

2 Corinthians 9:1-5, "Being Ready"

8.15.21

Did you enjoy the Olympics? I did too...and with the passing of these batons, it made me think of the Olympics... You know the United States had some great teams in the Olympics...but we also had some "not-so-great" teams. Like our 4 x 100 meter relay team. The four men were to run 100 meters each and then pass the baton. Look at this baton pass...



As Olympic Great Carl Lewis said, a high school team could make better passes than that. Our team didn't even qualify for the finals. Sad! Why? They weren't prepared! They weren't ready. You know running a track race is about being "Ready" in the blocks...like this...



But, in a relay race, it's ALSO about being ready to pass the baton and receive the baton. Thankfully, our men's 4 x 400 team did that with excellence...



They won the gold medal. So did our women's 4 x 400 team



led by Allison Felix, a believer (second from left) who is 35 years old and a mom... That's the GOLD MEDAL folks! Not just anybody wins those things. The amount of training and sacrifice that GOLD medal athletes go through is probably beyond most of our comprehension.

Hey church...Jesus Christ has called us to train and prepare ourselves for what, a GOLD MEDAL? No! His kingdom! He's called us to take up our cross daily and live for Him. **This morning we're going to talk about "Being Ready!"** Yes, that's a big deal in the Olympics... Like for instance when they were doing the swimming... you'd hear them say: "Take your mark." See the screens:



Of course, "Take your mark" means, "Get Ready" and then the that little buzzer would sound. So, we all know, being "ready" is critical in the Olympics...AND it's critical in the Christian life. We must be ready. We must be prepared or we will not be successful in navigating this crazy world. And if you are a parent in the room...you are running that relay race in which you've got to get the baton safely to your children. The baton of faith! The question is: Are we prepared to do this?

This morning, we continue in our study of 2 Corinthians and we see where the Apostle Paul is trying to encourage the Corinthian church to complete their part of a relief offering to help their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem who are struggling under severe famine and persecution. Unfortunately, in the midst of all of this, accusations of dishonesty were being levied against Paul that was causing doubts in some of the people's minds like: "Would Paul take this money for himself? Is he honest?"

We saw last week, (Paul seeking to protect himself), sends a group of three men into town, who were appointed by the churches in Europe to take up the remaining relief offering. Paul was SO careful in this whole endeavor to be above-board in all that he did so that he now offers yet another

encouragement to “be prepared/be ready” when he arrives. **Watch how many times he says “ready, readiness or be ready.”**

2 Corinthians 9:1-5

¹ Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, ² for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³ But I am sending^[a] the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. ⁴ Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. ⁵ So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift^[b] you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

The Corinthians weren't ready! That's the whole issue! They had started out great...but, fizzled out. It's been a year and yet, they've not finished taking up the relief offering. Apparently, they had set an amount and hadn't reached the finish line. Yet, the Corinthians were more prosperous (because they were so close to Athens)...than their neighbors to the north, the Macedonians, who were living in extremely dire conditions. Paul was greatly disturbed. His goal was to call the Corinthians back to their original desire that they had when they were in the starting blocks!



They had started out great...but, now they're fumbling around.



Paul says, “But, you’ve still got time to make up lost ground...get running...pass the baton and be ready when I get there, otherwise it’s going to be big-time embarrassing for you and for me.” That’s verse 3...

2 Corinthians 9:3

³ But I am sending^[a] the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be.

Would they be ready? That’s the \$64 million question. But, you see, church family, that’s the question for us today, as well? You say, “Uh, we’re not taking up an offering, are we?” No! It’s not a question about money, but it’s still a question of being ready. You say, “Ready for what?” Ready to run the race of this crazy life in this crazy world and contend for the faith of Jesus Christ while doing it. That’s what!

Church, the passage we’ve just looked at is very simple and I was tempted to make it part of next week’s message, but when I saw (several weeks ago) that this passage was coming up on ROP Sunday, the Lord stopped me in my tracks and in my spirit, He said, “Talk about being ready. You’ve got to be ready for what’s here right now!”

Church, we’re living in perilous times. We’re living in a country where we’re being mandated to do all kinds of things...many of which, is against people’s consciences and free-will. We’re living in a country today where it’s okay to discriminate based on a person’s skin color...which is no longer black...but, now white and you need to apologize. Critical Race Theory is from the pit of Hell.

Today, we live in a country where we want to cancel the police, but we want them to show up when we have a march, so they can protect us. We live in a country where you can’t stand up on a college campus at a secular university and say you’re a Christian, because that’s offensive, but you can teach Sex-ed (in our liberal cities) to 1st and 2nd graders...teaching them what it means to be gay, lesbian and transgendered (6 and 7-year-olds). We live in a country today where BIG Tech can censor a sitting senator because they have the audacious gall to question a government agency like the CDC or the NIH. Church, aren’t we “the land of the free and the home of the brave” or are we the land of the sit down and shut up and I tell you what to believe!

