

Amelia Boynton Robinson

A Devotional About Preparedness

In the acclaimed movie “Selma”, directed by the extraordinary Ava Duverney, the gifted actress, Lorraine Toussaint, portrays the unshakable civil rights pioneer, Amelia Boynton Robinson having a conversation with the brave Betty Shabazz (and yes, I used *many* superlatives, because they are well deserved!). In the movie, Boynton Robinson is portrayed as saying, “*I know that we are descendants of a mighty people, who gave civilization to the world. People who survived the hulls of slave ships across vast oceans. People who innovate and create and love despite pressures and tortures unimaginable. They are in our bloodstream. Pumping our hearts every second. They’ve prepared you. You are already prepared.*” The concept of preparedness is one that daily lingers in my reflections and observations. So when I read a familiar passage from Exodus, the idea of preparedness caught me, yet again.

“*Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel out of Egypt.*” But Moses said to God, “*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?*” He said, “*But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain*” (Exodus 3: 9-12 ESV).

A Lesson in “But”

The English Language Arts educator in me first noticed two sentences that began with the contraction “but.” This word sometimes negating the words spoken or written before it signals to readers or listeners that the important part of the sentence is coming up on the other side of the “but.” God told Moses he would send him on a successful mission. Moses negated what God said with his more important question of “Who am I?” God then returns the volley with a “but” of His own, negating Moses’ negation (you’re following me, yes?) and giving us all a lesson in preparedness. I’ve read this passage several times, but it wasn’t until a second or third reading that I noticed that God’s response of “*But I will be with you...*” didn’t quite answer Moses’ question. I started to think of all the responses He could’ve given Moses instead:

- Moses, you were the baby preserved from death for this very time. You were born for this. Literally. It’s your destiny!
- Moses, you are the man who was raised in the courts of the country I am sending you to topple. You know it inside and out! You are like special ops.
- Moses, you are the one whose zeal for swift justice is well known. You know I saw you handle that Egyptian who was beating the Hebrew? I need a swashbuckler like you to get this job done. You in?

Instead, Yahweh, in so many words, said, “But Moses, you are a man who I am with.” Now, I can’t articulate for sure Moses’ intentions in asking “*Who am I that I should go...*” but I can tap into my humanity and surmise that Moses

could have been seeking validation for why he was needed or called upon. However, Yahweh's idea of preparedness turned Moses' question on its head. Instead of validating why He needed Moses, Yahweh needed Moses to validate his need for Yahweh.

The Truth About Validation

I sometimes seek validation of myself when I should be validating the One who seeks after me! I sometimes muse about my preparedness when I should be meditating on the One who prepares me. I am not suggesting we be willfully unprepared for life's assignments. I am suggesting that we remember who has assigned us to this life.

God, why have you chosen me?

God says, "I am with you."

God, why do you think I can carry out this task?

God says, "I will be with you."

God, why are you not answering my questions?

God says, "My presence is an answer."

And might I add, that God is not being flippant at all! Whatever He tasks us to do for Him, it is He who fulfills the purpose ([Psalm 57:2](#)) and it is He who gives us the energy ([Colossians 1:29](#)) to live and love for him day after day. In fact, one of the names of God, Adonai, actually describes God as our loving master who not only gives us tasks but also equips us for them!

We Are Already Prepared

Amelia Boynton Robinson was already prepared for the life of fearless activism that she would lead. She became the first African American woman to run for Congress in the state of Alabama in 1964. She spearheaded and organized the 1965 march in Selma across the Pettus bridge where she suffered a brutal beating, yet she survived and continued to walk in her activist calling. In fact, Boynton Robinson recalls of her childhood that, "We felt like we had to be leaders, because this is what the community expected." The expectations held of her as a child was a part of her preparation. The expectation Yahweh has of us is a part of our preparation. He expects you to "Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; He's the one who will keep you on track." (Proverbs 3:5-6 MSG). Emmanuel, God with us, is our preparation. We are already prepared.

Sources

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