

The Holy Waste: Why Boring Obedience Outlasts Frantic Ministry

Key Verse: Ezekiel 4:4-6 (King James Version)

“Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.”

You have never heard a sermon like this. I promise you that. Because for many years the pulpit has been addicted to adrenaline. We want the shout. We want the run around the sanctuary. We want the prophecy that comes with a timestamp and the offering that comes with a fireworks display. But there is a prophet in the Bible who did none of those things. His name is Ezekiel. And God told him to lie on his side. Not for an hour. Not for a weekend retreat. For four hundred and thirty days. Over a year. On his left side, then on his right side. No pulpit. No crowds. No miracles. Just a man, a dirt floor, and a command that made him look like a fool.

Let me tell you what we have lost. We have lost the spiritual discipline of boredom. We have forgotten that the most powerful obedience is often the most invisible, and that the frantic minister who burns bright for three years is not necessarily the one who hears “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” No, I believe that on judgment day, God will pass by the crusade stadiums and the bestseller lists. He will walk past the viral sermons and the conference stages. And He will stop in front of a woman who spent ten years changing the same bedridden husband’s sheets. He will kneel beside a man who clocked in at a factory he hated for forty years because God said, “Stay.” He will put His hand on the shoulder of a teenager who sat alone in her room night after night, refusing to numb her loneliness with filth, and He will say, “This one. This one was My masterpiece.”

The most terrifying wisdom of God is His willingness to waste what we value most. Look at Ezekiel. He was a priest. He had training. He had lineage. He had oratory skill. And God said, “Lie down. Be still. Do nothing remarkable for 430 days.” From a human resources perspective, that is a firing offense. From a church growth perspective, that is a closed door. But from the throne room of heaven, that year of holy boredom accomplished more than a

thousand frantic sermons ever could. Why? Because Ezekiel's lying down was not inactivity. It was warfare. It was prophecy. It was the most difficult thing he ever did.

Let me show you something. Turn to Exodus chapter fourteen. The children of Israel are trapped. The Red Sea is in front of them. Pharaoh's chariots are behind them. And they cry out to Moses in terror. Moses cries out to God. And what does God say? Most preachers would expect, "Speak to the sea, Moses!" Or "Raise your staff!" But read it. Exodus 14:14, King James Version: "The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Hold your peace. That is the King James way of saying, "Shut up and do nothing." The most terrifying battle command in all of Scripture is the command to be still. Because your flesh screams, "Do something! Run! Fight! Strategize!" But the Lord says, "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10. That stillness is not passivity. It is the most active thing you will ever do, because it crucifies the part of you that needs to be the hero.

Now, what is the most powerful point in this entire sermon? I have given you many, but here is the one that will either save you or send you away angry. Listen closely. One day of boring, unseen, repetitive, unapplauded obedience can outweigh a lifetime of frantic ministry. Do you believe that? Most of you do not. Because you have been raised on a diet of visible results. You count conversions. You count dollars. You count attendees. You count likes. But God counts nothing the way you count. For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. First Samuel 16:7. And the heart is most clearly revealed not in the crisis, but in the mundane.

Consider the Apostle Paul. The great missionary. The church planter. The man who wrote half the New Testament. And yet, what did he do for years before his first missionary journey? He went to Tarsus. Acts 9:30 tells us the brethren sent him off to Tarsus. And there he stayed. For years. Scholars argue how long, but it was likely a decade. Ten years in Tarsus. No book of Acts chapter ten. No conversion of the jailer. Just a tentmaker in a backwater Roman city, sewing leather, waiting. The world saw wasted potential. God saw a furnace. Because if Paul could not endure the boredom of Tarsus, he would never endure the prisons of Rome. If he could not be faithful in the mundane, he would crumble under the miraculous.

You want to know why so many ministries implode? I will tell you. They were built on the fuel of excitement, and excitement is a liar. Excitement promises you that the highs will last. But they never do. And when the plateau comes, when the growth stops, when the congregation yawns, the minister who has no discipline of boredom will either manufacture

false fire or walk away in bitterness. But the minister who has learned to lie on his side for four hundred and thirty days? He does not need your applause. He does not need your retweets. He has learned that God's presence in the silence is sweeter than any crowd's roar.