Dear brothers and sisters, whether we realize it or not, we're fighting giants today and I am not really concerned about myself or my parent's generation. I'm concerned about making sure we pass the baton to the 20, 30, and 40-year-olds who are raising kids today. We've got to run like the 4 x 400 teams and not sloppy 4 x 100 team. I want to show you how we've got to Be Ready! AND we're going to see this from the perspective of David and Goliath.

As you're turning, I want to say this: Church, we've got to raise some David's...those who will fight the Goliath's of our day. You see, our children are facing cultural giants today that our generation could never have imagined. They're being hit in the face with secularism, socialism, sexual immorality and overt depravity. And here's the cold-hard-truth: **IF** they seek to stand for Christ, they will be hit with a barrage of hate and intolerance...hate and intolerance that will be used to disparage and ultimately, seek to shame them into silence and eventually eliminate their faith.

Therefore, we have to equip and prepare them for this adversity so they can thrive in knowing that they are doing something bigger than them! Like when David slew Goliath...which literally rallied an entire nation. We're going to start at the end of the chapter...after David defeated Goliath, because this is so interesting! You might not know this part:

1 Samuel 17:55-58

⁵⁵ As soon as Saul saw David go out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this youth?" And Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I do not know." ⁵⁶ And the king said, "Inquire whose son the boy is." ⁵⁷ And as soon as David returned from the striking down of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. ⁵⁸ And Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

You may read this and say, "Wait a minute, I thought Saul knew David?" Well, he did. If you know the account, Saul tried to put his armor on David and it didn't fit...so yes, Saul knew David, but not really. I believe when David went down in that valley to fight Goliath, Saul must have thought, "This kid is going to go down there and fight this giant man who is twice his size. Yeah right." But, then there is David standing, holding Goliath's head in his hand! WHO IS THIS YOUNG MAN?

Well, this young man is someone who was prepared for this day and this occurred over a great period of time. *I want to show you 5 things about David that we need to hear today so that we can be prepared for the giants of our day, and so we can properly pass the baton of faith to our kids.*

Being Ready: #1 David was willing to do the little things

David woke up that morning and was tending his flock of sheep like he did every day...showing he had a great work ethic...but, his dad came and told him to take some snacks (some bread and cheese) to his brothers. And he did. Think about it...in a matter of hours, David would go down in history as one of the greatest warriors of all time. We all know this account of David vs. Goliath is known by almost everyone. Yes, that morning, David was tending sheep and then minutes later, carrying nabs to his brothers. David was obedient to do what he was told. He was a worker. Are you? Will you do the menial tasks, or do you have to be in the spotlight? So much of life is being willing to work hard when no one is watching. David did that.

Being Ready: #2 David had great courage

David shows up to the battlefield and hears this blow-hard, Goliath, spouting off curses against God and his nation, the nation of Israel, and this has been going on for **40 DAYS (vs 16)**... and

David looks around and says, "Isn't anyone going to do anything about this guy? Why are you guys just standing here" Look at verse 26.

1 Samuel 17:26

²⁶ And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

Now, you need to understand something. The reason David wasn't in the army, (in the first place), is because he was only a "Na'ar." That's Hebrew for a "lad," or a "boy," or what we'd call a teenager. Look at the depiction of the size difference.



And BTW, do you see the sling he used. It wasn't a sling-shot, but a sling that had a leather pouch and you would release one end and it would send the stone. **The point is...David was a teenager;** and yet, he had had the courage to say: "I'll go fight him." Look at verse 32.

1 Samuel 17:32-36

³² And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." ³³ And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." ³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵ I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. ³⁶ Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God."

Wow! You know David could have died, and he knew it, but he went down into that valley anyway. One of the questions the ROP young adults have to answer (and Michaella mentioned it in the video) is **What would you do if you had only two weeks to live?** Why do I ask them that question? To get them to think about what's really important. Have you thought about that lately? What would you do if only had two weeks to live? **Hey church, why don't you just go ahead and do that...**because that's what's most important, right? David knew he could die and he went anyway...that's courage! We've got to have courage today to fight the giants who are big and loud and defy the Living God!

So, what have we seen thus far?

