

“Will You Be Ready When Opportunity Knocks?”

As we begin this New Year our hearts are once again filled with hope and expectation. The bible tells us “...with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26) But what we may not realize is that while we are waiting on God’s timing, we need to be doing something to prepare for His blessing.

Preparation, planning and effort are necessary components to achieving our God given goals. Wouldn’t it be foolish to sit at home and pray that God would bless you with a high school or college degree without putting forth any effort? We all know that earning a degree takes planning, time and a great deal of work. In the same way, we have to plan and prepare for the results we want in our lives today.

Think about what you are doing today and what the long-term effects will be.

- Are you planning to live a long and healthy life? Then what are you doing to improve your health?
- Are you planning to be successful? If so, what steps have you taken to ensure your future success?
- If you want to live a happy and satisfying life, then are you becoming more positive, stronger in faith, are you developing healthy relationships?
- Are you moving forward in all aspects of your life or are you still discussing last year’s problems? (If you’re not sure about this, just ask a close friend).

The bible has a lot to say about preparation and planning.

- Moses spent 40 years in the dessert in preparation for the work that God had for him to do.
- Joseph’s character development came through his time spent in prison.
- John the Baptist spent most of his life in the desert in preparation for a few years work of ministry.
- And Jesus was preparing His whole life for three years of ministry.

We demonstrate our faith in God by taking the focus off of our current circumstances and preparing for the future God has in store for us.

Steps to take to prepare for change:

First: Recognize that God is a planner and He has something great in mind for you.

Jeremiah 29:11 “I know what I’m doing. I have it all planned out--plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.” (TM)

Second: If we want God’s best for our lives we must begin by praying and asking Him to guide and direct us.

Psalms 10:17 “O Lord, You have heard the desire and the longing of the humble and oppressed; You will prepare and strengthen and direct their hearts, You will cause Your ear to hear.” (AMP)

Third: Prayer, along with preparation, effort and action will keep us on the right track. *Nehemiah 4:9* “But we prayed to our God and guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves.” (NLT)

Fourth: Pray for God’s will for your life.

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (AMP)

Fifth: Check your motives and be sure that what you want lines up with the word of God.

Jeremiah 17:10 “...I, the LORD, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve.” (NLT)

Prepare yourself to wait for God’s timing.

First: Delay does not mean denial but sometimes it means we are not getting the message that God is trying to teach us. The Israelites wandered in the desert forty years in an attempt to complete a journey that should have taken eleven days. It wasn’t distance that stood between them and the Promised Land; God was trying to do a work in their hearts. The problem was with their attitude. They were unappreciative, rebellious, complaining and unbelieving. God cannot bless people with that kind of negative attitude. God wants us to trust and believe in Him.

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (NKJ)

Second: Learn to be content.

There is always a time of preparation before a blessing. We may feel that we have been waiting a long time for God to answer our prayers but we must realize that God is working on our behaviors and attitudes during this time. Our spiritual growth and maturity as well as our heart attitude towards Him are what matter most to God.

Proverbs 16:1 “The preparations of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.” (NKJ)

The Hebrew translation of the word preparation means ‘mental disposition’. If you feel that you have been waiting forever for God to move in your life, maybe you should do a ‘mental checkup from the neck up’. In other words, take a good long prayerful look at your attitude and behavior. Are you grateful, content and appreciative with what God has done in your life and hopeful about your future? Or have you become bitter, angry, frustrated and depressed with your current situation?

Philippians 4:11:13 “...For I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need.” (NLT)

The parable of the ten virgins

Matthew 25:1-13 “**THEN THE** kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish (thoughtless, without forethought) and five were wise (sensible, intelligent, and prudent). For when the foolish took their lamps, they did not take any [extra] oil with them; But the wise took flasks of oil along with them [also] with their lamps. While the bridegroom lingered and was slow in coming, they all began nodding their heads, and they fell asleep. But at midnight there was a shout, Behold, the bridegroom! Go out to meet him! Then all those virgins got up and put their own lamps in order. And the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. But the wise replied, There will not be enough for us and for you; go instead to the dealers and buy for yourselves. But while they were going away to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were prepared went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Later the other virgins also came and said, Lord, Lord, open [the door] to us! But He replied, I solemnly declare to you, I do not know you [I am not acquainted with you]. Watch therefore [give strict attention and be cautious and active], for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man will come.” (AMP)

Virgins (singles) 5 were wise and 5 were foolish.

- The foolish took their lamps but did not take any extra oil with them. Oil represents the anointing. They had no spiritual provision for the journey. The bible refers to them as foolish, thoughtless, with out forethought or planning.
- The wise took flasks of oil along with their lamps and were prepared for the delay. They are called wise, sensible, intelligent and prudent.
- When the bridegroom finally arrives, the foolish virgins recognized that they weren't prepared and needed more oil. They tried to borrow from the others who brought provisions with them. But you cannot buy or borrow someone else's preparation at the last minute. You are responsible for your own actions.
- The foolish missed their opportunity “the door was shut.”
- The wise however, those who were prepared, were ready to receive their blessing.

The bible has a lot to say about wisdom but this scripture stands out among the many: *Proverbs 24: 3-4* “*Through skillful and godly Wisdom is a house (a life, a home, a family) built, and by understanding it is established [on a sound and good foundation], And by knowledge shall its chambers [of every area] be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.*” (AMP)

Questions:

1. How can we discover God's will for our lives?
2. What can we do now to prepare for the future blessings God has promised us?
3. How do we develop and keep a right heart attitude toward God?
4. List both negative and positive effects our attitude and behavior have on our lives.
5. Discuss the parable of the Ten Virgins. How does this parable relate to single adults today?