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## **JUNE 2019 “ARE YOU READY FOR MINISTRY?” (Part 1)**

Greetings in Jesus!

I preached my first sermon in 1989 and first started pastoring on June 1, 1994. Since that time, I have encountered many people who believe they are ready for some type of pulpit ministry; some even ask if they can preach in our church. Other people believe they are ready to be promoted into some type of leadership position in a church. More than once I have been asked to ordain a person into ministry; even people I have never met and know nothing about their calling have made such a request.

Most of the people I’ve met who tell me how much they’re ready for a promotion from God are no where near ready for such a promotion. I’ve even been accused of holding people back in their ministry, but such a thing is absolutely impossible; if God is moving you forward and promoting you, how in the world do I have enough power to stop Him?

Every person who is born again has a ministry calling on his or her life. For some, that calling involves delivering the Word of God from a pulpit. For others, the fulfillment of their calling will be in the Sunday School rooms of children. There are those who will be anointed of God to develop organizational structure for churches, ministries or even secular businesses. Some will be used of God to funnel great sums of money into churches and ministries for God’s Kingdom purposes. There is more, but the point is, **ALL** Christians have a ministry calling.

There is an extremely good chance that some – if not many – reading this have been going through times of frustration, doubt, anger, and confusion about being used by God in ministry. You’ve wondered what’s wrong, why nothing seems to be happening, why no one recognizes your calling, or how much longer you must wait before your “big breakthrough.” Well, I have news for you: if something is wrong, the problem is **NOT** with God.

What I’m going to do in this month’s letter is pass along some tips that will help you examine your own life and ministry and judge yourself concerning your readiness for promotion by God. I’ll start with a prophecy that came forth in our church during a Wednesday night service.

### **WHY THE TWELVE WERE CHOSEN** **20050803**

*And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. (Luke 6:12-19)*

Have you ever wondered why I chose the twelve that I chose? Out of all the disciples who were with Me, who had spent the night with Me while I prayed all night, why were those specific twelve chosen? It is because the Father told Me to choose only those twelve. But why those specific men, especially since one of them would betray Me?

Those twelve were chosen because they were prepared to serve. There were many with Me that day, but out of them all, only those twelve were at a place where they were ready to serve Me. When you read the scriptures this may not be so readily understood, but you need to look beyond the Four Gospels to see what they did.

At the time they were chosen they were still lost with a sin nature. But the Father saw in them things similar to what He had seen in people like Abraham, Moses, David, and others. Even though they were lost, they still had a heart to serve Me. Do not forget that the twelve were able to carry My anointing to heal the sick, cast out devils and raise the dead. This anointing did not come from within them, but from upon them as I ministered to them.

The Father saw that those twelve were ready to go forward with the gospel and My anointing to reach the world with My love and salvation. My responsibility was to train them while I was with them and to point them to the Holy Spirit who would pick up their training and continue it after I was gone.

Even Judas could have done this had he not killed himself. You see, he did not betray Me because he hated Me; otherwise he would have kept the 30 pieces of silver and not been concerned about it being "blood money." He betrayed Me because he chose a path of confusion, and the course to that path is deception. Yes, it was prophesied that one would betray Me, but the prophecy did not force Judas to betray Me, neither did it violate his will. The prophecy simply foretold of a decision one of My disciples would make.

Out of all the disciples who were with Me on the morning I came down from that mountain, those twelve were the most ready to go forward with Me. I did not choose them out of My flesh or mind, but out of My spirit as the Father spoke to Me.

Now think very closely about this: out of all those who were with Me, only those individuals named were ready to go forward with Me. I would have chosen anyone the Father identified because it was not up to Me; but I only chose who He wanted chosen. All the others were disciples too, but they were not ready to follow Me.

This same thing is happening today. There are so many in My Body. There are so many who have called upon Me to be saved. There are so many who call Me Savior and declare My Name to others. There are so many who even preach from pulpits, from platforms in crusades, on street corners, in jungles, and many other places. They all love Me and they all desire to follow Me.

But out of all of them, only a very few have hearts that are truly ready to follow Me in the way I desire. These few are the only ones who I can take into the levels of My glory where My fullness is manifested. These are the places of revival, of miracles, of spiritual milk and honey. These are the places of My presence; a presence that is so real that you will think at times that I am physically in the room with you.

Each generation has had a few people who have been qualified to go that deeply into Me, and out of those, even fewer have made the journey. But this generation is different. There are more who are ready than ever before, yet it will only be after this generation has passed that we can look back and know who made the journey and who did not.

The thing which qualifies a person to be so used by Me is their attitude toward the things of Me. You see, unless a person is ready and willing for constant change and conformation to My image, he is not qualified. Nearly all of My Church says they are ready and claim to have such an attitude, but this is coming from their mind and not their heart. When it comes from the heart, they will fight for change and refuse to be held back by the things of man.

To be “one of the twelve” is not easy. It requires a total restructuring of your life and time. It requires you to receive from Me My vision of what needs to be done. It requires you to go where I send you, speak only what I say, and die out to yourself. I have given to you everything you need to do this. I have made everything available. But it is up to you to utilize what I have made available.

