

One, three, twelve, four, one, three, twelve, four. We are in the third week of our series, unpacking a two-year theme, Always Ready. One, three, twelve, four.

One foundation for readiness, this idea of always ready. Three motivations for readiness. Twelve postures of readiness, and four actions of readiness.

I know that's rather confusing. Lots of numbers and concepts, but I feel like it's worth us unpacking this. It's going to be helpful.

The Bible calls followers of Jesus to be ready to do four things. If you look up the New Testament and look for readiness, you'll find these four things. Matthew 24, the Lord Jesus says, I want you to be ready to see me when I return.

So to see Christ, we're talking about holiness, clothed in his righteousness, having character that is just longing to see Jesus return, not hide from him, but be ready to see him. Titus 3 tells us to be ready to do good.

And we know that as we do it to the least of these, we do it unto Jesus. So we call doing good, serving Christ. We wanna be ready to see Christ, serve Christ, and then 1 Peter 3 says always be ready to give an account for the hope that you have.

So we say we wanna be ready to share Christ. And then Ephesians 6 says we have feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace.

So we talk about being ready to minister in the fullness of the Spirit and the power of the authority of Jesus' name. So we say to steward Christ. Always be ready to see Christ, serve Christ, share Christ and steward Christ.

For actions of readiness. But what leads up to this? Well, it all stems from one foundation.

And Ben was speaking about this last week. It is the love of God. I have collected versions of a very special verse as I've traveled at different times in my life.

In Spanish-speaking countries of the world, they will speak something like this. Por que de tal manera amor Dios al mundo. And that's a very special verse.

And if you go to Africa, parts of East Africa, where they speak Swahili, they will teach you Cuamaana ginsihi mungu aliopend ulimuengu.

If you head a little bit west, you'll find them in Zambia saying, Pakuti balesa balitaman wei, ababachalu chapachi uqwakuti. And if you go somewhere that speaks English, they will say, for God so loved the world. Amen?

This is the truth of John 3.16. He loved the world so much that he gave his only son, that whoever would believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This is the one truth that is the foundation for us to respond in readiness.

Amen? It is the one truth that God loved the world. 1 John 4.8 says that God is love.

And 1 John 4.19 says, he loved us first. Before we do anything back to love him or love the world, it is all because the love of God came first. God is love and he loved us.

And so that's so important. That's the one foundation. Again, I'm gonna say amen a lot.

So be it. One foundation, the love of God. And then there are three motivations, and that's what Ben was talking about last week, three motivations that come from his commands.

He says, love me with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength. Love others and make disciples. This was his response to the young man who said, there's 613 laws.

Which are the top laws or what's the main law? Jesus synthesises 613 Old Testament laws about how to live for God. And he simply says, love God with everything.

Love others and make disciples. Well, he says, love God and love others. We add, we have the Great Commandment, and we add the second part, the Great Commission, which is Matthew 28, 18 to 20, where Jesus says, go and make disciples of all nations.

So we put the three all together, and we say, these are the motivations that drive our readiness, the love of God, the love of others, and the making of disciples.

One, three, twelve, four. We have twelve core values at NorthernLife. These are the twelve, and we're referring to them as twelve postures today.

You can see them on our website. I think there's a slide that shows these twelve core values. So we're referring to them as postures of readiness.

Anyone seen, like in the Olympics or the Commonwealth Games, there was a 100-metre sprinter. How would you describe them at the start of the race? Are they like this?

No, they are in a posture of readiness. They are primed like a cat, ready to go. And so that's what these 12 are to us, postures of readiness.

We need to be ready to do what the Great Commandment tells us, that is, love God. Are you in a posture of readiness to love God? Posture number one, we call it known and loved.

Romans 8.15 says, By him we cry, Abba, father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

If you were to create postures of readiness and you were starting from scratch, how do you tell someone, describe to someone what it is to love God? So we're told the first thing you have to do is love God.

And so we were doing this years ago when we thought about core values. We thought, what's the main way that you love God? And if you had to do that task to come up with how do you love God, you'd find what we found.

That's a probing deep question. How do I love God? And so what we were struck by was we receive his love.