Being Ready: #1 David was willing to do the little things

Being Ready: #2 David had great courage

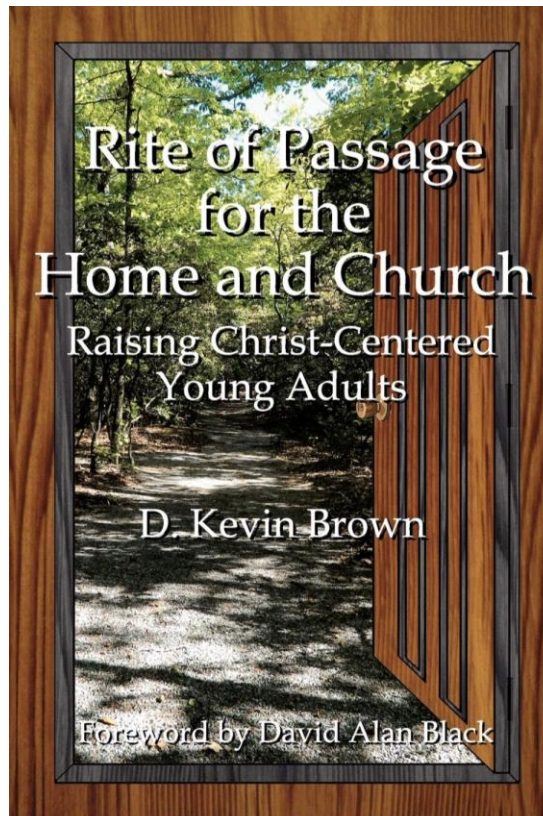
Being Ready: #3 David had high expectations of himself

When he came to King Saul and said, “I can do the job,” he basically laid out his resume of all that he had done. You see, David didn’t fall for the trap of **low expectations** that many people (including Christians) fall for today. Most people and most parents, even don’t expect much. Most parents simply don’t expect much AT ALL spiritually from their kids. They have no spiritual goals for them. Yes, we want them to BECOME Christians when they’re young and to be moral and honest people, but beyond these elementary goals, we have few expectations. And this is what that looks like:

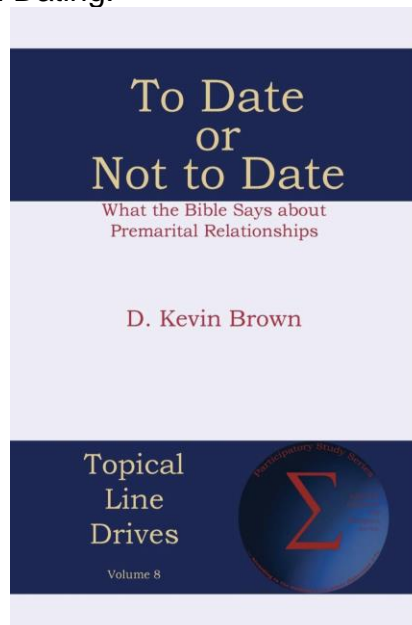


The Apostle John said in 3 John 4: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” Is that you? Listen, do you want to know how you can tell what your greatest joy is in regards to your children? It’s what you talk about on Facebook and Instagram and tell your coworkers about your kids. It’s what you brag about with family and friends. I’ve found for many parents it’s about: school, sports, grades, boyfriends/girlfriends, jobs and making money.

So maybe we could say it this way: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are: climbing the corporate ladder, or making a ton of money, or playing professional sports, or making front page headlines in the local paper, while dating the best-looking person in school.” Do we really think we’re going to raise champions for Christ if Christ isn’t important in our homes? This is why I wrote ROP. I want you to **take one from the table up front.**



and also get a copy of my book on Dating.



What does the Bible say about it?

You see, church family, when I wrote those books years ago, I did so because I desperately want to get the baton of faith in Christ passed down to the next generation. And to do that...we've got to start training them when they're young. I mean REALLY young. Like toddlers! No joke! And mom and dad, this is training process lasts only a few years. By the time a child hits middle school, their worldview is almost completely formed. Mom/Dad what role are you having in shaping their worldview? Are you doing the training and the work of raising your children or is it their cellphone

and their peers? Here's the big question: **Are you having spiritual conversations with your kids?**

I know these are hard questions...but, we've got a new school year starting...and that's wonderful. But listen, yes, I know we have great teachers in our local schools; but, they can't teach about Jesus, and unfortunately, the curriculum that's been passed down from the education elites is filled with godless, secular humanism... and it's sad to say and is unfortunate, but more and more teachers are moving into our communities that haven't been raised in our churches, but instead they've been trained on a steady diet of progressive liberalism taught in many of our secular universities.

So, mom and dad, you better be debriefing your child every day by asking, "What are you learning?" It's your job to know what they're learning. It's your job to know the curriculum. It's your job to train your child in the ways of the Lord and get the baton to them...the schools aren't going to do that. That's your job. Your children are YOUR children, not the government's.

