

Necessary Endings in the Congregation and School

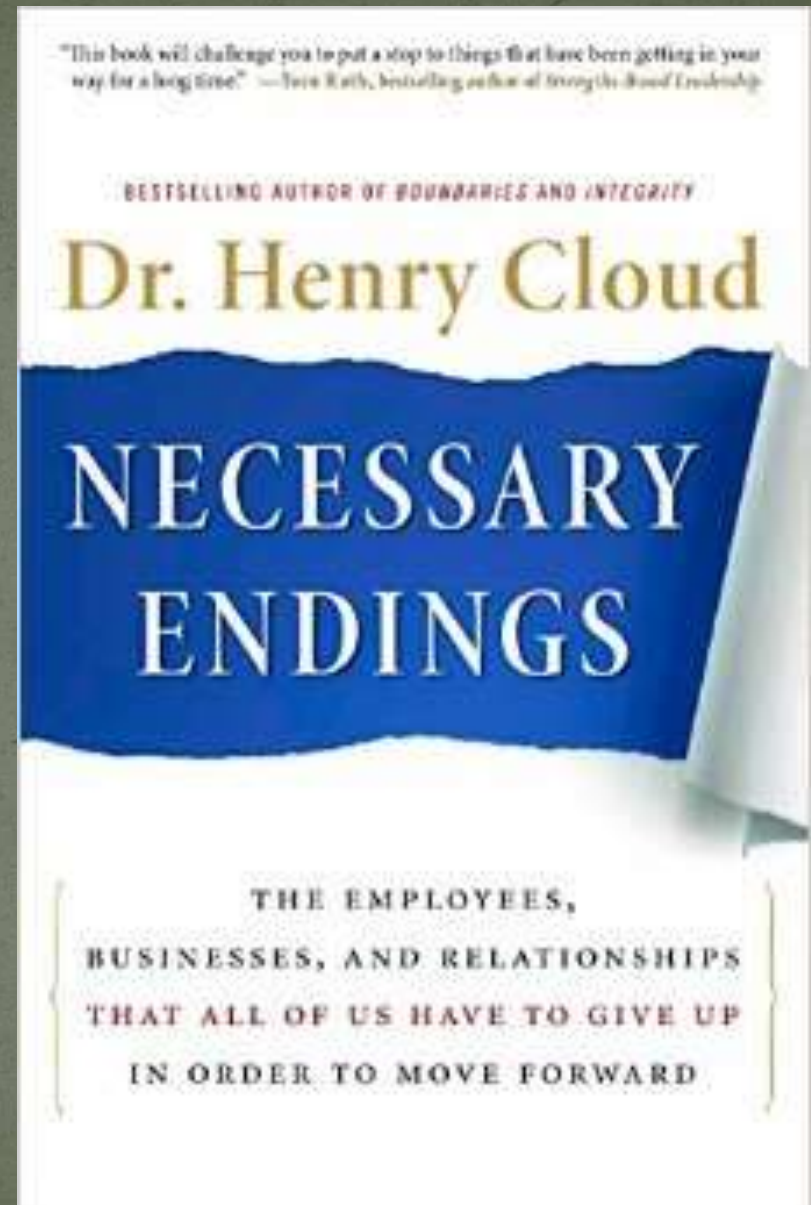
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Passionate Believers Conference

Disclaimers

- Based on Dr. Henry Cloud's book "Necessary Endings: The Employees, Businesses, and Relationships that all of us have to give up in order to move forward."



Disclaimers

- Dr. Cloud is not Lutheran (at least from what I can find).
- If this bothers you, feel free to leave. I won't be upset.
- Dr. Cloud is a Christian self-help author. Again, if this bothers you, feel free to leave. I won't be upset.
- It has always been my opinion that we can learn something from anyone...

Intrigued?

- “So, are you going to tell us how to close a school?”
- “Are you going to try and tell people how to get rid of a pastor/principal/teacher?”
- Who are you and what did you do with Mark L’Heureux?

The Purpose of Today's Session

- Using Dr. Cloud's "Necessary Endings" framework, we will explore how our churches and schools approach or don't approach endings.
- We will use quotes from his book to facilitate our discussion

So, what's ending?

- As we go through this sectional, you can choose to look at this from a variety of ways in the congregational/school context:
 - Maybe it's a program
 - Maybe it's a practice or procedure
 - Maybe it's a (GASP!) tradition
 - Maybe it's a position or a person
- You can choose to take this material and place it into whatever context you wish.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

Endings are a normal part of life

- For there to be anything new, old things always have to end, and we have to let go of them.
- Revelations 21:4 – “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”
- Infant -> Toddler -> Childhood -> Adulthood

Endings are normal/not debatable

Our life cycle includes endings of all types, our first ending occurred shortly after birth:

“What does such baptizing with water indicate?

