

AFTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAM

Session 1: In Transition

What should I expect for transitional times and how can I thrive within them?

Based on chapters 1-3 of After College: Navigating Transitions, Relationships and Faith. In preparation for this session, students should read these chapters in advance.



Objectives:

- After this session, students will be able to identify aspects of transitions in general and discuss the specific transition ahead.
- After this session, students will be able to integrate lessons from the life of Abraham and his transition story to their own upcoming academic transition.

Lesson Outline

(Total Length: 90 minutes)

TIMING	CONTENT	MATERIALS NEEDED
5 minutes	Walk in Questions	Snacks/Food, Nametags, PPT, Projector/Screen
10 minutes	Formal Welcome & Expectations	PPT
45 minutes	Genesis 12 Inductive Study	PPT, Manuscripts, Pens, Colored Pencils, Approaching Differences Diagram bookmarks
10 minutes	Navigating Transition	PPT, Navigating Transition handout, Tips for Transition hand out
5 minutes	Testimony: Faithfulness in Transition	PPT, Alumni Interview
5 minutes	Individual Reflection	PPT, Ambient Music, Notebooks for Seniors (could be good gift)
10 minutes	Group Discussion	PPT
5 minutes	Closing Comments & Announcements	PPT, Changes, Challenges, & Choices Worksheets

Context For Facilitators:

God calls people to go through transitional times and to be faithful to Him throughout the process. He tells people to embrace change despite the uncertainties. This means His people must be aware of their expectations and motivations, whether these are based on fear or trust in God. Ready or not, change will come. We can encourage students with the reminder that God invites them into this post-community-college transition *with* Him. They enter the unknown with a known God, who knows them.

It's important for students to understand the difference between change and transition. According to author William Bridges, change is external (e.g., crossing the commencement stage, moving to a new town, starting a new job) whereas transition is internal (e.g., how we internally process the change and our emotions surrounding it). Though all students face a similar change of college coming to a close, individuals will process that change differently. We can help our students avoid comparison and lean into the unique journey God has for each of them. During this session, we will help students gain a better understanding of transitional times, how we can approach them with healthy postures, and how we can rely on God and His promises within them. This session will also help close the gap between what students expect for their transition out of college and what might actually happen.

Section 1: Preparing for the After Community College Program & the Transition Ahead

Walk in Questions (5 Minutes)

As students walk in, invite them to enjoy the food spread and engage each other with the prompts below. Place questions on a large screen or as “table prompts.”

1. Think back to a previous transition (such as your transition into community college or a major move). Who or what was most helpful to you during that time?
2. What’s one thing you learned about yourself or God during your previous transition that you can apply to this upcoming transition?

Encourage students to find someone they don’t know and share with that person, or have students split into small groups of 3 or 4, making sure students who know each other include those who are new.

***Note:** If you plan to have students share in small groups and then share with the whole group, it’s best to cut the small group time short. If you give students a long time to process as a small group, they will often share less (or not at all) as a large group. If you plan to invite them to share as a large group, let students know that they are welcome to share something they said in the small group or what they’re thinking about because of what another participant said.*

Formal Welcome & Expectations (10 Minutes)

Welcome:

Thank you all for joining us! We are so excited to help you prepare for and walk with you as you transition into life after community college. There are so many things that you could be doing with your time, and you chose to spend some time with us. We don’t take that for granted. Your presence says you are serious about preparing for your upcoming transition. As the facilitator of this time, I am committed to being there for you in this journey. If you commit to showing up (in the midst of taking courses, big life decisions, and all of life’s demands), I will commit to making it well worth your time, every time.

My guess is that most of you are both “nervous and excited” about what’s ahead. Look around the room. You are not alone. You share spaces with other students who are in the same shoes, and we as staff are there for you also. Most importantly God is with you, whether you believe that in the moment or not.

What To Expect During Our Times:

Here’s why we created this space:

- This is arguably the most difficult transition you will face up to this point in your life. At the same time, it is also the transition with some of the most exciting and hope potential.
- As staff, we want to do all we can to help prepare you for this transition.
- *Share the story of a recent alumnus. Share honestly about some of the challenges and why it’s important to prepare. Cultivate hopefulness. [See “A Case for Why this Matters” in the attached folder for further reference].*

Each time we gather we will address a topic that matters most in the transition ahead, and we will communally have the opportunity to journey with each other. Our hope is to provide the best resources and learning for you to transition successfully. According to research, students who *approach* the transition rather than *avoid* it are more likely to thrive. Our vision is to see each of you thrive in transition.

