

When God Overlooks You for a Spiritual Promotion

Whether in the world of work or the work of the **ministry**, everybody likes to feel appreciated for a job well done. But some strive, scratch and claw for promotion.

There's nothing fundamentally wrong about hoping God notices your faithfulness, increases your territory, and gives you greater works to steward. But striving for promotion can breed all manner of discord in a church—or in our own hearts.

Nowhere does this manifest more than when someone is overlooked for a promotion they feel they deserve. Maybe it's a management position in the marketplace or a **preaching** opportunity in the pulpit—or some other public recognition they've been working for. Regardless of the circumstance, our true character is on display when we feel like God has overlooked us for a promotion.

Jealousy Doesn't Win Promotions

When God told Samuel to anoint a new king, he went to visit Jesse the Bethlehemite and his sons. Israel's next king was among them. Samuel thought Eliab was the chosen vessel, but God told him, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

Each of Jesse's seven elder sons passed before Samuel but the Lord didn't choose any of them. Finally, the prophet asked Jesse if he had another son. When David emerged from tending the sheep the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" So Samuel anointed him in the midst of his brothers (see 1 Sam. 16:12-13).

Why was Eliab overlooked for the promotion? You would think the firstborn would be the most deserving, naturally speaking. But God looked at the heart and there was something there he didn't like. I believe in Eliab's case it was jealousy, and we actually see its ugly head rearing on the battle line. When David heard about Saul's magnanimous promise to the Israelite who defeated Goliath, his ears perked up and he asked some of the soldiers to confirm the reward.

"Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger was aroused against David, and he said, 'Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle'" (1 Sam. 17:28). Could it be possible that Eliab was angry that David was **anointed** king because he felt like he was more deserving? Was Eliab jealous?

Let's not forget Joseph. Already his father's favorite and donning a coat of many colors, this young one had dreams that symbolically revealed his brothers bowing down to him (Gen. 37:1-10). That didn't go over too well among his brethren, who were already jealous about his special coat and favorite status with dad. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery and told his father Jacob that he wild beasts devoured him. Joseph suffered much but God promoted him time and time again. His jealous brothers did indeed bow down to him, just as he dreamt it. But Joseph and the entire family suffered plenty before peace was restored.

Staying In One Accord

By contrast, even before the **Holy Spirit** fell on the Day of Pentecost, believers in the early church refused to allow jealousy to distract them from their mission. Since Judas betrayed the Lord and committed suicide, Peter pointed out Scripture that a new witness to Jesus' resurrection must be appointed. Two men were proposed: Joseph called Barsabas, who

was surnamed Justus, and Matthias (Acts 1:1:23).

“And they prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.’ And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:24-26).

We don’t see Justus getting jealous, making false accusations against Matthias or throwing him in a deep well to die. Justus didn’t pitch a hissy fit to the other disciples or seek to prove why he was better suited for the promotion. He didn’t breed strife in the early church. In fact, the Bible says when the Day of Pentecost came they were all with one accord in one place (Acts 2:1).

Justus didn’t storm out of the Upper Room and spread rumors about the apostles. No, he went on to receive the **Holy Spirit** in the **Pentecostal** outpouring and it appears he may have gone on to work with the apostle Paul and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10-11). Whether that’s the same Justus or not, only the Lord knows. But somehow I believe Justus, of whom the disciples thought to select him as one of the two candidates to become an apostle, went on to do great things for the Kingdom of God in his humility. And if you respond in humility when someone else gets the promotion you want, so can you. Amen.

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