image or picture or analogy that comes to mind when you think about this season of New Beginnings?
- Oftentimes we move into New Beginnings without noticing it. How do you want to name, mark, and celebrate this New Beginning?
- As you think about our Hillcrest Community what do you imagine for us in this New Beginning? What words or images come to mind for our community?
- How do you feel invited to pray for our community in this new season?

Notes:



## May 2: Sharing Sunday

### Key concept:

*Power of story* - The story we tell ourselves and others matters. God invites His people to remember and to remember in a particular way. God invites His people to remember His faithfulness, the revealing of His character and movement. He invites us into His big story and find our home, our place, within the context of His kingdom story. How we tell ourselves and others the story of our experiences of change and transition will impact how we think and feel about the events themselves. The telling of the story focuses our attention on certain things. God invites us to be people who find meaning and story-telling language centered around His love and kingdom values.

### Scripture:

- Read Psalm 107
  - How does this Psalm invite sharing the stories of individuals and communities?
  - How does it model sharing the difficult parts of the past?
  - How does it model sharing the celebrations of the past?
  - How does it model connecting story sharing with God?



**Further Reflections:**

- In the months and years ahead what stories will you share about this last year?
- Where do you want to focus your attention?
- How can you share your experience within the context of God's kingdom?
- What stories would you like told of our community?
- What aspect of God's character will you remember with significance?
- How will this new understanding of transitions impact how you care for a friend?
- What did you learn about yourself through this reflection process?
- How does this change the way you think about being part of a church community going through transition together?

Notes:



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