Setting Communal Expectations:

For this experience to go well, what do you think it will require from each of us as individuals? As a group?

Allow students space to respond, and facilitate a brief (2-3 minute) conversation about expectations for:

- *Involvement & Contributions*

- *Time Commitment*
- *Readings/"Homework" in between sessions*
- *Small & Large Group Discussions.*

Transition to Next Session

Now that we know why we are here and what it is it's going to take for us to make the most of the experience, let's focus on the transition to life after community college. As we learn to transition in the healthiest ways possible, let's take a look at a character from scripture who went through a major transition. We're going to dive into the life of Abraham and learn from his transition story.

Section 2: Learning from Abraham, Leading Ourselves During Transitional Times

Genesis 12 Inductive Study (45 Minutes)

Today we are going to spend some time looking at the story of Abraham, specifically spending some time studying Genesis 12. We won't have time to do a full-InterVarsity style inductive study, but that method will guide our approach.

Context

The first 11 chapters of Genesis set up the basic storyline of the Bible. God creates all things, but people choose to take control themselves, which leads to violence and death, and eventually the scattering of his people in Babylon. So, the big question going forward is what will God do to rescue and redeem his world? Starting here in chapter 12 through the end of Genesis, we follow the story of God's covenant faithfulness to the family of Abraham. Here is some other important context worth noting:

- Ur of the Chaldeans – Abram's birthplace, was an important ancient city with "flourishing civilization" but was also considered "godless and self-centered".
- Tree of Moreh – Most likely a great Tabor oak, which served as a landmark at Shechem and perhaps could have functioned as a point where a teacher (literal meaning of Moreh) or judge would come to hear legal cases or provide instruction. This type of tree was also often adopted as a place of worship.
- Altars – Building altars often marks an introduction of worship of particular god in a new land.

Can I get a volunteer to read the text aloud for us? (*Read Text*)

Observation

Now we are going to take some time to make some observations in the text. Be on the lookout for content like: characters, locations, and actions. Also observe connections you see: repetition, cause/effect, etc. Today we have one additional lens to use as you observe. You might be familiar with the Approaching Differences Diagram. If you have never seen it, here it is (display diagram on screen). *Facilitator's note: If more explanation is needed feel free to reference [Approaching Differences Diagram Overview](#).* As you consider Abram's journey, I'd love for you to observe if you see evidence of him green-lining or red-lining throughout the passage.

Provide time for individual observations and then gather observations collectively.

Potential Observations:

- Characters: God, Abram, Sarai, Lot, Canaanites, Egyptians, Pharaoh and his officials, servants
- Locations: Ur, Haran, east hills of Bethel, Negev, Egypt, Canaan
- Actions: Abram's call, God's promise, Abram builds an altar, Famine in the land, re-route through Egypt, encounter with Pharaoh, Abram's half-truth.
- Time: Abram is 75 years old when he sets out from Haran
- Repetition: "I will", "bless/blessing"

- Cause/Effect: God's call causes Abram to leave. Famine causes Abram to re-route through Egypt. Abram's lie about Sarai causes God to inflict serious disease on Pharaoh's household.
- Green-lining Examples:
- Red-lining Examples:

Interpret

Potential Discussion Questions:

- What does God say to Abram throughout the text (v. 1-3, 6)?
- Why does God give Abram this command in v. 1?
- How are God's promises in v., 2-3 lived out? What do these promises teach us about God?
- What are Abram's motivations in v. 11-13? Why did he choose to tell a half-truth.

Main Points:

- God pursues, promises, and provides for Abram.
- Abram is obedient to God's call.
- Abram is faithful, but not perfect. He is still noted for his deep faith example despite his fear, doubt, and imperfect decisions (see Hebrews 11:8-11).
- God is faithful. He makes a covenant with Abram.
- Even though Abram obeys, his transition journey is not without trials.

