

GOD'S SCHOOL

BY ZACK M. GUESS

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For any career that one may choose to follow in life, a particular course of instruction is required to qualify him for it. In order to be adequately prepared to do a certain job, one must follow a well-planned course of instruction and training. For example, a man who completes law school may well have a wonderful education, but he would not be prepared to be a doctor of medicine. A man trained to be a plumber would not spend all his time laying brick. The training and instruction for any job must be specifically designed for the trainee to gain the necessary skills to be able to perform the job under consideration.

A beginner or inexperienced person doesn't have the judgment that is necessary to plan his own education. He must look to others to advise him as to what course of study to pursue. He may look to his own parents or to other older people for general advice. However, he must usually look to those who have been successful in the particular trade or profession he wishes to enter for specific advice. A young man or woman entering college is usually assigned to an advisor in his or her major field to help plan the proper course of study for the next few years. Without the benefit of this advisor the student would probably make a mess of planning which courses to take. He would take some classes that would be of no value to him, and would omit others that were essential.

Likewise, a young man beginning to learn a trade enters into an apprenticeship and works under the supervision of an experienced journeyman or master of that particular trade. These experienced ones know exactly what types of situations the apprentice needs to be exposed to in order to be fully qualified to perform his trade.

God Has a Job for Each of His Children

God has a job for every one of His children to perform. If you are a child of God, He has a job for you to do. Some of our jobs are described in general terms in the Scriptures, such as: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5: 16). This is something that every child of God is required to do and it takes some preparation, some schooling, before we are able to do it very well.

However, Scripture also teaches that God also has more particular and specialized jobs for His people to perform. They are not all called to do the same things. For instance, He calls some to be apostles, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. (Eph. 4: 11). Some are going to be the wives of preachers and deacons. (1Tim. 2: 11). Some will be the mothers and grandmothers of those that will be prominent in God's service. (2 Tim. 1: 5). Some will be good women that God chooses to minister to His people in particular ways. (Phil. 4: 3). The particular specialties in God's service are practically innumerable. You can be certain that if you are a child of God, He has something definite and particular for you to do. He did not put you on this earth to merely fill up space or to live a life of pleasure, or to just mark time. God has a job for you to do!

God Prepares Us

We should continually seek what it is that God wants us to do with our lives. The apostle Paul set a wonderful example when he inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9: 6). When the Lord does show us what to do we should immediately set about doing our Master's business. For example, if a man feels a call to preach

the gospel of Christ he should at once begin to gain an intimate and extensive knowledge of the Word of God. If a person thinks the Lord wants him to be a lawyer, doctor, bricklayer, farmer, or salesman he should prepare for that task, constantly asking the Lord to show him if this is really His will, remembering that Satan and even our own hearts are very deceitful. When one prayerfully chooses a career he should work very hard at it. There is no place in God's work for laziness. Paul tells us in Colossians 3:23, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men..." The child of God is always working for God, no matter who his earthly employer may be. If we do a poor job we are ultimately cheating God.

It is not always, however that God reveals to us early in life some of the specific tasks He has in mind for us. He withholds this information until just the right time according to His infinite wisdom. However, knowing what He has for to do He prepares us for it. He is the perfect "guidance counselor." Isaiah called him "Wonderful Counsellor." (Is. 9: 6). In his commentary on Isaiah, H. C. Leupold translates this expression "a marvel of a counselor."

God prepares His children in His school. He does not give out high sounding titles in this school such as D. D., Ph. D. etc. However, when one goes to God's school he is well qualified for the work God wants him to perform. God has a custom-made course for each of His children, and He provides them with personal instruction!

We see this personal instruction wonderfully illustrated in Deut. 32: 9-14. First, we learn that, "...the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." In other words, Jacob here is being taken as a representative character, representing God's people. Thus, God deals with us in a similar way as He dealt with Jacob.

Next, we learn that the Lord "...found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness." That is exactly where God found us, wandering in the desert land of sin and corruption. We, being dead in trespasses and sin, weren't seeking God, but He was seeking us and found and rescued us.

After finding Jacob, God "...led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." What a marvelous thought! God instructed Jacob. He also instructs His children today—He instructs you and me!

What is the name of God's school? The name of His school is Experience. God knows exactly which experiences (internal and external; subjective and objective) we need to be brought through to qualify us for the works He has for us. He will lead us as the perfect "guidance counselor." He has promised us that, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." (Ps. 32: 8).

