

Preparing for Revival



31 Ways to Prepare:

- ⇒ Your Life
- ⇒ Your Family
- ⇒ Your Church
- ⇒ Your Community
- ⇒ Your Life

Preparing for Revival

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02100 CR 687
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rickleland.com

In conjunction with
The Author:
Dr. Stephen Swihart
1333 El Reno Street
Elkhart, IN 46516

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Preparing for Revival

The Forward: Dr. Stephen Swihart

Imagine yourself in a state of deeply satisfying prayer. Your heart is open wide to the Lord. You love His word. You love His will. You love His presence. All you desire is to worship Him and to serve Him as faithfully as possible. Then, softly, lovingly and persuasively He whispers in your heart a message.

There is nothing in the Christian life that is any more important or rewarding than hearing from God and then seeing Him fulfill His word. On the following pages are thirty-one “messages” that were heard in prayer. I make no claim of infallibility. To the contrary, I humbly acknowledge how weak my heart and ears are in hearing God’s voice. Still, I press on with the assurance that with the help of the written Word and the careful correction of sincere Christians, there is something here, at least in essence, that reflects God’s remarkable mind regarding the profound subject of revival.

Again and again, the Lord said to His church, He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Here are a few short offerings that attempt to do precisely that. Please read the following messages as if the Lord himself were beside you urging you to go deeper. Don’t accept these words uncritically. Test them with Holy Scripture. Test them with a humble spirit. If there are things you cannot accept, just set them aside. And if there are things the Lord wants you to embrace, then by all means do so.

There is a desperate need for revival in the church-at-large today. Anything you can pray, hear, learn, or do that will advance the Lord’s own purposes in this regard must not be taken lightly. Please read the following thirty-one points with a view to freshen and deepen your own experience of personal, family, church, and community revival.

Preparing for Revival

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Dedicated to:

You, the Reader

Dedicated to:

The Dedicated—dedicated to the Master

Dedicated to:

Father God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit

Come, all you who are thirsty...Listen,
listen to Me and eat what is good.

And your soul will delight in the richest
fare. Give ear and come to Me; hear Me.
That your soul may live.

Seek the LORD while He may be found. Call
on Him while He is near.

You will go out in joy and be led forth in
peace; the mountains and hills will burst
into song before you.

From Isaiah 55

Are you preparing?

Revival

- ⇒ Revival is God's will.
- ⇒ Revival is spiritual life—fresh, transforming, inspiring, humbling, and contagious life.
- ⇒ God says: "Let me show you some of the keys to revival."

From God's Word:

"Revive us and we will call on Your Name. Restore us, O LORD God Almighty; make Your face shine upon us, that we may be saved."

Psalm 80-18b-19

From God's Heart

Revival is My will. Personal revival. Family revival. Church revival. And city revival. All of these are My will.

But let's be honest. True revivals are fairly rare. And I will explain why.

Revival in its simplest definition is spiritual life—fresh, transforming, inspiring, humbling, and contagious spiritual life. It is living in the consciousness of My presence.

When you, your family, your church or your city are in the midst of a revival, everyone will know about it! You can't hide a genuine revival any more than you can cover a mountain top with a baseball cap. It is too big, too real and too lively to keep to yourself.

Revival is a fresh and invigorating infusion of My presence in your life, home, church or city. It is like the recharging of weak batteries. It renews your mind, stimulates your faith, realigns your priorities and sets your heart on serving



How are you preparing?

Me with all of your might. It saves you from the deceitfulness of self-management and sin. And it enlarges your heart to love people in a new and better way. This is revival. Everyone needs it—from the mailman, to the plumber, to the mayor, to the pastor, to you.

Come, let's renew our relationship. Let Me show you some of the keys to revival.

Are you preparing?

Change

- ⇒ You will never improve until you change.
- ⇒ Changes will not only make you more spiritual, they will also make you more effective in life.
- ⇒ Make improvement that will please yourself and those around you.

From God's Word:

"Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I Press on."

Philippians 3:13-14

From God's Heart

You will never improve until you are willing to change.

You will never improve until you are willing to change your attitude about something.

You will never improve until you are willing to change your priorities.

You will never improve until you are willing to change the way you spend your time.

You will never improve until you are willing to change the way you spend your money.

You will never improve until you are willing to change your relationship with people and things—adding some, subtracting a few.

You will never improve until you are willing to change your level of commitment to change.

You will never improve until you change.



How are you preparing?

In the following messages I am going to show you some of the specific changes you can make that will result in improving your life and your relationship with Me. These changes will not only make you more spiritual, they will also make you more effective in life.

When you are reach to come into My presence and to change whatever I speak to you about, then you will make improvements that will please both yourself and those around you.

Come, let's work on making some improvements!

Prayer Walks

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ Learn to pray wherever you walk.
- ⇒ God says: "Sometimes, standing squarely between Me and You are walls...to overcome."
- ⇒ God says: "Learn to conquer your walls at my side."

From God's Word:

"I will give you every place where you set your foot..."

Josh. 1:3

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days."

Hebrews 11:30

From God's Heart

Revival, among other things, is allowing Me to teach you how to break down walls (obstacles, barriers, problems).

Sometime, standing squarely between Me and you are walls that need to be overcome if we are going to enjoy a meaningful and lasting relationship: walls like worry, fear, doubts, procrastination, depression, presumption, sin, and the like.

At other times, there are simply tough problems that form a wall between you and some desired fulfillment—things like inadequate finances, hurt relationship, lost hope, annoying frustrations, health difficulties, and so on.

Often in life there will be walls that will pop up out of nowhere to prevent you from making progress. They will tempt you to stop where you are and to go no further. They will test you to see the measure of your resolve. They will either break you or make you.

How you handle the walls in your life will determine

How are you preparing?

the extent to which you will enjoy revival—in yourself, your home, your church, and your city.

When a wall appears in your life, come to Me in prayer right away. Don't try to remove the wall, just come to Me. Pray and listen to My instructions. I want you to learn how to conquer your walls at My side—not by getting ahead of Me, but by standing at My side.

You are capable of defeating a certain number of walls in your life by yourself, but when you do this, you develop a character of self-confidence and pride which I will someday be forced to oppose. Your self-confidence will trap you, and you will come to believe that you are stronger than you actually are. That is why I want you to give to Me even the smallest walls in your life. Together, side-by-side, we will demolish the walls that come against My will for you. In this way you will learn to walk in humility and with a spirit of God-confidence. No wall will ever be too great for this kind of person.

There are many ways you can come to Me in prayer: standing with your hands lifted toward heaven, kneeling, laying down, riding in your car, sitting at the dinner table, and so on. All of these methods are acceptable. But there is another kind of prayer that I want you to experience (if you have not yet done so). This is PRAYER-WALKING. I call it this because sometimes I want you to walk around a room or your home or your church or a portion of your city as you pray.

Walking over an area is a symbolic way of claiming

How are you preparing?

that territory for My glory and plans. It is a way of telling the devil that he can no longer possess or control what goes on within the area that you have walked. It is a way of pushing back the sin and worldliness that dominates the territory you are circling. It is a way of calling down heaven to the space you have marched out by your walk.

