

# APPENDIX A : HOW TO LEAVE A CHURCH WELL

You may be joining Redemption from another church in which you were either a member or heavily involved. In addition, the time may come when it's necessary for you to leave Redemption Church to join a community elsewhere. Because we value commitment and investment in the church, we believe strongly that the transition from one church to another is a significant event. However, in our experience, few people really do this well, which often leads to hurt feelings, misunderstandings, unmet expectations, and a lack of unity in the overall body of Christ that dishonors Jesus.

We have compiled the five steps below in order to help you walk through the transition process well for the sake of your own health and the health of the body.

## **1. Have a good reason for leaving.**

Before you go, evaluate whether your reasons are good, legitimate and God-honoring. The reasons that people leave churches are many. Some are good, some are bad, and many are hard to discern. Check your pride in the decision. Ask yourself whether you are running from conflict or reacting to unrealistic expectations. If your reasons are good, go. If not, stay. If you are unsure, it would be wise to seek good counsel from godly friends or church leaders who can help you think through the process.

## **2. Communicate your decision to leave with the appropriate leaders.**

If you're an active part of the church, leaders will need to know you're leaving. If you are serving, communicate it to your ministry team leader. If you are in a small group / Redemption Community, communicate it to the leader. If you are connected to an elder or pastor, communicate your decision to them. Personal communication is preferable to written communication, but make sure you communicate.

## **3. Tell these leaders the truth about why you're leaving.**

If you have legitimate reasons to leave then you have nothing to hide or worry about. If the reasons for leaving will sting church leadership, deliver it in the spirit of Proverbs 27:6, "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." Scripture commands us to "speak the truth in love" (Eph 4:15), which means you don't couch the real, sometimes difficult reasons behind a bunch

of spiritualized nonsense. God may use your reasons for leaving to help the church or its leaders. “Exit Interviews” can be immensely helpful to leadership, who are accountable to receive truth with humility. Whatever you do, don’t just leave without telling your leaders.

#### **4. Appropriately transition or conclude your ministry commitments.**

If you’ve been an active part of ministry, your role will need to be transitioned. Hopefully you’ve been training and developing somebody to take your place anyway. But if you haven’t, give your leaders an appropriate time to find others to serve in your capacity. This period shouldn’t drag on, but you also should not just drop the ball on the people you’ve been committed to.

#### **5. Leave graciously.**

Ray Pritchard writes:

*“[Leaving] graciously means you refuse to speak evil of those who remain in the church. Look forward, not backward. Focus on your new church, not your old one. Think carefully before you speak about your former congregation. Don’t say anything that could be remotely construed as criticism. Even casual comments could stir up needless controversy. Let the Golden Rule guide all your comments public and private.”*

#### **Conclusion**

If you’ve read this material and realize that you didn’t leave a church well in the past, it might be wise to circle back to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. If you have gossiped or stirred up division, you should make it right, apologizing not only to the leaders of that church but also to the people to whom you gossiped.

In the end, remember that Jesus loves the church you’re leaving and the one you’re going to — his blood was shed for both. Both churches are part of his bride. Do his bride the honor of leaving well.