

SHIFTING

A Necessary Behavioural Adaptation

INTRODUCTION

Shifting is the capacity to recognize when circumstances, beliefs, relationships, or practices have become misaligned with present reality - and to move decisively toward what is accurate and life-giving. It is not a change for its own sake, but a purposeful realignment: releasing what no longer serves growth to embrace what does.

This competency operates across three interconnected dimensions:

SPIRITUAL

- Spiritually, shifting means moving from where God was to where God is - following the living presence rather than memorializing past encounters.

PRACTICAL

- Practically, shifting means adapting behaviour and environment to match current wisdom, discarding habits and associations that have become obstacles.

ECONOMICAL

- Economically, shifting means repositioning toward abundance by leaving places of scarcity, stagnation, or diminishing returns.

The failure to shift is not neutrality - it is regression. What was once accurate can become obsolete. What was once a refuge can become a prison. The person who remains stationary in a changing landscape does not stay in place; they fall behind.

PART I: THE BENEFITS OF SHIFTING

The Problem of Prolonged Misalignment

When a person, organization, or community remains in an inaccurate position for an extended period, that position becomes normalized. Adaptation occurs - but it is adaptation *to dysfunction*. The discomfort of misalignment fades, replaced by a false stability. This is the danger of tradition without evaluation: longevity is mistaken for legitimacy.

A practice held for generations is not necessarily wise. A belief inherited from ancestors is not necessarily true. A relationship maintained for decades is not necessarily healthy. Duration alone does not validate a position. Shifting requires acknowledging that what was once appropriate may now be hindrance. This is not betrayal of the past - it is recognizing the present.

Biblical Examples of Beneficial Shifting

Scripture is filled with accounts of people who moved - geographically, relationally, spiritually, and found transformation on the other side.

1. The Ark of the Covenant: From Gibeah to Zion

The Ark of the Covenant, representing God's presence, was relocated from Kiriath-jearim (in the region of Gibeah) to Mount Zion under David's leadership (1 Chronicles 13:2-3; 2 Samuel 6). This was not merely a logistical move but a spiritual realignment. To access the presence, one now had to go to Zion.

Principle: in this context an accurate migration positions you where God is, not where He was. Those who insisted on seeking God where the Ark *used to be* would find emptiness.

2. The Four Lepers: From the Gate to Abundance

In 2 Kings 7:3-5, four leprous men sat at the gate of Samaria during a famine. Their logic was sound: "*Why sit we here until we die?*" They shifted from their position of stagnation and walked toward the Syrian camp only to find it abandoned and full of provisions.

Principle: The gate represented waiting for change to come to them. The camp represented moving toward provision. Shifting **transformed their condition** from scarcity to abundance within a single night.

3. Ruth: From Gleaning to Marriage

Ruth's story is a masterclass in progressive shifting (Ruth 2–4):

- She began as a foreign widow gleaning leftovers behind the reapers - the lowest economic position available.
- Through obedience to Boaz's instruction to stay within his sphere, she was promoted to glean *among* the sheaves - a position of greater access.
- Her yield increased from one ephah to six ephahs.
- She shifted from the *field* (labour) to the *feet* of Boaz (relationship).
- Ultimately, she shifted from widow to wife - from receiving charity to becoming an ancestor of kings.

Principle: Each shift required releasing the previous position. Remaining at the gate would have meant remaining a widow. Obedient migration moved her from association to covenant, from gleaning to inheritance.

4. The Blind Man at Siloam: From Darkness to Sight

In John 9, Jesus instructed the blind man to wash in the Pool of Siloam. The man had to leave his position - his familiar darkness and go where he was sent. Upon obeying, he received sight.

Principle: Physical migration symbolized spiritual transition from immaturity (blindness) to maturity (sight). He could not receive in place; he had to move.

5. Israel Crossing the Jordan: From Wilderness to Promise

For forty years, Israel wandered in the wilderness. Only when they crossed the Jordan did they enter the land of milk and honey. The wilderness sustained them; Promised Land would prosper them.

Principle: There is a distinction between survival and flourishing. The wilderness was permissive provision; Canaan was intended possession. Crossing over required leaving behind wilderness thinking.

6. Abraham: From Receiving Blessing to Becoming Blessing

God's call to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3 required leaving his country, kindred, and father's house. The destination was not merely a new location but a new identity: "*I will bless you... and you shall be a blessing.*"

Principle: This represents the ultimate shift - from being a recipient of blessing to becoming a conduit of blessing. Such transformation requires departure from the familiar.

PART II: THE CONSEQUENCES OF REFUSING TO SHIFT

If shifting leads to abundance, sight, and blessing, then the refusal to shift produces stagnation, blindness, and loss. The examples below illustrate patterns of resistance and their outcomes.