Some of our Courses of Study

If we can only understand that God in His providence allows us to experience difficulty and suffering for His glory and our good, we can bear up under trials joyfully. Instead of hanging our heads in despair, we can eagerly seek the good that may come out of a particular trial in our life.

God has many experiences that are designed to bring out the best in us and to further prepare us for His service. For example, most of us are much in need of patience. God knows that "tribulation worketh patience." (Rom. 5: 3). If you are experiencing tribulation at the present time, God may be preparing you for a work in His service that is going to require a great deal of patience. Cheer up! You may be going to God's school

It is possible that the Lord has a task for you to do that will require great faithfulness to His word. You may not be taking His word seriously enough. You may not fully realize that God means what He says. If this is the case

you have to go through God's course of affliction. David had to go through this course. He wrote in Psalms 119:67, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." When he realized why the afflictions had come upon him and saw the good they had done in his life, he wrote in Psalms 119:71, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." He went even further and wrote in Psalms 119:75, "I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." Instead of being angry at God for the afflictions, he acknowledged that God's school was the most outstanding school he had ever attended. He wrote in Psalms 119:99, "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation."

Speaking from personal experience, I can testify that God's school is good. For example I have been called to give up both of my dearly-loved parents in death. That was a bitter pill to swallow. However, since that time I have been much better qualified to bring comfort to those who have lost loved ones and to personally testify that, "If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me." (Ps. 139: 11)

Much more could be said of particular courses in God's school, but let us look at three men for whom the Lord had some difficult but very God-honoring tasks. None of these men knew what God had in mind, but each of them had to have some very specialized training. The Lord put each of them into very difficult but very effective schools. Each of them had to go through a tailor-made course of study to prepare for the jobs that lay ahead.

Joseph

God had a momentous task for Joseph. He was going to send him down to Egypt to provide for the preservation of His chosen people. (Gen. 45: 7). Joseph was to keep God's people from starving and was to provide them with a place to live so that they could multiply and become a great nation.

In order for this to come to pass, Joseph was going to become the second highest man in Egypt. He was second only to the Pharaoh. (Gen. 41: 40-44). Joseph would have to be highly qualified for so important a task. He would have to be humble. Otherwise he might become lifted up in pride when wealth and honor came his way. He had to be very obedient to God and had to follow His every command, for the very existence of God's chosen people was at stake. Obviously, Joseph was going to have to have a very good education.

God put Joseph in a very hard school when he was only seventeen years of age. (Gen. 37: 2), and He didn't graduate until he was thirty years old (Gen. 41: 36). Thirteen long years in a very hard school! That is even longer than most doctors and lawyers have to spend in school today.

First, he was separated from his beloved father, sold by his own brothers into slavery, and carried far away from home into a strange land. Even under these circumstances Joseph didn't despair, but worked so hard at his job and was so honest that his master soon made him the overseer of his house and trusted Joseph with all his money. Joseph here set a good example of how to live in hard times. Instead of complaining and being continually downcast, he was busy doing the best he could to do God's will in the midst of difficult circumstances.

Next, Joseph was continually tempted by his master's wife to commit adultery. But in spite of this constant, day by day temptation, Joseph refused to sin against God. If he had not had the proper fear of God, he might have fallen into grievous sin.

Finally, the woman became angry and falsely accused Joseph of trying to seduce her. Joseph was cast into prison. We can imagine how he must have felt. Injustice had been piled on top of injustice! First his brothers had

betrayed him and now he was in prison because of a false accusation. However, again God was with him and he tried to live close to his Lord. He did not waste time feeling sorry for himself or complaining how unfair God had been to him. He went to work and was so diligent that he soon became an assistant to the keeper of the prison, sort of a “trustee.”

Finally, God brought Joseph out of the prison and made him second only to Pharaoh in Egypt. That was a long way up—from a despised slave in a prison to the number two position of power in a great country! When God knew that Joseph was ready, He brought him out of school and put him to work. We can be sure that Joseph, looking back, could see God’s hand in all the events that had taken place and was thankful for every step in God’s school.

Moses

The Lord also had a very important job for Moses to perform. Moses was to lead the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt, to cross the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula, and go into the Promised Land in Canaan. Moses was also to be the law-giver under God. He was to take over one million people, mold them into a viable nation, and to direct their infant national life. Clearly this job was going to require a great deal of training. Among other things Moses was going to have to learn to be a great leader.