Anyone can go on a prayer walk. And you can begin by doing it in each room of your house. Pray over every wall, drawer, and object. Remove everything that dishonors Me. Cleanse your home as you pray. Replace the spirit of worldliness and self-centeredness with the Spirit of holiness and love. Dedicate everything inside your home to be used for My glory. Then do the same thing outside of your home—in the garage, in the vehicles, in the shed, and so on.

Once your house is in order, thoroughly cleanse your church's facility and property. This is a project that all of the serious people in your church should perform either individually or in small groups. Walk slowly through each room. Ask Me how to pray for classrooms, hallways, kitchens, the auditorium, the pulpit, and so on. Wherever there is the slightest trace of worldly ways, remove it. Saturate everything in prayer.

Determine to make your church a place that is distinguished by fervent prayer, for the strong preaching of the Word, for training people to serve Me, and for outreach.

Next, pray for your city as you have prayed for your home and church. Don't draw attention to yourself by

How are you preparing?

any bizarre behavior; simply pray. Walk around the courthouse and pray. Walk around individual schools and pray. Walk around the police department and pray. Walk around the library and pray. Walk around government buildings and pray. Walk around immoral businesses and pray. Command satan to depart. Pray for a great blessings of favor and Godliness to come to your city, one area at a time. Never tire of these city-wide prayer walks. Enlist others—hundreds and thousands of others—to join you in praying for your city.

A single Christian and a single church cannot bring a city-wide revival. Unity and teamwork will be required to accomplish everything that is necessary. Churches must humble themselves and learn to work together for a higher purpose than their own congregation.

Walk and pray. As you walk through a grocery store, pray for the management and employees. As you walk to pay the gas station attendant, pray. As you eat in a restaurant, pray for the waitress and management. As you go about your job, pray for your employer or fellow employees.

Learn to pray wherever you walk. Take back territory that the devil and the work have stolen from Me. Pray down My Kingdom and My will in every possible place.

Fasting

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ God says: "I want your relationship with Me to remain fresh, invigorating, and productive."
- ⇒ One of the best ways for you to escape a dull routine and spiritual ruts is to spend time fasting.

From God's Word:

"When you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Matthew 6:17-18

From God's Heart

There is too little fasting among My children. They are largely content with their spiritual state. Rather than firmly resisting worldliness and lukewarmness in themselves (or their churches), they wander from one spiritually shallow practice to another. They never grow strong in Me because they are overly preoccupied with themselves, their work, and their addiction to entertainment.

Whatever spiritual routine you follow, sooner or later it will become dull and prove to be inadequate. I designed it to be this way. I do not want you to follow a single pattern for the rest of your life. Instead, I want your relationship with me to remain fresh, invigorating, and productive. And in order for this to happen, you must break the mold you are in...you must reinvest yourself in Me.

One of the best ways for you to escape a dull routine and spiritual ruts is to spend some time fasting. Devoting three days to a complete food fast or three weeks to a partial food fast (especially from sweets and meats) can knock off the barnacles

How are you preparing?

that have attached themselves to your walk with Me. In addition to this, a nonfood fast would also be welcome. Many of My children need to set aside one or several entertainment habits for a whole month.

The longer you follow the same old pattern of doing something, the more likely it is that your heart will lose its freshness. Without realizing it you will become mechanical.

Most of My children and churches are so mechanical that they have become encrusted...they are no longer sensitive to My voice or eager to pursue My will with all of their hearts.

Pastors, pray for a revival...for a fresh awakening in both yourself and your co-leaders. Fast, pray, read My Word and obey Me in everything until I begin a fresh work in you. Then, enlist others to join your spiritual quest. Pray for one another! Pray with one another! Hold each other accountable to taking the next step in your spiritual journey.

Stay with fasting, praying, reading My Word (and other spiritual books), and wholehearted obedience; until you break through to a new level of spiritual love and expectancy. Find and destroy every obstacle that is coming between the two of us. Root out unworthy habits and plant new commitments in their place. Restore your spiritual zeal.

If you are struggling to make headway over your lukewarm lifestyle, fast again...fast longer. Read a couple of Christian biographies. Start going to bed at a reasonable hour. Start getting up early enough so



**How are you
preparing?**

we can spend time together. Turn off the television. Go on a short missionary trip. Volunteer some place where you can help people (even if it means cleaning a lot, or painting a room, or the like).

Never let a rut dominate you. Resist them with all the force you can muster. If you are serious, I will help you win this battle!

Brokenness

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ The greater your brokenness, the greater God's Spirit will work in you.
- ⇒ God says: "I am looking for people who know how spiritually bankrupt they really are...and I will bless them..."

From God's Word:

"If anyone would come after Me [Jesus], he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

Luke 9:23

From God's Heart

Very few people who claim to be Christians actually follow Me. They think they do, but in reality they do not.

The average person believes that attending church and being a generally moral person is the essence of being a Christian. This is not so. Some people no longer believe it is necessary to attend My church in order to be a "good Christian." Again, they are wrong.

Instead of listening to Me, instead of obeying Me, and instead of following My example; most professing Christians listen to their own hearts. They obey their own consciences and follow the pattern of the world. They are not My disciples.

No one can become a true Christian until his will is broken of self-management. No one can be resurrected to a spiritual life until he first dies to the natural life. And no one can follow Me until he stops following his own set of priorities.

I do not accept "good people" or volunteers.

How are you preparing?

And neither do I accept your “good works.” Instead, I am longing to find those individuals who are so empty of themselves that they have nothing to offer Me but a willingness to follow Me. Wherever I lead them and a heart to do whatever I tell them. I am looking for people who know who know how spiritually bankrupt they really are. I am in search of individuals whose chief desire in life is to serve Me. I look for the broken! And when I find them, I restore them. I give to them My own heart and I bless them until they have no greater joy than being in My will.

Do not think you are broken when you tithe and support special offerings—the lost can do this. Do not think you are broken when you serve on some church committee—the lost can do this, too. Do not think you are broken when you are responsible to stand behind a podium and preach—the lost can even do this. And many do. The lost and the lukewarm can “play church” quite well.

You are lost, and will remain lost, until your relationship with yourself and your relationship with your church is superseded by your relationship with Me. Broken people are no longer self-centered, but Christ-centered. They are no longer preoccupied with church programs, but with My own presence.

The Christian life begins when you are broken of every trace of self-confidence that your own “goodness” will qualify you for salvation. And your Christian life grows as you continue to look to Me for directions. The greater your brokenness to the self-life, the greater My Spirit will work in you and through you. You cannot break yourself satisfactorily—do not try.



How are you preparing?

Instead, ask Me to break you of everything that prevents you from fulfilling all of My will for your life. Ask Me to send you the right trials to humble you. Then, when the trials come, ask Me to help you get through your ordeals with a tender heart of love and faith. Be patient. I will help you and you will never be the same again if you will fully submit to My will.

