

When you are considering jobs that require a person to be always ready, what are the jobs that come to mind? Maximum readiness, just call them out. Paramedic, yeah.

Fireman or woman, yes. IT support, security, defence. Mom, yeah, teacher.

I've got police officers, pilots, traffic controllers, war correspondents, head of state. And as someone said, moms and dads, when the toddler goes quiet. You've got to always be ready.

That is way too quiet. Something is amiss. Our theme for the next two years, Lord willing, is always ready as followers of Jesus.

We are called to be always ready. At least that's what stood out to me last year when we were studying the Book of Titus. And we saw in Titus chapter 3 that the Word of God says, always be ready to do good.

And that really struck me as a powerful command. Always be ready to do good.

And that got me interested, a little intrigued, and I went looking in the Bible, in the New Testament in particular, to find out what are the other things that we're called to be always ready to do. And I found four.

Four things that we, as Christians, are to be ready for. We're to always be ready to see Christ, serve Christ, share Christ, and steward Christ. There's actually a lot to unpack in this idea of readiness.

If I'm always ready, I will have an understanding of the context that I'm in. Why not? Because different contexts are very different.

It might sound odd to say it, but is my context at sea? Is it on land? Is it in a hot environment?

Is it a cold environment? It's very important to understand what is the context of my readiness, and I'm going to need to gather information, knowledge about that context. Like, are there hazards?

Is there an antagonist in that context that I need to be ready for? Or is there even an enemy? What is at stake as part of the knowledge that I need?

Is there a consequence if I'm not ready? So readiness has a lot to do with preparation, doesn't it? So much context, knowledge.

And then if you're always ready, there must be some sort of skill acquisition, some learned bunch of habits to actually be able to execute.

And I need to do that over a period of time because they need to be automatically, subconsciously available to me, don't they? So if I'm ready, I've got context and knowledge and I've learned a bunch of skills.

And typically, these skills will need to be enacted in community with a team. Other people will be involved.

There will be collaboration and cohesion and synergy required with the skill sets to come together to perform the said task that you are meant to be doing. And in all of this, there will be some level of capacity testing, won't there?

It won't just be over like that. There will be a level of fitness, like resilience, as I said, capacity. If it was the human body that was being readied, you might need to be strong.

Muscle development might be required. There might need to be flexibility.

But you also need tendon strength behind the scenes and cardio fitness to be able to for a length of time perform the tasks that you have been called to do and to do it together.

So if you put it together, there's context and knowledge and skills and team and capacity. And then the last thing, you need to train other people to do that, don't you? There's a multiply factor in being ready.

When you see them all on the screen like that, that looks a lot like church, doesn't it?

But it's what we need to do as a church, understand our context, be grounded in the knowledge of the scriptures, then have skills that we have acquired to be the Christians that Jesus tells us that we can be, do it as a team, have a capacity to do it

over time, and then train other people in how to do it. So, followers of Jesus, certainly from the first century after his death and resurrection and his ascension and the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost, they knew that there was a lot at stake.

They knew that there was a cost to be counted in following this risen Saviour. They were cognizant of being ready. But ready for what?

Ready for what?

The first readiness of the four is always ready to see Christ. To see Christ. We take the scripture from Matthew 24.

Therefore, Jesus says, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

But understand this, if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you must also be ready.

Because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. This is from the Olivet Discourse. It's right before Jesus goes to the cross.

And he talks about his dramatic return. When he, it's called the Perusia of Christ, when he will return and wrap up the world as we know it and usher us into new creation.

Jesus explicitly says, You don't know when that will happen, the day or the hour when the Lord will return. So be alert, be faithful daily, waiting to see the Lord, to see Christ.

The thief metaphor is appropriate because thieves don't tend to send you a text and say, Oh, we're there at 11 o'clock tonight. But this is the metaphor that he chooses, that thief comes in the night when no one is expecting them to come.

So we've translated this into our little matrix of readiness as to be ready to see the Lord, to see the Lord. Human beings tend to hide from God, don't they?

From the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve sinned, they hid, they got prickly leaves, fig leaves and covered up their shame. But that's what we tend to do. Sin causes us to want to hide from a holy God.