To begin with, Moses was nursed by his Hebrew mother, at the expense of Pharaoh’s daughter. We do not know how old Moses was when he was weaned, but it is very probable that his mother had a great influence on him during this very early stage in his life. When he became of age, he refused to forsake his Hebrew heritage. One of the most important schools we will ever be enrolled in is the school of our parents. What a great influence parents have over their children for either good or ill! How careful they should be to realize their responsibility before God to rear their children in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

At a very early age Moses was taken into Pharaoh’s household. There he became “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.” (Acts 7: 22). Thus God, in His glorious providence, was sending Moses to school to be taught by those he later would destroy. The enemies of God’s people were training the future leader of these people. According to historians there was much that Moses could have learned from the Egyptians. The priestly class in Egypt was noted for their knowledge of science, astronomy, medicine, and mathematics. They developed the world’s first solar calendar which was only six hours short of the true year.

This phase of Moses’ schooling lasted until he was forty years old (Acts 7: 30). Then God sent him to another school for another forty years. This was a much different kind of school, but it was necessary for Moses’ preparation. This was the School of the Wilderness. It was a rough school which lacked glamour and prestige. It was a school of quiet meditation. It was the school in which Moses would meet God in the burning bush. (Ex. 3: 4). This meeting with God was Moses’ final preparation for his task. If we are ever really going to be used of the Lord we too must spend time with God. We must have a confrontation with Him. God has a way of getting our attention when He wants to speak with us.

Sometimes we may become very impatient to know what our life’s work is to be. We would like to get busy without going through the necessary preparation. Moses spent two-thirds of his life just getting ready to do what God had designed for him to do. (Deut. 34: 7). He was eighty years old before God finally put him to work. However, the best and most productive period of his life was yet ahead.

Paul

God had a great work for the man called Saul or Paul. Paul was going to be the principal apostle to the Gentiles. He was to go all over the world of the Roman Empire, establishing churches as he went. He would be the most productive of all the apostles and could truly say that , “I have labored more abundantly than they all.” (1 Cor. 10: 15).

However, Paul had no idea that this would be his life’s work until he was about thirty years old. In fact, he was dedicating his life to the eradication of Christianity, not to the propagation of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, God was preparing Paul for the work He would give him to do.

God was schooling Paul even before he was born again. Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, a province in Asia Minor. This was a cosmopolitan seaport city where people of many languages, cultures, and religions mingled. This was an ideal place for Paul to live, seeing that his later work for the Lord would bring him into contact with all sorts of people from many places. Consequently Paul was in command of every situation he found himself in. He could say, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some...” (1 Cor. 9: 22). Because of his early background Paul could speak the language of the street, the synagogue, the market place, and the palace.

God also had a hand in Paul’s early religious training. He was sent to Jerusalem to learn the Old Testament law from Gamaliel, one of the most learned Rabbis of the day. Paul intended to become a Rabbi himself, but God had other plans for how he would take that same law and show as he preached the gospel how the Lord Jesus was the perfect fulfillment of that law. (Acts 22: 3).

Paul was also a Roman citizen. This citizenship was a great asset to him, enabling him to travel freely across the Empire and preventing him, on several occasions, from undergoing severe punishment. (Acts 22: 25-28). It is evident that the hand of God was on Paul in his early life, training and preparing him for his future work in the gospel.

When Paul was around thirty years old, Jesus Christ revealed Himself to him and told him what his life’s work would be. (Gal. 1: 16; Acts 9: 3-6). Even then Paul had to undergo much preparation before he was ready. After his encounter with Christ he spent three years in Arabia. He probably spent much of this time by himself, thinking about his recent experience and communing with the Lord. After this he made a brief trip to Jerusalem where he met the apostle Peter and then returned to Arabia. (Gal. 1: 18-21).

About ten years passed between the time Paul met Christ and the time he began his work of spreading the gospel at full speed. (Acts 13: 2, 4). Paul was, then, about forty years old when he really began his main work in life. These ten years were packed with schooling. Looking back it is certain that Paul was very thankful that God had been the director of his education.

God is Still Schooling Today

I hope that after considering what has been written each of us will have a new awareness of the working of God in the lives of His people. God is a personal God. He is alive and He is real. He takes an active and detailed interest in the lives of His children.

Don’t despair when you are in pain, trial, and affliction. God has a purpose in your life. Do not try to plan your life without God. God may have different plans for your life than you do. Slow down and be quiet long enough to listen to Him. Say with meaning, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”