Worship

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ God asks: “How much do you worship Me?”
- ⇒ Until you offer yourself as a sacrifice, you have not yet worshipped.

From God’s Word:

“I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—This is your spiritual act of worship.”

Romans 12:1

From God’s Heart

Worship is the act of dying to self and living to fulfill My purposes. There is no worship where there is no death. Until you offer yourself as a sacrifice, you have not yet worshipped.

Many people imagine that they are worshipping Me when they are in church singing and feeling good, but unless I see a disposition of sacrifice (unless I see the death of self-will), there is no genuine worship.

How much worship do you think actually takes place in a typical “worship service?”

When you go to church, do you really go there to worship?

When you have your personal devotions, do you begin and end each period with genuine worship?

How much do you worship Me?

His Presence

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ God says: "I am looking for people who are desperate to be filled with my gospel and used by my Spirit. To these people I reveal myself."
- ⇒ Most people are spiritually "dry" because they have stopped seeking God.

From God's Word:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always—to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:19-20

"Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere and the Lord worked with them and confirmed His Word by signs that accompanied it."

Mark 16:20

From God's Heart

If the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth be told; My presence is virtually absent in a high percentage of individuals, families and churches that claim to know Me. Why is this the case? Because only a small number of individuals, families, and churches are pursuing My will of making disciples.

The average believer has personalized his faith to such an extent that he no longer feels responsible to be his brother's keeper...he no longer has a passion for spiritual ministry. Instead, he is addicted merely to attending church meetings.

When you lose your first love for Me, and when you no longer care deeply about the spiritual condition of people, you will conveniently (and sometimes subtly) replace My presence with a program.

Most people are spiritually "dry" because they have stopped seeking Me and My will with all of their hearts. Their agendas have replaced My agenda. Their passions have replaced My passions. They no longer hunger to help people know Me

How are you preparing?

or grow up in Me. Their faith is no longer active and involved in giving, but rote and preoccupied with self.

Your sincerity and busyness can deceive you. Watch out. Do not equate good works with My presence. And do not equate meetings with ministry.

I am searching for individuals, families, and whole churches that desire above all else to see My Kingdom come and My will done throughout the whole world. I am in search of teenagers and young adults who want to work with Me to change the world. I am eager to find middle-age adults and seniors who will equip My younger disciples with My word and My Spirit.

I am looking for people who are desperate to be filled with my gospel and used by My Spirit. To these people I reveal myself.

The average church is looking for more nickels and noses—more money and members. I am looking for more totally sold out disciples. I will not “play” church.

Do you really want My presence in yourself, in your family, and in your church more than anything else? Do you really long to be used by Me? Do you really want to see people set free from sin and surrendered to My heart? Do you really desire to bless people with every possible spiritual, physical, material, and social blessing?

If this is the genuine burden of your heart, then I will



How are you preparing?

show up and train you. I will make you into a strong and productive disciple...I will transform your family...I will revive your church...I will impact your community and regions beyond. But you must continue to take the ministry of discipleship seriously.

You must evangelize those who are spiritually lost and equip those who have found Me. This is My interest, and when your desires blend with My desires, you will find My presence.

Knowing God

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ At the heart of the Christian faith there is a reviving, inspiring, illuminating, and refreshing relationship with God.
- ⇒ God says: "We can be close again. Come near!"
- ⇒ God says: "I would like that very much."

From God's Word:

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better."

Ephesians 1:17

From God's Heart

Do you know spaghetti when you read the ingredients on the side of spaghetti box? Do you know spaghetti when you cook it on the stove, drain it of excess water, and pour a special sauce over it? No, you do not know spaghetti until you eat it for yourself. Until you taste it, you merely know about spaghetti. You do not know it.

The same thing is true about your relationship with Me. You do not truly know Me by reading about Me or by attending meetings in My honor. There is more. You must taste Me for yourself.

At the heart of the Christian faith there is more than information, responsibility, and obedience—there is a reviving, inspiring, illuminating, and refreshing relationship with the One and Only True God.

You may have been raised in a Christian home, but this fact does not necessarily mean that you now possess a Christian heart. You may know the ingredients on the box marked "God": all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, and so on.

How are you preparing?

But until you personally taste Me for yourself, you only know about Me.

There are many levels of tasting or getting to know Me. When you first realize that you are guilty of sin and then experience My forgiveness, this is an entry level of knowing Me. When you hear My voice and follow My plans for you, this is another dimension of knowing Me. When you allow Me to work through you to bless someone, this is also a facet of knowing Me. There is no limit to the number of times or ways you can taste Me—or know Me.

If you have never tasted Me before, do it now. Determine that your relationship with Me will not be superficial or ritualistic. Invest your total being into our union and I will do the same thing. Insist on reality, not just an ingredient list. Come directly to me. Become transparent. Make your dealings with Me wholehearted and I will not disappoint you. Make My will your will and you will find Me. Be patient. Be determined. Taste for yourself.

If you have tasted me before, but it has been some time since you and I got together for a genuine heart-to-heart encounter, let's do it again. But I am not interested in a short, sweet chat where you tell me this or that, then you expect Me to bless you again. No, let's not go down that road. Instead, why don't you empty yourself of every trace of the self-life (self-pity, self-justification, self-madness, and so on). Let's not pretend—I can see through that. Let's be as serious as we have ever been in the past. Perhaps more so. Let's lay down everything and start over. I would like that very much. We can be close again. Come near!

Going to Bed Properly

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ Go to bed properly—your heart is in alignment with three things: Faith, Hope, and Love.
- ⇒ God says: “If you are not in right relationship with Me, with people, or with circumstances; then you are not ready to crawl into bed.”

From God’s Word:

“In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun do down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold.”

Ephesians 4:26-27

From God’s Heart

One of the easiest ways for the devil to gain entry into your life is for you to go to bed having failed to resolve (or at least do what I want you to do to resolve) a sour relationship. The seeds you plant before you retire in the evening will often determine the kind of crop you will reap in the morning.

Determine right now that you will go to bed properly every night for the rest of your life. Let Me explain to your heart what I expect.

No one should ever go to bed with unresolved sin in his life. A properly proportioned amount of anger that is directed at an offensive sin in another person can be justified, but bitterness, complaining, foul speech, a critical attitude, or the like, is not acceptable. If you are even partially responsible for an unresolved conflict (either starting it or continuing it), then you need to do your part to correct the problem before you retire for the evening.

Family squabbles needs to be ironed out before

How are you preparing?

turning off the lights. Employer-employee disputes need to be resolved before going to bed. Anger with circumstances need to be turned over to Me in faith before falling to sleep. And so on. If you are not in right relationship with Me, with people or with circumstances; then you are not ready to crawl into bed.

One of the most important things you will ever do is to go to bed properly. At times, this will be extremely difficult. But it can be done. At least from your side of the conflict. You cannot make someone agree with you but you can do your part to make peace. Don't retire until your heart is in alignment with three things—faith, hope, and love. Only in this way can your rest be truly restful.