That's number one. He is love. He has loved me.

The worst thing I can do is reject his love or not receive his love. The best thing I can do is receive it. Amen.

I receive his love. When a child is born, for those first couple of months, the parents or the parent, they're just loving that child, serving them, loving them, loving them.

What's the first time that they get an inkling that this child might love them back? They smile. Now he or she may have wind, but we don't care.

Grandparents, parents, we don't care. We're looking for that smile. Something that says, you know I am loving you.

And we get this smile back from a child, and it's like, wow, thank you, thank you. The child can't give us anything other than that smile. And I would put it to you, that's how we first love God.

We smile back. We smile back, and we say, Abba, father. That's the guttural dadda, Abba.

It's the first sound that the infant can make for a Jewish child. Abba, father, I belong. The first posture of readiness to see, serve, share and steward Christ is intimacy with the father.

To smile with our lives back to him. Intimacy, and then secondly, we need a posture of awe. We call it, Jesus is worth it.

And this is what we write in our description of this core value. He, Jesus, is our treasure, delight, first love and reason for being. This is how we love God.

To worship him is our joy. He deserves our very best. Colossians 1 says it best, the son is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation.

For in him, all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him.

He is before all things and in him, all things hold together. Last week, Ben made the comment that we are human beings, but we are really human longings. We are designed by God to long for that which is worthy of our worship.

And sometimes we don't find the one who is worthy of our worship, who is Jesus, and we find things that are maybe good. They're not just bad, but we give our heart to good things.

But who knows that when a good thing becomes an ultimate thing, it's called an idol. And so we give our hearts affection, sometimes not to the one who's worthy of it, Jesus, but we give it to some fabricated idea, some idol.

John Calvin said the human heart is an idol factory, and that's certainly the truth. We get disordered loves. That's what Tim Keller calls them.

But we want to have ordered loves. We want to have Jesus at the top as we ready ourselves in this posture of awe. He is the one who holds the highest place.

And think about it. Is there anyone that God loves more than Jesus? I would say no.

He loves Jesus with everything. We know. John 17 says, I want them to know the love I had from you from the very beginning.

So we love Jesus and hold him up as a way of loving God. Amen. Does that make sense?

Can you see that if we walk in intimacy with the Father, worshipping the Son with everything we have in us, that's good preparation for the work of the kingdom. And it stands to reason that we would agree with the posture.

Our third core value, God speaks, we listen. Jesus in Matthew 4 is being tempted by the devil to disobey his father.

And he says those classic words, it is written, man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. This is the posture of obedience. The Apostle Paul says, as Christians, followers of Jesus, we're not civilians.

We're like people's soldiers. We're athletes, we're trained, we're ready to do the work. John 14 verse 15, Jesus says, if you love me, keep my commands.

If you love me, keep my commands. We talked in the first message of this series, two weeks ago, about some of the aspects that you need to think about to be ready. And they were things like context.

I didn't understand what context am I in? We said, am I on the water? Am I on land?

What knowledge do I need to be ready? Is there an adversary that I need to sort of know about? And then I have to learn skills, do it in team, have a capacity to do it for a long time, and then be able to multiply these skills.

Do you agree following Jesus, obeying him is a skill? Have you been taught that? Some of us are taught following Jesus is receiving a ticket into heaven that's in your back pocket, but it's more than that.

It's a skill learned through the word of God by grace. Obeying Jesus involves learned skill. I say that because that's one of the aspects of readiness.

We need to learn to be people who obey. God speaks, we listen. Do you think Jesus learned obedience?

Would the son of God have learned obedience? Yeah, there's that astonishing verse in Hebrews at 5:11. Son, though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

So how do we respond to the love of God? We learn obedience. That's how we do it.

It says, intimacy, responding to his love by loving him back, that's all. Known and loved, I belong. I have awe of Jesus and I want to obey by God's grace.

And the fourth posture of loving God is faith. His grace is enough. Second Corinthians.

But he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness. The grace of God is the fuel of the kingdom.

We ask the question, who uses the most grace, the sinner or the saint? And the answer is the saint. The saint is constantly needing the grace of God.

