

2 Timothy 4:7 (NKJV)

⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, (*my course*) *KJV*, I have kept the faith.

Whether you are just starting to realize the will of God for your life or have been living on the path He has for you; this series will help you **Stay the Course**

Often, even if a person fully understands the will of God for their lives, it takes time mentally to adjust to what is revealed

The apostle Paul was one of the most unlikely candidates you could ever imagine being called into the ministry

- If God could use him, He can use you, and I

Ephesians 1:4, 11 (NKJV)

⁴ just as **He** chose us **in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

¹¹ **In Him** also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the **purpose of Him** who works all things according to the counsel of **His will**

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

God will always confirm what He tells you to do and give you further direction for the course of your life when you surrender to His call

God puts those He chooses to use through a process designed to remove any weaknesses that could later create defects in their ministries or life assignments

Many times, those that are the most gifted are so strong-willed and prideful that they need to be dramatically changed before they can be used

Sometimes those who seem to have few natural gifts and talents often have to be dramatically convinced that they are worthy to be used by God

Don't be surprised of the fires God allows you to go through to expose your character flaws and weaknesses

- This is God's mercy at work in your life
- If He doesn't remove the dross from your life it could show up later and cripple your work or ministry
- Allow Him to deal with your character defects
- God's desire is to first purify us and prepares us for the job

The Bible tells us stories of those who were elevated to a position before they were tested, tried, and proven

- In many cases their kingdom ended in disaster

The Bible also tells us stories of others God tried to refine and protect from self-destruction

- But because they relied totally on their gifts and talents they refused to let God work on their character and were later destroyed

God can have all of the best intentions for us, but how we respond to His dealings and tests in our lives determines whether or not His intentions for us are fully carried out

Samson – Judges 13-16

He is the perfect example of a gifted, anointed man who had a character defect

- He refused to let God to purge it out of Him
- He could kill a lion with his bare hands
- He slayed one thousand Philistines with the jaw of an ass and pulled down their temple
- In the end the Philistines gouged out his eyes and humiliated him
- He acted like a superman yet was no hero at all

He was a terrible failure who missed his opportunity to be a real hero of the Old Testament

As a recipient of a special calling by God's grace and mercy, Samson had everything going in his favor

- However, he had a loose attitude and a lazy disregard to live a holy life
- He made choices that led to him forfeiting God's call on his life assignment
- In the end he threw his life away

It was never God's plan for this gifted young man to end up dead under the rubble of the fallen philistine temple

King Saul

Israel asks Samuel and God to give them a king and He gives them their request

“And he (Kish) had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.” (1 Samuel 9:2, NKJV)

- Notice that the description refers entirely on the outward appearance
- He stood out in a crowd
- No one could compare to his handsome appearance
- In fact, the word handsome is mentioned twice
- This tells us he had a lot more going for him on the outside than on the inside
- He was the perfect choice for the worldly king Israel had asked for
- Over time it became evident that this handsome man had little inward character upon which to build his kingdom
- The flaws in his character would prove to be injurious and even fatal in just a short period of time

These flaws were so serious that God took the kingdom from Saul and gave it to another man who was younger, had less experience, and was less educated

- But he, (David) had a right heart toward God

“Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, “Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me.” So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, “There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people.””

(1 Samuel 9:15–17, NKJV)

If God is all knowing, then why would he allow Samuel to put Saul in position knowing he had a character flaw?

- Was God confused?
- Was He unaware of what would happen after Saul was put in a place of power?
- Remember that Saul was Israel’s first king
- Before him God was their only king – **1 Samuel 8:7**
- This was their first experiment in human leadership

God wanted His people to understand what is and what isn’t important in His eyes in regard to leaders He wants to use

- I believe he wanted to teach them a valuable lesson

They came to understand that God is more interested in inner character than He is with appearance or giftedness, education, talents, or “know-how”

- The heart is first priority to God

Promotion will expose every strength as well as every weakness

Eli – Priest and judge of Israel

- He had become slack in his responsibilities
- He was so lazy in his leadership that he didn't even lead his household well

“(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);”

(1 Timothy 3:5, NKJV)

Eli's sons were so wicked they were referred to as son's of the devil – **1 Samuel 2:12**

- Eli had become so back slidden; a time came when God no longer desired to use him
- Eli possessed a wealth of life experience
- He was the chief theologian of his day
- He possessed extensive leadership skills, acquired through years of ruling
- Naturally speaking no one was more equipped to lead Israel
- Yet at one point God rejected him and turned to young Samuel
- God chose Samuel because his heart was right
- Eli's heart was wrong
- The heart has always been the issue with God

“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.” **(Proverbs 4:23, NLT)**

Before we give someone a place of authority, we should first know that person

“Never be in a hurry about appointing a church leader. Do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.”

(1 Timothy 5:22, NLT)

- Appointing someone before you know them is foolish
- It will produce painful consequences

If you feel God has chosen you, grab hold of your calling and pursue it with all of your might and energy

- But don't get frustrated if you are held back for a while by those in authority over you
- It is wise and right for them to know you and test you
- If God has truly chosen you it won't hurt you or the call He placed on you to wait a little while

If anything, your divine calling will be affirmed and confirmed again and again

Pastors and ministries and organizations can attest to the dreadful mistake of promoting people before they are ready

- Often they betray leaders, split churches, and divide organizations

Wounding the leader's spirit so deeply it took a long time for them to recuperate and return their lives and ministries to normal

Why would God chose a shepherd boy to be a king?

