stuck!

navigating the transitions of life & leadership

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Revised Edition
Stuck! focuses on the life and leadership transitions that each of us will face. Christians and non-Christians alike have discussed the need to better navigate life and leadership transitions. What is new in the pages of Stuck!, however, is a deeper understanding of how God uses transitions to shape the destiny and character of a Christ-follower. Ahead, you’ll discover that God does some of His most important work in the lives of His followers during the in-between times of a transition.

It is the desire of most every Christ-follower to hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Matthew 25:21) at the end of his or her life. The problem is that even committed Christ-followers can get lost en route to hearing those words. Many have become paralyzed by difficult life experiences. Many of these moments occur during the transition from one phase of personal development to the next.

Difficult moments or experiences can often be used by God to signal the beginning of a new work or stage in one’s development. God uses these defining moments in ways not often apparent. Failure to navigate these formation moments has contributed to men and women, like you and I, shrinking back from God’s best.

The purpose and goal of this book is two-fold. First, it seeks to empower passionate Christ-followers and leaders with the tools necessary to work through a time of transition, gaining all of what God intends. Second, it seeks to counteract the potential stagnation that often results from a transition. Through being able to identify and align with God’s greater purpose during transition moments, I hope that many more Christ followers hear the words, “Well done.”

**DEFINITIONS**

This book must be read with some definitions in mind. These terms provide the key frameworks surrounding the concepts of life and leadership transitions.

First—and most basic—what is a transition?

A *transition* is a defined period of time where one phase or period of
an individual’s development ends and another phase or period needs to begin. A transition represents that in-between time. Transitions move a Christ-follower from somewhere to somewhere else.

Transitions (or personal development boundaries) are well documented in the leadership development study and research of Dr. J. Robert Clinton of Fuller Theological Seminary. His writings undergird many of the insights found in Stuck!. I’ve taken Clinton’s work and added my own insights based on 30 years of coaching leaders. Transitions play an important role in the development of leaders and committed Christ-followers.

MAJOR TRANSITIONS
Transitions serve to bring about needed change, provide clarity in life direction, consolidate learning, deepen values, shift paradigms, and advance one’s influence and/or ministry.

There are three important transitions that occur in the personal development of committed and passionate Christ-followers. These major transitions move one toward greater influence and growth, helping to shape a life for a unique and ultimate contribution, whether one works and ministers in a vocational ministry role or lives and serves Christ in the marketplace.

These three generic transitions are:

- The Awakening Transition (often occurring in one’s 20s or 30s)
- The Deciding Transition (often occurring in one’s 40s or 50s)
- The Finishing Transition (often occurring one’s 60s or 70s)

MICRO TRANSITIONS
Other transitions exist, however—ones different than the in-between moments of the three major transitions. These occur along the way, often within a larger phase of one’s development so that he or she continues to grow. These are known as micro-transitions or sub-phase transitions and they move a follower from one sub-phase of his or her development to another.

Finishing well is a term that refers to reaching the end of one’s life and having been faithful to the calling God has placed on that life.
well is about Christ-followers being more passionate about Christ and His mission as they fulfill their life purpose than they were in the beginning. It also entails a life that experiences the depth of God’s grace and love.

An individual who finishes well is more surrendered to God’s will and desires and more focused on running the race to the end. It’s the living out of one’s destiny and the making of one’s unique and ultimate contribution in the expanding of God’s Kingdom.

The word “mindset” is defined as (1) a fixed mental attitude or disposition that predetermines a person’s response to, and interpretations of, situations or (2) an inclination or habit.

A **sovereign mindset** is the key intentional choice that allows an individual to see life and its circumstances with developmental eyes. This predisposition that God has always been at work brings ongoing insight about God and His purposes.

*Paradigm shifts* are often the by-product of a transition. Paradigm shifts are the change of one’s perspective, attitude, approach, and/or understanding of a given circumstance or set of facts. In a paradigm shift, an individual or group learns to process the same information and facts in new ways. Paradigm shifts provide new ideas and ways to overcome old obstacles. Transitions often initiate shifts in a Christ-follower’s perspective and paradigm.

Paradigm shifts break unhealthy behavior patterns, leading to new approaches to life and leadership. Without transitions, and the paradigm shifts that occur with them, Christ-followers would stay stuck! The ability to look at the same facts in new ways and see new truths releases a Christ-follower and leader to a new level of influence.

