

November 2010

CATALYST

Transitions

Transitions are what happen when you are going from one place to another. We've had lots of experience of transitions. With six country moves and more house moves than we can count, we know what it's like to live between worlds, cultures and languages. All of our moves have been real faith moves, where nothing has been certain or secure or known, or nicely worked out! These moves have not been nice little relocation packages. They've been more like Abraham's experience with very few details clear except one—Go!

Even when you reach your destination, the transition experience has really only just begun. These kinds of transitions are not easy. At times they can feel unsettling, disturbing, or uncomfortable as you deal with the unfamiliar. They can also be exciting as God takes us into new territory. They require trust, faith and patience, and sometimes more strength than we feel we have! There is one thing we can be sure of however, and that is the goodness and faithfulness of God. He said to Joshua, *'I will be with you wherever you go'*. So whether it's a new job, a new location, a new home, a new relationship, a new country, a new church, or a new life, God will help each one of us through the transition process if we will keep our eyes and our minds stayed on him and his Word.

Every Believer Commissioned!

Before my family and I left England to go to China for the first time, we were commissioned by the leaders of two churches. Hands were laid on us, prayers offered, prophetic words uttered, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit requested for the task that God had called us to. This time of 'sending out' was a great encouragement to us and many Christians will be familiar with this kind of commissioning for those embarking on missionary service. Similarly, such practices are commonplace for those 'entering the ministry' in other kinds of church work. We typically have times of ordination for new church leaders, ministers, elders, and maybe deacons.

These acts of commissioning are important and necessary. However, the fact that these believers are the only ones in a church community who are commissioned in this way is evidence of the dualism that is embedded into much of our thinking and church practices. Drawing on an ancient Greek dichotomy this present-day evangelical division has elevated the spiritual and relegated the rest of the Christian 'workforce' to less important secular activity. Church leaders, pastors, and missionaries are seen as having important and special tasks to perform for the kingdom of God, and are thus commissioned by the rest of the Body. They do have special tasks to perform, but so does everyone else!

Just imagine how exciting and empowering it would be if *every* believer in a local church community had the opportunity of being prayed for, commissioned, and sent out into their particular spheres of influence in society. There would no longer be scores of believers feeling disempowered in church meetings, feeling that their vocation in life was unspiritual, and that what they spend the majority of their waking hours and years of their lives doing is insignificant for the kingdom of God. Let the commissioning of *every* believer begin!

(the above is an excerpt from Stuart's forthcoming book - *The Fourth Wave: Every Believer finding their God-given place in the Great Commission*)

The God Who Makes the Impossible *Possible!*

Are you facing an impossible situation today? The world seems to be abounding with impossible circumstances – financial struggles, marriage problems that look impossible to fix; sicknesses that seem impossible to cure, and a host of other impossibilities. Have you been in that place where you've said, "This isn't working. There's nothing I can do"? Have you faced a situation where it feels like you can't go on, there is no answer, it's impossible and you have felt like just giving up on everything, but you don't even know what you would do or where you would go if you did give up?

We've been there. Several times. It's a horrible place; a place of despair and despondency and depression. It's like a big pit that you can't claw your way out of. It's dark and it's miserable and you hate being in it, but you don't know how to get out. Maybe you've no-one to talk to about it, and even if you have, rehearsing the problem might bring sympathy but doesn't bring the answer. You pray, but now it feels like whatever faith you had is crumbling around your ears. Desperation begins to take over and you discover a whole new set of emotions that you thought didn't exist inside your Christian self – frustration, anger – and you are beginning to direct those feelings towards God. You even begin to question just how much of a Christian you are!

You have, in athletic terms, 'hit the wall'. You've reached the end of your strength and your ability to go on. Your spiritual muscles are in cramp and you are in pain. While people around you seem to be running on ahead, you feel like dying, and right now heaven seems more attractive than ever. You have hit the impossible. If that's the place you are in, I have good news. God is right there with you in that impossible situation waiting to get you out. When you are experiencing all those emotions and blaming God for the situation, it can seem like God is a million miles away and no help at all! If you want your situation to change however, you are going to have to get a 'thought' change.

