

10 Rites of Passage to Spiritual Influence and Authority

By rites of passage in this particular article, I am referring to a person's transition from one status or phase to another. In the church we have various ceremonies that mark different phases of spiritual and biological maturity: for example, baptism, first communion and confirmation.

However, in the context of this article, an ROP (Rite of Passage) is more of a test that is part of a process God uses to bring believers into another stage of maturity before assigning them into another level of kingdom service. Biblically, we see great leaders who have gone through different stages of their life that prepared them for something greater they were called to do. For example, the patriarch Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob, had various tests and experiences before he was made second in charge to the Pharaoh in Egypt; Moses was in the wilderness for 40 years before God called him to be the deliverer of Israel.

King Saul persecuted David and hiding in the wilderness for many years before God elevated him to be the King of Israel. Even Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days, being tested by Satan, before He began His public ministry; He also had to endure the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane before He was ready to go to the cross and be raised from the dead.

The following are some ROPs I have observed as a believer for almost four decades.

1. The ROP regarding dependence upon God instead of upon man

The higher the calling you have, the greater the tests and more intense ROP you will have to go through. As we look at

the most effective leaders in the Bible, they all had one thing in common—their utter dependency upon God to fulfill their calling. The more you grow into your higher calling, the more fragility there is along with so many moving parts that you have to trust God to bring everything together every day just so you can survive. This is the only kind of person He can release to the highest levels of spiritual leadership.

2. The ROP regarding learning courage in the face of fear

One thing I learned many years ago was that, obedience to the will of God meant that I had to leave a predictable life and live a life of risk based on faith. You live on the edge so much in so many areas that it sometimes takes courage just to get out of bed in the morning! God cultivates courage during an intense ROP in our life to prepare for the next kingdom assignment.

3 The ROP regarding obscurity

One of the greatest ROP is being willing to obey God without the accolades of men. God cannot thrust us into the public eye if we cannot first serve Him faithfully in obscurity.

4 The ROP regarding adversarial circumstances

One of the most common ROP is during times of testing where everything in your life is under attack. I have had seasons in my life lasting more than several years at a time in which I experienced major push back and conflict in every area of my personal life and ministry.

I knew this was my ROP because it always came right before God wanted to bring me into another level of my divine assignment.

5 The ROP regarding financial lack

Sometimes there is no immediate provision for a divine vision. God uses these times to test our hearts to see if we want to do something for Him based on financial gain or for His glory.

He also wants to know if we will continue to move forward in obedience even if we do not see a long-term financial solution. The children of Israel were required to continue to obey God even when they did not know where their next meal was coming from when they were in the wilderness for 40 years.

6 The ROP regarding silence from heaven

There are times of testing in which there are long periods when we do not continue to receive clear words of affirmation or confirmation regarding a calling from God. He gave us a long time ago. It is always much easier to keep on going when we receive ongoing prophetic encouragement and or divine endorsements through others—but maturity and preparation is often cultivated more inside of us when the heavens are silent for a period of time and we have to live *totally* by faith.

7 The ROP regarding loving those who hurt and abuse you

One of the hardest ROP is during periods of time when there are many relational conflicts and misunderstandings from those closest to you. This is a very important ROP that involves learning how to love unconditionally through the insults, abuse, neglect and persecution. If God can trust us to walk in forgiveness and love the unlovely unconditionally, then He can trust us to demonstrate His heart to others in higher levels of leadership no matter what the circumstance or response.

8 The ROP regarding faithfulness during the mundane

It is probably much easier to demonstrate faithfulness to God when there are big events, a crisis, and or great movement replete with incessant action. I believe more people fall into unfaithfulness when things get boring and mundane. This is a key ROP that teaches the believer to cultivate the joy of the Lord during slow, boring days and seasons in your life. Consider Moses' 40 years in the wilderness of Midian, which prepared him for the last 40 years of his life that was

replete with non stop action as he became the deliverer of Israel.

9 The ROP regarding finding contentment only in God

Ultimately, the greatest ROP is to learn to get ultimate satisfaction in honoring and worshipping Him. Every person and everything we have or accomplish in this life is soon passing away—and God will often work to strip out of our heart every secondary thing we depend upon for happiness and fulfillment. God releases His highest calling to those who delight themselves in Him.

10 The ROP regarding prioritizing our mission and focus

One of the greatest ROP for accomplished leaders is the ability to say no to good opportunities and open doors. God will often test us to see what we will say no to—before He brings better opportunities He wants us to say yes to.

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