We minister, serve, function in the kingdom by and through the grace of God. And there's enough grace to give it away. We've talked about lighting candles.

If I light Trotty's candle, I don't lose any light from mine. And that's the grace of God. We can give it away.

There's no way that God looks at Northern Life and sees us doing the works of the kingdom, trusting that there will be enough grace, and thinks, oh, those kids, they drive me nuts. They just trust me so much, and they just keep giving away grace.

They just keep giving away the gospel. They just keep stepping out more, because they keep believing my grace is enough. Would someone tell them?

No, that's not what, there's no problem in that. Hallelujah. His grace is enough.

We can dream up ways to love him back by stepping out in his grace. I feel like that's a really important aspect of loving God. Just letting him know, I'm trusting your grace for me, and I'm trusting my grace for them.

I'm going to give it away, and all the time, give you back the glory. One, three, twelve, four. Let me recap.

One reason for readiness, the love of God. Three motives for readiness, loving God back, loving others, making disciples. Four actions for readiness.

See, serve, share, steward Christ.

So the second aspect, loving others. We have four parts to that. It starts with life matters.

Life matters. Genesis 1, 26.

God said, let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

Did you know God always wanted a human being to run the cosmos? Did you know that? Remember, that's what Genesis says.

Adam and Eve, God's like, here it is. This is everything I've made. I want you to name the animals, Adam.

I want you to manage this. Co-manage it with me. Look after it all.

Of course, Adam and Eve messed things up, but it did end up happening, didn't it? You know, there's a human running the universe. Big job.

His name is Jesus. Hallelujah. He's fully man, fully human, fully God.

He is the dream that God had. A human being would be trusted to run the cosmos, and that is exactly what he is doing. We, in Jesus' name, are responsible for people and planet.

Last week, there was an interesting scenario, I thought, in our induction. The team had come up with a real-life scenario. They said, there have been pizzas eaten, and the bins are full to overflowing.

No one's taken them back, and they're looking like they would attract rats or vermin. They wouldn't be very good, and we're not thinking that the cleaner has to do it. It's not his or her job.

What do you do when you are confronted with pizzas falling out of bins downstairs on level one? What do you do? And we talked about that.

And what you do is you take responsibility, you wrap that up, you go and find another bag, and you double bag it, and you don't put it in the bin to rot, put it in the can, take it home. At least, that's what some people said.

Do you see what I'm talking about? You would only do that if you felt a responsibility as though the church was your home. Amen?

Well, guess what? Apparently, the world is meant to be that to us. We're meant to take responsibility for this planet.

And of course, we look after the part that God has put in front of us, but it's a very important truth, life matters. And so we are stewards of God's goodness to look after it. The second readiness posture for loving others is canvas of colour.

This is a reminder that God is painting his story on the canvas of generations in the colours of the nations. You might have heard me say this. We were at our last church that I was a pastor at for 19 years.

And I was a pastor there for that long. I was the senior pastor for 17 years. And I sort of felt like, you know, I had blood coming out of my veins into the church.

Like it was our first church, and it was just like a really important place. So when the Lord moved us on, I went sort of kicking and screaming a bit. And I said, this is unfair, Lord.

I want to stay. And I'd already left because he made it clear. And I'll remember being in Bangor where we lived in our bedroom.

And I felt like God spoke to me and said, I am painting my story on the canvas of generations in the colors of the nations.

What that meant to me was, he's saying, I know you like having a job to do in my church, but you won't live long enough for me to do what I want to do. I'm joining generations together, this canvas of the painting that I'm painting.

I'm doing something for 200 years in the Sutherland Shire. You're going to be long gone. You are not that important.

Let it go and I'll keep painting. And I felt like he was saying, and I'm doing it in the colors of the nations. And so that became this idea of a canvas of color, that we want to be as a church an intergenerational church because we need to be, amen?

You actually need to be. You can't just be a group of old people. You won't pass it on.

We need to actually realize there are new people being raised up and it's great having Tristan as an example of someone who's getting involved like that. I, isn't it a wonderful thing, as Jimmy read, that God's plan is to use different people?

