



The End: *Also Known as the Beginning*

By Greg Wiens

Necessary Endings: The Employees, Businesses, and Relationships That All of Us Have to Give Up in Order to Move Forward

By Henry Cloud

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Please don't read Henry Cloud's most recent book, *Necessary Endings: The Employees, Businesses, and Relationships That All of Us Have to Give Up in Order to Move Forward*, unless you are willing to change your life. Cloud presents life as a collection of "necessary endings" that must be dealt with in order to live a peaceful, productive life.

The book is built on three principles, which can help make peace with life's ephemeral nature:

- Accept that life cycles and Seasons are a normal part of life
- Accept that life produces too much life, and so it must be pruned
- Accept that incurable illness and sometimes evil are part of life as well

FEAR OF DEATH: A MODERN PROBLEM

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 being plowed under. There was a season for cultivating, planting, pruning, harvesting and removing the old crops. Everything was seasonal. However, in our generation we are much less comfortable with pruning, death and bringing things to an end.

What decisions are you afraid to make because of the consequences? What actions are you afraid of taking because the impact might hurt someone or challenge you? What changes are you hesitating to make because of how they might affect you? Too many of us as leaders refuse to bring an end to relationships, ministries, staff, projects, or even ideas because of personal cost.

THE GOOD: THE ENEMY OF THE BEST

We all face difficult situations in life that need some sort of closure. We must be careful in these situations not to choose slow death rather than welcome the deep change required for a new season of life to begin. Cloud helps us see that often, necessary endings distinguish the good from the best. Because we are not willing to bring about an end to something good, we may miss the best.

We may miss the opportunity to start a new season or lifecycle because we will not bring the old season to a close. Think about what God might be calling you to do in the future, but cannot begin until you have shut the door on something in the present. That something might be an ineffective ministry, a non-functional structure, a staff position (perhaps your own), a dysfunctional relationship, or even a church that has atrophied beyond recovery. The incentive for bringing an end to one season of life is always to further fulfill our mission in the next.

As leaders, we need to learn to discern when it is appropriate to bring a necessary end, or instead 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. In this book, Cloud provides great wisdom for knowing when to give it another try and to throw in the towel.

If we are afraid for ourselves, we must ask why that is. Is some insecurity causing us to avoid action? Are we afraid that the decision will be unpopular and others will not like us? Do we fear potential anger or backlash? Are we afraid of getting hurt? If we are honest, these questions can help us see our fears for what they are.

For Cloud, the mission determines whether one should bring something to an end or continue it. If the mission is kept clear, it will lend insight to when and how the endings should happen. For the sake of the mission, we must deny our own fears—even our own well-being—and take action. We cannot allow our fears to impede the mission to which we have been called.

NECESSARY ENDINGS IN THE BIBLE

Jesus is very clear that if something in your life (fear, lack of faith) is an impediment to the becoming who God wants you to be, then you are to pick up your cross and deny yourself. In the context of Cloud's book, this may mean eradicating something from your life that is hindering your ability to be an effective leader.

We must bring necessary endings even if an ending will hurt others. Just as we cannot allow our pain to stand between our leadership fulfilling our call, neither can we allow the pain of others to impede our mission either. Jesus did not coddle those who chose to follow him, like the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:15-17, the blind man in John 9, or most notably, the disciples. Jesus never sheltered people from pain if it meant fulfilling the Father's mission. He challenged Peter when he did not want to think for himself in Matthew 15:15-16, or when he was influenced by Satan in Matthew 16:23, or just impulsive, as he was in Matthew 26:34. All of these occasions were painful for Peter, but necessary for his growth.

You cannot start a new season of life until you healthily end some elements of the old. Every gardener understands this concept. Pruning allows the best of a plant to flourish out of otherwise dead growth. This is what necessary endings are all about. We need to ensure that we are causing closure for the right reason, which is to be more effective in fulfilling our mission. When we hesitate to do so, we must make sure it is not because of our own fears, lack of faith or insecurities.

Cloud has written this book for the business community, and does not directly reference scripture very often. However, this does not lessen its potential impact on your life if you seriously pray about and apply its principles. Personally, I made several significant staff changes as a result of reading this book, which cost me great personal pain. However, these changes were needed in order for the Kingdom of God to continue to expand.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GREG WIENS, PLEASE VISIT WWW.LEADERSTHATLAST.ORG