I am willing to accept anyone as one of My “twelve.” If you will commit to Me in this fashion, you will walk in what many would call a “book of Acts anointing.” You will walk in that level of wisdom, grace, love, and power. The choice is yours and I am present to help you.

Too many Christians look at their accomplishments and experiences as their qualifier for ministry. Such things as college or seminary degrees, previous service in churches, a manifestation of Gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12) and more are deemed as the pedigree for promotion by God. But even Jesus, Peter and John were men without a “proper” education, yet God used them mightily (John 7:15 and Acts 4:13). Furthermore, the Gifts of the Spirit were in notable operation in the Corinthian church, yet that congregation was filled with Believers in strife, division and severe doctrinal error. Thus, an advanced degree and the operation of the Gifts of the Spirit are not in any way a true qualifier for ministry.

As you can tell by the above prophecy, God is searching the hearts of His children. When He finds those who truly humble themselves before Him, He will begin to use them (James 4:10 and 1 Peter 5:5).

***Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. (Psalm 92:13)***

The word “plant” means exactly what you’d expect: to be firmly established, having roots firmly entrenched. The word “flourish” comes from the Hebrew word “pârach” and it means, “to break forth as a bud; to bloom; abundantly blossom; break forth.” Therefore, a person planted in the house of the Lord will break forth and abundantly blossom in God’s will.

Do you have a home church? If not, why? I have met people who call themselves by a ministry title yet have no home church and no pastor. They explain it by implying they are “beyond” what any pastor could do for them. That is pure, unabashed pride and self-exaltation. Christians who are mature enough to be used by God in ministry know without question they need to be planted in a church and in submission to a pastor.

Other people explain that every church they’ve visited in their city preaches doctrinal error; thus, they do not attend anywhere. That explanation may sound good at first, but it is just an attempt to

justify a refusal to obey God. You see, there are too many churches which stream their services on the internet or upload their services for future viewing (both of which is done by our church). If there are no good churches in a person's city, he or she can definitely find a good church on the internet and "attend" it until a good church opens in their area. Even people living in areas where the internet service is poor or non-existent can most likely get DVD's or CD's of services or sermons.

But there is another aspect of being planted in the house of the Lord and flourishing. A flower, shrub, tree or other type of plant sinks its roots into the ground. However, those roots are not just to keep it from blowing away, they are for drawing water and nutrients into the plant so it can grow. Attending a good church is just the start; you must apply the truth you hear in order to flourish. James addressed this when he wrote we must be doers of the Word, and not hearers only (James 1:22).

Do you honestly believe God is going to promote you into active ministry in His Kingdom when you refuse to be an active part in a home church, even if being active means you attend online? If you want to be promoted in ministry, seek God, get planted in a church and be a doer of the Word.

***<sup>24</sup>And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: <sup>25</sup>Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)***

***And he (Jesus) came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. (Luke 4:16)***

***<sup>1</sup>Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:1-2)***

Having a home church is one thing, but being faithful to that church is another matter. In all my years of pastoring, I never cease to be amazed at the lack of faithfulness in many church members. Yes, people take vacations, fight physical battles, have jobs and other very legitimate reasons for missing church. But far too often, weak, disingenuous excuses are used as a legitimate reason to stay home or do something else (a list of such excuses could be a letter unto itself). It's almost as though their position is, "I'll be faithful as soon as God starts using me in ministry." But faithfulness comes before promotion.

As Christians, God has made it clear we have a responsibility to each other beyond what the pastor does. We are to support and encourage each other in our walk with God. We are stop focusing only on our own problems and minister to others facing challenging circumstances. Church attendance is not just to have a personal encounter with God; we are to **BE THERE** for each other. Hebrews 10:24-25 is not a suggestion, *it is an instruction!*

It was Jesus' custom to be in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. In other words, it was His habit, normal behavior, standard of life and commitment to regularly attend church. That alone should be enough to convince Christians they need to develop the same custom.

In Paul's writings to Timothy, he is essentially saying that the only people who are going to be promoted by God into ministry and leadership are those who have proven themselves faithful. People expect their pastor to be at church every time the doors are open (and in some cases, to be the one who opens the doors)...*and that is a reasonable expectation*. Yet God expects the same level of faithfulness from all the members of a church. In His eyes, they are all just as equally important as the pastor. The problem is that too many Christians set the standard for themselves far lower than they do for their pastor. If you want to be promoted in ministry and leadership, show yourself faithful; see yourself now as being in ministry and fulfill your God-mandated responsibility in church attendance.

Man can promote himself, develop programs to build a church or ministry and receive the accolades of people that will increase his popularity in the eyes of many. But that is building your house on sand. You need God's promotion, not that of men. You need God's approval, not man's, as the Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 1:10, ***For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.***

Next month, I am going to continue this teaching about proving yourself ready for God to promote you into His call on your life. Until then, I encourage you to order a copy of my sermon, *Promotion in Ministry*. It will serve to enhance what I've shared this month and what I will be sharing next month. May the joy of the Lord be your strength!

In His Grace,

*Jim*

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☐ Check this box to receive a CD of the sermon, *Promotion in Ministry*.

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