Isn't it? Did anyone enjoy that, that truth? He chooses different types of people.

We, I talk every now and then about HOP, which stands for House of Pain, Loving Pain. House of Pain, our garage, they get, has a gym in it, little gym, and a lot of the guys come and do some training.

And I always find it interesting how different men are skilled in different ways. So we'll do something like a grip challenge, where you've got to lift something. And there's one person who wins that every time.

And then he says, I think this is because I have massaged my wife most days of our lives since I've been married. My thumbs are really strong. But I only say that because that's how they've been prepared in life, and God uses that.

Not that God is that, cares much about grip challenges. But someone else will be on the rowing machine. They get on the rowing machine, and it's like, how do you do such good rowing?

And then it comes out, if you start talking, I was in the rowing team in high school, and I learned how to do it, and I've got a really great stroke.

And so, excuse me, someone else has got flexibility that allows them to do some other type of activity, exercise. Do you see what I'm saying? We have different skills learned over lifetime.

And God doesn't want to waste that. We are a canvas of color. We need one another to do the works that God has prepared in advance for us to do.

Find out, help out is the third posture of readiness. 1 John 3, 18 says, Dear children, let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth.

Our spiel on this value says, since people matter, we believe in listening to stories, understanding journeys, discovering opportunities, and providing solutions. Love loves with action. We listen and respond, we get involved.

If people matter, listening matters. If people matter, hearing their story matters. It's the only way you can genuinely help, isn't it?

So, we have this posture, find out, help out. And the best place you could ever go is the Good Samaritan, where you find out what the problem is, and you do good. We know that listening is a skill, isn't it?

Remember the skill we talked about, context, knowledge, skill, team, capacity, multiplication. Learning to listen, so that I can find out the need, allows me to help out. So we have this idea, this posture.

I want to find out, help out. So, do you have a posture out there in today? Is that what you're like?

Your ears are ready, and you go out there, and what this is saying is that we would have a posture, it's like, Lord, who are you gonna lead me to to have a conversation with?

And my posture, my readiness in the 100 metres, is not, I've got my vocal cords ready, I just wanna talk and tell people about me.

Or is your posture, I've got my ears ready, I've got my ears ready, cause I want to find out who is in need of love, amen? Who is in need of stewarding Christ, that I could minister in the fullness of the Spirit and the power of the name of Jesus.

The fourth part is prayer has power. We wanna be postured with readiness to pray and to minister in the power of the Spirit.

Luke 11 says in verse 7, Suppose the one inside answers, don't bother me, the door is already locked and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.

I tell you, this is Jesus telling the story, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of your friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity, he will surely get up and give you as much as you need. He's teaching about prayer.

He's saying have shameless audacity. Keep knocking the father's door and say, Lord, could you help? I need you to do something.

Of course, Ephesians 3 says, Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work with us.

It's been said, and this I think is true, the most loving thing you can do for another person is pray for them. Would you agree? The most loving thing.

We're talking about loving others. Prayer has power. How do you pray for someone?

Some of us have a list. Some of us are just led spontaneously. But we want to be people who are ready to pray because we don't want to just do the physical.

We want to do the spiritual. Stewardship, generations, care and prayer. All postures of readiness.

And then the last part is making disciples. And I'm just going to pull them all together. We talk about being gospel grounded, life learners, part of a coaching community, and sent senders.

So to have a posture that is ready for action to make disciples, I need to know myself, I think, and I think our church needs to know, what's the biblical story? What's the arc of the narrative of Genesis to Revelation?

How can I describe how someone becomes a Christian? How do I understand who God is, who Jesus is, who the Spirit is, who the church is, who the enemy is? We might call that systematic theology.

So that's gospel grounded. But we also want to be teaching people, it's not just about getting into heaven. Christianity is about life learning.

It's a process of character development. In a life change, learning the ways of the master. This is done by people meeting with one another, a coaching community, and ultimately stepping out to be sent on mission.

And you've got to learn how to do that stuff. We did the induction last week, as I said, and we had an evacuation event where we sort of worked out how would we evacuate. Again, that's a learned skill that we need to learn together.