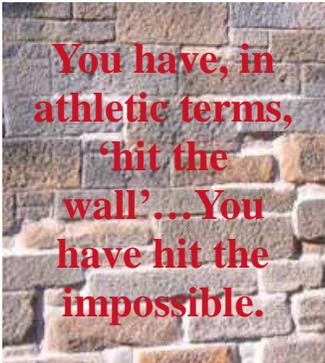
God's Not Doing It

When bad or terrible things happen, or when people are suffering in an impossible situation, too often I've heard people attribute the problem to God. "He's teaching me something", they say. Let me ask you a question: If God is doing this to you to teach you something, why are you trying to get out of it? If God is doing this, why are you praying for deliverance and answers? Believing that God is putting you through trouble to teach you something is religious thinking that needs to stop, right here, right now. There is enough suffering going on in this fallen world without God needing to bring it on you. So many times people forget that there is a devil out there whose purpose is to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10) and he DOES NOT WORK FOR GOD! God is not employing the devil! God and the devil are not in league together to teach you anything. God is not employing him to make you a better person, as if the devil could make anything better! Evil and darkness cannot mix with good and light. Jesus came to deliver you from the works of the evil one (1 John 3:8).

Before you can see a change in your impossible situation, you need to understand that God is not the source of your problem, but he is the source of your deliverance. Once you get these things in their right place, you are on the first steps to seeing that impossible situation change.

God Delights in the Impossible

God doesn't put us in these impossible situations. As I said, our fallen world under the devil's influence is full of enough difficult and impossible situations to last us a lifetime. But he does delight in getting us out! Where there is an impossibility, you will always find God. It's in his nature. Impossible situations are his speciality. Whether it's a virgin birth, a resurrection, healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, repairing a broken marriage, bringing people out of poverty, or helping people pay their bills, where you meet an impossibility, God wants to get in on the scene.



You have, in athletic terms, 'hit the wall'... You have hit the impossible.

However, he won't force you to have him there with you. He'll sit on the sidelines if you want him to and wait for you to invite him on to the pitch. He'll let you rant and rave, and cry and scream about your situation, and about him, and try this and try that until you are all worn out. But all the time, he'll be waiting and saying, "Come on, get me in there. I'll sort it out for you." You won't invite God in with fits of desperation however. The Bible makes it clear that God responds to faith. He said to the two blind men, "according to your faith be it unto you". And of his own countrymen he said he could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief, or lack of faith. He honoured the Roman centurion for having the greatest faith he had seen in all Israel, and the bleeding woman drew power for healing out of him by her faith.

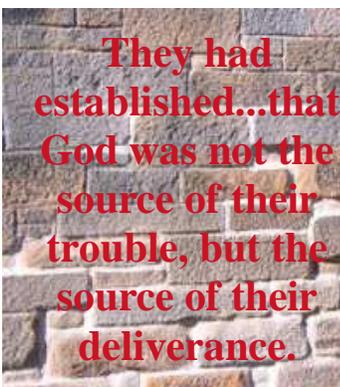
These people, in spite of their desperate circumstances, all had something in common. They had all established in their hearts that Jesus was not the source of their trouble, but the source of their deliverance. They had all established in their hearts that Jesus could and would do the impossible for them. For your situation to change, you must decide and establish in your heart that God is not the source of your trouble, but that he is the source of your deliverance. You must decide in your heart that he wants to do the impossible for you.

But My Faith Feels So Weak

If you are having trouble believing these things about God, it is because your faith has got weak, or because you have been taught the wrong things about him. Difficult circumstances and feelings of despair and despondency can knock us about until our faith feels raggedy around the edges. Religious teaching can leave us helpless and hopeless in the onslaught of circumstances. Busyness and other priorities keep us from renewing our faith daily in God's word. Then, when tough times hit, we don't have enough faith in us to keep us standing. We can find ourselves in a position of confusion, wondering what God is doing and thinking he is the source of trouble, temptation and pain instead of our deliverance from them. There is no faith in that and it won't work with God!

Invite God In

If you are having a hard time establishing God in your heart as the one who wants to deliver you, heal you and make the impossible possible, you need to spend time in his word. In Romans 10:17 it says, 'Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God'. When we spend time in his word, faith comes. As you spend time in his word, your faith may still seem weak at first, but faith will come! Keep in God's word. Make it your priority every day. Let it be the first thing you read or listen to in the morning. Feed on it again during the day. Feast on it again in the evening. This is how you invite God into your situation. Do it every day and you will find a change taking place on the inside of you. Your faith in God as your deliverer, as the God with whom all things are possible, will grow! It will take a bit of effort on your part, and it may take a bit of laying down of some old habits such as TV, newspapers or other activities that have become your priorities. But if you are desperate for change, you'll do it!



