BREAKING THE CYCLE OF UNPREPAREDNESS (II)

GETTING YOU READY FOR WHAT GOD IS PREPARING YOU TO DO

Bishop P. O. Rodgers, ThD

Primary Scripture

Joshua 3:3–4 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God prepares us for unfamiliar seasons by teaching us to recognize His leading, trust His timing, and follow His presence rather than relying solely on past experiences.

Introduction

Have you ever found yourself standing before an opportunity, a challenge, or a transition and realized that what worked before might not work now?

Israel faced that very situation at the Jordan River. After forty years in the wilderness, they were finally preparing to enter the land God had promised them. But there was a problem: they had never crossed this way before.

Not only was the destination unfamiliar, but the manner in which God was directing them required renewed attention.

In the previous message, Bishop Rodgers challenged us to stop focusing exclusively on where God is taking us and begin examining the baggage we may be carrying.

We learned three important lessons:

1. We must break the cycle of living unprepared.

2. Preparation requires consecration.

3. Stop expecting a new season with old habits.

Now, the message continues with three additional lessons about learning to follow God, recognizing His timing, and facing the challenges that often accompany transition.

Key Teaching Points

4. Learn to Follow God Differently

JOSHUA 3:3–4; EXODUS 25:22

For forty years, the Israelites had become accustomed to God's guidance through the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

As they prepared to cross the Jordan, they were instructed to watch the Ark of the Covenant, which symbolized God's presence among His people.

The Ark going before them was an encouragement to their faith. It reassured them that God was going before them and opening the way.

Joshua explained the reason for their careful attention: they had not passed that way before.

This instruction emphasized the unfamiliar journey ahead and, as Bishop Rodgers teaches, the different manner in which the people were now being directed.

Key truths:

- God's presence remains essential even when the manner of His guidance changes.

- Previous experiences are valuable, but they cannot replace present attentiveness to God.

- Unfamiliar circumstances require renewed dependence upon Him.

- Following God means remaining sensitive to His direction rather than becoming overly dependent on familiar routines.

Memorable statement:

Yesterday's experience alone cannot guide tomorrow's journey. We must have God's presence.

Familiar seasons can tempt us to depend primarily on experience. Unfamiliar seasons challenge us to depend upon God.

Life application: Think about an area of your life where you have become comfortable doing things a certain way. Are you allowing past experience to prevent you from recognizing how God may be directing you today?

You don't have to know the road when you know the One who's leading you.

5. Don't Move Ahead of God

JOSHUA 3:4; ISAIAH 40:31

The Israelites were instructed to maintain a specific distance between themselves and the Ark.

This instruction had an important purpose. It allowed the people to see where the Ark was leading, while also honoring the holiness associated with God's presence.

Bishop Rodgers draws two practical lessons from their positioning.

First, position yourself to discern God's direction.

If the people could not clearly see the Ark, they would struggle to follow its movement.

Similarly, we must remain spiritually attentive through Scripture, prayer, and fellowship with the church.

If you are struggling to discern God's will, Bishop Rodgers challenges you to examine your spiritual location.

Are you cultivating habits that help you recognize God's direction, or are you allowing distractions to interfere with your attentiveness?

Second, don't prevent others from recognizing God's direction.

Israel's positioning also allowed others to see the Ark.

Our attitudes, conduct, and participation in the work of the church can either help others recognize God's way or make their journey more difficult.

Continual opposition, unnecessary distractions, and a refusal to cooperate can interfere with the spiritual growth of those around us.

Beyond these two lessons, Bishop Rodgers warns against becoming so excited about a new season that we begin running ahead of God.

Three important reminders:

- Not every opportunity is God's direction.

- Not every open door is God's assignment.

- Not everything that looks good is God's best.

Spiritual preparation includes developing sensitivity to know when to move, where to move, how to move, and sometimes when not to move.

Isaiah 40:31 reminds us that waiting on the Lord is connected to renewed strength.

Life application: Before making a significant decision, examine whether you are responding to God's direction or simply reacting to an exciting opportunity.

Waiting is not necessarily a sign of inactivity. Sometimes, waiting is an expression of trust.

6. Your Jordan May Be Proof That You're Close

JOSHUA 3:15

After forty years in the wilderness, Israel finally arrived at the Jordan River.

They had survived difficult seasons, experienced God's provision, and witnessed His faithfulness. Yet another obstacle stood between them and the land they had been promised.

To make matters more challenging, the Jordan was overflowing its banks during harvest season.

From a human perspective, the timing might have appeared inconvenient. The river was not at its easiest point to cross.

But the Jordan was not proof that God had abandoned them. It marked the place where they were approaching a significant transition.

Bishop Rodgers highlights the Hebrew word abar, meaning to cross over or pass through, and connects it to the idea of transition.

Sometimes God allows us to see the difficulty before us so we can better appreciate what He accomplishes on our behalf.

Key truths:

- An obstacle does not automatically mean that God has changed His plan.
- Difficult circumstances do not necessarily indicate divine rejection.
- The presence of a challenge does not cancel God's previous faithfulness.
- The God who sustained Israel throughout the wilderness was also able to bring them across the Jordan.

Memorable statement:

Don't mistake difficulty for denial. You may simply be standing at your Jordan.

Life application: When you encounter resistance during a season of transition, don't immediately assume that you have reached a dead end. Examine the situation prayerfully and remember how God has guided you through previous challenges.

Supporting Scriptures

Exodus 25:22: God promised to meet and communicate with His people from above the mercy seat, reinforcing the significance of the Ark.

Exodus 33:14: God's promise to Moses emphasizes the assurance of His accompanying presence.

Joshua 3:5: Joshua instructed the Israelites to sanctify themselves in preparation for what God would do among them.

Joshua 3:15: The overflowing Jordan emphasizes the challenge Israel faced as they approached the crossing.

Isaiah 40:31: Trusting and waiting upon the Lord are associated with renewed strength and endurance.

Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between following God and simply repeating what worked in the past?

2. Why can familiarity sometimes become an obstacle to recognizing God's direction?

3. What spiritual habits help you remain attentive to God's leading?

4. How might our actions or attitudes make it easier or more difficult for others to recognize God's direction?

5. What is the difference between moving in faith and running ahead of God?

6. What current obstacle in your life might require you to exercise greater trust in God's timing?

7. How can remembering God's past faithfulness encourage you without causing you to rely exclusively on past experiences?

Practical Application

Examine your spiritual position.

Identify one distraction, attitude, or habit that may be interfering with your ability to discern God's direction.

Evaluate an important decision.

Consider whether you have been waiting for direction or trying to force a particular outcome.

Consider your influence on others.

Examine whether your words and actions help others follow God's direction.

Identify your Jordan.

Name a current challenge, then reflect on how God's faithfulness in previous seasons can strengthen your trust in Him today.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for being faithful in every season of our lives. Forgive us for the times we have depended more on our experience than on Your direction, or allowed our excitement to move us ahead of Your timing.

Teach us to recognize Your leading, to remain attentive to Your Word, and to develop the discernment necessary to follow You faithfully.

Help us become people who make it easier for others to see Your goodness and understand Your ways.

And when we stand before our Jordan, remind us that difficulty does not mean You have abandoned us. Give us the courage to trust You in unfamiliar territory and the patience to wait for Your direction.

We believe that the same God who has brought us this far is able to lead us forward.

In Jesus' name, Amen.