

Session 11: The Journey of the Forerunner Part 1

I. The Necessity of Preparation

1. Believers desiring to become a forerunner must go through a prolonged and rigorous preparation process.

- a. In the final two sessions, we will discuss the journey of preparation *and* the journey of ministry that those called as a forerunner must travel. *As we begin these last two sessions, I want to make it abundantly clear—one cannot just read through the materials in this class and think that they are now prepared to be a forerunner. Each of us who are or will minister as a forerunner must be prepared in God’s training school.*
- b. God spoke these words to Jeremiah, “See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant” (Jer. 1:10). Just as God spoke to Jeremiah, God is working in the global church of this generation to tear down the old and erroneous in order to build His church anew based on His eternal purpose. God is doing a major work of transformation in His church in our day, and forerunners have a major role in this effort. However, to be a voice of transformation into the church, forerunners must undergo a major work of preparation to allow the Lord to work deeply in their lives—that is, to pluck up, break down, destroy, overthrow, and build and plant.
- c. Most of us think this way. I will learn it this week, teach it next week, and take it to the nations in the third week. It will not work this way. We will not be able to put a patch on the old things we have been doing. Forerunners must let God do a deep work of tearing down the old and building up the new—then He will use us as forerunners.

2. If we will prepare, God will use us as forerunners.

- a. We have previously used in this class the phrase from the movie *Field of Dreams*, “Build it and they will come!” The implication in saying this is, “If we will prepare, God will use us in ways we could only hope”. In this context, Ephesians 3:20 comes to mind, “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” God can and will do exceedingly abundantly in and through you if you will prepare yourself to be used.
- b. Therefore, I urge you to take the preparation process very seriously as it will pave the way for God to use you in ways you cannot imagine. Let’s discuss the preparation process, beginning by exploring the idea of being called and commissioned.

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II. Called and Commissioned

1. Elijah, Elisha, and Paul went through a time of preparation before they were commissioned by the Lord for their forerunner ministry.
 - a. Elijah went through a three-and one-half-year preparation process before his famous confrontation with Ahab and Jezebel. After prophesying that a drought would come upon the land, the Lord told him to go away and hide himself outside the center of religious activity (1 Kings 17:2-3). In obedience, Elijah went first to brook Cherith and then to Zarephath for a total of three-and one-half years before confronting the prophets of Baal and Asherah (James 5:17). During that time period, God did a very deep work of preparation in him that positioned him to be used in mighty ways.
 - b. Elisha also had to go through a preparation process between his call and commissioning. He was called to be Elijah's successor while plowing in his field but was not commissioned until years later when he received Elijah's mantle as Elijah was caught up to heaven. In the interim, Elisha followed Elijah faithfully, serving him and being trained by him for at least five years and probably more before receiving Elijah's mantle (1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:12-14).
 - c. Just like Elijah and Elisha, the apostle Paul went through a preparation process following his call. Paul was called on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-16), but the Lord took him through a process of preparation before being sent out on his first missionary journey. As the book of Galatians records, immediately following his conversion, the Lord took him to Arabia for three years. During that time, Paul received revelation directly from the Lord of the message he was to preach and was prepared for his ultimate calling as the Lord's messenger and master builder (Gal. 1:11-24).
2. In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, he explained what God accomplished in him during the preparation process.
 - a. The apostle Paul wrote these words to the believers at Thessalonica. Speaking of himself and his team, "but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. For our exhortation does not come from *error* or *impurity* or by way of *deceit*; but just as we have been *approved by God* to be *entrusted with the gospel*, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts" (1 Thess. 2:2-4).
 - b. Note what Paul wrote. He said that he had been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel and because he had been approved by God, he could speak without error, with purity of heart, and with boldness so as to please God regardless of what man thought.
 - c. As noted, before writing the above passage, God had taken Paul through a preparation process. Notice what God had accomplished during that time period. He had removed from Paul's life and message all *error* from what he taught. He had taken Paul to the cross so as to remove all *impurity* from his life. Remember, prior to his dramatic conversion, Paul had persecuted and murdered Christians and was a leading teacher of what Christ came to replace.

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- d. God had also *purified Paul's motives* so that there was *no deceit* in him. God had removed all desire to flatter people in order for his message to be received, and He had removed every desire *to seek glory* from man (1 Thess. 2:5-6). Before commissioning him for his ultimate call, God did a deep work in Paul to prepare him.
- e. Because of the work of God to approve Paul, he was able to exhort, encourage, and correct believers as a spiritual father much like a natural father would encourage and lead his own children. Paul did this so that believers would “walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12).
- f. Summarizing, God did a deep work of preparation in Paul during his three years in Arabia to prepare him to speak boldly and accurately regardless of the opposition. Through the preparation process, Paul was commissioned by God as an apostle of Christ to be sent to many places as God’s representative.

