

Ready When You Know You're Not

Exodus 3:7-12

When it comes to serving the Lord, how can anyone know when they are truly ready? The answer may not be what we expect. Moses, for instance, spent 80 years in preparation before beginning his ministry. Through all his years of learning, humility, and growth, Moses discovered a vital truth: the final element of readiness in serving God is knowing that you are not ready, and never will be! In other words, awareness of our inadequacy is the key qualification for ministry.

1. Ready When God Is Ready (v7-9)

It's easy to think that readiness depends on our own sense of preparedness, but God teaches us that readiness is determined by his perfect timing. Moses thought he was ready when he acted on his own and killed the slave-driver in Egypt, but God's plan unfolded when he was ready to act. For 400 years, God's people waited, and it seemed like nothing was happening. But God had a plan, and when he was ready, everything happened at the perfect time.

Just as God was faithful to bring about the birth of Jesus many thousands of years after the promise of Genesis 3:15, he is always on time, never early or late. As servants of the Lord, we must learn to wait patiently for God's perfect timing, trusting that he will act when the time is right. Our role is not to rush ahead but to rest in God's timing, believing that he will act according to his covenant promises, Habakkuk 2:3.

2. Ready When God Calls You (v10)

Moses wasn't ready when he took matters into his own hands in Egypt, but when God called him in the wilderness. The call of God is what makes us ready. Once we are commissioned by God, nothing can stop us from fulfilling his purposes, not even our feelings of inadequacy. Like the disciples who followed Christ despite their weaknesses, we, too, are called by God, not because of our abilities, but because he has chosen us. It was after Peter acknowledged his unworthiness before Jesus that he was sent out to become a fisher of men, Luke 5:1-11.

In relation to Christian ministry today, too many people take it upon themselves, without God's calling. Like Paul, our calling must be both personal (as on the road to Damascus in Acts 9), and confirmed by the church (as in Acts 13:1-4). Both are vital. We cannot afford to appoint ourselves, as Moses did in Egypt – it will inevitably lead to failure. We are ready when God calls and the church sends.

3. Ready When God Has Humbled You (v11)

Moses' question, "Who am I?" reveals his humility. This was not the inward-looking question of a person on a journey of self-discovery, but the question of a man who had been humbled by God. He had learned through failure that he was inadequate. It is not in our strength or wisdom that we are ready to serve, but in our recognition of our utter dependence on God. God does not call the wise, the noble, or the powerful, but those who are humble and meek, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.

Moses' earlier failures and past struggles were part of his preparation. Even though they haunted him, they pushed him to depend fully on God. When we face our own shortcomings,

we must not be discouraged but use them to drive us toward Christ, who is our sufficiency. Christ is able to meet all the needs of his humbled people, Philippians 4:19.

4. Ready When God Is With You (v12a)

Moses asked, "Who am I?" but God's response was, "I will be with you." The key to being ready is not our personal competence, but knowing that God is with us. When Paul was in the midst of the storm, knowing that the ship was going to sink, he didn't rely on his own strength, but trusted in the God who stood with him, Acts 27:23-24. In the same way, we can rest in the assurance that God is with us, enabling us to serve.

God does not assuage our fears by trying to argue they are invalid, but by calling us to trust in one who is greater than our fears, even Christ himself. The story is told of a father whose daughter was afraid of the bogeyman. Trying to tell her there is no bogeyman was to no avail. The father's only recourse was to sit at the foot of his daughter's bed and stand guard while she slept. "If the bogeyman comes out," he said, "he'll have to get through me, and I'm tougher than the bogeyman." There was no sense in denying the fear; it had to be replaced with trust in her father. (Victor Hamilton)

God is greater than our fears. As we follow God's calling, we need to remember that his presence gives us the confidence to move forward, knowing that his power is greater than any obstacle we face. If God be for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31.

5. Ready When God Signifies (v12b)

Finally, God gave Moses a sign: the very place where Moses was now standing in the wilderness of Sinai, was the place where God would reveal himself to his liberated people. What Moses might have seen as 40 wasted years were actually God's perfect preparation for him to lead the Israelites to worship him on that very mountain. God's timing and preparation are often hidden from us, but in due course, he will make his purpose clear, Psalm 37:5-11.

As we look back on our own lives, it's easy to question the significance of past struggles. But when God chooses to reveal his plan, everything will make sense. We need to trust that, in his time, God will show us how he has been preparing us for the work he has called us to.

Are You Ready?

You are ready to serve when you know you are not ready, and never will be. Like Moses, we must come to terms with our inadequacy and trust that our sufficiency comes from God. Through his perfect timing, his call, his humbling process, his presence, and the signs he gives, God prepares us for his service.

So, are you ready? As you surrender to him, trusting that you can do nothing apart from him, you will be made ready to serve.