

PUT AWAY YOUR **SWORD**

and

GRAB YOUR NET



PART FOUR

IMPORTUNITY

vs

OPPORTUNITY

Part Four - Importunity VS Opportunity

Scripture Readings

Matthew 13:47-51 (NKJV)

47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, 48 which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

51 Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?"

They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."

2 Timothy 4:1-5 (NKJV)

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Introduction

Today I'm burdened to share with you an important aspect of our series "Put Away Your Sword & Grab Your Net." I believe it is a prophetic message to the Body of Christ today and there are layers to our understanding of these 2 objects highlighted in this message:

The Sword

- the weapon that Peter used to defend Jesus
- the weapon that represented the opposite nature of his calling (to be a fisher of men)
- the sword that could make immediate impact and also do the most harm

The Net — Persistent / Importunate

- the tool that Jesus met Peter using
- the tool that would be at the core of Peter's calling
- the net that would draw more people to Christ Jesus
- the net that doesn't discriminate but gathers all.

But there's a deeper level to this contrast of the sword and the net that I want to share with you and it's connected to these two very significant words: "importunity and opportunity."

Importunity vs Opportunity

Importunity is defined as:

- persistence
- urgency
- pressing
- insistence
- petitioning

Opportunity is defined as:

- the right moment
- a favorable condition
- a chance to do/say something
- a rare opening

When it comes to the uses of these two words in the Bible, the Word of God shows us the following:

The Sword — Opportunity Driven

- reacts to moments
- waits for openings
- responds to situations

"I'll act when the moment presents itself"

The Net — Persistent / Importunity Driven

- steady
- consistent
- message-centered

- not dependent on conditions

"I will proclaim whether the moment is perfect or not"

2 Timothy 4:2 (NKJV)

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season..."

Living By The Sword

Matthew 26:52 (NKJV)

52 But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

- The sword by nature is a weapon of "Opportunity."
- It's design is made to be used at the right moment
 - to strike when there's an opening
 - it cannot hit every target in a wide area
 - it can only hit one target at a time
 - it cannot be used all of the time—just the right time

We've all been raised in a society that highlights taking advantage of "the right moment."

- success stories built on "the right moment"
- going viral is such a random occurrence and many times its for something that you didn't even intend
- waiting for the right time to "shoot your shot."
- waiting for the right platform to "shine."

While timing is a critical part of being obedient to the Lord and moving when it's time to move, it can lead Christians to believe that the right things only happen at "the right time." And that is a very narrow minded way of thinking when it comes to living by faith.

If the right things only happen at the right time, it means that we live according to unplanned convenience; happenstance; good fortune; favor. And the desire to experience more of these things leads to unhealthy behavior:

- we become "opportunistic"
 - attention seeking behavior
 - clout chasers
 - aligning ourselves with others who have what we want
 - always positioning ourselves to "try to get on."
 - putting more weight on what others do or say versus what's in your heart
 - selfish and not sharing
 - waiting and not moving

Living By the Net

Matthew 13:47

47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind,

- the net by nature is a tool of "Importunity."
- it's design allows it to be used over a wide area, to capture a great number of things

- multiple objects can be captured at once or over time
- the net can be used again and again

We're not all raised to "fish." Fishing takes:

- patience
- persistence
- consistency
- insistence
- steadiness

When Jesus first met his disciples, they had been toiling all night long trying to catch fish and importunity can sometimes feel like "I've been at this for a long long time and I haven't gotten anything for it yet!"

That long time of not being able to reap where you've sown can feel like "it's just not my season." But importunity teaches us to always have seed in the ground! And when it comes to the Gospel—there's no waiting around for followers to preach it!

- **Importunity can often feel like failure...until it produces fruit!**
- **Just because nothing is happening yet, doesn't mean that nothing is happening at all**

2Timothy 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

- The Gospel is not seasonal—it's constant!
- Where the sword looks for the right moment, the net always carries the message
- Where "Opportunity" says 'when it's convenient, I'll do it' "Importunity" says 'whether it's convenient or not, I'll do it!'

Importunity refuses to stop!

Luke 18:3-5 (NKJV)

3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' "

This widow kept coming back to this crooked judge for justice day after day and after a while, he couldn't keep dismissing her case, he had to grant her what she desired just so she would leave him alone.

Story Reference

There's a young couple by the name of Steven Urkel and Laura Winslow—you might know them:

- Ever since they were kids, Steve loved Laura, and Laura couldn't stand Steve.
- Every day, Steve would show up with some grand gesture of his expression of love for Laura, and somehow manage making the biggest blunders and often asked the question "did I do that??"
- Yet after all the embarrassing moments, the loud refusals from Laura, the yelling from her father Karl to "go home go home go home Steve!"
- When they got older and Laura saw that "El Mira" was interested in Steve, something inside her burst open.
- Every gesture of love, every attempt to gain her affection, every time Steve went out of his way to protect

her, fight for her, love her and respect her, all came rushing back to her and she realized she was truly loved by Steve and her heart opened and loved him back deeply.

- El Mira tried her best but didn't stand a chance, because Laura realized that out of all the guys she dated, none of them were going to love her like Steve!
- Since they were kids til they were young adults, Steve would grab his suspenders and shimmy side to side and say to Laura "I'm wearing you down baby!"
- And the happy ending of the story and the final season was that Steve DID get the girl he'd loved for all those seasons.

The Importunity of the Gospel creates The Opportunity for the Holy Spirit

"The Holy Spirit doesn't just move in moments...

He moves through persistent witnesses."

"Importunity prepares the atmosphere...

Opportunity is just where it becomes visible."

I wonder if we truly have that kind of persistence when it comes to the Gospel and sharing it with others?

- how many times have we said "I'm just waiting for the right moment"
- how many days, weeks, months, years passed us by because the moment never felt right
- are we afraid to trip over awkwardness, unsure if we'll have the right words, trying to create the right atmosphere

- Urgent messages don't wait for the right time. They are always on "broadcast level" so that that message is not missed.

- Is the Gospel message urgent enough to you to share NOW versus "one day"

For those feeling that call to come and follow Jesus:

- When does "someday" become "today?"
- When do you realize that you've needed to start following Jesus "yesterday?"

If you're hear and you recognize that some day is today—I'm here to tell you "this is your moment." Begin following Jesus today!