Transition: Genesis 12:1 says, "to the land I will show you". This can also be translated to mean "as you are going, I will show you." Abram stepped out in faith, not knowing where he was going, but choosing to trust God would show him.

Apply

Facilitator's Note: This can individual reflection or verbal processing.

What is your current posture as you enter this time of transition? Where are you red-lining? Where are you green-lining? What do you think it would take to help keep you on the green-line?

After reflection pray for students. Then transition: Now that we have taken some time to look at a biblical example of transition, let's learn more about what navigating transition looks like in our own lives.

Navigating Transition (10 Minutes)

As we go through transitions, it can be helpful to understand the pattern of transitions. Author William Bridges wrote in his book *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, "All transitions are composed of an ending, neutral zone, and new beginning." Let's spend some time unpacking each of these phases so that we can manage our expectations and lead ourselves well.

Ending

Transition starts with an ending. This is paradoxical but true. This first phase of transition begins when you identify what you are losing and learn how to manage these losses. You have to determine what is over and being left behind, and what you will keep. Some things that may be ending include relationships, processes, or locations. This phase is marked by uncertainty. It's common to feel confusion or frustrating, while simultaneously feeling excitement or anticipation. Your community college experience is coming to a close, and it's important to finish well. What does it mean to end well for you? Here are some questions to consider as you think about ending well:

- Is there a broken relationship you need to mend?
- Is there anyone you want to thank (mentor, professor, etc.)?
- Is there a class, paper, or project you need to put more effort into?

- Do you have a responsibility that you need to transition?
- Is there a pattern that you need to “dismantle”? (i.e. one way that you’re used to doing things that may need to change in a new context).
- How will you end well in your role in InterVarsity? Your local church? With your friends/community?

Neutral Zone

The second step of transition comes after letting go: the neutral zone. People go through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new isn’t fully operational. It is when the critical psychological realignments and repatterning take place. It is the very core of the transition process. This is the time between the old reality and sense of identity and the new one. People are creating new processes and learning what their new roles will be. They are in flux and may feel confusion and distress. The neutral zone is the seedbed for new beginnings. The neutral zone is the in-between time. It’s often the time when we’re longing for the past and wishing for the future, which makes it difficult to faithfully “sit” in the neutral zone. It’s often the hardest part of the transition. Here are some helpful concepts to consider during the neutral zone:

- Give yourself space to experience distress. When we’re in the thick middle of the transition, we may long for what was or look back with rose-colored glasses. We may be confused, especially when things feel hard. Former students often ask, “Did I make a mistake in moving here, taking this job, staying here? Should I have done something different? Did I really hear from God?”
- Just because something feels disorienting or distressing doesn’t mean we should go somewhere else. There’s a good chance this is exactly where we are supposed to be – the just right place for God to do the spiritual work in us he wants to do.
- We need to normalize the emotions of the neutral zone for ourselves and our students.
- We need to help students embrace the chaos of this time; our uncertain and messy lives are a magnet for His Holy Spirit. He loves to take what’s formless and make it into beauty (Genesis 1).

New Beginnings

Beginnings involve new understandings, values and attitudes. Beginnings are marked by a release of energy in a new direction – they are an expression of a fresh identity. Well-managed transitions allow people to establish new roles with an understanding of their purpose, the part they play, and how to contribute and participate most effectively. As a result, they feel reoriented and renewed. These aren’t always neat and tidy, nor are they mechanical like booting a computer. For some of you, the new beginning will be when you start a new job or school, but there may be more to consider.

- Remember, the goal is to *transition*, not just change to a new location. Change sometimes allows us to avoid the transition, and we want to encourage our students to show up to the transition.
- Bridges also suggests that we may have “ideas, images, and impressions” during the in-between time that hint at the new beginning.
- The new beginning may not be the job but rather something else – a new way we’re going to do something, a new activity we start, etc. Or maybe it’s a way of being made new in the attitude of our heart and mind.
- Bridges describes the new beginning like a hotel key card – when you try it on the door, it clicks and opens; new beginnings are moments where things are clicking. One former student described the new beginning as the moment he realized he finally had friends to hang out with on a Friday night. For another former student it was the day she checked out her first library book from the public library – a symbol that she had become a member of her new community.

