

Is It My Turn Yet?

We must lean to serve. Only then can we become the humble leaders God uses.

Early in my ministry I had my share of opportunities. Once I was asked to serve as a pastor of a floundering congregation under the close guidance of my home church. The situation was ideal, the church building was paid for and I was placed on staff with a full salary.

This was my big break. It was my chance to impress the people I served under. I was going to show the world what a good leader I was and how fast I could grow a church.

Well, I failed miserably—and in record time. Three months into my adventure the church roasted me in a public meeting. Ironically, after that meeting several of the members asked if I would still stay and preach for them. They liked my preaching—they just didn't want me to lead them.

I recovered from that painful and humbling experience. And I have learned that failure can be the best teacher. I no longer ask, "Is it my turn yet?" Instead, I ask: "How well am I developing my relationships?"

It is common to presume that promotion comes when people in positions of power grant opportunities or open doors for us. This thought is rooted in the corporate world's reward-based system. It fosters a when-is-it-my-turn attitude.

Yet emerging leaders must realize that the Bible does not endorse power mongering or entitlement. Proverbs 16:18 says: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a

fall" (NKJV). Young leaders are susceptible to pride (see 1 Tim. 3:6).

God has certain prerequisites for promotion. By examining the lives of Joseph and Moses I have discovered what those are. Generally we go through three phases on our way toward influence and authority, just as Joseph and Moses did.

Phase 1: Favor. In the first phase, calling is identified and potential is recognized. It is during this phase that you realize you have something to offer. This sense of destiny is important because it serves as a momentum builder for passing through the second phase.

We must be careful in the first phase. Many of us who experience favor early on are prone to become proud as Joseph did when he had the dreams about his destiny. We might even be tempted to brag about what we believe God has in store for us.

Moses' sense of destiny caused him to kill an Egyptian slave-master in an attempt to free the Israelites before the right time. As young leaders, Joseph and Moses had to go into exile and slavery because of their premature actions.

Phase 2: Frustration. Phase 2 is a season in which we wrestle and contend with God. During this phase of their lives, Moses learned to shepherd in the desert of Midian, and Joseph learned to serve in Potiphar's house.

The key to success in this phase is to stay submitted and serve wherever you are. Some aspects of ministry may be glamorous, but learning to serve as a shepherd takes time, practice and patience.

Many young leaders have entered into ministry based solely on the fact that they enjoyed favor in the Father's house—yet they have never learned to shepherd. In Midian Moses developed a relationship with Jethro, who was a mentor in his life. This relationship served him well in Midian and later in his leadership of Israel.

Joseph had similar experiences while faithfully serving Potiphar and his jailer. Notice that Joseph did not ascend to Pharaoh's right hand until he interpreted the dreams of others. Likewise, we will not ascend to our destinies until we help others realize their dreams.

Phase 3: Fulfillment. Only after we pass the tests of Midian, where we learn to contend for our destinies while patiently serving another, will we find ourselves before Pharaoh. But this is not the end.

Though we may have realized a dream, destiny still stands before us in the action we take in this new place of promotion. Like Joseph and Moses, arriving before Pharaoh requires that we redefine what we think our destinies entail and learn to serve. Only then can we become the humble leaders God uses.

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