What this scripture is saying, no, we don't want you to be hiding in shame, we want you to be boldly coming to meet Him, the Holy One. What do we need to be ready to meet the Holy One? Well, we want to be walking in holiness, don't we?

We want to be clinging to even marinated in the grace of God daily, hourly. We want to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ every day of our lives because of the gospel.

Confident in our hope in Christ because our conscience does not regularly testify against us that we are duplicitous of character. Isn't that what we want to be?

If you just think about being ready to see Christ, I don't want to be a lover of the darkness as a way of life. I want to be a lover of the light. Amen.

I want to be someone who is postured towards grace and goodness and the glory of God because I can come into his presence through the grace of Jesus, through the cross and the resurrection. I want to be someone who is leaning into the light. Amen.

Otherwise, you don't want to see the Lord. You're hiding. It's like, Lord, just give me a couple more days, weeks, years in the life that I'm living because I don't want to see you.

I just want you to turn up at the end and make sure I get to heaven. Now, this passage is saying, no, you need to be ready. I need to be ready to see the Lord at any point in time.

Now, is Jesus going to return in our lifetime? We don't know, maybe. Absolutely, that's the answer.

Maybe, but there's a good chance he won't. But you know what, we're all a heartbeat away from dying and waking up into the resurrection where we will see the Lord. We will come face to face with the judge of all the earth.

So don't think this is something that we don't need to think about to see the Lord in his righteous judgment. This could happen at any point in time when we are taken from this earth.

So what would it look like for us as a church to be ready to see the Lord? I want to suggest that we consider some commitments like, I commit to the journey of the Holy. I want to be holy.

And the best chance that we can do that is, it's only going to happen through the grace of God in Christ, but to do that together. Amen? In community.

We want to be holy. It's a journey. And spiritual formation is an intentional endeavour.

And I intend to endeavour to offer my character to Christ for his glory and my confirmation to his likeness. I will rest, renew, repent and realign on a daily basis so that I will be ready to see the Lord, because that's what's required, isn't it?

That I am clothed in his righteousness, ready to see him in his stark holiness.

And if you think this happens automatically, just by signing up for Christian faith, in a sober way, may we think of those who have gone before us and slow to mention names, but I think it's helpful to mention names, names like Ravi Zacharias, a guy

who was so gifted, so used by God, but yet had a brokenness, a hidden duplicitous nature, and struggling with sin. Bill Hybels was a great hero of mine, but he had a big fall.

Philip Yancey recently had a public fall from grace, and they're just the men, wait till we find the women. But I say that almost humorously, because we tend to have men that we can find, but clearly women struggle just as much.

So may we be ready in our commitments to see the Lord.

The second aspect of life that we are to be ready to do is to serve Christ. Titus 3, verse one, remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities. To be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.

To slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. Context, knowledge, skills, team, capacity, multiplication, all involved in this.

We are to be, if we looked at the text, if you went back to the text, please Janet, thank you. We are to be obedient and ready to do good, which will involve the godly use of our mouth, our words. It will involve our relational equity.

How we get on with people, peaceable and considerate. It will be affected by our predetermined posture towards others, which is to be gentle, ready to do good. What is your context?

Do you remember, maybe you could raise your hand if you remember, Ben was preaching on good, on this passage from chapter three in Titus. And he put up on the screen a list of all the jobs that were in our church. Does anyone remember that?

It was just like a really powerful moment. And the point was, that's our context to do good. Could we yell out a few?

What's your context to do good? If you're ready to do the good that God has prepared in advance for you to do, what might it look like? What's the context?

Parenting, caring, teaching, encouragement, serving, welcoming. Any jobs you do? No, we haven't said any.

Anyone expect to do good at your job? What are some of the jobs in the room? Leading worship, is that what you said?

Medical imaging, now we got there. Do good in medical imaging, amen. What are some of the others?

Accountancy, teaching, lawyering. Lawyering? Loitering, did you say?

Lawyering. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 10 says, For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. We are called to chip away, to do good.

Last year, we mentioned Florence Nightingale. She was a British Christian nurse who lived in the 1800s and served during the Crimean War. She didn't set out to change health care policies or write speeches or become famous.

She just refused to walk past suffering in a hospital in the war. And so night after night, she was known as the woman with the lamp. And she would walk past people, the crowded hospital wards, and she washed wounds.