Remember, that we go through endings, neutral zones, and new beginnings every day. As believers, we have the unique perspectives of knowing abundant promises of new beginnings more than anyone! So now let's get practical and explore what faithfulness in the midst of this transition will look like for you.

Section 3: Pursuing Faithfulness Now & In Transition

Testimony: Faithfulness in Transition (5 Minutes)

Invite a former student to come back to campus to share their transition story. Have the former student share for 3-5 minutes (something they prepare in advance), and/or ask the following questions:

- Talk about one area of struggle in your transition and one success.
- Who/what was most helpful in overcoming challenges? Or, if you experienced successes, who/what contributed most to that?
- Describe your faith experience or spiritual life the first year.
- What's one thing you would have done differently to make the most of your last semester?
- Anything you wish someone would have said to you during your last semester?

Note: This could also be a recorded Zoom conversation that you play back during your gathering.

Individual Reflection (5 Minutes)

Turn on ambient background music.

Now, let's enter into a time of reflection based on the questions on the screen. Let me encourage you to journal your responses to these questions. Feel free to be honest in your reflection, you won't be required to share unless you would like to.

- As you look over what we've learned from Abraham's story, how can you apply it to your own life? What truth can you claim in your relationship with God and others? What promises can you write down? How does Abraham's story give you hope for your own story?
- Recall a time when God demonstrated His faithfulness to you in the midst of a change or transition. Maybe you have been through an ending, the in-between, and a new beginning. How did God show up to you in this? What did you learn about Him, yourself, or others?
- What is your current posture as you enter this transition? How is God inviting you to end well?

Group Discussion (10 Minutes)

Note: In groups of 2-3 or as a whole group, invite students to discuss key takeaways from the session.

What are you taking with you from this session (an encouragement, promise, hope or action)? What are you leaving behind (an old way of doing things, an unhealthy posture, a bad habit)?

Allow space for discussion

As I reflect on transitional times in my own life, I'm struck by God's faithfulness, even when things felt out of control or challenging. Even in Abraham's story of transition in the midst of his obedience and faith, he still was afraid and had doubt. It's encouraging to remember we all do, especially as we enter the unknown. But God didn't give up on Abraham. Instead, God encourages Abraham and reminds him of His character. God says, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward...I am the

Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” The God of Abraham is the same God we trust today. *We enter the unknown with a known God who knows us.*

Closing Comments & Announcements (5 Minutes)

Congrats! We’ve made it to the end of our first time together. I hope that you have found this first gathering to be helpful and worthwhile as you prepare for your transition to life after community college. Here are the details of our program going forward (Layout Topics & Meeting Days for Rest of Semester)

This is your space – a community of students who will journey together to find answers, walk humbly and honestly with each other, and encourage each other when it seems there are no answers. I believe this is a unique experience that many students don’t get to have, which makes this a unique gift you all have. Is there anyone that you know that could benefit from joining us next time?

Before our next gathering, you have a couple of tasks:

- Announce whatever reading you’d like them to do to prep for the next session.
- Homework: Changes, Challenges, & Choices Worksheet
 - Pass out worksheet. Explain: This exercise is an opportunity for you to anticipate some the changes what will come with your transition (moving to a new location, moving away from home, starting a new job, and so on). In the second column, think about the challenges that may come with these changes (e.g. finding friends in a new location or staying faithful to their values when they lack the social momentum of InterVarsity friends; navigating a strained relationship with a parent if they move away from home; adjusting to a 9-5 workweek structure or competing worldviews in the workplace, etc.) In the third column, consider what choices you can make – even now – to pursue faithfulness in the transition (e.g. check out local churches and commit to one no longer than 3 months after moving to a new location; initiate a conversation with parents about expectations they (the parents) might have with their student moving away from home; chose – even now – to not be a part of the gossip culture at work, etc.)
- Next Steps from Today:
 - Take thirty seconds right now to reflect. What is my first next step after this session?

Additional References:

Here are some additional resources to recommend to students or use for further prep of this session:

- Tips for Transitional Times, PDF
- Equipping Students for Lifelong, Lifewide Faithfulness: A Case for Why it Matters, PDF
- [Nancy Schlossberg’s Transition Theory](#)
- [10 Habits of Students Who Maximize Their Senior Year](#)
- *What the Best College Students Do* by Ken Bain