Let me take you to another strange verse. Second Kings chapter six. The king of Syria is at war with Israel. And the prophet Elisha keeps warning the king of Israel about the Syrian army's positions. The Syrian king is furious. He sends horses, chariots, and a great host to Dothan, where Elisha is staying. They surround the city. Elisha's servant wakes up, sees the army, and panics. "Alas, my master! How shall we do?" And Elisha prays. He does not run. He does not draw a sword. He prays. Second Kings 6:17: "And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." The servant was terrified because he only saw the visible army. Elisha was calm because he saw the invisible one. Boredom, holy boredom, is the discipline of seeing the horses of fire when there is nothing on the horizon but dust and silence.

Now, here is a hard truth. The devil does not need you to commit some spectacular sin. He just needs you to be distracted. He just needs you to reach for your phone the moment you feel the ache of stillness. He just needs you to fill every empty space with noise, with entertainment, with a new project, with a new relationship, with a new anything. Because if he can keep you from the silence, he can keep you from the voice of God. Elijah learned this. After Mount Carmel, after the fire fell, after he slaughtered the prophets of Baal, he ran for his life. He ended up in a cave. And God came to him. But not in the wind. Not in the earthquake. Not in the fire. First Kings 19:12: "And after the fire a still small voice." The King James says "a still small voice." The Hebrew suggests a sound of thin silence. The most powerful thing in the universe is not a shout. It is a whisper. And you will never hear the whisper if you cannot endure the boredom that precedes it.

Let me speak to the mother of young children right now. You feel invisible. You change diapers, wipe counters, break up fights, read the same bedtime story for the thousandth time. You wonder if your life matters. Listen to me. You are Ezekiel on his side. You are bearing the iniquity of your household in ways you cannot see. Every time you choose patience over snapping, you are preaching a sermon. Every time you scrub that same spot on the floor and do not complain, you are laying down your life. And God sees it. He is not distracted by the flashy ministry down the street. He is watching you. And He is recording every single boring

act of love in the Lamb's Book of Life. Do not despise the days of small things. Zechariah 4:10: "For who hath despised the day of small things?" Not God. Never God.

Let me speak to the man who has been in the same job for twenty years. You feel stuck. You pray for a promotion, a change, a miracle. But the door stays closed. You are bored out of your mind. And you are tempted to think God has forgotten you. No, my friend. You are in training. The longest seasons of hiddenness produce the strongest leaders. Moses spent forty years in Midian, tending sheep. David spent years running from Saul, hiding in caves. Joseph spent thirteen years as a slave and a prisoner. And then, in a single day, he went from the dungeon to the palace. But if Joseph had not learned to be faithful in the boredom of Potiphar's house, he would have crumbled in the throne room of Pharaoh. Your boring Tuesday is not a waste. It is the anvil upon which God is forging your character.

Now, I want to give you three practical anchors from Ezekiel's four hundred and thirty days. First, redefine obedience. Obedience is not the thrill of the new. Obedience is doing what God said to do, exactly as He said to do it, for as long as He said to do it. Nothing more. Nothing less. Ezekiel did not ask, "Can I preach on Sundays?" He asked, "Which side do I lie on today?" That is the question for you. Not "What great thing can I do for God?" but "What small thing is He asking me to do right now?" And then do it. Day after day. Until He says stop.

Second, kill the idol of impact. You are addicted to seeing results. But God is not. He works in the hidden as much as in the open. The seed grows in the soil, in the dark, unseen. Mark chapter four. Jesus said the kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and then sleep and rise night and day, and the seed springs up he knoweth not how. The farmer does not see the root system forming. He does not see the cell division. He just waits. And so must you. Your boredom is the soil. Your unseen obedience is the seed. And one day, you will wake up and see the harvest. But not yet. Not yet.

Third, embrace the gift of the still small voice. When you stop running from boredom, you will discover something terrifying and wonderful. You will discover that God is already there. He has been waiting for you to stop talking, stop scrolling, stop striving, and just sit. Be still. Not to get something from Him. Just to be with Him. That is the highest worship. Not the song set. Not the offering. Just the quiet sitting of a child who trusts that the Father is good enough to fill the silence.

I close with this. On judgment day, you will not be asked how many people followed you on Instagram. You will not be asked how many books you sold or how many conferences you spoke at. You will be asked one question, and it will be this: Did you do what I told you to do, when I told you to do it, for as long as I told you to do it, even when it was boring? And if you can say yes, even if your only answer is, “Lord, I lay on my left side for four hundred and thirty days,” He will smile. And He will say the words that make every wasted moment worth it. “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” Matthew 25:21.

Go. Be bored. Be faithful. And let God worry about the results. Amen.