3. In a similar fashion, end-time forerunners must go through a rigorous preparation process prior to being commissioned as a forerunner.

- a. In my own personal journey as a forerunner, there has most definitely been a journey of preparation and maturity in my forerunner call. As I have stated previously, I received the call as a forerunner in 1996, and it was secured in 1997. Following my call, there was a prolonged and at times difficult season of preparation before being sent out as a forerunner. During the late 1990’s, God began to unveil to me much revelation knowledge related to the forerunner call. At the same time, He was working in my life purifying my message, my character, and my motives. By the way, He is still doing this! However, it was not until around the year 2000 that the Lord began to send me out with the beginnings of a forerunner message. For sure, I taught my local church the things the Lord was showing me, but He restricted me from going beyond the walls of my local church until He had taken me through a period of intense preparation. Even after initially being sent out, there has and still is a maturing in the message and continued preparation that I believe will not end until I go to be with the Lord. Just like the faithful witnesses before me, I had to go through a journey of preparation.
- b. These are such important points for us to recognize and devote our lives. If the apostle Paul had to be approved of God before being commissioned, we must also. In the remainder of this session and in the first part of the next, we will draw from the lives of Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist, and Paul to explore a variety of issues that must take place in our lives in the season of preparation between our call as a forerunner and our commissioning into the forerunner ministry.
- c. Let’s begin by examining a call to complete surrender.

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III. Complete Surrender

1. In order to be significantly used as a forerunner, believers must completely surrender to the call as a forerunner.

- a. Elisha completely surrendered his life to pursue Elijah [*a picture of the forerunner call*] and to minister to him. When Elisha received the call to follow Elijah, he surrendered everything in order to fulfill the call set before him. Note this passage about Elijah's call to Elisha to follow in his footsteps as a forerunner,

So he [*Elijah*] departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. And Elijah passed over to him and threw his mantle on him. He [Elisha] left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, then I will follow you." And he [*Elijah*] said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" So he returned from following him, and took the pair of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the implements of the oxen, and gave it to the people and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah and ministered to him" (1 Kgs. 19:19-21).

- b. The above passage refers to Elisha's call as a forerunner, and the following passage which takes place several years later refers to Elisha's commissioning at which time he actually received the anointing to function in the spirit and power of Elijah as a forerunner to the northern kingdom of Israel,

When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."...He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over" (2 Kgs. 2:9-14).

- c. As the first passage indicates, in order for Elisha to actually receive Elijah's mantle, he had to completely surrender to follow Elijah in ministry. Had he not surrendered completely to the call of 1 Kings 19, he would not have been commissioned to walk in the forerunner ministry of 2 Kings 2. The same is true for those called as end-time forerunners. With that as our objective, let's dig a little deeper into Elisha's call to follow Elijah recorded in 1Kings 19:19-21 to observe what was involved in his complete surrender.

2. First, surrender is the response to an invitation from the Lord to become a forerunner.

- a. The passage we are considering begins with, "So he [*Elijah*] departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat ... And Elijah passed over to him and threw his mantle on him." As the passage tells us, Elijah found Elisha. Previously, the Lord had spoken to Elijah to anoint Elisha as his replacement (1 Kgs. 19:16). Elisha did not just decide that he would take up the forerunner call. He was not looking for a glamorous calling about which he could tell his friends. He didn't find the call; rather, the call found him.

