

# GOD'S RECRUITMENT STRATEGY FOR LEADERS IS NOT FOR WIMPS

*By John Gagliardi*



When I fired up my tired old laptop this morning, I was pleased to see a “TGIF” email message - not “Thank God It’s Friday” (actually it’s Monday as I write this), but “Today God is First”, a regular inspirational message sent out by leading Christian business teacher and author, Os Hillman.

The reason I was particularly pleased to see this one, headed “God’s Recruitment Strategy for Leaders”, was that it seemed to perfectly sum up my recent two-part series on God’s testing. Whether we like it or not, God thoroughly tests the people He wants to use, and the bigger the job, the bigger the test seems to be.

Os Hillman writes: “When God calls one of His servants into service, there is often much travail. There are many examples where God makes His presence known through circumstances that tax the individual to his very soul.

“Consider Paul, who was stricken blind on the Damascus Road.

“Consider Peter; when he denied Jesus after the crucifixion, he was in total despair.

“Consider Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were thrown into the fiery furnace.

“Consider Daniel, who was thrown into the lion’s den.

“Consider David, who was forced to flee his former employer for many years and lived as a fugitive.”

As Os says, it may seem strange that God uses such “incredible adversity” to prepare His servants for greater service, but this is God’s way. He intentionally brings us into hard places to prove (test) us and to drive us deeper into the soil of His grace.

As I tried to make clear in my two articles on testing, no one should be surprised when God puts us to the test, because his “recruitment plan” is hardly a secret. He tells us

over and over that we will be tested and “pruned” so that we will bear more fruit (John 15: 3).

If we want to bear fruit and fulfill our destiny in God, then testing and pruning - no matter how painful at the time - is part of the equation, part of the “deal”. The old saying, “no pain, no gain” is quite true in this context.

And if we had any lingering doubt at all, after looking at the list of Bible heroes Os Hillman mentions, we have to do no more than to look at the example of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Himself. No one in the Bible, or for that matter in all of human history, has been tested to the extent He was.

After being baptized by John, the Spirit of God came down on Him, and “...a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased’.” (Matthew 3: 13-17) But what happens next? If a human being were writing the story, he would have Jesus now storm into Jerusalem, triumphant, and claim His throne as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Instead of that, Jesus is immediately led into the wilderness to be “tested by the devil” for 40 days and 40 nights. (Matthew 4: 1 and 2) But when He passes the test, sending the devil packing in no uncertain terms three times in a row, “the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, light has dawned.” And from that time on, “Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand’.” (Matthew 4: 16 and 17).

And as if that is not enough, look at the staggering test that Jesus passed when He was led to the Cross. At any time, He could have just walked away, and called down avenging angels: “...Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26: 53)

But instead He stood firm, passed that bloodiest and cruelest of tests on the cross of Calvary, and went on to rob the devil of the keys of hell, and announce to all future generations: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28: 18-20)

In his article, Os Hillman makes an excellent analogy with trees, and points out that in the arid regions of the world, trees cannot survive unless their roots grow deep down into underground water. “Once they reach the water, these trees become stronger than any tree that can be found in tropical climates. Their root systems ensure that they can withstand any storm.”

Interestingly enough, Kay and I were recently in the deserts of Dubai and Oman, doing what they call “dune bashing” - careering over massive sand dunes in a four-wheel drive vehicle. In the midst of this unbelievably dry and arid desert, every here and there you see a startlingly green tree growing strongly and proudly up out of the dunes. The exact picture described by Os Hillman!

Jesus came to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and to "comfort all who mourn ... to give them beauty for ashes, the old of joy for mourning ... that they may be called trees of righteousness, and the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." (Isaiah 61: 2 and 3). We are the trees planted by the Lord, and while we can do nothing without Him, if we abide in Him, and He abides in us, we will bear "much fruit". (Matthew 15:5)

The themes of testing and fruit-bearing are inextricably connected - if we want to have "optimal fruitfulness" we must be prepared for the "pruning" that is part of the process. Listen to Peter, a man who knew only too well what it felt like to be tested: "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you ... but rejoice, to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4: 12 and 13)

God's army of Kingdom business professionals is not for "wimps", and if we want to be part of that ultimately victorious throng, we must be prepared for His "recruitment strategy". Out there in the marketplace, our battlefield, there is no room for neutrals or "conscientious objectors".

Let us take up the "weapons of our warfare" (2 Corinthians 10: 4), put on the "whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6: 11-18), and as Os Hillman concludes, "...Persevere, so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised."

The reward is worth it - for those who endure the testing, there is promised the crown of life (James 1:2; Revelation 2: 10), and - if that is not enough - "...he who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." (Revelation 21: 7).

That seems like a very good deal to me.

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