Getting Up Properly

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ God says: "Consistency in coming to Me first thing in the morning is a critical component in your spiritual well-being."
- ⇒ God says: "Set your alarm for an early appointment with Me."

From God's Word:

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed."

Mark 1:35

From God's Heart

It was a common practice for My Son to rise early, to find a distraction-free location, and to pray. This was also the pattern of the early church. And it has been a regular habit of almost all My choicest servants through the centuries. If you want to know My presence and power in a consistent way, then you too must follow this practice.

There is no substitute for rising early and spending time with Me. Neither is there any excuse for avoiding this period of fellowship. Consistency in coming to Me first thing in the morning is a critical component in your spiritual well-being.

One of the most difficult disciplines for a high percentage of Christians to master is the proper use of the bed—how to retire and when to rise. More believers than I care to count, have been defeated precisely at this point. They do not discipline their flesh, but coddle it. They often behave in this area of their life no differently than their worldly counterparts. They please themselves, rather than Me.

If you want to have more than a lukewarm

relationship with Me then, you must conquer your pillow. Set your alarm for an early appointment with Me. Ask Me when I want you to rise. I'll tell you.

**How are you
preparing?**

Intense Devotions

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ God says: "Have a specific time when you intend to meet with Me for Bible reading and prayer."
- ⇒ If people were as skillful and regular in study and prayer as they are with their e-mails, they would experience significant growth.

From God's Word:

"Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

Hebrews 5:13-14

From God's Heart

Going to church and listening to your pastor's messages are good things, BUT they are not enough. No one will ever become mature who limits themselves to being fed by someone else. You must learn to feed yourself.

How I wish My children would come to Me in skillful prayer and to My Word in close examination. Few do. They are content with shallowness. They are busy. And often they are much more worldly than they imagine.

There will be little-to-no spiritual growth in your life unless you learn how to pray and how to read My Book accurately on your own.

If you use a computer, think of your devotions as a kind of e-mail account. Reading your Bible is similar to the daily reading of your e-mail correspondence. And prayer is like sending an e-mail to Me. It's that simple and that profound. Honestly, if My people were as skillful and regular in study and prayer as they are with the e-mails, they would experience significant growth.

How are you preparing?

Let Me give you a few pieces of advice that will point the way for effective daily devotions.

1. Have a specific **TIME** when you intend to meet with Me for Bible reading and prayer. Select a time that will keep you from being rushed or distracted.
2. Have a specific **PLACE** where reading and praying are comfortable.
3. Have a specific **PLAN**. Read through Bible books. Pray for your family daily. Be flexible.

Feelings

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ God says: "I am most impressed with those individuals, families, and churches that stare the impossibilities in the face and refuse to buckle."
- ⇒ You may not feel like doing it...do it anyway.

From God's Word:

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training... Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

From God's Heart

Some people witness to the spiritually lost only when they feel like it. They pray for others in need only when they feel like it. They buy a Christian book and read it only when they feel like it. They give 10% of their income to My work only when they feel like it. They do whatever it is they are going to do only when they feel like it. They are controlled by their feelings.

If all My disciples did whatever they felt like doing whenever they felt like doing it, not very much would get done. You can do better than that. You must disciple your body to do what it should do, regardless of the way it feels at any moment.

You may not feel like doing a prayer-walk around your neighborhood, but do it anyway. You may not feel like fasting now and then, but do it anyway. You may not feel like dying to yourself, but do it anyway. This is the only way an ordinary disciple can become an extraordinary follower. Often, the main difference between progress and procrastination is simply this: Doing what should be done whether or not you feel like doing it.



How are you preparing?

Everyone can make excuses or complain or justify their lack of commitment. But I am most impressed with those individuals, families, and churches that stare the impossibilities in the face and refuse to buckle.

Do whatever you feel like doing, and then do a whole lot more besides.

The Past

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ God says: "If you will serve Me and people with a humble and persevering disposition, you will eventually be lifted high above your deepest pain."
- ⇒ Your future is not determined by your past.

From God's Word:

"Brothers...one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..."

Philippians 3:13-14

From God's Heart

The ability to forget is a remarkable gift. I do not expect you to be unable to remember the past, but I do want you to be free from any controlling influences that are in your past.

There are skeletons in everyone's closet—no one's past is perfect. Individuals, families, and whole churches sometimes have rotten reputations. But I specialize in reversing things thought to be impossible. I can take someone with a crooked past and give to him a straight future. I can take a terrible memory and convert it into a stepping stone. I can transform a failure and use it as a seed for an eventual success. I can do all of this and more because I will not permit the past to determine my destiny. Neither should you!

Your future is not determined by your past, but by your present perseverance and humility before Me and man.

Failure is not forever. Watch your heart. If you will serve Me and people with a humble and persevering disposition, you will eventually be lifted



How are you preparing?

high above your deepest past pains. But remember this: there is no lasting success where humility and perseverance are absent, and there is no permanent failure where humility and perseverance can be found.

Learn from your past. Pray more. Listen more. Serve more. Give more. Love more. If you will practice these things, you will be certain to overcome any obstacle from the devil or from the past.

Forgiveness

Are you preparing?

⇒ God says: “You will need a lot of forgiveness throughout your lifetime, but I will always have enough available to cover all of your sins—until the very end!”

From God’s Word:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

1 John 1:9

From God’s Heart

No one will ever rise up from a fall unless he first admits that he has fallen.

Proud people will never admit that they are fallen creatures. Instead, they will defend themselves. They will call themselves “good” and “moral.” But they are not.

The plain truth is that everyone has fallen. Your desires have fallen short of My intentions. And so have your thoughts, words, and decisions. In every area of life, you (and everyone else in the world) have fallen below My standards.

I am not angry with you because you have fallen, this matter can be corrected. But I do become angry with people who refuse to acknowledge their fall or who refuse to respond to it responsibly.

I cannot help people who refuse My help. As long as a heart remains hard and removed from Me, I cannot bless it as I would like.

It is only when you are prepared to admit the

How are you preparing?

truth about your sins that I can remove them. When you are ready to agree that you have disobeyed My laws, when you are ready to confess that you deserve my discipline, when you are ready to turn away from those things I call wrong; then I will quickly forgive you!

There is a great deal more involved in the price and nature of forgiveness than you will ever fathom. Actually, there is a very personal side to my forgiveness that you may not understand. Let Me explain this point to you.

My Son died in your place. I do not simply “forgive” sins; I require that a guilty party pay an appropriate price for his or her defiance. My justice requires a fine, a payment of some kind. When you break a law of Mine, there is a corresponding consequence. Otherwise, My justice would mean nothing.

When My Son hung on the cross, He died there in your place. He paid the price that you should have paid for your own sins. He took all of your disobedience (not just a few small things, but everything); He accepted it into His own body. Then, He received the punishment of death that should have fallen on you. (I know, you probably feel like your sins have not been that bad. Surely, you think, you do not deserve to die for your sins. But you are mistaken. Your disobedience is worse than you think, and My standards are higher than you can grasp. Suffice it to say, whether or not you can understand it all, I have made the necessary provision to remove the consequences that should come to you.)



