

What Did You Expect?

Joanne M. Bush



Evaluating Our Commitment



Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? (Romans 9:21)

It seems that anyone engaged in the Lord's work has been going through some difficult times. I'm not talking about the ordinary ups and downs of life. I'm talking about major issues concerning family, finances, health and other relationships.

I was pondering over this situation one day after talking to three different ministries with stories that wrenched my heart. I could hear the Lord speaking to my heart saying, "What did they expect?" I listened carefully to what He had to say. I realized then that we do not have an understanding of the work of the potter and His power over us, the clay. We were not prepared for the molding and remolding that would twist and turn our lives into the shape that He wanted.

Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make [it]. O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay [is] in the potter's hand, so [are] ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. (Jeremiah 18:3-6)

I am discovering that it is time for us to re-evaluate the commitments we have made to the Lord. At the time we made them did we not realize what they meant? The fourteenth chapter of Luke implores us to consider what we are committing to before beginning to build or before going to battle. Jesus is giving us the requirements for being His disciple. He is telling us what it is going to cost us to "run around with Him."

We have signed on with all kind of commitments to the Father, only to discover that part of being equipped is to turn a round peg into a square one so that it can fit in the square hole. Even the military will not send anyone into the battlefield without the initial training of boot camp. Boot camp not only changes how the soldier looks, but how he talks and how he lives. The biggest battle in boot camp is learning to obey without question, submitting to those who have authority over you. No longer making decisions that affect one soldier, but making decisions that affect an entire platoon; and then the whole military. The rest of the battles in the military are simulated. Though patterns of behavior can predict how most individuals may respond in combat, the "powers-that-be" know all too well that until actively engaged in combat, the real dangers nor the subsequent reactions to them cannot be realized.

Boot camp, in the military, is a prescribed period of time. However, in the Lord's army, boot camp is as long as it takes to get us to obey the Lord. We do not obey because we are afraid of Him, but because our fear (awe) of Him comes from our love for Him. It also comes because we respect and honor who He is.

Interesting in Luke 14, after describing all of the ways of counting the cost, toward the end Jesus says:

So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:33)

Jesus is saying here, that you cannot be his disciple unless you forsake all...and in the forsaking of all, count the cost, to see if your commitment is enough to see you through to completion.

We do not consider the fact that when our young men and women sign up for the military, they are leaving (forsaking) all to become a *disciple* of the government they are serving. They may never see their homes or families again, especially if sent into the battlefield. Yet, we let them go, cheer them on and expect them to finish their term. We call them deserters and treat them with shame if they run away from their commitment. They can be imprisoned and dishonored throughout the nation if they do not serve with valor, obedience and allegiance. A dishonorable discharge can affect the soldier's ability to find a job.

They are not allowed to whine or complain without getting extra duty. And, when they are killed in the line of duty they are given a funeral with honor. When they are wounded, they tell the stories with pride to an inquiring audience, who listens in awe at the bravery of the soldier.

The president can decide not to pay them. Just because the paycheck does not come on time or at all is not a reason to be discharged from the military. You can decide not to re-enlist...but you are held to your contract.

I remember being told right after boot camp that my next duty station and/or career field would be assigned to me according to the good of the military. Though they tried to give us what we wanted, it was never guaranteed that what we wanted would be what the government would want.

So, what did you expect when you signed on to the Lord's Army? Did you not expect to experience at least what others experienced who served before you? Moses was no different than pastors are today, struggling to get the sheep to turn to the Lord. The children of Israel were more concerned about their natural comforts than their relationship with the Lord. Yet God provided for their natural comfort. However, it was never enough. The blessings of God became a curse to them and they never did really enter into that rest; that complete abandonment to the Lord.

Paul was rejected time and time again. However, he stayed the course. Yet we whine and gripe because someone does not like us or accept us. We are still crying the blues about rejection. And we are the leaders of the army.

Jesus was crucified by those He came to save, to help, to redeem. Yet, the scriptures never give an incident when He retaliated or reviled them in any way.

Everyone is not going to be happy because you showed up in their church or their town. I have discovered that the very people you come to help can become the very people that hate you. As strong as these words are, they are true. It was only when I came to grips with this fact and stopped making excuses for people that I realized this very truth.

My father always told my brothers and sisters when we were growing up that he did not send us to school to make friends, but to learn. God does not send us on these life assignments to make friends. It is to learn His ways and to live His ways. In the process we will meet others with the same commitment and abandonment to His ways. We then become connected to each other and build great relationships out of the commitments we make to each other. Our first priority is becoming a friend of God. Becoming a friend of God in a world that hates Him sets you apart. Becoming a friend of God in a church that only needs Him and uses Him also sets you apart. If the world did not like Jesus and the religious leaders did not like Him, but sought His life, what did you expect when you sought to befriend Him? Jesus said that the world would reject us because it rejected Him. So why are we still paying the high psychology bills to figure out why someone does not accept us or like us?

Why are we shocked when we are betrayed in the church? Adam watched satan deceive Eve and did absolutely nothing to stop it. Miriam turned against Moses. Aaron followed the people's desires. Esau sold his birthright and then despised Jacob because of it. Abraham put Sarah in danger trying to protect himself. John the Baptist began to question who Jesus was and even planted these seeds in the disciples thinking. They were first cousins. And then there is the infamous Potiphar and Joseph. He knew Joseph had committed no wrong. If Potiphar had believed his wife, he would have had Joseph killed. He was imprisoned instead. And, Joseph was first imprisoned by his own brothers.

The majority of betrayals we find in the bible were because of envy. What do we expect? We must be careful that we do not preach a gospel full of cream and yet, ourselves, live a skim milk gospel. God's word can stand the test of time. Can our faith?

*Therefore I run thus: **not with uncertainty**. Thus I fight: **not as one who beats the air**. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, **I myself should become disqualified**. (1Cor 9:26-27 NKJV)*

Welcome to Success in Ministry!

The ministry given to each one of us is the ministry of reconciliation.

Success In Ministry wants to teach you how to recognize your uniqueness so that you can be transformed to help transform others.

Receive notices of new teachings and/or publications that will help you fulfill this call of reconciliation while celebrating your uniqueness.

Let's Transform Lives!