1. Antiquity: Allegiance to the Past

Moses' ministry was powerful and divinely ordained for his season. But the Pharisees and scribes could not transfer their allegiance to the One greater than Moses. Jesus said, "*A greater than Solomon is here*" (Luke 11:31), yet they clung to past authorities.

Consequence: Moses never crossed the Jordan. He died having seen the Promised Land but never entering it. Those whose allegiance remains fixed to the past can only take you as far as that past went - no further.

Principle: Past allegiance produces inflexibility. It creates an inability to live by the "proceeding word" - **the present utterance of God**. The Pharisees became experts in what God said but deaf to what God is saying.

2. Ritualism: Form Without Power

"*For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men*" (Mark 7:8). In Mark 7:3-13, Jesus confronted religious leaders who had elevated human tradition above divine command. Their rituals of hand-washing and corban had become substitutes for actual obedience.

Consequence: Tradition became an end in itself. The form persisted while the function died. Ritual replaced relationship.

3. Inflexibility: The Sitting Position

The Pharisees and scribes sat in Moses' seat (Matt 23:2) – a posture of immobility. In this context the sitting represents being fixed, unwilling to move.

Consequence: Those under a spirit of rigidity cannot flow with progressive revelation. They are unable to respond when God does a new thing. Their security is in position rather than in relationship.

4. Irrationality: Superstition and False Understanding

Superstition is belief rooted in irrational fear, false spiritual understanding, or ignorance. It attributes power where none exists and misses power where it is present.

Consequence: Decisions become governed by fear rather than faith, by tradition rather than truth.

5. Illegitimate Authority

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." (Matt 23:2)

The seat was designed for Moses - not for them. Their authority was borrowed from a past move of God rather than derived from present obedience.

Consequence: Religious systems often usurp the authority of restoration movements. They turn living encounters into institutional seats, then occupy those seats without the anointing that created them.

6. Sentimental Attachment Over Truth

Jonathan loved David but remained loyal to Saul. His heart was accurate, but his feet never shifted. He died alongside Saul, his potential unfulfilled (1 Samuel 31).

Barnabas separated from Paul over John Mark - prioritizing relational comfort over mission clarity (Acts 15:36–40).

Eli failed to discipline his sons, "*honouring his sons more than God*" (1 Samuel 2:29).

Consequence: When sentiment overrides truth, relationships become idols. Love unmoored from wisdom produces dysfunction rather than flourishing.

7. Apathy: Failure to Press Through

In 2 Kings 13:14-19, the dying prophet Elisha instructed King Joash to strike the ground with arrows. Joash struck three times and stopped. Elisha was angry: "*You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria until you had destroyed it.*"

Consequence: Apathy settles for partial victory. It stops short of complete breakthrough. The king's lack of intensity limited his deliverance.

8. Skepticism: Testing Despite Evidence

"*Your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years.*" (Hebrews 3:9). Israel had seen parting seas, falling manna, water from rock, yet continued demanding proof.

Skepticism is not honest doubt; it is refusal to trust despite ample evidence.

Consequence: The skeptical generation died in the wilderness. Their children entered the land.

PART III: ACCURATE RESPONSE - THE NATURE OF HEALTHY SHIFTING

1. Shift from Human Perspective to Divine Perspective

"*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit.*" (Hebrews 4:12).

The first and foundational shift is perceptual. Human reasoning operates from limited data and self-interest. Divine perspective sees the whole field, including what lies beyond the immediate horizon.

Application: Before shifting externally, shift internally. Ask not merely "What do I see?" but "What does wisdom reveal?"

2. Respond with Speed

Delayed obedience is often disguised disobedience. When clarity comes, hesitation erodes momentum. The four lepers did not form a committee; they rose at twilight and went.

Application: When the direction is clear, move. Analysis paralysis is a form of refusing to shift.

3. Transform with Love

Shifting is not abandonment but transformation. Ruth did not abandon Naomi - she brought Naomi into her new abundance. Healthy shifting redeems relationships rather than destroying them, wherever possible.

Application: Shift toward life but carry love with you. Leave positions, not people, unless the relationship itself is the toxicity.

4. Adapt Within Boundaries

"I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1 Corinthians 9:22)

Paul's adaptability was legendary, but it operated within clear boundaries. He became like those under the law to win those under the law, like those outside the law to win them. His methods shifted; his message did not.

Application: Flexibility in approach, fidelity in principle. Adaptation is strategic, not moral compromise.

PART IV: INACCURATE RESPONSE - PATTERNS OF MALADAPTATION

1. Maladaptive Response to Trials

"You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to return." (Jeremiah 5:3)

When discipline comes, the healthy response is grief, reflection, and correction. The maladaptive response is hardening - refusing to learn, stiffening the neck, becoming more entrenched in the very patterns that produced the trial.