I would put it to you, we need to learn how to make disciples. Amen?

We need to learn how to help people be gospel grounded, help them to learn the ways of the master in life, coach one another, and send people into the ministry and mission that they've been called to do in Jesus' name.

So one, three, twelve, four. Are you with me? One, three, twelve, four.

You've done well if you have. One foundation for readiness, the love of God for us. Por que de tal manera amor Dios al mundo.

All the nations remember, he loved us before we loved him. Three motivations for readiness. They are the charge on humanity.

Love God, love others, make disciples. Four actions of readiness that are less known, but we see them. See, serve, share and steward Christ.

And they all lead up to these postures, twelve postures of readiness, often referred to as core values. I'm going to tell you a little story that I made up, and I'm going to put the challenge out to Nev to keep up with the twelve core values.

Imagine there was a young mum named Mia, and she is at the Clean Up Australia campaign in Hornsby, and she meets an older lady from NorthernLife named Angie.

And because life matters, people and planet, they're there helping doing a Clean Up Australia Day, and the woman from NorthernLife listens to her story, as you do, because she's primed to find out and help out.

And when she hears that there's some challenges going on in Mia's life, and she has a brand new little kid called Holly, she says, Can I pray for you? And Mia says, I would love that. Thank you.

So she prays because prayer has power. And Mia gladly receives prayer, and Angie, because she's part of a canvas of colour, multi-generational connections, she invites Mia and Holly along to Play Group. And Mia says, I'd love to come.

And then at Play Group, she meets other young mums in this canvas of colour, which is the church. And over time, she hears the gospel explained to her and realises that Jesus loves her more than she could ever imagine.

She gives her life to Jesus because he is worthy of her glory and worship. And she starts reading the Word of God, and she starts thinking, this is worth obeying.

And she starts receiving the grace of God and the forgiveness that comes with the grace, and she starts giving it away. She starts giving away the grace of God because she gets this idea that his grace is enough.

And she meets a 40-year-old woman in the canvas of colour who is a trained mentor in discipleship. And so she gets alongside, they start having a cuppa, and she starts teaching Mia all about the gospel and the narrative arc of the Bible.

She starts learning about the fact that she can learn to not be angry all the time, not have lustful thoughts. She learns the sermon on the mount. She's like, oh, this is about life.

Yeah, it is, Mia. It's about life. And so there's a coaching community happening.

And then finally, Mia says, you know what? I'd love to get involved in kids ministry. And they say, yeah, you know what?

We've got a spot for you because we send people into the mission Jesus is on. I think we got all 12, didn't we? Did you follow Nev?

Well done, clap, yeah, good clap for Nev. That may seem cheesy, but it's not. It's the way it works.

You can see, can't you? The postures are real. We have to have ears open and hearts ready to be led by the Lord, always ready to see Christ, serve Christ, share Christ and steward Christ because we live with a posture of readiness.

I'm just going to say it one more time and then we'll finish. We love God because and through being known and loved, we get our identity right. We believe Jesus is worth it and we engage in worshipping him.

We think, you know, God speaks, I want to listen. I'm going to learn how to be obedient. And I'm going to lean into the fact that his grace is enough because I want to love God and I know I have to learn how to do it.

And I want to love others and it's not easy, but I'm going to believe and remember life matters. And I'm a steward of the goodness of God. I'm part of a big family called the Church.

It's intergenerational. It's multicultural and that's the way it should be. And I'm going to listen more than I talk because that's how you care.

Find out, help out. I'm going to talk to God about people's needs because prayer has power and it transforms us.

And then when it comes to making disciples, I'm going to be a person who is grounded in the gospel like Ben led us through in those first two songs. The gospel truth is going to direct my life. I'm going to be a life learner.

I'm going to grow towards the likeness of Jesus. I'm going to coach others when I get the opportunity and I'm going to be coached by them, by other people. And I know I'm sent.

I'm part of a church that is going to send. Amen. Thank you, Lord, for the way that you have designed us to be useful.

And I simply pray in the name of Jesus, would you make Northern Life useful in the kingdom? Amen.