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

If endings are normal, why...

- Are they uncomfortable?
- Do I avoid them?
- Does my church struggle with them?
- Do they hurt so much?

Why do we avoid endings?

- Don't know if an ending is actually necessary
- Afraid of the unknown
- Fear confrontation
- Afraid of hurting someone
- Afraid of letting go/sadness of loss
- Don't possess the skills to execute the ending
- Personal, painful history with endings
- When forced on us, we do not know how to process

Discuss

- Can you think of any situations where these reasons have interfered with an ending you/congregation/school needed to make?

How do you view endings?

Do you view endings as normal occurrences or problems?

1. Accept life cycles and seasons
2. Accept that life produces too much life
3. Accept that incurable sickness and evil exist

Pruning as a Metaphor

For a rose bush to be healthy, a gardener must remove branches. Individual branches must be cut for the good of the whole bush.



Pruning as a Metaphor

- “Pruning is a process of proactive endings.”
- Pruning has to do with focus, mission, purpose, structure, and strategic execution.
- In other words: A gardener can't begin pruning without a final picture in mind.

Pruning as a Metaphor, cont.

With intention and purpose, a gardener cuts off three different types of branches and buds:

1. Healthy buds or branches that are not the best ones.
2. Sick branches that are not going to get well.
3. Dead branches that are taking up space needed for the healthy ones to thrive.

Healthy Buds and Branches/ Type 1

- Roses and other plants produce more buds/branches than the plant can sustain.
- The gardener must determine which buds/branches are worthy of the plant's fuel and support and prunes away those that are not.
- By doing so, the plant can free those resources to the buds/branches with the most potential to grow into mature roses.

Discuss: If the rose bush is a metaphor for our congregations/schools, why is this difficult?

Sick or Diseased Branches/Type 2

- Some branches are sick or diseased and are not ever going to make it.
- No matter the amount of water or fertilizer that is given to the bush, the branch will die.
- More fuel and life is now available for the healthy buds

Discuss: Again, if the rose bush is viewed from a congregational context, why would this type of ending be difficult?

Dead Buds and Branches/Type 3

- These buds and branches are already dead and taking up space.
- Healthy buds and branches cannot grow or will not grow properly because the dead branches are in the way.
- To make way for the healthy buds/branches, the dead ones are pruned away.

Discuss: This should be the easiest in a congregational context, but often times it is not. Why?

What is your natural reaction to pruning?

- What is your INTELLECTUAL response?
 - Do you accept that it is normal?
 - Do you recognize that pruning must occur?
- What is your EMOTIONAL response?
 - Does it feel mean or uncaring?
 - Does it make you anxious?
 - All of the above?

Strategy #1: Make Endings Normal

- “Make the endings a normal occurrence and a normal part of business and life, instead of seeing it as a problem.”
 - Most likely requires a mindshift
 - Changes happen - this needs to be accepted and seen/felt as normal
 - Accept the 3 facts (life cycles/seasons exist, life produces too much life, incurable disease and evil exist)

Strategy #2: Pain with a Purpose

Pain is a signal: Something is wrong, action is required.

Good Pain: Might cause temporal pain, but results in something good.

Bad Pain: Misery that goes nowhere. Oftentimes, the pain just becomes normal.

- Learned helplessness

Strategy #3: Begin with the End in Mind

- Before an ending, be clear about what you want the result to be. If it is a conversation...I want to leave the conversation:
 - With zero confusion, completely confident that this is over.
 - Having said that I care about the person
 - With the person knowing that although I disagree with their opinion on a project/program/etc., I still value them and their work.

Strategy #4: Embrace the Grief

- Face the reality that it is over, whatever it is, and to feel the feelings involved in facing the ending
- Metabolize the event
 - Learn from the mistakes
 - Let the grief equip you for the future

Strategy #5: Take Inventory

- Sustainability: “A method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged.”
- If you are doing something that is using you or your resources in a way that is depleting you or damaging you, you can't keep going.
- Areas of possible depletion
 - Spiritual
 - Professional
 - Financial
 - Emotional
 - Physical

Conclusion/Discussion/Questions

- The Five Year Question (If you are in the exact same position in five years, will you be content?)
- For the right tomorrow to come, some parts of today may have to come to a necessary ending.

**HE
WHO BEGAN
A GOOD WORK
IN YOU
WILL CARRY
IT ON TO
COMPLETION
UNTIL THE DAY
OF
CHRIST
JESUS
PHILIPPIANS 1:6**