How are you preparing?

My Son dies on the cross in your place so you could be released from My judgment against your sins. Therefore, you can do nothing to earn your forgiveness. It is a gift. And it is provided by My Son to everyone who will take the steps to be in right relationship with Me.

Lastly, you must understand that this forgiveness not only covers all of your past sins, it also includes all of your present and future sins as well. Every time you are prepared to turn away from your sins, I am prepared to forgive you. You will need a lot of forgiveness throughout your lifetime, but I will always have enough available to cover all of your sins—until the very end!

Lordship

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ God made us and knows what is best for us.
- ⇒ God says: "Honor Me and I will delight to honor you as well."
- ⇒ God says: "Do not resist my Lordship, but embrace it."

From God's Word:

"If anyone would come after me [Jesus], he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Luke 9:23

From God's Heart

When you look to Me, I want you to see more than the best Friend you will ever have. I also want you to see my Lordship (My Sovereignty, My Authority).

You did not make yourself. Therefore, you are not to rule yourself. Instead, I made you and I expect you to respect this distinction between "Maker" and "Made". You are precious to Me and I love you very much (more than you can possibly know). But this does not change the fact that I am in charge of your life—directing what you are to speak, guiding where you are to go, deciding what you are to do, and so on. Every aspect of your life, from start to finish, is to be lived under My authority.

Normally, it is this aspect of My nature, MY Lordship, that most people despise and disobey. Instead of following My counsel, most people want to think for themselves, talk for themselves, decide for themselves, work for themselves, save for themselves, and so on. In short, most people want to be independent of Me and My authority.

How are you preparing?

Consequently, they are rebellious against the very One who made them and knows what is best for them.

Because I am the Maker of people, I am also the Owner of people, but often people behave as if they owned themselves. I designed people to fulfill specific purposes, but often they are bent on fulfilling their own agencies. I have the right to give orders to people, but often they act as if I have no authority over them whatsoever.

As the Lord of the universe, I am in charge of everyone and everything. The entire creation is accountable to me. You are accountable to me. And the sooner you recognize this fact, the sooner you will want to find My will in everything you pursue.

Do not resist My Lordship, but embrace it. I am not out to ruin your life, but to restore it! I am not a mean or hard ruler, but I am your King. Honor me, and I will be delighted to honor you as well. But if you choose to resist Me, you cannot win. Trust My wisdom, follow my counsel, and obey My laws. This is the sure route to satisfaction.

Radical Obedience

Are you preparing?

⇒ God says: "The ideal believer is the one who seeks to please Me with his or her whole heart... And you can be sure of this, when I find this kind of character in one of My children, I will reward it!"

From God's Word:

"Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

1 Corinthians 10:31

From God's Heart

Parents were not made to obey their children's wishes, but children were made to honor the wishes and rules of their parents. This fact should be altogether obvious, but in an increasing number of families it is the children who are in charge, not the parents.

Children are not supposed to make up their own rules, but to obey the rules that are given to them by their parents. When boys and girls believe they know more than Dad and Mom and that they have a right to do whatever they want, they manage only to create serious problems and heartaches in the home. Peace will never return to that home until these sons and daughters decide to obey their parents in both their attitudes and actions.

The ideal son or daughter is the one who desires above all else to please their parents. In a similar way, the ideal believer is the one who seeks to please Me with his or her whole heart.

Obedience to my commandments is the only proof I have that you love Me more than you love



How are you preparing?

yourself. I am not interested in any sort of self-styled obedience, when-I-get-around-to-it obedience, partial obedience, or grumpy obedience. I look for pure, prompt, complete and positive obedience. I look for a servant's heart. I look for a disposition that has no hidden agenda, but one that delights in making Me happy. And you can be sure of this, when I find this kind of character in one of My children, I will reward it!

Desires

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ God says: "Whenever your desires are in agreement with my desires, I will bless the works of your hands.
- ⇒ It is more important for you to guard your desires than you can possibly comprehend.

From God's Word:

"He (Jesus Christ) withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed: Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will (or desire) but Yours be done."

Luke 22:42

From God's Heart

The highest degree of spirituality appears, whenever you are willing to lay down your will for My will, your wishes for My wishes, your desires for My desires. This exchange of what you want, for what I want is not always easy; especially if I am asking you to lay down your life. The most difficult thing you will ever do is lay down your desires and pick up My desires, but it is also the best thing you will ever do.

It is more important for you to guard your desires than you can possibly comprehend. This is the spring from which all of your thoughts, speech, and decisions emerge. If your desires are polluted, then your entire character is in danger of corruption. But if your desires are pure, then your entire character is certain to be safe. Watch over your desires as a top priority.

Sinners are trapped by their unwholesome desires, and you can become snared by unholy desires as well. Make a pact with your eyes, ears, feet, and hands that you will do nothing that might entice your desires away from My will.

How are you preparing?

Above all else, seek to know My own desires. Just as a child cannot possibly hope to please his parents without first knowing what his parents expect from him, neither can you please Me until you first know what I expect from you. Therefore, don't presume that you are doing what I want. Find out what My will is in every situation. Often ask Me what I think about this or that. Examine My Word until you have sure guidance. Ask Me to show you my will case by case. I will help you see matters as I see them.

Whenever your desires line up with My desires, I will hear you when you pray. Whenever your desires are in agreement with my desires, I will bless the works of your hands. And whenever your desires reflect My own desires, I will be close to you every moment of the day and night.

Radical Repentance

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ God says: "Most Christians and congregations are in deep need of repentance."
- ⇒ You only have to be alive for any length of time in order for your spiritual sharpness to grow dull.

From God's Word:

"You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! REPENT and do the things you did at first."

Revelation 2:4b-5a

From God's Heart

Only a few people and churches see themselves as I view them. Most Christians and congregations are in deep need of repentance. They have lost their first fire, and now their relationship with Me is mostly mechanical and at a distance. Their doctrines are accurate enough, but what they lack is Heart.

Almost every member of every church should give serious thought to taking the better part of a day off from time to time in order to do nothing but get warm again, warm toward me.

You only have to be alive for any length of time in order for your spiritual sharpness to grow dull. Sooner or later, your faith will need to be renewed. Promises to Me and others will need to be remade. Priorities will need to be realigned. Commitments will need to be reestablished. Love will need to be reexamined for its depth and purity. And so on. Everything you can think of will eventually need to be washed, polished, and restored to its original condition, including your relationship with Me.



How are you preparing?

Never take your spiritual freshness for granted. Be filled with my Spirit every day. Watch yourself. Spend less time critiquing others and more time evaluating yourself.

Never tire of renewing your mind, heart, will, love and work. Read more. Pray more. Listen better. Serve better. Repent often and deeply. Stay close to me.

Living for Others

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ The greatest people in the world are servants.
- ⇒ Now, let's get to the bottom line: How much of a servant are you at home? At work? At school? At church?
- ⇒ God says: "Ask Me to make you a true servant."