And she brought people water. And she sat with the dying. And she did it over a long period of time, a small ax, clean sheets, fresh air, basic hygiene.

She ended up being involved in saving thousands of lives. And she inadvertently changed the whole way that we do medicine and run hospitals with hygiene.

I read one figure that said at the time, simple hygiene habits drop the death rate from 40% to 2%. She had no authority apart from the authority that Jesus had given her. To do good.

It's one of the most profound concepts that we can get our heads around. It's not good to earn God's favour. It's not good works to get us into heaven.

And it's the good works God has called us to do because he has given us his favour, amen? To do good. We have tried our best by God's grace to do lots of good at church.

Here, in Hornsby, around the world, and it's ticking up the years. It's well over 120 years that we've been doing it. We give money.

We pray for people that we support in mission who work for justice in communities around the world. They do empowerment training. They work against evil by doing good with anti-slavery in Cambodia.

We've supported midwife training in Burma, basic survival needs in South Sudan, disaster response in all sorts of places.

In our own area, we have collected probably over the last few years hundreds of hampers for people who, and you might be one person who has received it here because we have poor people in our community, really poor people who are struggling.

And we have people in our church who sit with the poor and listen and love them.

And we have people running things like homework club and youth ministry and kids ministry and kids hope and young people get valued and children like they're downstairs learn about the truths of the gospel.

This year, may we be always ready to do good, which the Bible says when we do it, it is unto who? Christ is unto the Lord that in as much as you've done for the least of these, Jesus said, you have done it unto me. So that's why we say serve Christ.

Always be ready to serve Christ by doing good to the people Christ puts in our path. What would our commitment look like if we put a line to it? A statement, I commit to be an agent of good for God.

Is that a statement that we could say, yeah, by God's grace, let me do that. The second statement I thought of was, I expect that this good will cost me time, money, and will require sacrifice.

And one aspect of doing good that George Capses from the Sutherland Shire taught me, who was a real Florence Nightingale of the 20th and 21st century, he said, John, I'm doing goods and it's always inconvenient. Always remember that.

It is typically inconvenient, so we need to embrace that. I will embrace the inconvenient nature of doing good.

The third aspect, we see Christ, serve Christ, and share Christ, 1 Peter 3.15, but in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord.

Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have, but do this with gentleness and respect.

I think most of us who have some level of Biblical literacy, if you were asked at the start, where does the Bible say to be ready?

You might say, oh, it's 1 Peter 3.15, there's a spot that says, always be ready to give an account for the faith that you have. The Greek language says, gird up your loins and be ready for action. Gird up your loins.

Pull your clothing up. Last year, we had a course, Let Me Tell You About Jesus. It's all online.

That course will help you have access to the gospel. And a lot of apologetic arguments, a lot of information that might help people in their quest to understand the truth of life. So it's there.

There's a good course there. There are many other ways you can find resources to help you share the gospel. Of course, you and I have a personal testimony of what Christ has done in our lives that we add to the simple truth of what Christ has done.

Be ready to give an account. There was a young cobbler who was named William who was compelled to give an answer. He was born in 1761.

His name was William Carey. And before he was known as the father of modern missionary movement, he was this poor cobbler in a small English village.

And I found it fascinating that I don't know how you do this if you're poor, but he made his own map, a map of the world. More power to you, young William.

He's fixing shoes, he's poor, but he's made himself a map of the world because he's so compelled that the people in the world who don't know Jesus need to hear an answer for their hope, for the hope of the world. They need to hear the gospel.

He was passionate about missions, and you might remember the answer that he got. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he'll do it without your help, William.

And then one night, Kerry preached a sermon from Isaiah 54, and he had this fantastic line that's become very famous. Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God. Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.

It wasn't well received.

There was no revival, but a small group of pastors kept meeting together, and they gathered their small amount of money that they could, and they formed something that barely deserved the name, but they formed the Baptist Missionary Society.

And they said, we have enough funds to send one person. And William Carey said, I will be that person.

And so he went out, the first person sent out, he went to India for seven years, no converts, constant sickness, financial stress, language barriers, his son died, his wife suffered mental illness.

