**“Links to a Bright Future” New Hope Fellowship P. Joshua Brunette 3.5.2023**

**Opening: A chain is a tool to synergize and to exponentially increase the effectiveness of multiple links. Leaders are called to fulfill their purpose without forgetting the limited part they play in a much larger mission.**

1. Your leader’s leaving demonstrates the paradox of the parting and the peace. The parting of a pastor and a people causes sadness, and that is normal (Acts 20:36-38). Simultaneously there is also the peace of knowing that God is in control and is equally leading the pastor and the people (Acts 21:10-14, Isaiah 26:3, Proverbs 3:5-6).
2. **Acts 21:10-14** it was God’s will to move Paul so that He could fulfill God’s purpose for His life. Paul was willing, the people were saddened but they said, “God’s will be done.”
3. **Isaiah 26:3** the prophet reminds the people that peace in transition is found when we look steadfastly at Jesus.
4. **Proverbs 3:5-6 5Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. 6In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.** \*\* We cannot fully understand the plan of God, but we must Trust Him and forsake our limited view of His work in the earth.
5. Your leader’s leaving is a reminder of God’s sovereignty and human submission. God’s sovereignty tells us that He oversees his church.
6. Job 1:21, And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. **The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.”**
7. Isaiah 45:9-10). 9“Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker— An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, **‘What are you doing?**’ Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands’? 10“Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting?’ Or to a woman, ‘To what are you giving birth?’”
8. (Acts 26:19, 16:9-10).
9. Your leader’s leaving is a reminder that the work of God is much larger than any man of God. The work of God will continue in a local church in spite of the absence of any single man of God.
   1. **Deuteronomy 34:1-12** The Israelites grieved for Moses as He finished His work, but God had already prepared Joshua to take over after Him. Moses’ ministry was unique, but Moses could not do what Joshua was called to do. You need what is coming next as much as you have needed what has been present.
   2. **Joshua 1:1-6** 1Now after the death of His servant Moses, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying, 2“Moses My servant is dead. **Now therefore arise,** you and all these people, and **cross over the Jordan into the land** that I am giving to the children of Israel.
   3. **Life Lesson:** In times of transition, listen to the Lord, He will give you instruction on how you can be a building block in transition and not a stumbling block.
10. Your leader’s leaving is a reminder that leaders are **links in a chain.** While each link in a chain is important, the real importance of any individual link are the two pieces of chain that are joined together
    1. **I Corinthians 3:5-9 5What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? They are servants through whom you believed, as the Lord has assigned to each his role. 6I planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. 7So neither he who plants, nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8He who plants and he who waters are one in purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 9For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.**
    2. **Key Point:** What was, what is and what will be are all connected in one chain. The chain is not the result of one link but the sum of all of them working together. I am the connection from P. Bates to your new Pastor. My ministry took what was and prepared it for what will be.
11. Your leader’s leaving necessitates you’re staying. Sometimes there is a temptation to leave a church because a particular pastor has left. God’s will would be to stay and see the work continue
    1. **John 4:35** **Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!** \*\* There is a field in Sutherlin ready for harvest, and a Church that is willing and ready to bring the people in.
    2. **John 9:4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. \*\* Most are called to stay and work; the time is short why waste time leaving chasing something. God calls us you to put our roots down, work the land and fulfill the mission. Other churches exist, but you have been called to this one. God gathered you to this place for what comes next.**
12. Your leader’s leaving increases the danger of division. Every member of the congregation must take extra care and prayer to maintain unity and harmony during this crucial transition period.
    1. Satan desires to destroy the flock; God desires to edify it, and so must you.
    2. **Acts 20:30-31** **30Even from your own number, men will rise up and distort the truth to draw away disciples after them. 31Therefore be alert and remember that for three years I never stopped warning** **each of you night and day with tears.**
    3. **Matthew, 7:15-18** **15Beware of false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16By their fruit you will recognize them. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a tree bears bad fruit. 18A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.**
    4. **Some enemies of God & deceived people see transitions as opportunities to take control, to use people, to sow division or to increase themselves. Keep the bonds of peace and unity and use discernment just in case Satan attempts to sow rebellious tares into this church.**
    5. **Hebrews 13:17** **Obey your spiritual leaders and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit. \*\*** I am no longer your primary leader; your honorable and worthy church deacon board are now in charge through this transition. Listen to their unified collective counsel. You will succeed and be blessed as you work with them and not against them.
13. Your leader’s leaving means that a new leader is coming. You can trust God that your new pastor will be the right leader at the right time. God’s timing is never wrong.
    1. **Jeremiah 1:5 “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.”** \*\*God knows your new Pastor and his family intimately.
    2. **Esther 4:14 “For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows if perhaps you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”** \*\* Times and seasons change; your new pastor is equipped for what comes next in the world and for this Church.
    3. **Galatians 4:4 But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. \*\*** There is a time for everything in God’s perfect plan. Trust the timing of God, He is never late, never early.
    4. **Romans 5:6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. \*\*** Everything is not dependent upon you. When we were “helpless” God continued to work, so take the burden off your shoulders.
14. Your leader’s leaving is an opportunity for spiritual growth. Times of transition need to be viewed as golden moments for growth. God is just as concerned with how you are going to handle the situation as He is with the situation itself.
    1. **Romans 8:28 And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. \*\* Maintain your love for God and He will do the rest.**
    2. **Isaiah 48:10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. \*\*** God uses these moments of transition to test us, to prove us, to shape us to prepare us. Nothing else can do this quite like a transition.

**Conclusion:** New Hope it has been my privilege to pastor this church. We are excited for your bright future. Know that we love you deeply and we will be supporting you from afar. We look forward to returning in different capacities in the future. Even though we are leaving you will forever be a part of our family. Remember us and pray for us as we do the same for you. Let us pray together at this altar.