*Faith Challenges* are defining moments when a Christ-follower must decide to put “weight” on the new direction and life decisions that a transition can produce. God tests the dependency and trust of His followers by calling them to take new steps and move beyond current levels of growth and capacity. Rest-assured that as transitions unfold, they will call for new faith as one moves into the future.

**THE PATHWAY OF A TRANSITION**

Transitions often travel down a generic pathway. This pathway consists of four steps or phases of a transition: the Entry Phase, the Evaluation Phase,
the Alignment Phase, and the Direction Phase. Each phase plays a role in moving a Christ-follower from a time of isolation to a new hunger for God's plan to the time of processing of obstacles and roadblocks (often issues of pain and wounding) to discovering the new way forward.

In the Entry Phase, a follower often experiences a time of isolation or conflict that launches a deeper search for God and a hunger for clarity.

In the Evaluation Phase, a follower begins to assess what has transpired, what God is seeking to reveal, and the convictions and lessons that need to be brought into future decision-making.

In the Alignment Phase, there’s often a time of surrender as a follower comes face-to-face with issues of brokenness, inadequacy, and renewed submission to God’s purpose and desires. The prize of this time of surrender is a fresh revelation of God’s desired future.

In the Direction Phase, the future and a sense of destiny surfaces. Confusion, which once seemed unending, finally lifts and new experiences begin to point the way forward. As followers take new steps of faith, they move on to the next chapter in their life and development.

The majority of the time in a transition is spent in evaluation and surrender. As a Christ-follower captures lessons from the past, Christ begins to unfold the future. Sometimes, the only thing tougher than not knowing where one is going is knowing and realizing that the future will require new steps of faith and trust in God.

Whether Christ-followers focus their time and efforts on their business, their family, their local church, or their community or government, these same principles apply.

God uses transitions to shape life direction and further the discovery of one's unique contribution in the expansion of His Kingdom.

END RESULT

Convergence is the focused time when a Christ-follower reaches the end, only to discover a unique contribution: the net result of years of formation and life experience. Convergence involves the coming together of “who” God has shaped an individual to be and a sense of “for this I was born.” Transitions are one of the key tools that move a Christ-follower along that journey. Christ-followers move from an individualized life and purpose to leaving behind a legacy for others.
Transitions also:

- Break Christ-followers free
- Move a Christ-follower from somewhere to somewhere else
- Surface greater clarity in God’s call on a Christ-follower’s life
- Clarify a Christ-follower’s unique role
- Call for focus and greater intentionality
- Are catalysts in a Christ follower’s life purpose
- Produce greater self-definition and discovery of how to influence others to live out God’s purposes

**HOW TO READ THIS BOOK**

*Stuck!* should be read and used according to where you are in your own journey. If you want to better understand transitions, read the chapters of this book in order. However, if you sense that you’re in a time of transition, then you need perspective and insight now. If that’s you, using the overview below, skip to the chapters most applicable to your current life situation. Below is a description of the flow of the book.

**THE EARLY CHAPTERS**

In chapters 1–4, the focus is on better defining transitions and identifying the characteristics and key reasons behind them. Go to these chapters to determine if you’re currently experiencing a transition and to help you better define and identify the nature of a transition.

Chapters 5–10 introduce the Transition Life Cycle and the pathway of a typical transition. The Transition Life Cycle will provide a map, helping give greater clarity to the actual steps through a transition. Go to these chapters to better understand where you might be in your transition and what to expect in the future.

**THE MIDDLE CHAPTERS**

In chapters 11–16, we’ll take a closer look at the three major transitions every Christ-follower will face. There’s a good chance that you picked up
this book because you’re in one of these three transitions, each of which has a unique purpose and goal.

There are two chapters for each of the three transitions: one chapter describing it and the next chapter offering coaching help. Go to the one that most closely approximates your current stage of development. Then, double back to the chapters describing the other two major transitions.

**THE FINAL CHAPTERS**

In chapters 17–20, I explain why you shouldn’t quit your transition early. These chapters provide tangible helps that describe what God does during a transition and how to best approach the transitions you face.

Go to these chapters if you’re feeling restless in your transition and if you need to re-think how to approach transitions in the future.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

At the end of each chapter, you’ll find links to the Leader Breakthru website and additional resources to help you gain greater clarity during your time of transition.