David had high expectations and we must too! #4 and this is a BIG ONE!
Being Ready: #4 David didn't let his peers negatively influence him

Look at verse 28 with me. Even his own family was negative toward him. Jesus faced that too!

1 Samuel 17:28-30

²⁸ Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." ²⁹ And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?" ³⁰ And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before.

Eliab thought he was show-boating. Listen, when you live for the Lord, there's going to be plenty of nay-sayers and they can be really loud! You have to just stick to your guns and contend for the faith. David just turned away from this negativity...maybe you need to do that too. Listen, do what the Lord has told you to do and keep on trucking and don't listen to the naysayers! **Last one...**

Being Ready: #1 David was willing to do the little things

Being Ready: #2 David had great courage

Being Ready: #3 David had high expectations of himself

Being Ready: #4 David didn't let his peers negatively influence him

Being Ready: #5 David trusted God totally

Watch his response to Saul...when Saul said you are too young to go fight him!

1 Samuel 17:37

³⁷ And David said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you!"

You know, as I thought about David's supreme confidence in the Lord. I was really awed by his commitment as a na'ar, a teenager. Yet, in reading the answers of the young adults who completed ROP this year, I was reminded, yet again...that there is no teenage Holy Spirit and Adult Holy Spirit, there is one Holy Spirit and when He is allowed to control our lives, it doesn't matter if you're 15, 55 or 85 people will be able to see if we're truly committed by how we live, not JUST by what we say.

One of the study questions in ROP is **“What does it mean to be 100% committed to Jesus.”** I want you to see and hear Jady Cothren’s answer. It’s fantastic!

What does it mean to be 100% committed to Christ?

“A young adult who is 100% committed to following Christ is going to look like Christ. To fully follow Christ is to put Christ in every aspect of your life. Your behavior and how you respond needs to depict Christ and if you are committed to him you will. Your actions will say, it's not about me, it's about the Lord. Young adults need to depict Christ in every aspect of their lives, even the little things need to show Christ. The way you talk should be like how Jesus spoke.

Being fully committed to Christ means never taking a day off. Being committed to Christ means sticking with Jesus and not giving up when things get messy. If we have a desire to follow Christ, we should want to be like him. Being committed 100% to Christ means devoting every second of your being to his will and purpose. Being committed to Christ is saying that you will serve him no matter what the world will do to you. Your actions, your body language, your speech, and everything within you should be a picture of Christ. Being committed to Christ is saying I don’t care what the world says, I choose to follow Jesus.

Following Christ may cost you everything, but if you are committed 100%, you’re not going to care what happens to you. If a young person is committed to Christ, they will give everything to his will and purpose. Christ is the head coach and you are the player, if you are committed to Jesus, you will run the play he has for your life.

With Jesus it's like skydiving, once you've jumped out of the plane there is no turning back. Being fully committed to Jesus Christ means to me that once you've dove into him, every ounce of your life should serve and reflect him, and you're not going to turn back when life gets ugly. A young person who is 100% committed to Christ will look like him, will talk like him, will act like him, they will be like Christ. Your actions should reflect who you are, what you believe, and who you stand for. And if you are committed to Christ in everything that you do, he will shine in you for the world to see.” Jady Cothren, ROP 2021

Wow! Just wow! That’s “David-kind-of-talk!!” You see, that’s 1 Timothy 4:12...

1 Timothy 4:12

¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

This is what I want for our kids...



To get a gold medal at the Olympics? No! To live for Jesus for the crowns that we'll be given in heaven...because that's where we headed. Heaven is the goal...not the temporary, transient stuff of this life. Mom and dad, we've got to be prepared, and then, we've got to prepare our children and grandchildren, because the gun has fired; any yet, many are still stuck in the starting blocks.

How are you training your children? Do you have a plan? Are you raising David's? To raise them, you will have to spend time with them. Kids spell LOVE- T-i-m-e! Or, when speaking of raising your kids, you can let their peers, schools and social media raise them. And that will turn out like this...



We'll never get the baton passed. So, the sacrifice we make must be and will be in direct proportion to how much we value the mission. "The mission?" Building Christ-Centered Christians. Building a generation of young people who will be strong enough spiritually to make it in a world that is now mostly "anti-Christian" and "anti-God," and they will stand up to those giants!

So what do we do? We train...we make them ready... How? 5 things and we're done. Watch:

1. Pray over them out loud. Let them hear you call their name to Jesus A LOT!
2. Eat meals together at a table. That's where faith is transferred
3. Make sure your children "own" their faith. It must be theirs, not yours
4. Seize the day! Be intentional with your time. Talk, talk, talk to them every day

5. Teach, teach, teach the Word of God in your home. Have high SPIRITUAL expectations for your children. **Every home is a classroom, what is yours teaching?**
