

## Preparing Ourselves for God's Wonders

**Intro:** There are times God deals with us as individuals and there are times God deals with us as a group. As Americans, we struggle with the latter. We have so individualized our relationship with Jesus to such an extent that we have forgotten we are part of a collective experience. We follow Jesus as individuals but we also follow Jesus together. This group I am referring to is called the church.

There are times when God is doing something big that it requires a group response. God is doing more than simply working in an individual. God is doing something big and He wants us to collectively follow. A response from only a few individuals will not get the job done.

I believe we are at one of these moments as a church. God is on the move in our community and beyond. I believe we are getting close to a tipping point where we will see God do wonders in our midst none of us have ever witnessed before. We will see tangible demonstrations of His power of transformation. (Refer to the vision statement on wall) BUT, this requires us to prepare ourselves for the wonders of God that are coming.

When God is about to move in new ways, the people of God are always called upon to prepare themselves. God asks us to “get ready”. Today, this is what we are going to talk about. As Fall approaches, it is time for us to prepare for God is about to do.

Summarize Josh 1-3. This is a story about God asking the people of Israel to get ready for something big He was going to do.

*Josh. 3:5 “Then Joshua said to the people, “Sanctify yourselves [for His purpose], for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders (miracles) among you.” (AMP)*

How do we prepare ourselves for what God wants to do? What is the collective response God is asking from us as a church?

### 1. We Prepare Spiritually

How do we prepare spiritually for what God wants to do?

- The term “sanctify yourselves” is used in the bible as a description of setting yourself aside from the world in order to be used by God for His purposes. The term is connected with the word holy.

*Lev. 20:7 “So set yourselves apart to be holy, for I am the LORD your God.” (NLT)* So what does this mean for us? How do we do this?

- Spiritual preparation requires embracing godly purpose

Listen to this message at [foothillsonline.com](http://foothillsonline.com)

Page 1

*“Sanctify yourselves [for His purpose] We prepare spiritually by first believing we are called to something great...something bigger than ourselves...something God has ordained for us to participate in. We sanctify ourselves ‘FOR HIS PURPOSE”.*

- We do not set ourselves apart for our purpose / our agenda / our ideas. We are willing to alter of lives so that we can be a part of the purposes of God. We set ourselves apart for this. We prioritize our lives for this.
- Let me ask you a question. Do you want to be a part of what God is doing? Do you want to participate in the purposes of God? Do you believe He is asking you to be a part of His godly purposes right now at this point in history?
- Unless we collectively embrace this, our collective response will be apathy. We all must accept the call of God upon our lives for this moment. I realize many of you struggle accepting that you are called by God...BUT you are!

*Eph. 4:1 “Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.” (NLT)*

- Can you hear the desperation in the voice of the Apostle Paul as he writes this from prison? “I beg you...” This is important!!!
- Unless you accept this calling, this next step will never happen. You will have no motivation to follow it.

- Spiritual preparation requires a removal of hindrances to that purpose

Often we all have things in our lives that will get in the way of God using us to accomplish great things. This is not about trying to be perfect. It is being willing to walk away from behaviors / attitudes / values / or thinking that is not consistent with where Jesus is leading us.

*II Tim. 2:20-21 “In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. <sup>21</sup> Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.” (NIV)*

- As followers of Jesus we are all instruments for special purposes. You were not made for common use. You have been saved / adopted / gifted and empowered to fulfill the purposes of God in this generation. This hardly makes you common. Jesus is calling each of us to stop living a common life.
- Of course you may have a common job / but He wants to use your life and influence in a very uncommon way. Will you allow Him to do so?

How?

- Will you be willing to remove the things in your life that are hindering God from using you? This is part of setting yourself apart for godly purposes. You are willing to throw off those things that are keeping you from following Jesus; those things that keep tripping you up.
- It is where you finally realize you will never be able to follow Jesus into something great unless you leave certain things behind. Those old habits just can't go into the

Listen to this message at [foothillsonline.com](http://foothillsonline.com)

Page 2

Promised land / that old behavior / that self-centered world view / that thinking that tells you God can't use you.

- Where Jesus is leading us is so great, it motivates me to leave behind my worldly baggage. We finally understand this choice: Hang on to my worldly stuff and forfeit the purpose for God; OR Follow Jesus across the river and leave my worldly baggage behind.
- Fall is a great time to set yourself apart / sanctify yourself for the purposes of God. Let me encourage you to spend some time in prayer asking Him what baggage He is wanting you to leave behind so you can follow His purpose.

