

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

Dr. Henry Cloud

Summary by Mark R. Elliott\*

Quotes compiled by Tony Morgan:

- “They have realized that their success depends on having the time and energy resources to go deep with a few relationships, and they have to end the wish to go deep with everyone, as it leads to skimming the surface with almost everyone.”
- “Failing well means ending something that is not working and choosing to do something else better.”
- “If your map says that you are responsible for other adults as if they were your children, then something is wrong with your map, and no doubt some well-needed endings are not taking place.”
- “There is a difference between helping someone who is disabled, incapable, or otherwise infirm versus helping someone who is resisting growing up and taking care of what every adult (or child, for that matter) has to be responsible for: herself or himself. When you find yourself in any way paying for someone else’s responsibilities, not only are you stuck with a delayed ending, but you are probably harming that person.”
- “Make the concept of endings a normal occurrence and a normal part of business and life, so you expect and look for them instead of seeing them as a problem.”
- “In the absence of real, objective reasons to think that more time is going to help, it is probably time for some type of necessary ending.”
- “Hope is not a strategy.”
- “The person who ultimately does well is the one who can learn from his own experience or the experience of others, make that learning a part of himself, and then deliver results from that experience base.”
- “You cannot fix people who will not take feedback, because from their perspective, they do not have a problem.”
- “Nagging or any other kind of repeated attempts to get someone to listen should never have to be done, and if you are having to do it, something is wrong.”
- “There are some people whose desire it is to hurt others and do destructive things. And with them, you have to protect yourself, your company, your loved ones, and anything that matters to you.”
- “Sometimes a person’s performance is not going to get better if you continue to have her doing something for which she has very little giftedness, ability, or inclination.”
- “Sometimes people are indeed operating in their area of strength, but their character issues are so formidable that their strengths are neutralized.”
- “We need structure to organize energy, contain it, and direct it toward an effect.”
- “Getting people to finally see the stark incompatibility of certain desires is often what finally gets them unstuck.”

- “This is a fundamental truth about endings: you have to be able to face losing some things you might want in order to be free to do the right thing. If you can’t, you are stuck.”
- “Everything I have that is of value has come from being willing to end something that I was doing and go to the next step.”

## A Necessary Ending By: Henry Cloud, Ph.D.

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Everyone wants to believe in hope. It’s a crucial characteristic that leaders must learn to use to inspire. Hope gives us energy and sustenance—it powers us to win against all odds. It keeps us going.

*And that can be a problem.*

When leaders misspend it, hope can keep a team, a business, or an entire organization going in the wrong direction, sometimes for a long time.

This brings up a crucial dilemma that leaders face. If hope is necessary to win, is it ever right to give up hope? Said another way, when do we need to face the music and realize that a strategy, a dream, a product line, a business, or even a key employee is just not going to make it? How do you decide if something is truly worthy of your hope, or when to pull the plug?

In coaching and consulting with leaders, I find that negotiating the “hope paradox” is one of the factors that separates the truly great and successful leaders from those who aren’t. The good project or a person versus when to get truly “hopeless” that the project or person is not going to work. *They know when to step up and create a “necessary ending.”*

The paradox is this: by getting hopeless about a strategy, product, plan, or a specific person’s ability to change, these leaders step up and create an ending to what is not working. By creating a necessary ending, they actually restore hope to the business and organization. Their decisive action restores confidence throughout their teams, organizations, and stakeholders, and builds hope that something is going to change and get better. The “get hopeless” step is one It can finally lead to *real* hope.

So here is the difficulty: how do you know when more perseverance is needed because there truly is hope for something, or someone, to turn around? On the other hand, how do you know that the worst thing you could do is give it more time?

I suggest a simple diagnostic paradigm that helps leaders and their teams know when to have “hope” versus when to create a “necessary ending.”

**First: What is going to be “different” in the upcoming months or appropriate time frame?**

People say, “I really hope the business is going to turn around this year.” And they persevere. But you have to ask the next question, “Why? What objective reason do you have to hope that it is going to be different?” Remember, the best predictor of the future is the past unless something changes. So, to think that sales are going to improve, or that your employee is going to perform better just because we hope they will or because that person says they will, is a fantasy. There is no objective reason to sustain hope for that.

But, if you say, “We just got listed on Yahoo's home page, we replaced the boss's non-performing nephew as head of marketing with a proven guy, we have an experienced consultant helping us, and we got a contract with the NFL, so we have hope that everything is going to be different this year,” then you can have hope. These are objective reasons. In other words, you're not just “wishing,” which is subjective. You are “hoping,” which is based on real reasons to believe. Wishing and hoping are different.

**Second: Where is the new source of energy going to come from for change?**

Change happens when there is a new amount of force driving it. If a business is stuck, what new source of energy is going to be present? A new leader brought to the project? A new team member? A new boss or board member? An innovative consultant or coach? A new partner? New motivation and push? If you are thinking that the same amount or source of energy that has been present is going to drive a change, then think again. If a train is not making it up the hill, it needs more fuel.

The same is true for an individual. If someone is stuck in their mediocre performance, obviously their energy to make it work has not been enough. It is not moving. Where is the new source of energy, such as a coach, supervisor, counselor, peer coach, or accountability partner going to come from? Find new energy to bring to the problem and you may have reason to hope. *New energy changes things.*

### **Third: What new “ways” are going to be present?**

Energy is necessary, but not sufficient. It has to be spent in a way that works. Your body has energy, but your brain has to organize that energy to make it deliver the actions that bring the results you need. In the same way, if you are truly working the plan and the plan is not working, there must be new ways brought to the table, such as new wisdom, knowledge, experience, and skills.

Ask yourself: Where are these new ways going to come from? There are many sources, but face the music that the old ways are not working and bring in some different ways. The energy list above may bring new ways, as well innovative training or other development. If those are being added, then hope may make sense.

The bottom line is this: *hopelessness is not always a bad thing, but sometimes hope can be.* To continue to do the same thing expecting different results is usually a sign that you are due for a necessary ending with what or whom is not working. Leaders know that hope is so valuable that they cannot spend it on something, or someone, who does not warrant it.

### **The Necessary Ending**

Good leaders have the courage to create the “necessary ending” and bring about new energy, and a new way, that can be the source of real hope instead of empty wishing. When you do that, you bring hope to yourself, your people, and your business. Hope is precious and essential. Do not let it go to waste because your desire for something is misplaced, or your fear of ending something is too strong. Step up, lead, and get the hope back.

*A Necessary Ending* by [Henry Cloud, Ph.D.](#) is an excerpt from Chick-fil-A Leadercast Journal, 2011

\*Mark R. Elliott served as a Director of Missions (Associational Mission Strategist) in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska for almost three decades. He is a strong advocate for obedience and Biblically based disciple making. As such, he knows that making healthy disciples requires Christian leaders to be constantly pursuing spiritual maturity—be lifelong learners. Because of the time constraints of ministry, most pastors focus their reading list on resources that assist them in teaching and preaching the Word of God. As such, books focusing on church health, leadership development, and church growth tend to find their way to the bottom of the stack. With that reality in mind, Mark has written discussion summaries on several books that have helped him to personally grow in Christ and that tend to find themselves on the bottom of most pastor's stack. Many pastors have found them helpful as they are able to more quickly process great insights from other pastors and authors.