



14 June 2024

## Are you ready?

About 30 years ago my son gave me a small sliver of a plant, a Christmas cactus. It has survived a number of moves and has been repotted once.

One constant is that this now very large plant blooms two, three, four or more times a year, often when I least expect it. Sometimes with dozens of blooms, at other times with just two or three. It is always a pleasant surprise when I see a bud, as it was when three buds appeared recently.



As I watched it over recent days, the plant reminded me that opportunities to serve God also sometimes come when we least expect them. The apostle Paul instructed his protege Timothy,

“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.” (2 Timothy 4:1-2)

While Paul was writing to a particular person who was a leader/pastor, don't dismiss this for yourself. You may never preach a sermon, but one principle here for all believers is that we are to “be ready in season and out of season” to fulfill our ministry, to serve God. There are a number of New Testament words that can be translated *preach*. The one here has the underlying idea of being a herald, being an announcer proclaiming a message. That is something all of us can do.

We are to do this “in season and out of season.” We are always to be ready. The apostle Peter tells us to always be “ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). Some workers put in their regular hours and then on top of that are on stand by, on call, ready to respond even when it may not be convenient. We are to be ready to speak, listen, encourage, help at all times — when it is convenient or not, when we feel comfortable or not.

Years ago I almost missed an opportunity God gave me. It was late in the evening after a long day. I was tired, more than ready to get to bed. A man wanted to talk. I thought about telling him, “How about tomorrow”, but we talked. He did most of the talking while I strained to keep alert and listen. I was able to explain how to become a Christian. He didn't say much to that, and we called

it a night. Years later I learned that he considered that conversation a key point in his moving from having religion to having a personal faith, relationship with God.

Remember that as a believer you and all of us are

“a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, *so that* you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (emphasis added; 1 Peter 2:9).

To always be ready for the opportunities God gives you

- accept, embrace this great privilege.
- “sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart” (1 Peter 3:15), that is, determine, regard at the core of your being that Christ is Lord, He is in charge, you will follow and obey Him.
- Pray for opportunities to speak, support, help, encourage.
- Prepare how you can share the gospel in a simple, clear way.
- Be alert for opportunities, no matter if it is a good time or not, or whatever you may be doing.
- Don’t be fearful — God will enable and use you for His purpose.

Are you ready?

Pastor Lyle