

## Reflecting on Transitions in Ministry by Dr. Mick Nelson

Looking back over my life in ministry, I have experienced several occasions where the opportunity to change the place or focus of my ministry has presented itself. In weighing those decisions, this life principle has guided me. Faced with a possible change in my “marching orders”, I have looked the alignment of two factors. On the one hand, I have looked for signs that might indicate I was being released from my current place of ministry. On the other, I have considered what compelling reasons in the potential new situation might lead me to transition.

My conviction is that both need to be present to make the decision to move into a new chapter of ministry. When I have felt a release from my current place of ministry, but nothing compelling towards the new opportunity, I have said “no”. I have also said “no” when I felt a compelling interest in a new opportunity, but no sense of release from my current place of ministry. In fact, there have been times when that “no” has ushered in a new season of ministry effectiveness just where I was.

I think there is a matrix of factors to consider in weighing whether or not you are being released from your current place of ministry.

1. CALLING: Do I still feel a sense of call to the place where I am serving? Am I still dreaming dreams for that place? Do I have a vision of what God could do with me in that place that keeps me going, even in the face of adversity?
2. DEVOTION: Am I growing in my relationship with God in this place? Am I able to maintain my spiritual, physical, and relational health in this place? Trusting that I am taking care of my soul, is there anything “built-in” to my present ministry situation that is holding me back from wholeheartedly following Christ? Am I “hitting a wall”?
3. SPOUSE: Is my spouse happy here? Is she growing as a believer and a person in this setting? Is she still able to pursue her calling and passions? Is she connected and supported in this place? Does she still feel a sense of calling to this place?
4. FAMILY: What are the needs of my family at this stage of life? Can I care for them well in this place and this setting? Are they finding friends? Are they developing their abilities and interests? Does my current ministry venue allow them to access opportunities for education and training they need at their current developmental stage?
5. LEADERSHIP: Am I still able to provide the kind of leadership this ministry needs to move forward? Has the ministry outgrown me? Or have I outgrown my current place of ministry as I have matured and acquired new experience and skills? Can I keep functioning well as a leader in my current role? Can I reinvent myself here for a new season of ministry?
6. FRIENDS: What perspective do my friends/mentors who know God and know me bring to the decision to remain or to move on in ministry? Can they identify any blind spots preventing me from seeing the potential of the place where I am? Or that is preventing me from seeing God’s hand in moving to a new place/role?
7. CIRCUMSTANCES: What doors is the Lord opening or closing in my present situation? What has changed in the church, in my life, in my family, or in the community that might indicate that it is time to move (or recommit to staying)?

These are the considerations that have guided me. I have never made a final decision based on only one factor; I look for alignment among most or all of them. When I feel I can answer these questions honestly and they suggest that my current chapter of ministry is drawing to a conclusion, then I feel a sense of confidence that I am being released for the next chapter. That is when I feel I can consider new opportunities.

I have always believed that God knows my current address and my next address (if there is one). He knows where to send new marching orders when time comes. But he also knows how to enable me to grow in my current setting if that is what he chooses. My need is to let him have his way. And trust Him.

**Mick Nelson is Discipleship Ministries Director at Broadway Church, Vancouver BC**