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- b. This is most definitely what happened to me. When I was first called to full time ministry, I was not at all seeking any type of calling, especially the calling of a forerunner. I was content being in business, trying to be a good husband, and committed to raising my children. It was in this setting that the Holy Spirit came to my wife and I, calling us to leave our comfortable life and to pursue a life of ministry. At that point, we had no idea about the forerunner call and did not have any real desire to leave our lifestyle for a life of ministry. With this as our attitude, the Holy Spirit came to us with a very clear call to leave our “plowing with twelve pairs of oxen” to follow him in ministry. The same is true when God called us in 1996 as a forerunner. At that time, we were very open to whatever the Lord might call us. At the time of receiving the call as a forerunner, we felt that we did not fit in with any church movement of the day. So, we were very open to being called as a forerunner. Even so, we did not say to the Lord, “I want to be a forerunner!” He called us to be His forerunners.
- c. This must be the case with those called as end-time forerunners. Elisha’s calling was dramatic with the leading prophet of the northern kingdom inviting him to follow him in ministry. Ours was not as dramatic but clearly a call from the Lord to follow Him as a forerunner. Your call as a forerunner may be much different from ours or Elisha’s; even so, it is important *that you recognize that you are being called as a forerunner*. Your call could be a result of a dramatic encounter from the Lord or it may be the Holy Spirit merely giving you a burden for the current state of the church or a deep desire to see Christ have a prepared bride for Himself. There are many ways the call may come, but it is important that we believe in our heart that we are called in this way. From my experience, forerunners often minister in ways contrary to the predominant message of the mainstream church. Because of this dynamic, it is very important that forerunners have a deep conviction that they are called as forerunners.
- d. *I want to make it clear that I am not saying that one must hear an audible voice from the Lord to say “yes” to the forerunner call. For many, the call will be quiet and soft and it may even be just a desire to minister on the subjects that comprise the forerunner call—nonetheless, the forerunner call must come as a result of an invitation of the Lord.*

3. Second, those called as end-time forerunners must count the cost of accepting the invitation to be a forerunner.

- a. In giving Elisha the call to follow him in ministry, Elijah spoke these words, “And he [*Elijah*] said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” Reading between the lines, Elijah must have been thinking of the personal cost of taking up his calling. He knew of the isolation, the loneliness, the rejection, and the spiritual warfare associated with the call as a forerunner. The same is true with us as those called as end-time forerunners. Jesus spoke these words about the cost of discipleship in general,

For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.” Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? (Lk. 14:28-31).

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- b. Jesus spoke these words in the context of saying that if someone desires to follow Him, he must surrender his family, his possessions, and die to his personal desires, purposes, and dreams in order to take up Christ's agenda. In other words, there is a cost to following Christ, and Jesus made this abundantly clear to all who would come to Him.
- c. The same is true with the call as a forerunner. For me, I had to lay down my life to take up the call to ministry and then again to take up the call as a forerunner. Whereas once I began in ministry, my desire was to have a large, widely praised church, a comfortable life, and to be an in-demand teacher of the scriptures. I now realize God had other plans. His call included me leading a small church, living on a limited salary, and spending years with a real sense of insignificance. God may have other plans for you, and you might be praised by all men. But before saying "yes" to the call, it is wise to count the cost of committing to follow Christ in the forerunner ministry whatever might come your way.

4. Third, those called as end-time forerunners must not be double minded about the call.

- a. In response to Elijah's invitation, Elisha "took the pair of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the implements of the oxen". Once Elisha had made his decision to follow Elijah, there was no looking back to his old life. By sacrificing the oxen that he had used in his occupation, he took action in such a way that he could not go back to the way life was before saying "yes" to the call. Elisha had made an irrevocable decision to follow after Elijah no matter what the call involved.
- b. The same is true for us once we have received the invitation to the call as a forerunner and counted the cost of such a decision. Responding positively to the call will require us to surrender our life in such a way that we cannot go back to our old pursuits or our old ways of ministry. This was certainly true for me during the years following my decision to say "yes" to the Lord's invitation to be His forerunner. As soon as I received the call, I began immediately to pursue it with determination and never considered returning to my old ways of ministry. Certainly, over the years God has matured me in the calling and led me through many times and seasons in the ministry, but I never looked back and never thought of going back to my old career, my old denomination, or my old ministry pursuits. And, by the way, I have never regretted it either!

5. Fourth, there will be great fulfillment in the lives of those who have surrendered to the forerunner call.

- a. The passage we are discussing includes these words, "He left the oxen and ran after Elijah". Among the many things this phrase could suggest, one is that Elisha wanted to follow after him and his calling. There was no uncertainty in his mind that this was something he greatly desired. He had seen enough of the ministry of Elijah that he wanted to walk in that same anointing. He knew that even though it would be difficult at times, he wanted it and knew it would produce great fulfillment in his life.
- b. My experience tells me that this will be the case with end-time forerunners. I know that as I have pursued this call, I have had great joy as a forerunner. It has most definitely not been easy. There have been seasons of intense warfare and others seasons of great disappointment. However, at the same time, there has been much joy and many blessings that have accompanied the call. Truly, I

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cannot imagine another call that I would ever want to pursue. There has been such fulfillment in it, I never have given a thought to turning back to another way of ministry.

- c. For those called as forerunners, this should be the case with you. Pursuing the call and ministering in this way should produce great fulfillment.