From God's Word:

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Philippians 2:3-4

From God's Heart

The greatest people in the world are servants.

Who admires a doctor for peeking his head through a hospital doorway for one minute and then charging you a small fortune? No one. But what about the nurse who cheerfully empties your bedpan and gently helps you walk down the hallway after surgery. Everyone praises her.

Who respects the lawyer who charges you more for an hour's work than you earn in a full day? No one. But what about the restaurant manager who comes to your table to apologize for the delay with your order and then drops all of the charges for your meal? Everyone praises this person.

There is nothing you appreciate more in another person than the presence of a sincere desire to help you in a professional and courteous manner. When someone goes the second mile for your benefit at no additional expense to you, there arises in your heart an automatic response of gratefulness. You cannot help but think good thoughts about

How are you preparing?

that person. But when you feel like you are being taken advantage of, when you feel like you are being gouged, you cannot help but think negatively about that person or business.

The greatest people in the world are not out to get you where it hurts, but to watch out for you, and to help you. Great people want to serve you. They are glad to give and give and give. They really do care. They are not inconvenienced by your predicament, but thankful they can be of assistance. And so on.

Now, let's get to the bottom line:

- ⇒ How much of a servant are you at home?
At work? At school? At church?

- ⇒ Do you think more highly of others than yourself? Are you a humble and cheerful servant?

- ⇒ Are you a great person? Or, is there room left for more dying to self?

Ask me to make you a true SERVANT.

Heart for Souls

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ It isn't natural to withhold information from someone when that data could be used to save their life.
- ⇒ Less than 10% of all professing Christians will ever lead another person to salvation.

From God's Word:

"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they might be saved."

Romans 10:1

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this if from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation... we are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us."

2 Corinthians 5:17-20

From God's Heart

Less than 10% of all professing Christians in My church will ever lead another person to salvation. Less than 10%.

That statistic tells Me that the majority of My people are spiritually sick. They are surrounded by people headed for hell, yet they are doing very little to prevent this tragedy from occurring. And if they do not actually care about the condition of peoples' souls, then either they do not really know Me and the salvation I offer. Or they do know Me but they are spiritually ill.

It isn't natural to withhold information from someone when that data could be used to save their life. In fact, it is one of the worst things one human being could ever do to another human being— to keep back lifesaving information. This is nothing short of passive murder (failing to do what is within your power to do to save another person). You can be certain that I will hold each individual and congregation accountable for the souls that they permit to slip between their fingers.

Missions

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ Many people are coming to salvation around the world and many churches are being founded. But so much more could be done.
- ⇒ God says: "If you love Me, but have never considered being a missionary; pray about it."

From God's Word:

"Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:19-20

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Acts 1:8.

From God's Heart

One of the reasons so many churches are dull and lifeless is because they have replaced passionate missions with programmed meetings. They are no longer a hospital for sinners, but a retirement home and a social club for saints. They have forgotten SOULS!

Few churches pray any longer for souls or for missionaries. Few churches support long-term missionary workers. And even few missionaries win souls or start churches. The entire missionary enterprise has fallen on its face. Of course, there are exceptions. Many people are coming to salvation around the world and many churches are being founded.

But so much more could be done.

1. Have you **prayed** for just three missionaries during the past month?
2. Do you **help support** at least one missionary with you finances?

How are you preparing?

3. Does your church **give regular updates** on both global missionary work and the specific activities of your own missionaries?
4. Are **missionaries invited** to your congregation to make presentations and to receive offerings?

A decline in fervency for:

1. Prayer Meetings and 2. Missionary Support are sure signs of spiritual sickness. When a church is more interested in its own comfort than it is in the conversion of the lost (both locally and around the world), it has a fever and is in immediate need of revival.

If you are not yet married, consider serving two years (or more) on some mission field. If you are retired, consider going on a short-term missionary trip of several months every other year (or more often). If you love Me, but have never considered being a missionary; pray about it.

Many of today's Christians (especially in the Western world) are lukewarm, weak, and in serious need of a spiritual transfusion. They are preoccupied with themselves, and with the things of this world. They only have a minimal interest in My worldwide Kingdom.

Enlarge your vision—see the bigger picture. Allow Me to motivate you—get involved in new and exciting ministries.

Generosity

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ Giving is the pathway to success and blessing.
- ⇒ God says: "Here's the word that I never want you to forget: Generosity."
- ⇒ Generosity—tuck this word down deep into your heart.

From God's Word:

"And now, brothers we want you to know about the grace that God has given to the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints."

2 Corinthians 8:1-4

From God's Heart

Tuck this word down deep into your heart. Say it over and over again until it challenges you. Pray about it until you get a revelation from Me. Act on it until you see its practical power flowing out of you.

Here's the word that I never want you to forget:

⇒ **Generosity**

⇒ **Generosity**

⇒ **Generosity**

Let it sink down into your spirit. Let it inspire you. Let it convict you. Let it guide you:

⇒ **Generosity**

⇒ **Generosity**

⇒ **Generosity**



How are you preparing?

Every significant spiritual work in the world has been birthed, fed and kept alive by generous people. Without generosity, zeal cools and progress stalls. Giving is the pathway to success and blessing.

Christians should be generous with their wallets and time. Families should be generous toward one another and those less fortunate than themselves. And churches should show their endless generosity by meeting needs and plating seeds.

Church Leadership

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ "God says: I have raised up leaders so they might work together as a team to equip the rest of My children."
- ⇒ Do not be quick to become a leader.

From God's Word:

"It was He (Jesus Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

Ephesians 4:11-12

From God's Heart

Not every "leader" is a genuine leader. A person may have a leader's title, but not have a leader's heart or gifts.

Do not be quick to become a leader. And if you are already a leader, do not be quick to assume that you understand what it means to be a leader.

The leaders that I raise up are gifted and passionate about the calling I have placed on their lives. They feel compelled by My Spirit to minister. They desperately want to serve Me, but soon most of them become confused and frustrated. They find that working with people is much harder than they imagined it would be. And, after a certain period of time, if they do not quit their jobs, many of them will become mechanical servants of the church.

Too many leaders will substitute intense ministry with routine meetings; they will exchange prayer for fellowship; they will trade My spiritual calling for their church's traditions; and they will replace divine guidance with decision from a board.

How are you preparing?

In short, they will lose touch with Me, not completely, but significantly enough to cut their effectiveness in half!

All of My present (and future) leaders need to study My Word closely to find out exactly what I have called them to do. Most of My leaders imagine that they have already done this, but they have not.

Consider your calling from Me:

- ⇒ Are you an APOSTLE? If you are, then train people to work with you in planting churches.
- ⇒ Are you a PROPHET? If you are, then train people to work with you in praying and in hearing from Me.
- ⇒ Are you an EVANGELIST? If you are, then train people to work with you in winning the lost.
- ⇒ Are you a PASTOR? If you are, then train people to work with you in meeting the needs of others.
- ⇒ Are you a TEACHER? If you are, then train people to work with you in a diversified teaching ministry.

