



**What No One Tells You About New Beginnings**  
by Shannon Whitehead

I always dialed the number when I was about two miles away from South Boulevard.

The conversation always began with “Hey, Shannon” when he recognized my voice and ended with, “Got it, Shannon—see you soon!”

It wasn't a family member or even a friend on the line, but the manager of a restaurant down the street from the apartment I'd lived in for almost five years. A few minutes later, I'd walk in to see his smiling face and newsboy cap that always seemed too old and sophisticated for his young age. I'd go about one mile to my home and enjoy the country-style food that was always good. I always knew it would be. Always.

Memories like this of the comfortable and the familiar remain even as I sit contently in a bright, new stage of life. When you've moved on, you forget that barely anything is comfortable and familiar anymore. You might feel

lost and scattered as you stare at the blank page of a new beginning. You might feel unprepared to navigate what it's like to be new again.

But you can't always prepare for the unknown. It pains me to say this as someone who appreciates a plan and a purpose, but sometimes you have to take change as it comes. And sometimes it comes unannounced. Sometimes it's a new beginning you initiated, wanted, or expected, and sometimes it's not.

Whether it's a job change, a change of location (or both, in my case), a relationship status update, a fresh taste of freedom after being incarcerated, or the adjustment that comes with becoming a parent, new beginnings can be tough territory. Both my first day of college and, four years later, my first day at a new job in a new city where I was living alone for the first time were a combination of joy, excitement, uncertainty, and fear. The challenges of new beginnings are uniquely able to transform us, bring a complex type of joy to us, and even make us question every decision we've ever made.

When you start over, it's easy to forget why everything feels uncomfortable—especially if you're happy with your new circumstances. But everything is new and so are you. You're suddenly the new person at work, at church, and at social events when you used to be the one everyone knows.

You're faced with the strange nuances of newness. You have to become known again in an environment or situation where you barely know anyone

or anything. The fear rises up that people who don't yet know you won't like you once you start being yourself. The insecurities about whether you'll be any good at your new venture arrive and start knocking.

You realize you have to take relational risk in a new beginning. There's a chance that the adjustment won't be an easy one and the connections won't be natural, fruitful, or lasting at first. And in order to eventually turn your new beginning into a comfortable setting, you step out into that shallow water anyway.

That's when you find out that vulnerability is required. The hard facts are that this is new for you and you'll always feel new if you don't let yourself be known. Even if vulnerability is easy for you (it's not for me), the chance of rejection still lingers. And in order to eventually turn the fresh into the familiar, you open the door, pick up unknown passengers, and start navigating this new journey anyway.

You'll see that the days pass and life has to go on, even if your discomfort hasn't ceased. Everything about you has to move and get on with it. I never moved to a new place because I thought I could hide my pain in a suitcase. I've had enough new beginnings to know that it comes with you. When you find yourself facing a fresh start, your willingness to heal has to come too. Your development and your sanctification has to continue on.

Maybe your new beginning isn't as beautiful or breezy as you hoped for and you're fighting back regret and illogical expectations. Maybe you've watched other people get engaged and move forward while you're breaking

up and moving on. Maybe you've seen people leave the same place you left and get to say proper goodbyes while you're left with a stack of trauma counseling bills. I get it. I do. And I turned to the master of new beginnings.

In Christ, new beginnings are all around. Many new names were given out in the Old Testament. Every morning, His mercies are new. He makes new creations out of old sinners (2 Cor. 5:17), puts a new song in our mouths (Ps. 40:3), gives new hearts and new spirits, and presents us with another chance to turn away from deceitful sins each time we repent.

It often feels like everything has changed when you have to start over. But nothing about God has changed. He hasn't changed His mind, left His children, or wavered in faithfulness. The glorious new heavens and new earth still await after our lives on this earth have ended. The discomfort we feel now has an expiration date and until then, God is with us through the challenges of every beginning and every end in this life. That's the comfort in a new beginning for those who have been made new in Christ.

With every new beginning is a new chance to bring glory to the name of this God who makes all things new. The world will see how He brings you through it and how you honor Him. He provides the community you need to walk through life with Him. He sorts through the baggage you brought from the other new beginning that you thought would be the last one. He heals the pain that's still dragging behind you down this new road.

Wherever you are, through however it feels to be new there, be all there. Be present there. Be yourself there. Be ready to serve there. Be willing to heal

there. In whatever new beginning God has allowed for you, through what He plans to teach you, be faithful there. Be where He's placed you. He'll be there, too.