

Swinging Bridges

When I was a little girl, my family vacationed in the Great Smokey Mountains. I loved to go, but I dreaded one family activity. Near our vacation spot was a swinging bridge, just wide enough to walk across. It scared me to death! It took a lot of coaxing from my parents to get me to venture across. But Mom and Dad would remind me of what was waiting on the other side—the fun, the view, the other members of my family. That encouragement usually won me over (literally)! But I still didn't like the bridge. It seemed unstable. By the time I got to the other side my heart was doing a staccato beat, my hands were sweating.

It's occurred to me much later that life is a lot like that swinging bridge. And so is faith. We get very comfortable in our current place, but God urges us to greater depths, more profound usefulness, enlarged anointing. Between us and the enlargement is a bridge of transition—one that seems to shift beneath our feet. Seasons of transition are necessary to take us from the past into our future.

Matthew 9:17 says this:

Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst. The wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

The person we are today can't hold the increase God plans for us. Increase requires a new wineskin. New wineskins are flexible. They can handle change. A greater measure of Holy Spirit activity in our lives requires a different container than the last season. Christ is the change agent. He does the work of spiritual transformation in us but the catalyst is our willingness to change.

After Paul was commissioned on the Damascus road to become the apostle to the Gentiles, the Lord put him through 14 years of transition before he was released into the fullness of his ministry. After Christ called Peter "the Rock," Peter failed miserably and went through the transition of restoration before assuming his leadership role. After Joseph dreamed his dreams about his future, and how his family would bow down to him, he went through more than 20 years of preparation before finally reaching his place of fulfillment.

Hopefully, our transition won't be as long or as hard but it will be necessary to get us to where God wants us to be. So how do we get across the swinging bridge of transition? Here are a few suggestions.

- **Live your life inside out**

God works from the inside out. We live from the inside out when we allow Him to shape our inner woman, no matter how uncomfortable His methods. The greatest battle we face is not between who we were and who we are today. The greatest battle is who we are today and who we can be.

- **Continue in Bible study and prayer**

You might need to increase your time in Bible study and prayer. Although God is not limited in how He chooses to speak to you, He reveals Himself primarily through these avenues. Don't just look at the Bible; allow the Bible to look at you. God is Truth and it's our contact with Truth that changes us, that readies us for a new season of increase. How diligently we seek God and His truth and how completely we allow truth to transition us, determines how soon we reach our destiny. Let down your guard before Him and let Him prepare you for the next season.

- **Be willing to move into uncharted territory**

Put up your map and get out your compass. If you use a map, you will only go where someone else has already been. God wants to do a new thing in your life. How He chooses to work in your life might not resemble His work in others. Put aside the fear that might keep you from charting new spiritual territory. God's love neutralizes fear. 1 John 4:18a says this: Perfect love drives out fear...

- **Put aside negative thoughts**

Silence the voice that tells you that God can't use you. The enemy's voice bombards us with comments such as: "I've made too many mistakes; I'm too timid, I'm too simple; I'm too busy." Heed only the voice of the Holy Spirit. His voice always brings hope and never condemnation. You are the vessel He has chosen for a place only you can fill. God's purpose for your life transcends any failures, any deficiencies you might think you have. Put your confidence in God, not in yourself.

- **Commit to being a finisher**

Endurance is the mark of a champion. It usually takes God longer to change us than we think. Ask yourself, "Am I charcoal, or a diamond?" The only difference is time and pressure. Take comfort in these words...he who began to good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6)

- **Fix your eyes on Jesus**

Take courage. Remember that your future is already prepared. Although the bridge across might seem unstable, God never leads you where He has not gone before. Don't trust your eyes, trust Him. He transforms a swinging bridge into solid ground. Step out onto the bridge. Let this day be the beginning of the best of your life.