Look at this list. Do you see yourself here? These are the leaders I have placed over My Church. And now consider this critical point: I have raised up these leaders so they might work together as a team to equip the rest of My children. This is the primary mission of leaders: To prepare the members in their congregations for specific spiritual service. (This is a great deal more than ushering and greeting!)

How are you preparing?

Every member of every church should view themselves as either a TRAINER or a TRAINEE. The church is not to be a club, but a training center. Here you are not only to learn My Word, but how you can help others know Me, grow up in Me, and be used by Me. You are here to be equipped, so you can equip others.

This aspect of My Church is almost completely absent in the majority of all congregations. The cults, under Satan's leadership, have often followed this practice better than My own Church. Frankly, there is a major need for some serious revisions in the way most people (including most "leaders") think about the purpose of My church. This dreadful absence of the quipping of believers so they can equip still others must be corrected if you and your congregation are to see revival!

Purpose of the Church

Are you preparing?

⇒ God says: "Think of My Church more like a specialized trade school...attending for the purpose of learning how to live day after day in the center of My will... and learning to help others to know Me and live close to Me."

From God's Word:

"The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."

2 Timothy 2:2

From God's Heart

Few people attend church with the view that they are there to be trained for ministry. But that is precisely the mission that should serve as the foundation for every congregation.

Unfortunately, only a tiny percentage of My people feel they are called to engage in ministry. Worse yet, those who sense this call on their lives are virtually required to leave their church and go elsewhere (normally to a school) to be equipped for ministry! This is not my plan. Bible schools, colleges and seminaries have their place, but first and foremost it is My Church that is to serve as a training center.

When you think about your church, do you think of meeting with your friends, enjoying a song service, putting some money in the offering plate, and listening quietly to a sermon? Is this (more or less) your idea of church? If it is, then your thinking needs some corrections.

You should think of My Church more like a specialized trade school. And you should envision

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yourself attending this trade school for the purpose of learning how to live day after day in the center of My will. More than that, you should see yourself becoming competent enough to help others know Me and live close to Me.

My Church must never be reduced to passive meetings. Instead, My plan is for the church to be constantly engaged in active ministry. When you attend church, you should know that you are being taught and trained to use your gifts for meaningful ministry.

- ⇒ Everyone in My Church should know for certain they are forgiven of all their sins and they should be able to back up this conviction with citations from the Holy Bible.
- ⇒ Everyone in My Church should know how to use the Bible to lead another person to salvation.
- ⇒ Everyone in My Church should be engaged in personal daily devotions that help to advance their character and competence.
- ⇒ Everyone in My Church should be in training by a gifted leader.
- ⇒ Everyone in My Church should view themselves as a minister.

Are you preparing?

Ministerial Meetings and Watchmen

- ⇒ God says: "I do expect local church leaders to come together for prayer, for vision, and for mutual cooperation."
- ⇒ God says: "STOP focusing on your church and begin to concentrate on My Church."

From God's Word:

"I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he (the Lord) establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth."

Isaiah 62:6-7

From God's Heart

The main watchmen in your community are your church's leaders. They watch over your souls. They protect you from error. They feed you My Word. And they equip you for ministry in your world.

But there is a major problem in most communities. The watchmen are independent and divided. They do not work together. They are soloist, when I have appointed them to be part of a larger choir. I am not expecting all of the churches in a city to come together for regular meetings, but I do expect local church leaders to come together for prayer, for vision, and for mutual cooperation.

Independent churches are an abomination to Me because their pride will not allow them to work with other congregations that are actually a part of my universal Church. It is one thing to keep yourself from liberal "churches" that deny My Word and Lordship, but it is another thing altogether to refuse to cooperate with genuine Christians simply because they do not agree with you at every single point. This is arrogance. I work

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with Christians that I do not completely agree with and I expect you to do the same thing. Honestly, if I cut Myself off from everyone with whom I had a disagreement, there would be on one with whom I could work—including you.

There are some things that I want to accomplish in a community that a single church cannot achieve. For example, the costs for managing a good Christian school are normally too large for a single church. Therefore, churches must come together with a humble and generous spirit in order to produce a ministry that is larger than they can achieve by themselves.

Additionally, if you want to impact the local public schools, the mayor's office, the juvenile judges, the police department, troublesome drug rings, pornographic businesses, and other community concerns, then you must lock arms with fellow believers to tackle these massive projects. Community revival is too large of a mission for a single church. You must come together, hear from Me, and act on what you hear.

Listen carefully to Me. If you want revival for yourself, but not for your church, then (obviously) your heart is not pure. Likewise, if you want revival for your personal church, but not for all of the churches, institutions, and organizations in your community, then (again) your heart is not pure. You should desire a community-wide revival, something much larger than can be contained or controlled by a single church. STOP focusing on your church and begin to concentrate on My Church.

Unity

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ Unity in the Lord is the secret to family, church, and community strength.
- ⇒ Division is the father of all weakness.
- ⇒ God says: "Anyone who sows discord cannot be trusted with My work."

From God's Word:

"I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in me and I am in you . . . I have given them the glory that You gave me, that they may be one as We are one: I in them and You in me. May they be brought to **complete unity** to let the world know that You sent me and have loved them even as You have loved Me."

John 17:21-23

From God's Heart

A fragmented home will never be able to enjoy what a **united** family can enjoy. A fragmented church will never be able to accomplish what a **united** church can accomplish. And a fragmented community of churches will never be able to have the impact that a **united** community of churches can have. Division is the father of all weakness.

If you want to destroy a home, divide it. If you want to ruin a church for decades, divide it. If you want to keep back a community-wide revival, divide its leaders.

Unity in the Lord is the secret to family, church, and community strength. The greater the unity, the larger the strength. For example, a cord of three woven strands is considerably stronger than a single string. Likewise, a rope of 3,000 strands is unfathomably stronger than a rope of just thirty or three hundred strands.

Some people are nearly specialists in creating discord. They dislike this or that idea before they even hear the entire plan. They dislike this or that

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person without even knowing the heart of the individual. They have plenty of doubts and they express them. They are opinionated folks. They are narrow-minded and they don't mind telling you that they will not support whatever is being presented. They claim to mean well, but they are self-deceived.

Anyone who sows discord cannot be trusted with My work. Such a person will draw attention to himself, not to Me. It is possible to be strong in the Lord and to be humble at the same time. And it is with these individuals that I can accomplish My deepest and most far reaching works.

Most leaders are motivated by fear. They fear key members in their congregations, they fear their co-leaders, and they fear the leaders I have raised up in other churches. Consequently, they entrust little authority to anyone. I have a better plan.

I am looking for leaders who are motivated by unity. I am looking for true team players. I am searching for people who do not have to be in charge or have control of everything. I am searching for people who are eager to learn from others.

You do not have to agree with a person at every single point to have a productive unity with him. Naturally, I do not want you to unite with pseudo-believers. But you must be cautious not to mislabel people, making yourself look sensible, and everyone else look half-stupid. Aim for mutual cooperation and refuse to jeopardize a major accomplishment because it might have one or two minor flaws.