6. Fifth, those called as end-time forerunners must be devoted to the call.

- a. The following phrases stand out to indicate Elisha's devotion to follow after Elijah and his calling, "He left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, then I will follow you" and "then he arose and followed Elijah and ministered to him".
- b. Jesus spoke these words about following Him as a disciple, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk. 14:26). In saying these words and many others which make a similar point, Jesus is saying that following Him requires complete and total devotion to Him. I am not trying to equate being devoted to the forerunner call with being devoted to the Person of Christ. Nonetheless, the passage makes a great point for us all as those called as end-time forerunners. Just like Elisha placed devotion to the call above family and career, we must be devoted to the call as a forerunner that places this call as a very high priority in our lives.
- c. The issue of how to balance family life, the ability to earn a living, and following after Christ and the forerunner call is a complicated issue that would require much more space than we have in this session, and I am NOT saying we must abandon our family or leave them in poverty to pursue the forerunner call. At the same time, it is important if we want to truly be a forerunner that we seek the Lord as to how to balance these all important issues. The point for here is that forerunners must be fully devoted to this call.
- d. Another aspect of devotion to the call is recorded in Elisha ministering to Elijah. Elisha served Elijah for a number of years before receiving his commission as Elijah's replacement. In the intervening time, there were a number of years during which Elisha learned from Elijah. The same will be true for end-time forerunners. There are many and varied topics that constitute the forerunner call. The issues of God's eternal purpose, the preparation of the bride, the coming forth of overcoming sons, and the need for a new wineskin of prayer are a few. Each of these topics require devotion to receiving the revelation and wisdom to understand them, teach on them, and implement them into our lives and ministries. To be approved as a forerunner, those called in this way must be devoted to learn and live the truths of the forerunner call.
- e. Summarizing, those called as end-time forerunners must surrender all to pursue Christ and the calling as a forerunner. Next, we will examine the need to come outside the camp.

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IV. Called Outside the Camp

1. Jesus calls His followers outside the camp in order to pursue Him and the bridal city.

a. The author of Hebrews wrote these words,

For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him *outside the camp*, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come (Heb. 13:11-14).

b. The city we are seeking is the new Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22-23), that is, the bridal city and the eternal dwelling place of the bride made ready. As the above passage states, in order for the church to get there it will have to come outside the camp of the religious system, many mainline doctrines and rituals, and the busyness of church activity in order to fully pursue the Man Christ. Many believers will have to leave the familiarity of the religious mainstream to pursue the true. For most believers, this will require coming out of the way we have lived the Christian life and the way we have led our churches into a new way of relating to Christ.

c. The call outside the camp is no different for forerunners. As we will point out in the following paragraphs, God's forerunners of old all had to go outside the camp to be made ready for their ministry and to function in that ministry.

2. God took Elijah outside the camp of the religious activity around him to prepare him for his forerunner ministry.

a. We mentioned this earlier, but it is worth repeating in the context of being called outside the camp. After Elijah's declaration that drought would come upon the land, God called him outside the mainstream of the religious activity of that day. The scriptures record this about God's call to Elijah to go outside the camp, "The word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan'" (1 Kgs. 17:2-3).

b. We will speak about the purpose of Elijah's time at Brook Cherith in the next session. Our point for now is that Elijah being sent to Brook Cherith was a call out of the mainstream of the religious activity of the day. In Elijah's case, there were several reasons for God sending him away. First, we know Ahab did not like Elijah by his calling him a "troubler of Israel" (1 Kgs. 18:17). Therefore, God was hiding him from King Ahab because it was not safe for Elijah to be there after prophesying such a severe judgment on the land.

c. However, God had a purpose for Elijah beyond protection while the drought played out. He also was taking him out of the noise of the religious system so that he could be prepared for the confrontation that was to come. As we will see in the next session, God used his time away to teach him, to impart into his life, to refine him, and to lead him to overcome those things he would later speak into.

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3. Whereas Elijah's preparation took place outside the camp, the majority of the ministry of John the Baptist took place outside the arena of mainstream religion.

- a. This is written of John the Baptist, "Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea..." (Mt. 3:1). The wilderness of Judea was a barren land east of the Jordan River near the Dead Sea. Somewhat different than Elijah, John's ministry took place outside the mainstream of activity as the people came out to him from the busyness of life in Jerusalem to hear his message and to repent of their sin so as to be ready for the coming of the Messiah.
- b. There are several points that could be made about John's ministry being in the wilderness, but for our purposes here, the point is that like Elijah, John was called outside the camp.