Perhaps you've looked at your life and thought, why me?

- I believe anyone who God choses for ministry has thought this very same thing
- There are reasons why God choses certain people
- His selection is not based on random choice

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.” (2 Chronicles 16:9, NKJV)

- God's eyes are searching, roaming, and running in the earth
- Seeking someone who's heart is right toward Him
- God's kind of candidate is not easily found on every street

“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.” (Ezekiel 22:30, NKJV)

- Out of an entire generation God found no one
- Perhaps there were many crying out in prayer for God to use them
- God isn't obliged to use everyone who prays that prayer

Yes God loves everyone, but that doesn't mean He choses everyone for the job

People are not chosen by accident

“So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!” Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.” (1 Samuel 16:12–13, NKJV)

- David was far too young by today's standards to be chosen to be king
- He was the youngest and least experienced in his house
- Samuel passed up all of his brothers and selected him
- What was inside David's character is what caused God to choose him

If God chooses us it's because He sees something in us that qualifies us to be a part of His team

“Then one of the servants answered and said, “Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the LORD is with him.””

(1 Samuel 16:18, NKJV)

David Was Skilled in playing

He simply wanted to worship God and for Him to be pleased

- Bethlehem was just a tiny dot on the map
- He didn't play his instrument for fanfare or applause

David also became a masterful writer

- Few shepherds in David's day knew how to write
- They didn't need to
- Yet David painstakingly learned to express on paper the deepest thoughts of his heart
- David possessed an unquenchable urge to be excellent

This was a remarkable quality for a boy who grew up in an unremarkable setting

Excellence will cost you something!

“No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.” (Hebrews 12:11, NLT)

- Look at a child with no discipline, boundaries, or parental guidance
- You will see what flesh does when it has its own way
- It lies around, watches television, and eats junk food from morning to evening
- Dealing with the flesh is like chastening a child
- The flesh must be controlled, corrected, and made to obey
- It must be told what to do
- The process is painful, but the rewards are eternal

If you don't like your present situation or position in life, take your downtime and weekends and build a new position in life

If you pay the price to become excellent, it will pay off with big dividends

- Most people spend their downtime trying to escape their situation, position, job, etc.
- Use your downtime to develop your gift and cultivate your spirit
- Let the Holy Spirit exercise His discipline in your life
- You may not see immediate, tangible results but in time they will come forth
- Train and prepare to fulfill your call and eventually you will see the fruit of your labor

“A man’s gift makes room for him, And brings him before great men.” (Proverbs 18:16, NKJV)

- We don’t know if David was the most talented musician in the land
- He may have been
- What we do know is that he became the most well-known musician
- His gift made room for him

When Saul was tormented by evil spirits and needed someone to soothe his soul they called for David

The boy from the small village played in the presence of the king

David Had Desire

David's desire for excellence was part of his character

What if David had chased birds and slept in the afternoon sun rather than writing and playing his instrument?

- What if he had ignored his gifts, talents, and dreams?
- David had something the others didn't have – Desire

Desire is the insatiable urge, longing, appetite, craving, and yearning to stretch for something greater than you have now

- Desire is what takes people higher in life
- The lack of desire is what keeps them stuck in the muck of mediocre
- Survival mode is not enough

A person who is content to live an average, run-of-the-mill, nonproductive life will never be mightily used by God

- I personally do not understand a person who: Has the ability to improve himself, but doesn't
- Has the money to buy better clothes, but doesn't
- Has an iron to press his clothes, but doesn't use it
- Has a comb to comb his hair, but doesn't care how his hair looks
- Has the opportunity to study and increase his knowledge and skills, but never cares enough to do it
- Has been reared in a good home with good parental examples, but allows his living quarters to look like a pigpen

David Had Courage

Courage is having the guts to do what needs to be done, regardless of the fear you sense or the questions that remain unanswered

- David was a mighty, valiant man – **1 Samuel 16:18 KJV**
- Consider Noah – 100 years to build the ark
- Consider Moses and the Red Sea
- Consider Joshua – He had to follow in the steps of Moses

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews also mentions...

- Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Rahab

“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,” (**Hebrews 11:32–33, NKJV**)

- David had already proven he had courage
- He had to fight a lion and a bear to protect his sheep – as a boy!
- God needed a king who would be willing to stand up for what was right and wrong
- Willing to lay his life on the line

David Had Principle

Principal is a person's inward rule

It's how one sees and responds to life

Day after day, week after week Goliath defied the armies of Israel

Only David, an untrained, non-military boy faced the challenge

David Was Responsible

He was prudent in matters – 1 Samuel 16:18

While other boys were playing with kids their own age, David was cultivating himself

Proving himself to be cautious, sensible, and careful

He became entrusted with the most important details of his father's business

God is watching to see how well you are handling your current responsibilities

“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.” (Matthew 25:29, NKJV)

- The key to receiving more responsibility is doing something with what you have

“for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing,” (Philippians 2:13–14, NKJV)

- Show God that your attitude is right, and your heart is willing
- God will begin the process of promotion
- You are on God’s schedule, not yours
- Do the best you can and don’t complain
- Everything BIG starts small
- No job is too small

David Had Discipline

1 Samuel 16:18 says he was a “comely person”

That means he was well groomed and took care of himself

David Was Spiritual

1 Samuel 16:18 says “the Lord was with David”

David had a relationship with God

He knew God and God knew him

“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

(Psalm 16:11, NKJV)