

## Stand Ready

**Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season**  
(2 Timothy 4:2).

**Scripture:** 2 Timothy 4:1-8

**Song:** “Preach the Word”

A newborn baby is completely dependent on adult care. Step by step, the child will need to learn to perform life’s daily functions independently. However, until that day arrives, there’s work to be done! Starting on day one, caregivers provide what’s needed, ultimately leading to the day when the grown child launches out to live as the unique adult God created him or her to be.

In today’s passage, Timothy received instruction from the apostle Paul to be prepared to put into practice what he had been raised up in the faith to do. Paul reminded Timothy to stand ready “in season and out of season” to preach God’s Word (2 Timothy 4:2). Timothy was not born ready to lead the church and to preach. God first provided all that Timothy needed: a saving faith, a community of believers, spiritual gifting (1 Timothy 4:14), and a strong mentor.

In His faithfulness, God prepares us for and brings us into what He has for us to do. And just as a parent knows that a child will grow up long before the child knows this, so God has a plan that, while yet unknown to us, will provide all that we need, using everything we’ve been through for a future glory in service to Him.

**Father**, thank You for blessing me with the ability to serve You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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## Stop and Reflect

**[May] God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah** (Psalm 67:1, *KJV*).

**Scripture:** Psalm 67

**Song:** “Wonderful, Merciful Savior”

A study conducted by the Federal Highway Administration revealed that 50 percent of drivers perform rolling stops when approaching a stop sign. Two common culprits for failing to obey this simple traffic law are driving while distracted and being in a hurry.

In today’s psalm we see the Hebrew word *selah* situated between two important verses. *Selah* appears 71 times in the the book of Psalms and 3 times in Habakkuk. This mysterious textual notation is not fully understood, but some scholars believe it indicates a place in the text (or music) for the reader (or musician) to stop and reflect upon what has just been read or sung. Seeing the word *selah* in today’s passage can serve as a reminder for us to us slow down and allow God’s Word to penetrate our hearts and transform our minds.

Are you distracted or hurried when it comes to approaching God daily? Or are you coming to Him with a calm and observant spirit? God is good, and He extends His mercy from Heaven all the way down to us on earth, providing what we need for each day. His face is not looking away from believers in disappointment, but it’s shining on us in love and delight (Luke 2:14). When we slow down to spend time with God, we enter a place of true rest and experience peace beyond comprehension (Philippians 4:6-7). *Selah!*

**Father,** as I go about my day, remind me to slow down and meditate on Your holy Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Start at Home

**Jesus . . . said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19).**

**Scripture:** Mark 5:1-2, 6-7, 11-20

**Song:** “Take the World, but Give Me Jesus”

After winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984, Teresa of Calcutta (also known as Mother Theresa) said that the best way to spread love throughout our world is to start at home. Simply put, the world is impacted by how we love and interact with those closest to us.

After being set free from the demons that had controlled him, the man in today’s passage had one desire: to continue on with Jesus and follow wherever He went. Jesus, however, redirected the man’s zeal to fulfill a special purpose. Jesus sent him back home to tell about the wonderful things the Lord had done for him.

This story is a reminder that while the work of Christ is a vast, ongoing global endeavor, there is plenty of work to be done in the context of our own homes and communities. Those closest to us need to see the love of Jesus just as much as anyone else. Do those nearest to you know of the blessings with which Jesus has filled your life and how much He’s transformed you? It’s commendable to desire to tell the entire world about Jesus, but don’t forget to tell your family, friends, and neighbors!

**Father**, remind me daily not to overlook those right in front of me as I make Your salvation known. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Finding God's Will

**Ananias . . . said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:17).**

**Scripture:** Acts 9:10-22

**Song:** “This Is My Story”

The Oregon Trail was a 2,000-mile rugged wagon-train route that began in Missouri and stretched westward into the Oregon Territory. While the pioneers who sought to settle these new regions saw great potential in westward expansion, inclement weather, dangerous river crossings, and death due to disease were just a few of the perils they faced on the journey. However, propelled by the ideals of Manifest Destiny, settlers packed their belongings, loaded their wagons, and, in faith, set out to seek a better life for themselves.