Signs: Refusal to receive correction. Increasing stubbornness. Blaming circumstances rather than examining self.

2. Maladaptive Response to Blessing

"I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek Me... I spread out My hands all day to a rebellious people." (Isaiah 65:1-2)

Blessing can be as dangerous as trial if it produces complacency rather than gratitude. Those who receive abundance without acknowledging its source often drift into entitlement and eventually rebellion.

Signs: Taking provision for granted. Crediting self for divine favour. Using blessing for indulgence rather than purpose.

PART V: DAMAGED MINDSETS THAT PREVENT SHIFTING

Mental strongholds are patterns of thinking that have become entrenched through repetition, trauma, or teaching. They operate below conscious awareness, filtering perception and limiting options.

Paul described them as *"arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God"* (2 Corinthians 10:5).

1. The Proud Mindset

Characteristics: Inflated self-estimation, reliance on personal ability, delusions of entitlement, resistance to feedback.

Effect: The proud cannot receive correction because they do not believe they need it. They cannot shift because they believe their current position is deserved.

2. The Suspicious Mindset

Characteristics: Ascribing evil motives without evidence, seeing threats in benign actions, interpreting ambiguity negatively.

Example: Saul's suspicion of David (1 Samuel 18:7–9). David's success triggered Saul's insecurity, and from that moment, Saul "eyed David" with suspicion rather than celebrating a national hero.

Effect: Suspicion isolates. It prevents the trust necessary for healthy relationship and collaborative growth.

3. The Dependent Mindset

Characteristics: Inability to function without external direction, collapse when leadership is absent, requiring constant validation.

Example: When Moses ascended the mountain, Israel descended into calf worship (Exodus 32). When judges died, the nation fell into apostasy (Judges 2:19).

Effect: Dependence prevents maturity. It makes the individual perpetually subject to the presence or absence of others rather than rooted in personal conviction.

4. The Ungrateful Mindset

Characteristics: Receiving without acknowledging, benefiting without reciprocating, devaluing contribution.

Example: Laban benefited enormously from Jacob's labour but repeatedly changed his wages and spoke as though Jacob owed him (Genesis 31:5–7).

Effect: Ingratitude erodes relationship. It eventually drives away the very people who brought blessing.

5. The Double-Minded Mindset

Characteristics: Attempting to serve two masters, maintaining divided loyalties, keeping options open in conflicting directions.

Scripture: *"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other"* (Luke 16:13).

Effect: Double mindedness produces instability. James 1:8 describes the double-minded person as *"unstable in all his ways."*

6. The Sentimental Mindset

Characteristics: Prioritizing emotional attachment over truth, inability to make hard relational decisions, confusing loyalty with love.

Examples:

- Jonathan loved David but could not shift loyalty from Saul. He died unrealized.
- Barnabas separated from Paul over John Mark, prioritizing relational comfort over mission.
- Eli failed to discipline Hophni and Phinehas, honouring his sons above God.
- Samuel mourned for Saul long after God had rejected him, until God asked, "*How long will you mourn?*" (1 Samuel 16:1).

Effect: Sentiment untethered from wisdom becomes bondage. It keeps people connected to what is dying rather than moving toward what is living.

CONCLUSION: THE CALL TO SHIFT

Shifting is not a rejection of what God has done; it is a recognition of what God is doing. It is not instability - it is sensitivity to divine movement. It is not abandonment - it is advancement in purpose.

Throughout Scripture, every significant season of increase required a God-ordained transition:

- The Ark moved from Gibeah to Zion.
- Ruth moved from the field to the threshing floor, and from the threshing floor to covenant destiny.
- The four lepers moved from the gate into the camp and discovered abundance.
- Israel moved from the wilderness into the Promised Land.

In every case, something had to be left behind before something greater could be embraced. **No one enters a new season while clinging to an old one.**

The issue is not whether change will come - it will. The issue is how we respond when it comes.

- Will you shift with revelation or be forced to shift by circumstance?
- Will you move toward God's appointed abundance, or remain at the gate of missed opportunities?
- Will you follow the living presence of God, or build monuments around yesterday's encounters?

Many are praying for increase while resisting the shifting that increase requires. Yet God never anoints stagnation. He blesses obedience, responsiveness, and faith-filled shifting. Those who refuse to shift eventually become prisoners of a season God intended them to outgrow. But those who discern the times and move with God discover that the grace that sustained them *there* is also waiting for them *here* -and that *here* contains dimensions of glory, fruitfulness, and purpose that *there* could never provide. Therefore, do not fear the shift. Discern it. Embrace it. Obey it. For the God who calls you forward has already prepared what awaits you ahead. "*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?*" (Isaiah 43:18–19)

**Grace. Peace. Joy
Amen!**