As you invite God in to your impossible situation by immersing yourself in his word, you'll begin to change. I'm not talking about immersing yourself in preaching that is philosophical, theological, and that reasons God out of everything. I'm not talking about reading books that tell you faith doesn't work and that God isn't interested in helping you. I'm talking about hearing God's word, the words of faith and promises that he has given us in his word. I'm talking about listening to preaching and reading books that inspire you to believe in God as the deliverer, as the provider, the helper, the healer, and the God who not only can, but WILL do the impossible for you.

As you immerse yourself in God's faith-filled words, you will become filled with faith. You will begin to change. Your thoughts about God will begin to change. Your habits and priorities will begin to change. Your prayers will begin to change. You'll hear from God more clearly as you make time for him. You'll grow in wisdom and understanding of what to do about your situation. You'll grow in your knowledge of the authority he has given you and how to use it. You'll be stronger to stand and have patience while God brings about change in your situation. And ultimately, your impossible situation will change.

The God Who Makes the Impossible Possible

As you fill your life and mind with God's word, remember that the enemy comes to steal the word you are putting into your heart. If he can steal the word from you, he can steal your faith, and steal your miracle. Be careful what you hear. If people speak words of doubt and unbelief about God in your company, you don't have to believe what is said. Protect the word in your heart, and surround yourself with people of faith. Remember that people's word is not the final word in your situation – God's word is the final word. (Continued on next page)

I remember when our daughter, Rebecca, was 6 months old. She was such a pretty little thing, sitting up and playing with her little toys around her. I discovered a skin problem on her scalp. At first I thought it was just cradle cap and would go away. But then I found that as the crusts of cradle cap came off, they took the skin off with them leaving red, raw and weeping flesh underneath. The hair would come out with it. I took her to a doctor and he told me that she had eczema on her scalp, that it was unlikely to go away by itself and that there was nothing he could do about it. Well, no disease was going to plague my baby for the rest of her life as far as I was concerned. I was so angry when I left that surgery that I cut into the enemy with God's word as I pushed that buggy all the way home. When I got home, I got my Bible and spoke every scripture on healing I could find. I told the enemy what he could do with his eczema, laid my hands on her head, and spoke God's healing over her. One week later, that eczema was all gone! There was not a trace of it and she has never had a problem since. She is now 19 and has the most beautiful head of luxuriant blond hair that we could ask for. Man's word is not the final word about your situation, however impossible it looks! God's word is the final word, but you need to spend time in it and know what it says!

Fifteen years of mission work in four different countries has given us plenty of impossible situations to deal with. Over the past few months, we have faced another one, having been without our own home, and without the money to rent one. Boy, did I go through some tears and tissues before the Holy Spirit was able to get on the scene! Finally, I remembered that my fits of desperation would not achieve anything and that I could go on like that 'till the cows came home', with God sitting on the sidelines waiting for me to invite him into my impossible situation. At last, I picked myself up, got hold of my emotions by the ears, and forced myself to listen to God's word. I was struggling with reading so I listen to faith-filled broadcasts online before breakfast and at different times where possible throughout the day. As I do my daily power walking, God's faith-filled word is coming into my ears from our iPod.

I haven't seen the answer yet with my physical eyes, and I'm still building my faith, but I have seen a change in me. I feel better, can face the situation better, and have more faith and patience than before. My emotions are more stable. I am believing God that our financial situation will improve so that we can have a home to live in, buy clothes, get haircuts and have necessary dental treatment. I am believing God that we will have the finances to be able to help and bless our children as they serve God. And I am believing God that we will have more than enough for us to be able to give to other missionaries, and to their work.

Right now, it looks impossible. That's how it looked when the Israelites stood facing the expanse of the Red Sea, an impossibility before them, their enemies behind them. But with God's word to build my faith, I have made a decision. God is not my trouble, he is my deliverer, and he is behind me, with me, and before me. As I face this wall of impossibility, I have invited him in to make the impossible possible for me and for our family. As I stand in faith on his word, believing in him as the God who makes the impossible possible, our situation will change, if God has to part the Red Sea to do it!

We have invited the God who makes the impossible possible into our situation. Will you invite him into yours? CATALYST



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