

An Unfinished Life Part 4

My days come and go swifter than the click of knitting needles, and then the yarn runs out—an unfinished life! Job 7:6 (MSG)

Watch your step, use your head, make the most of every chance you get... Ephesians 5:16 (MSG)

*So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?” He replied, “**The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses,** telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* Acts 1:6-8 (NLT)

There is order in the Kingdom, just like there is order in the human body:

The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12 (NLT)

But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NLT)

- **The value of your life should never be measured by the things you possess.**
- **The value of your life should never be measured by the position you hold.**
- **The value of your life is measured by finishing the work Jesus assigned you.**

Assignments can change as directed by the Holy Spirit:

*Meanwhile, the believers who had been scattered during the persecution after Stephen’s death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria. They preached the word of God, but only to Jews. **However, some of the believers who went to Antioch from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to the Gentiles about the Lord Jesus. The power of the Lord was with them, and a large number of these Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.** When the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw this evidence of God’s blessing, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And many people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul. When he found him, he*

*brought him back to Antioch. Both of them stayed there with the church for a full year, teaching large crowds of people. (It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.) **During this time some prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up in one of the meetings and predicted by the Spirit that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world. (This was fulfilled during the reign of Claudius.) So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of the church in Jerusalem.*** Acts 11:19-30 (NLT)

When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission to Jerusalem, they returned, taking John Mark with them. Acts 12:25 (NLT)

Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. Acts 13:1-4 (NKJV)

“And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again. I declare today that I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it’s not my fault, for I didn’t shrink from declaring all that God wants you to know. “So guard yourselves and God’s people. Feed and shepherd God’s flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders.(overseers) I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following. Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you. “And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself. “I have never coveted anyone’s silver or gold or fine clothes. You know that these hands of mine have worked to supply my own needs and even the needs of those who were with me. And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: It is more blessed to give than to receive.” When he had finished speaking, he knelt and prayed with them. They all cried as they embraced and kissed him good-bye. They were sad most of all because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they escorted him down to the ship.” Acts 20:25-36 (NLT)

Preaching the Kingdom, serving others and generosity will always be the evidence of a life that is lived in obedience to God.

After saying farewell to the Ephesian elders, we sailed straight to the island of Cos. The next day we reached Rhodes and then went to Patara. There we boarded a ship sailing for Phoenicia. We sighted the island of Cyprus, passed it on our left, and landed at the harbor of Tyre, in Syria, where the ship was to unload its cargo. We went ashore, found the local believers, and stayed with them a week. **These believers prophesied through the Holy Spirit that Paul should not go on to Jerusalem.** When we returned to the ship at the end of the week, the entire congregation, including women and children, left the city and came down to the shore with us. There we knelt, prayed, and said our farewells. Then we went aboard, and they returned home. The next stop after leaving Tyre was Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters and stayed for one day. **The next day we went on to Caesarea and stayed at the home of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven men who had been chosen to distribute food. He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy. Several days later a man named Agabus, who also had the gift of prophecy, arrived from Judea. He came over, took Paul's belt, and bound his own feet and hands with it. Then he said, "They Holy Spirit declares, 'So shall the owner of this belt be bound by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and turned over to the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the local believers all begged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. But he said, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but even to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." When it was clear that we couldn't persuade him, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."** Acts 21:1-13 (NLT)

Motivational Gifts:

In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. **Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.** Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. Romans 12:6-13 (NLT)

Ministry Gifts:

For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ. That is why the Scriptures say, "When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people." Notice that it says "he ascended." This clearly means that Christ also

descended to our lowly world. And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself. **Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.** This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. **He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.** Ephesians 4:4-16 (NLT)

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)

Definition of submission: to willingly place yourself under the authority of another for the purpose of accomplishing the same mission.

- **Submission to authority is ultimately about faith.**

Biblical Example - The Centurion

- **An act of submission is an act of faith.**

Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue." Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick. Luke 7:1-10 (NKJV)

Several things we learn from the Centurion about authority:

- He recognized the authority given to Jesus.

Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof.” Luke 7:6 (NKJV)

I cannot do anything on my own. The Father sent me, and he is the one who told me how to judge. I judge with fairness, because I obey him, and I don't just try to please myself. John 5:30 (CEV)

But I have a greater witness than John—my teachings and my miracles. The Father gave me these works to accomplish, and they prove that he sent me. John 5:36 (NLT)

I have come with my Father's authority, and you have not welcomed me. But you will welcome people who come on their own. John 5:43 (CEV)

So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will understand that I am he. I do nothing on my own but say only what the Father taught me.” John 8:28 (NLT)

Jesus said to them, “If God were really your Father, you would love me, because I came from God and now I am here. I did not come by my own authority; God sent me.” John 8:42 (NCV)

No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.” John 10:18 (NLT)

- He recognized his position in relation to Jesus.

Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. Luke 7:7 (NKJV)

So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. Luke 7:3 (NKJV)

- He demonstrates his understanding of how authority works.

For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” Luke 7:8 (NKJV)

- He shows that he grasps both the responsibility and benefits of authority.

And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. Luke 7:2 (NKJV)

But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” Luke 7:7b (NKJV)

And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, “for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.” Luke 7:4-5 (NKJV)

- He also recognized that authority does not have to be in proximity to be respected or dismissed.

When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, “I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!” And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick. Luke 7:9-10 (NKJV)

Our faith's foundation is in our relationship with the Father:

All who follow the leading of God's Spirit are God's own sons. Nor are you meant to relapse into the old slavish attitude of fear—you have been adopted into the very family circle of God and you can say with a full heart, “Father, my Father”. The Spirit himself endorses our inward conviction that we really are the children of God. Think what that means. If we are his children we share his treasures, and all that Christ claims as his will belong to all of us as well! Yes, if we share in his suffering we shall certainly share in his glory.

Romans 8:14-17 (J.B. Phillips)