## 2. We Prepare Progressively

*Josh. 3:14-15 "So the people **left their camp** to cross the Jordan, and the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them. <sup>15</sup> It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks..." (NLT)*

- The wonders of God were not waiting for the Israelites "in camp". The wonders of God were waiting to be experienced only as they left camp and approached the waters of the Jordan at flood stage. They left camp and walked towards the impossible.
- We prepare progressively as we embrace the truth that we must keep following Jesus into the unfamiliar...into the unknown...into what seems impossible. Our relationship with Jesus is progressive. We're always leaving camp into another adventure. He is always asking us to leave camp and follow Him towards the impossible.
- Pioneers Vs Settlers mentality- explain
- Our calling as a church is to be spiritual pioneers in this area. We are progressively moving forward into new territory. We are never looking to settle. We are always picking up camp and moving towards another obstacle that Jesus is leading us to overcome.
- Here in a couple weeks we will be having our open house and will be celebrating the completion of this phase of the building project. This is a tremendous accomplishment that Jesus has lead us through. We need to celebrate this well and give God all the glory for this.
- BUT, after we celebrate, we will leave camp once again and resume the journey. There are more rivers to cross. Jesus continues to lead us towards the impossible. We will begin the next fundraising efforts (explain)
- BUT, there is more than a building going on here. There are other projects we are currently working on.
  - We are developing a counseling center
  - We are exploring opening up a free medical clinic in town
  - We would love to expand our Resource Center services – maybe even expand that facility.

Listen to this message at [foothillsonline.com](http://foothillsonline.com)

Page 3

- Our Guatemala ministry needs to purchase property and build a school
- How we get ready preparing to follow Jesus into to something big is to think progressively. Jesus is on the move and we must always be willing to leave camp (leave the familiar) in order to follow Jesus into the next miracle.

### 3. We Prepare Relationally

*Josh 3:17 “Meanwhile, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed as the people passed by. They waited there **until the whole nation of Israel had crossed the Jordan on dry ground.**” (NLT)*

- How do we prepare relationally? We follow Jesus into the miraculous together. The whole group of us. It’s not enough for some of us to follow. He is calling all of us.
- Unity is more than saying we get along. Unity moves together. Unity is demonstrated by our ability to follow Jesus into the miraculous together.
- If we want to see the waters part then we must follow Jesus into the impossible together. We can’t have people on the river bank with arms folded refusing to cross with a “wait and see” attitude.
- There is spiritual power in unity. It is something that God promises to bless. It is something that evokes spiritual power. Unity is what the Kingdom of God looks like.

*Ps. 133:1,3 “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity...For there the LORD has commanded the blessing....” (NLT)*

- The blessing of God does not happen because there was great planning or talented leaders. The blessing of God is commanded where there is unity following Jesus together.
- This is why Satan fights against unity in churches. If he can destroy the unity in a church he can keep that church from following Jesus and he can remove the blessing of God from that group of people.

What are practical steps we all can take to better prepare relationally for what God is doing?

- Be aware of your own critical spirit – We live in such a critical environment right now in our country. It’s hard for this not to creep into our hearts. Ask God to protect your heart from this daily.
- Be godly in your relationships – Hold your relationships to a higher standard. What do I mean? Practice forgiveness / resist gossip / pray for the people you struggle with / do the loving thing regardless how you feel / talk issues out in private rather than Facebook. We must have a higher relational standard than the world.
- Be a participator not a spectator – Unity is a participation sport. If you are not already actively involved somewhere, how can you get involved? Unity is cultivated through participation. When I serve alongside someone, there is a greater sense of unity than if you simply sit in the blue chair. We cross the river together.

Listen to this message at [foothillsonline.com](http://foothillsonline.com)

Page 4

- Be Humble – Often, it is easy for us to forget our own brokenness and flaws as we relate to others. No matter how long we have been on this journey with Jesus, my need for Jesus is still as desperate as everyone else's. Humility is a unifier. Pride will always destroy unity. Our pride must be checked at the cross every day if we going to follow Jesus into the miraculous. This story is all about Jesus not us. His Story...His Glory!
- Be prayerful – We need to pray like never before. We need to pray unlike any other time in our history. We need a collective response in prayer that rattles the gates of hell and one that summons the armies of God. The tipping point is here. It is time the people of God must pray.
  - Pray for your church / pray for obedience / pray for a willingness to follow Jesus no matter where He leads. Pray for unity
  - At the end of October I am going to give the church a BHAG prayer goal. (explain BHAG)

Are we ready to follow Jesus on our next great adventure? Are we willing to get ourselves ready for the journey? Can we set ourselves apart for His purposes and the next miracle?

Listen to this message at [foothillsonline.com](http://foothillsonline.com)

Page 5