He looked like a total failure, but he just kept translating scripture, one verse at a time. He started schools for girls. He opposed child sacrifice and widow burning and mentored local leaders quietly.

He was giving his answer in word and deed, seeing the kingdom of God come. Decades later, Kerry translated the Bible into over 30 languages, helped end widow burning, laid foundations for the modern education of India.

He reshaped Protestant missions globally. Today, it is fair to say that thousands of mission organizations carry the DNA of that cobbler.

Millions have encountered the gospel because one man prayed over a little homemade map because he was compelled that those who have the answer need to be ready to share the answer.

So what is your context that you are living in, that you and I need to be ready to give an account for the hope that we have? What would it look like for you, real life?

Is it a family member who is aging or sick or going through a time of life reflection? Is it a neighbour you might be called on by the Lord to tell them about Jesus?

A person you met at a social club, maybe exercising, maybe walking the dog, you sit next to them at school, they're your workmate.

All of those are actually real stories that I've heard in our congregation of people that have been called upon to share when asked. And that's important.

The text actually says when someone asks, the Spirit of God is in front of us and He is causing people to see in us something different.

I remembered as I was writing this sermon, some friends of ours who before the time of phones, were so keen to be ready to give an account for the faith they had, they made up little cartoon booklets of their story of salvation.

And they went street witnessing with the cartoon. They said, can I tell you the story? And they would go through their story that they had printed of what Jesus did in their life.

What would it look like for you to be always ready to give an account for your faith, to share Christ? We might need to do that as a team. So we want to be ready.

It's interesting too that it says, in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord, which connects us to that holiness piece, doesn't it? Revere Christ as Lord.

If you're going to be an agent of transformation in your community, if you're going to be an ambassador of Christ, it's going to be really important to revere Christ as Lord.

And then always be ready for everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. So let's be ready to hear someone ask us, amen? We expect, the scripture says it, we should expect people to ask us about our questionable lives.

We live in such a way that they want to ask a question. What's going on? Can I find out what makes you different?

So what would a commitment be in 2026? Maybe I commit to give an answer for the hope I hold. Witnessing to the good news of the gospel is a privilege.

I commit to give an answer. And it would be a privilege to do so. I will step out of my comfort zone and witness for Jesus by His grace.

We are ready to see Christ, serve Christ, share Christ, and the fourth aspect, steward Christ.

Ephesians 6 says, Stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

Paul says, there's a spiritual battle that we're in as followers of Jesus, and you need armour.

And just before this, he talks about the armour, and if you might remember, there's a belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, a helmet of salvation, a sword of the spirit, and then with that armour, feet fitted with the readiness that comes from

the gospel of peace. Paul is charging us to be ready in full armour, fully equipped to minister in the name of Jesus with that sheriff's badge that we have been given of positional power in the kingdom of God. This is what happened in Matthew 10.

The disciples were sent out with a sheriff's badge of authority. He said, as you go, proclaim this message.

The kingdom of heaven has come near, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons freely you have received, freely give. He sends his people out to see the kingdom come.

And then in Ephesians 4, Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers to equip his people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the

knowledge of the son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. The church is empowered by the spirit through the truth of God's word, in the fullness of Jesus' name to bring the kingdom.

And we do this with spiritual giftedness and a synergy, a body life as we work together. When we say we are always ready to steward Christ, it's a realisation that we have a power that is beyond explanation.

The power of the gospel, the name of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in us, and we are called to minister. We don't do it every week, but when we invite people to come forward for prayer, we're trying to, by God's grace, steward Christ.

Maybe God wants to use your vocal cords and your hands, and he wants to bless someone who comes forward for prayer and just give you a spiritual insight, some word of discernment, the words you pray.

We trust they're from the Spirit, and it's us stewarding Christ. Often at Life Hub, we will have people share in our small group.

And sometimes we will stop at the end and get some oil and anoint them and be open for someone to have some level of a prophetic word or some discernment. Doesn't happen really that often, but we're ready.

And we want to be ready as a church to steward Christ in the fullness of the Spirit. Amen. What is the commitment for that look like?

I commit to minister in the fullness of Christ. In spirit-filled ministry as the body of Christ caring for the whole person, I will offer myself as a conduit of blessing to others in Jesus' name. That's a lovely way to put it, I think.

