

# Necessary Endings

By Dr. Gregory Wiens



What decisions are you afraid to make because of the consequences? What actions are you afraid of taking because the impact would cause someone to be hurt or challenge you? So many of us as leaders refuse to make a decision because of the personal cost involved.

Most of us often face difficult situations within ministry. We must be careful in these situations not to choose slow death rather than the deep change that would be required for a new season of impact to begin.

Jesus addresses this in Mark 8:34-36 when he says, “...*Whomever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.*” This sounds so pious until as leaders we are confronted with making decisions that will cause pain and upset many people.

I agree with Robert Quinn in his book *Deep Change*, that when we want change to occur in the church we want everyone else in the church to change but not us as the leader. According to Quinn, in order for the organization to change you as the leader must first change deeply. The only other option is to experience slow death, which results from settling for less than the best because we continue to lose impact and effectiveness through refusing to change.

In Henry Cloud’s most recent book, *Necessary Endings*, he picks up on this theme from the perspective that we all are faced with “necessary endings”. In the agrarian culture that existed for millennia everyone understood necessary endings. You could never plant a new crop without the old one dying and it being plowed under. There was a season for cultivating, planting, harvesting and removing the old crops. Everything was seasonal. However, in our generation we are much less comfortable with death or bringing things to necessary endings.

We may miss the opportunity to start a new season or lifecycle because we won’t bring the old season to a close. This may mean that we need to bring an end to: ineffective ministries, non-functional structures, staff positions (our own?), dysfunctional relationships or even terminally dying churches in order to start a more effective season. The motive for bringing an end is always to further fulfill our mission.

As leaders, we need to learn to discern when it is appropriate to bring a necessary end or double our efforts to remediate the situation. Often the reason we hesitate to pull the

trigger is some combination of fear for others and ourselves. This is not a bad reason, but it may not be a good reason either.

If we are afraid for ourselves, then we must ask: Why are we afraid for ourselves? In other words, is it some insecurity that is causing us to refuse to bring an end? If we bring the necessary end are we afraid others won't like us? Are we afraid there may be anger expressed? Are we afraid of how it may hurt us? If we are honest, these questions can help us see our fears for what they are.

Notice in verse 35, Jesus says we must be willing to lose our life for the sake of the gospel. If the mission is kept primary and is the motive for us bringing the necessary ending, then we need to deny our own fears and even well being. We cannot allow our fears to impede the mission to which we have been called. Jesus is very clear, if it is fear or lack of faith that is keeping you from bringing about an end to something that is impeding the church from effectively spreading the gospel...step up and deny yourself.

We must bring necessary endings even if an ending will hurt others. Just as we cannot allow our pain to stand between the church and it's mission, neither can we allow the pain of others to impede the mission. Jesus continually brought pain into the lives of those who chose to follow him (The rich young ruler-Matthew 19.15-17, the blind man-John 9, the disciples). Jesus never kept people from feeling pain if in doing so they would fulfill the mission of God. He even challenged Peter when he was stupid (Matthew 15.15-16) or being influenced by Satan (Matthew 16.23), which surely was painful.

Once you conclude you need to bring about the necessary ending, then how you do bring the ending is critical...we will discuss this next week.

You cannot start a new lifecycle (or season) until you bring a healthy ending to some elements of the old. This is what necessary endings are all about. We need to ensure that we are bringing the ending for the right reason, which is to be more effective in fulfilling our mission. When we hesitate to bring an end, we must make sure it is not because of our own fears, lack of faith or insecurities. For the sake of the gospel, each leader will be required to bring necessary endings to church and ministry functions that will be painful...but we must deny ourselves and take up our cross daily.