

WD October 14, 2024

“How Do You Know You Are Ready?”

Much of life is spent getting ready for something. We get ready for church. We get ready for exams. We get ready for our weddings. We get ready to build, for vacation, for the birth of a child, and for numerous other things. But how do you know if you are ready for bigger things like, marriage, career choice, or buying a house. And how about the spiritual things? How about witnessing, or leading a team at church, or just volunteering for something? Well, truth be told, we know sometimes when we are ready but not others. Sometimes it's hard to know for sure if we are ready. And sometimes we know we are definitely not ready.

Let's consider Gideon in Judges 6. We meet Gideon in a time when the Amalekites bullied Israel and stole anything that wasn't nailed down. God calls to Gideon as he is threshing wheat in a wine press in order to avoid any Midianites, Amalekites and eastern peoples from seeing what he is doing and then coming along and stealing it. No doubt Gideon was frustrated by this kind of cowering lifestyle. No doubt he wanted something to change and someone to do something but never imagined himself as the one to do it. Often a sense of readiness starts with something nagging at us. We sense something more is needed, and we sense we should do something, but often we don't know how or where to start. Yet, what we soon discover with Gideon when He is called, is often times to explore that nagging feeling. This nagging feeling made Gideon ready and more open to the Lord's calling.

The Angel of the Lord greets Gideon by saying, “Greetings mighty warrior.” Perhaps that's an important ‘tell’ to know if one is ready for something. Someone who knows us will see something in us that we do not see in ourselves. Gideon's reaction in verse 15 is one of uncertainty. “Are you talking to me? Our clan is the least of the tribes and I am the least in my family.” Hidden within that response is self-doubt but also a curiosity. But the Lord sees something in Gideon; character, wisdom, a building desire to fight back perhaps. I know how powerful an outside view can become and how it can impact. Our first pastor at our first church we ever attended as a family suggested that I be a good pastor. Later a DCE at our second church saw in me the potential of a pastor. The Lord seems to work this way at times. I remained hesitant but I couldn't seem to ignore their observations. The rest is history. Perhaps someone has seen potential in you. You might have a bigger role to play in the ministry of Grace Lutheran. Someone may convince you to sell the house due to health. Maybe you are a hands-on person and more aligned with a trade rather than college and someone suggested that. Sometimes family members will see something in a potential spouse that we also need to see, perhaps second guessing your choice. Like Gideon the Lord speaks through others to point out our potential. Often getting the perspective of someone we trust helps bring objectivity.

Gideon's reaction also signals a readiness. He has a willingness to follow the Lord's instructions. In the verses that follow Gideon welcomes the conversation with the Lord and a willingness to prepare an offering to the Lord who gladly accepts it confirming the credibility of the Lord. The Lord patiently works with Gideon enduring many tests from Gideon to confirm his calling as legit.

Definition is usually the biggest obstacle. What exactly what am I ready for? A lot of times we already know what the topic is if we are honest. As we said, that something will nag at us but it seems to lack definition. The harder question is what exactly am I supposed to do? During VBS volunteers often come in knowing that they are helping with VBS but don't know exactly what to do so I show them and they go to work. I will team them up with a veteran and they get a lot done. Often times though what comes next is more instinctive than distinctive; meaning there may be many ways to accomplish a goal. We are free to use our God given gifts as best seems to us. Here Gideon he was given specific instructions but he was also instinctive in that he devoted himself completely to the cause.

A warm up. Before the Lord calls Gideon to lead the army he first instructs Gideon to stand up to his own relatives including his father. In verses 25-31 Gideon is instructed to sacrifice his father's second bull; to tear down his father's altar to Baal, and build a new altar to the Lord, and then burn the Asherah pole for the fire. In the morning the town's members discover what Gideon had done and threaten to punish him for it. To his credit his father defends Gideon, effectively saying, “If Baal is a god why doesn't he defend himself? Why does he need your help?” Gideon's father understood that Gideon was right in what he did. The incident earned

Gideon a nick name, Jerub-Baal, 'Let Baal contend with him.' It was a big win for Gideon. In that moment Gideon showed a willingness to follow the Lord's instructions.

That's an important point before we go too much further. Spending a lot of time in the Word letting it saturate your thoughts is good and always provides important insights. Please do not misunderstand what I am about to say though. Just like faith without action is dead, so too readiness necessarily means some activeness. The danger is to passively wait for something to hit us. Doing nothing is not going to make us ready. Better to discover what isn't working than to do nothing at all. Just think: It took Edison a thousand tries to get just one lightbulb. In a similar way "trying something" may also be a step toward something else. Sometimes in the real world we first to have a job or do a lot of training before we get where we want to be.

What we learn from Gideon is that He not only interacted with the Lord but Gideon took the necessary small steps in becoming ready for becoming a leader of the people. Pastors likewise study the Bible but need to practice preaching, actually make hospital visits, and learn how to interact with people in order to become truly ready. Teachers go through similar training. Likewise, doctors need to practice on real patients to be ready as a doctor. However, sometimes in the practice is a revelation we may need a new direction. If, I am a teacher and while student teaching I discover I don't really like being around kids I can change gears. This happens all the time. Assuming one remains motivated (Motivation itself is a whole other topic)...Assuming one remains motivated readiness will find its definition and direction. With each step that Gideon took he was growing more defined and ready for leadership.

How do you know you are ready? Note what grabs your attention and emotions. Listen to those who know your strengths and who care about you—they may set you on a path that you didn't foresee. Accept criticism and correction as well—we are not always objective about ourselves or our wants. Be ready to put in the hard work and the time. Be prepared to make sacrifices and make mistakes. Be active in being ready. Most things in life require activeness on our part. Finally, be ready to get out of your comfort zone. In high school I never saw myself as a public speaker. Now I can't quit talking. Readiness is a result of sifting through many things, more than we can necessarily cover today. I just hope that you know that by the Grace of God readiness is within reach in whatever form that may take us. Gideon is a strong witness to this. May the Lord make us all ready for the call of our Savior in whatever form we are led.

Pastor Matt Woods
John 3:30