By God's grace, I will offer myself as a conduit of blessing to others in Jesus' name. When I first, I was a Christian growing up, and then I had an experience of God really grabbing hold of me when I was late teenage years.

And one of the first people I came across was William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army. And one of the first stories was his vision that he had, that this gripped my heart, I was challenged by it.

And William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was travelling on a train across a bridge and he looked out on a stormy sea. And he was taken by the spirit into a vision.

And he saw a vision of many, many people, hundreds of people in the water drowning. And amongst the drowning were these lifesavers that were skillfully swimming out and grabbing people and bringing them back to the shore.

And they're going back and forth. They're working as a team. And they're bringing them back.

And he said, he was taking in the spirit up the cliff face. And it started to flatten out. And there was a base station there where the people were being triaged and looked after.

So they were there on the edge, sending new people out to find and rescue and save and bring back. And then they were nurturing them and caring for them. And then he was taking in the vision further up the escarpment.

And he was struck by the fact that there were people walking around that weren't dressed in the rescue gear. In fact, they looked like they didn't know what was going on just down below.

And then he came up a little bit further and there was a lovely building, a magnificent building. He thought, wonder what this is. And he was taken into the building and there were people sitting like this.

And it was a church service and they were worshiping God. They were singing songs and they were being taught about the gospel and the goodness of God in the scriptures.

And he said, these people were completely unaware of what was going on, just at the bottom. And apparently, that stirred his heart to go to where the people were.

And the Salvation Army began with this idea of taking the pub songs and turning them into Christian songs and going out where the people were to share the gospel. And the Salvation Army have done a wonderful job over the years.

As we launch into another year with another theme and another vision, our prayer is, Lord, do it again. Do it again like you've done in the past.

I know many of us have seen, you've been at different churches or you've been at this church, and you know that there are different seasons, aren't there, in a church's life.

It's hard to know which were the super blessed and which weren't, or growth always feels good, but it's not always good.

But have you been in a church, have you been in a group of people where you look back and you think, we experienced a revival of the Spirit then.

God did something that we can't explain, but people got saved and people fell in love with Jesus and they loved the Word of God and they started doing good. And we had an impact. Do it again, Lord.

That's our prayer, amen. As we come to, this is where we're at as a church, I think. It's a lot easier to dream about the future when we're down in Hornsby South, isn't it?

There's this big church building we're knocking down and building. And it's going to be amazing. The vision's over the hill there and we're down there.

And every 100% of the people in the church know there's a vision to do something special. But who's discovered that seven years on when you're in that really fancy, nice building, it's harder to have the same level of 100% vision.

We've got the best years yet to come. We're expecting the Holy Spirit by the grace and power of the name of Jesus to do something worthy of Jesus' name amongst us and through us, said Motley Crue, us, us.

But what about, I remember at that other church, we had this person and this person, but it never, now could because Jesus loves to use fish and loaves from small people. He can do anything, but we have to ask for it, amen?

So we want to ask the question, and we're allowed to ask the question, it's how the kingdom runs. Lord, would you do it again? Would you move by your spirit and save people and allow us in Jesus' name to make an impact?

Move by your spirit and help us to be ready to play our part, ready to see Christ with a renewed passion for personal character and holiness. That's a work of revival. Ready to serve Christ with a reignited desire to do good in the world.

Ready to share Christ with a willingness to leave our comfort zone and give the reason for our hope. Ready to steward Christ with a confidence in the power of the Spirit and the authority of the name of Jesus. Lord, please, would you do it again?

Let's pray. Our Father, that is a genuine prayer that you would do it again. Like you did in the first century and your spirit was poured out on the early church and a sermon was preached and 3000 responded.

Like you did when your spirit moved the early church in Acts 2 and they came under God's Word and they shared everything they had and they listened to your guidance and you added to their number daily, those who were being saved.

The community were astonished and you did signs and wonders that astounded people and broke chains that bind and set captives free and you've done it all throughout history.

You've just tapped people on the shoulder of small groups of people, individuals, and you've called them to faithfulness and readiness. And so Lord God, we want to say, would you do it again?

Help us be ready to receive what you have for us in the year ahead. In the name and for the name of Jesus, we pray, amen.