4. The apostle Paul was also called outside the camp for a season of preparation.

- a. Like we stated earlier, before being sent forth as an apostolic missionary, Paul had to come outside the camp of the mainstream religion of the day to be prepared. The story of Paul's ministry is familiar to us all. He was radically confronted by Christ on the road to Damascus and converted to become a radical follower of the One he had previously persecuted. God had plans to use him mightily, but first God had to take him to Arabia outside the mainstream of religious activity for a season to prepare him for his ultimate call.
- b. There were multiple purposes in his going into Arabia for those 3 years. One of the reasons was to take him outside the camp. God had a powerful and unique message for him to preach—the message of Christ in you as the hope of glory and the cross as the pathway to this purpose.
- c. To put this message deep in Paul's heart, he had to leave for a season the mainstream of the religious activity of the day. He most definitely had to come out of the Judaism of his day as its goal was to destroy Christianity. But Paul also had to separate even from the other apostles for a time. Paul wrote these words, "Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:18-19). God took him outside the camp so that He could deposit His message deeply in Paul and to prepare him to be His voice from the throne.

5. In addition to being *prepared* outside the camp, Paul also had to come out of the camp of the mainstream religion of the day in order to be able to be *a voice* into it.

- a. Paul's letter to the Colossians offers a wonderful example of how Paul called the Colossian church out of compromise and error back to the person of Christ. The book of Colossians addresses a heresy that in Paul's day was seducing believers away from the pursuit of the Person of Christ and God's eternal purpose. The Colossian church was pursuing the wisdom of man, the shadows of Judaism, and lesser and erroneous things rather than Christ. Paul's message was to call them back to Christ and the true way of relating to Christ—Christ in them as the hope of glory.

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- b. To summarize, the church of Paul's day faced major issues that were leading them astray. They were pursuing the wisdom of man above the Person of Christ, they honored their traditions more than Christ, they put the things of God above the Man Christ Jesus, and they were looking at the shadows of Judaism as the primary way of worshiping the Lord.
- c. Paul was to be a messenger sent into the synagogues and to the pagan Gentiles to preach Christ. In order to be effective in this endeavor, he had to be removed from his Jewish beliefs and traditions. He could not keep one foot in the religious system that permeated the culture of his people and the other in the new wineskin God had introduced to him; rather, he had to separate from it entirely. He had to come out from the connection to the priesthood, the law, the sacrificial system, and the religious practices of his old ways. He could not stay in the system and at the same time call people to come out of it. He had to separate. Paul had to come outside the camp to allow God to remove the old wineskins of Judaism from him and to plant the fresh revelation he would need to become the forerunner he was called to be, and he had to come outside the camp in order to be a voice into the church.
- d. Therefore, summarizing why Paul was called outside the camp, there were two purposes for it: 1) to be prepared for the ministry to which he was called and 2) to separate from the system he was to minister into.

6. Likewise, forerunners must also come outside the camp of mainline religious issues and activity *to be prepared* and *to be used* as forerunners.

- a. Just as it was with Elijah, Elisha, John, and Paul, we must come outside the camp for these two same purposes—to be prepared and to separate from the system that we are to minister into. Forerunners are sent to turn people to Christ, His eternal purpose, to prepare people to stand strong as we approach the second coming of Christ, and to be made ready for eternity. There are many topics which go into addressing these objectives such as being made ready, eschatology, the prepared bride, overcoming sons, the judgment seat of Christ, intimacy with Christ, being conformed into the image of Christ, and the cross.
- b. These are the foundational issues for which forerunners exist and the message of which they are to be a voice. When one begins to think of the approaches being employed throughout the global church, we quickly recognize that a multitude of believers are being taught in a way that does not facilitate them being made ready in these things. Approaches like the prosperity gospel, the seeker sensitive movement, the hyper grace movement, messianic Judaism, and multitudes of traditional teachings dominate the church scene globally. In addition to this, many erroneous practices and incorrect eschatology all hinder the church from its ultimate goal.
- c. To be a voice into the church in these ways requires those called as forerunners to come outside the camp from any biblical teaching, doctrine, religious practice, organizational structure, denomination, or movement that restricts or is in opposition to the forerunner message. Forerunners must do this to be prepared as a forerunner and also to be used as a forerunner. Summarizing, those called to the forerunner ministry must come out of the many tentacles of mainline religious activity both to be prepared and to be a voice into the system.

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- d. As we close this session, remember that forerunners must be prepared for their forerunner call. We will continue our analysis of the journey of the forerunner in the next session.