

# The Dispatch

## The March 2022: Saying Goodbye

We all have heard the saying, “The only thing constant in life is change,” and we know it is largely true. This month’s Dispatch tackles the issue of how we face some of the inevitable changes in life. Sometimes we don’t even know what to call these changes. For example, we debated whether to entitle this issue, “Saying Goodbye” or “Moving On” or “Facing Loss.” Each one of us has a different take on the issue. Davon shows how change in the family business, though difficult, can create opportunities for success. Lance writes of how he missed the chance to say “Goodbye” when his grandfather passed. Finally, Bill describes the unexpected loss of a friendship. How do you say “Goodbye” when inevitable, or unexpected, departures occur? Let us know your thoughts.

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### Saying Goodbye

[Davon Cook](#)

Saying goodbye takes many forms. And even when not associated with other human beings, it can be full of emotion. Do you recognize any of these goodbye scenarios?

- The pet project you’ve nurtured for years just isn’t working, e.g., direct to consumer sales, alternative crop...
- The career dream that you realize isn’t going to happen, e.g., growing the business to X size, all my kids returning to the business...
- The traditions or norms that no longer serve their purpose, e.g., the overnight employee appreciation trip needs to change since all their spouses work now, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July family gathering doesn’t work anymore because everyone has scattered or married into other families’ traditions...
- Special objects that represent history but might be in the way of progress, e.g., great-grandma’s house that’s falling down, piles of old parts that we ‘might need some day’...
- A long-standing relationship that is no longer working, e.g., the employee you started with that will not adapt to today’s reality, a vendor that you’ve outgrown, a partnership that is not working...

In each of those cases, there’s both a rational decision to be made as well as an emotional release to navigate. I was awestruck [reading](#) about Ernest Shackleton’s three arduous attempts at reaching the South Pole in the early 1900s. On the second attempt, after walking *763 miles on foot* in horrific conditions, he turned his team around 93 miles short of the goal because he recognized they could not make it. They barely survived the return trek (yep, still 763 miles)! *“The Boss’s greatest heroism may have been in recognizing failure and embracing it so that he and his companions could live for another day.”*

I’m not suggesting all of our goodbyes involve failure. But they often do involve weighing emotion vs. reason and making tough decisions. What do you need to say goodbye to?

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## Missing the Chance to Say Goodbye – a Reframing

[Lance Woodbury](#)

A few years ago, I was on a business trip when [my grandfather](#), who I knew was close to dying, passed away, and I felt some regret about not being present. In the last two years, the passing of friends and family has frequently been complicated by the inability to be physically present with these loved ones in their final days and hours, or to collectively participate in a funeral or celebration of their life. Saying goodbye and being present during, or soon after, a beloved's physical death is an experience important to our grieving process, offering us a step on the path of closure we often feel we need in order to move on.

As I thought about this difficult experience for people I know, I was reminded of a quote I have turned to during my own grieving, where the pain of loss, or the lack of closure, is reframed and is seen as having a purpose. It was written by [Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#), a German theologian, in his [Letters and Papers from Prison](#). Bonhoeffer was hanged in a concentration camp just 14 days before the camp was liberated by US Forces in World War II, and thus he died physically separated from his family. Consider these words as you consider those friends or loved ones you so dearly miss:

*“Nothing can make up for the absence of someone whom we love, and it would be wrong to try to find a substitute; we must simply hold out and see it through. That sounds very hard at first, but at the same time it is a great consolation, for the gap, as long as it remains unfilled, preserves the bonds between us. It is nonsense to say that God fills the gap; God doesn't fill it, but on the contrary, keeps it empty and so helps us to keep alive our former communion with each other, even at the cost of pain.”*

You may not have had the chance to say goodbye, but that “unfilled gap” can instead be seen as a way to maintain an intimacy with those we love, have lost, and will see again.

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## Saying Goodbye – to a Friendship

[Bill Long](#)

We all know that the mere act of living sometimes requires us to move on or disengage from relationships that no longer work for us. But sometimes this disengagement can be abrupt, painful and unwanted. This was what happened to me recently, and I grieve a friendship lost.

A brief background. “Tom” and I had been friends for about a decade, meeting together with a third friend every other week to discuss everything from faith, to law, to events in our lives. I liked Tom a lot and considered him among the most measured, kind and gentle people I had met. I often told him that he was the type of person our country needs as we negotiate difficult cultural and political minefields.

We hadn't met for a month or so because of a long trip I took in Fall 2021. When Tom and I finally met, he wanted to know if my perspectives on life had changed from traveling 7,000 miles in six weeks across the country. I ended up sharing with him, too openly I later discovered, that I was re-evaluating certain beliefs I had taken for granted for decades. He calmly listened to me and then said, equally calmly, “Bill, I don't think we should meet anymore. I (and he faces a physical disability) only have energy to focus on a few things in life, and your words take me down a path I don't want to go.”

I was taken aback and left our meeting a bit shell-shocked. I didn't intend to injure nor did I want this to lead to a breakup of friendship. Yet he heard it differently. I have recently sent a card to him, confessing my insensitivity in language and expressing my desire for a resumed friendship, but have yet received no response. Stay tuned...