Appendix A is a discussion guide to use *Stuck!* in a small group context.

Appendix B provides excerpts from the seminal research by Dr. J. Robert Clinton, and his major article related to transitions, “Boundary Processing.”

Appendix C offers more information about Leader Breakthru and the coaching and resourcing you may need in the days ahead.
Appendix C: About Leader Breakthru

Whether you’re in a time of transition or need to move to the next level of your development as a leader, Leader Breakthru is committed to offering the best in leadership development resources to help you break through to the next level of effectiveness.

Our focus is personal clarity.
Our resources seek to facilitate breakthrough.
Our coaching and processes are all reproducible.
If you’re called to make a difference, whether in the marketplace or in vocational ministry, Leader Breakthru is for you.

EXPERIENTIAL TRAINING
- Leadership Processes: Focused Living, APEX, Resonance
- Coaching Skills and Certificate training
- *Stuck!* Workshops, Band of Brothers Retreats, Life Consultations

INNOVATIVE RESOURCES
- Books, Workbooks, and PDF resources
- Online Learning Platform (Leader Breakthru University)
- GoToMeeting/Training and Cohort Learning

BREAKTHRU COACHING
- Transition Coaching
- Coach Me (personal) / Coach Us (organizational)
- Executive/Mission Coaching

For more information about the ministry of Terry Walling and Leader Breakthru, please visit: www.leaderbreakthru.com.
the leadership development series

Leader Breakthru’s Leadership Development Series consists of three books that take a closer look at the three significant transition moments that every Christ-follower will face. Each of these books can be used as a personal read, a small group resource, or a one-on-one coaching resource.

AWAKENING
The Awakening Transition often occurs early-on in a Christ-follower’s life and causes individuals to examine what it means to be called by God, and to make decisions related to life-direction and focus. Awakening will surface issues of past development, core values, life purpose and personal vision.

DECIDING
The Deciding Transition occurs at the middle of an individual’s life, when Christ-followers become so busy with life, that they stop living. This transition is about clarifying one’s unique contribution and about learning to say “no” to what’s good, in order to say “yes” to what’s best. Deciding will surface issues of role, effective methods and unique contribution.

FINISHING
The Finishing Transition occurs near the end of one’s life and ministry. It’s during this transition that Christ-followers begin to focus on their legacy—what they want to leave behind for the others who will follow them. Finishing will surface key postures for finishing well, clarifying an ultimate contribution, influencing without position and coaching/mentoring others.
Leader Breakthru offers three core, personal development processes designed to guide the ongoing development of a Christ-follower. Together, they comprise a leadership development system for churches, missions, ministries, and organizations.

If you'd like more information about these processes, would like to go through one of the processes online, or would like to gain a license to facilitate one of the processes in your context, please visit: leaderbreakthru.com.

**FOCUSED LIVING**
The Focused Living Process consists of six-sessions related to clarifying life direction and personal calling. This process helps leaders and all Christ-followers gain perspective through the development of core values, a statement of being (life purpose) and a statement of doing (personal vision).

**APEX**
The APEX Process consists of eight-sessions that bring greater clarity to a Christ-follower’s unique, personal contribution. This process will help individuals discover issues related to their major role and effective methods, and will provide a decision-making grid called a “Personal Life Mandate” that will help to guide any choices that lay ahead.

**RESONANCE**
The Resonance Process is a series of three preparatory meetings and three strategic discussions by those who love Christ and desire to finish well. This process helps Christ-followers to clarify how to have influence without position, empower others and leave behind a godly legacy.
Terry Walling is President and founder of Leader Breakthru.

Terry’s passion is leaders who love Christ, and lead from within. Personal renewal precedes and serves to catalyze corporate change. In order to take ministry to a new place, the leaders themselves must go to a new place.

Terry is a graduate of Point Loma College, attended Talbot Theological Seminary, and received his Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Seminary in Global Ministry and Leadership Development. Terry teaches and mentors in the Fuller Seminary’s Doctor of Ministry program.

Terry has spoken and taught in a wide variety of seminaries, denominational settings, local churches, and men’s retreat settings.

He and wife Robin reside in Chico, California. They have three adult, married children and Terry is grandfather of six.

Leader Breakthru focuses on coaching and resourcing breakthrough experiences for risk-taking, Kingdom leaders.

For more information about Terry B. Walling or Leader Breakthru, visit the website: www.leaderbreakthru.com