Ananias came to a fork in the road in his faith journey. When directed by God to make the trip to Straight Street, he immediately found a reason to question God's command. Understandably, Ananias was afraid, but despite his apprehensions about Saul, he ultimately moved forward in faith rather than shrinking back in fear.

Growing in a relationship with God requires faith, especially in the face of adversity. Obedience always leads us into the will of God, never away from it. If you're seeking to be on the right path, begin by doing what you know is right and good and true, even if it's scary or difficult, and then keep following that path.

**Father**, help me to be obedient as I follow Your path of righteousness today. In Jesus' name, amen.

## The Good Things of the Land

**[God said,] “If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land”** (Isaiah 1:19).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 1:16-20

**Song:** “Victory Chant”

Over the last 50 years, 133 medals have been stripped from participants of the summer Olympic Games. The premise of the games is simple: work hard, follow the rules, and may the best person win. The reward for a competitor’s victory in any given event is to stand high on a podium and receive honor before the world. The Olympic medal is the culmination of everything for which participants strive, and it underscores the truism that hard work pays off. However, getting caught breaking the rules results in losing the reward.

The Old Testament account reveals that the kingdoms of Israel and Judah each had their fair share of ups and downs. Whenever a kingdom lived in obedience to God, it was showered with blessings. Whenever it disobeyed, going the opposite path of God’s instruction, it took giant steps backward, suffering painful consequences. Disobedience is never God’s will for His people. He has eternal rewards awaiting those who choose to seek Him and follow His instructions.

Whenever we attempt to make our own way instead of following the Lord, we’ll find ourselves in defeat, not victory. To move into the good things God has planned for our lives, we must begin with a mindset of obedience and a heart devoted to seeking God.

**Father,** help me to trust in Your strength and not my own as I live out my days in obedience to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Follow the Instructions

**They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for** (1 Peter 2:8).

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 2:4-12

**Song:** “Fully Surrendered”

A couple of summers ago, my wife and I bought a new house. One item on our to-do list was to plant hydrangeas. When putting them in, we didn't want to waste our time or our money, so to ensure that they grew strong and didn't wither, we carefully followed the planting instructions that came with each plant. Following these directions meant that we wouldn't have to worry that we'd made a mistake in our planting process. Our hydrangeas were virtually guaranteed to survive and thrive.

Obedience to the Lord puts His people on the path to experiencing His best for their lives. On the contrary, living in disobedience means living outside of God's will. When going the opposite way of God's Word, a person will stumble and struggle as they quickly find themselves on a path God cannot bless. Thankfully, the Bible's instruction is exactly what we need to ensure that our lives are growing and thriving. As we live to glorify Christ, our spirits will prosper in any season of life.

Blessings lie along the path of life when we make it our first priority to follow Jesus. When we follow the instruction God's Word sets out for us, our lives will grow, not wither. Obedience will always lead us into all that God has planned for our lives.

**Father,** my desire is to persevere in following Your instruction. Help me to walk in obedience all of my days. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Only the Lord!

**Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing** (1 Peter 3:9).

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 3:8-17

**Song:** “Be Kind”

My wife always dreamt of having a garden. When we bought our first house together, we made her dream come true. Despite our discovery that the soil was extremely rocky, we were confident that if we cultivated the ground well and were attentive to the garden, it would all work out with the Lord’s help. Within weeks of planting, rows of corn began shooting straight up out of that rocky ground. We knew that only the Lord is able to do such a great work!

When we love others and show kindness, we are laying the groundwork for a future harvest. It may not always be easy to love or care for those who aren’t kind to you, but with every loving act, we are cultivating the ground God has given us, preparing for a great harvest.

From time to time we’ll find ourselves standing on relationally rocky ground. Maybe it’s someone who treats you badly or a co-worker who has a secret grudge against you. When these kinds of challenges arise, we can keep planting the good seed of kindness and working the ground of opportunity by showing love. Through God’s blessing, He will produce and provide good things, even against all odds. Only the Lord can do such a great work!

**Father,** thank You for giving me the strength necessary to plant good seeds so that I might reap great joy. In Jesus’ name, amen.