How are you preparing?

Find people in your church who are smarter than you and lock arms with them. Find people in your community who are smarter than you (including members of other churches with whom you do not completely agree), and lock arms with them too. The more you surround yourself with above average people, the more you yourself will succeed.

If you will be humble enough, you will learn the rewards of working with people who will help you accomplish more than you could ever achieve by yourself. Trust me. Trust good people wherever you find them. Join with them. Try your best to make them a success and they will return the favor!

Prayer Partners

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ People with Prayer Partners are ten times more effective than people without them.
- ⇒ Never attempt anything without a base of prayer support.
- ⇒ Every Christian should have a prayer partner.

From God's Word:

"Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."

Ephesians 6:19-20

"Brothers, pray for us."

1 Thessalonians 5:25

"Pray for us."

Hebrews 13:18

From God's Heart

Surround yourself with people who will pray for you and with you. People with Prayer Partners are ten times more effective than people without them.

Where there is the spirit of prayer, there is humility. Where there is the spirit of prayer, there is dependence. Where there is the spirit of prayer, there is faith. And where there is the spirit of prayer, there is My Presence.

Never attempt anything without a base of prayer support. You can accomplish a certain amount of spiritual work by means of your own prayers, but you can accomplish more when you enlist others to be your partners in prayer. Develop a network of prayer support.

Husbands and wives should be prayer partners. Parents and children should be prayer partners. And outside of the home, you should have an additional partners for whom you pray and who pray regularly for you.

How are you preparing?

Sunday School teachers, find two people who will pray for you daily. Small group leaders, find a couple of people who will take praying for you seriously. Pastors, find a half dozen people (or more) who will lift you up in prayer daily. Be intentional in this matter. Know for certain that your prayer partners are actually praying for you. Ask them when and how they pray for you.

Every Christian should have a prayer partner—normally, a man praying with another man and a woman praying with another woman. Pray for each other's priorities, retiring and rising habits, holiness, zeal for the Lord, daily devotions, and so on.

Keep your prayer partners informed of your requests. Contact them weekly, either in person or over the phone. Naturally, you should also pray for your partners regularly.

Complainers and Praisers

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ Some of the most worthless words you will ever hear are complaining words.
- ⇒ Some of the most valuable words you will ever hear are praising words.
- ⇒ Are you more of a complainer or praiser?

From God's Word:

"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess His Name"

Hebrews 13:15

From God's Heart

Some of the most worthless words you will ever hear are complaining words. And some of the most worthless people you will ever know are complaining people. Make it a personal principle not to have close friends who are good at complaining. Complainers will rob you of your faith and joy. And worst of all, they will turn you into a co-complainer. Avoid them.

On the other hand, some of the most valuable words you will ever hear are praising words. And some of the most valuable people you will ever know are praising people. Make it a priority to choose people of praise as your closest and most reliable friends. They will feed you heart with faith and joy. Best of all, they will turn you into a person of praise. Get close to them.

Complainers grumble. They whine. They are pessimistic. They are negative. They have a bad attitude. They are always finding faults. They make excuses. I do not use complainers.



How are you preparing?

People who often praise Me (and people who often praise other people) are a delight. They are sunshine on cloudy days. They are full of hope when life is full of hurts. They possess a joyful spirit. They are easy to get along with. They are confident that even the worst situation will be worked around for good. They are overcomers. And I am glad to use them. I can rely on them.

Are you more of a complainer or praiser?

Never Give Up

Are you preparing?

- ⇒ In order for you to become strong in the Lord, you must first become weak in yourself.
- ⇒ God says: "If you will trust Me to walk with you through trials, on the other side I will make you into a stronger and more useful disciple."

From God's Word:

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up"

Galatians 6:9

"... there was given to me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me: **My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.** Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

From God's Heart

Sometimes life can seem unbearable.

Sometimes circumstances can seem unfixable.

Sometimes the rejection, the confusion, the pain, or loneliness can seem incurable. Sometimes.

At other times, no amount of suffering is to be compared with the inexpressible joy and satisfaction you have in your walk and work with Me.

Life is like that. Sunny mountain tops. Gloomy valleys. Everyone will experience his or her share of these extremes. It comes with the territory called "life." Whether you are a totally dedicated Christian, a lukewarm Christian, or a sold-out sinner; you will know terrific times and terrible times. You cannot escape them. Don't try.

It is in the tough times that you find out what you are made of. Trials never make you weak, but they are certain to expose any weakness that you might have. And trials do more than that. If you will trust Me to walk with you through them,

How are you preparing?

on the other side I will make you into a stronger and more useful disciple.

It may seem strange at first, but the more scars you wear, the more empathy and hope you can offer to others. I am rarely interested in removing trials from your path. Rather, what I am looking for is a determination on your part to face what is before you with the supreme confidence that the two of us can make it through anything!

You will never grow strong if I pick you up and take you to a cushy, air-conditioned suite every time you experience a fear or a pain. Trials are teachers. Learn to embrace them and find in them deep lessons for your character development.

Don't be too quick to blame the devil and to resist him simply because of some problem. Remember, the devil sends temptations to make you sin—resist them. But I send trials to make you pray—receive them.

In order for you to become strong in the Lord, you must first become weak in yourself. More than anything else, it is trials that I use to bring this about. Trust Me. Never give up. I will never forsake you, even in your darkest hour.

What Matters

Are you preparing?

⇒ The greatest challenge in life is to discern the difference between that which is temporal and that which is everlasting, and then to be devoted to those things that truly matter!

From God's Word:

"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

From God's Heart

Do not make the mistake of building your life around temporal things: your career, houses, cars, vacations, clothing, wealth, popularity, beauty, status, and the like. None of these things will pass beyond the grave to be enjoyed again. You will not delight in even one of them for single second after you die. They will all perish for ever and ever.

But some things do pass through the barrier of death. Some things will go with you as you come into My presence and stand before Me in judgment. Some things are not temporal, but everlasting. The greatest challenge in life is to discern the difference between that which is temporal and that which is everlasting, and then to be devoted to those things that truly matter!

When everything is said and done, and your life on earth is finished, You and I have an appointment. For some people this meeting will be the most exhilarating event of their lifetime. Nothing will be able to compare with it. They will be thrilled beyond comprehension because of our mutual love for one another. But for others, this

How are you preparing?

moment will strike unimaginable fear in their hearts. They will be terrified beyond description because they will know that they are about to reap a consequence for every sin they have ever sown.

There are only two things that are everlasting:

The REWARDS that I will give to those who have been obedient to Me. And the PUNISHMENTS that I will give to those who have been disobedient to Me.

These facts may not seem like a big deal now, but when the Day of Judgment actually arrives, each person there will wish with all of his being that he had lived every day of his life on earth for those things that matter.

It matters to Me that you know Me intimately and thoroughly as your Creator, Lord and Savior.

It matters to Me that you allow Me to guide you around Satan's snares and into My loving and wise will for your life.

It matters to Me that you repent when you fall into sin, and that you permit Me to help you out of your defeat right away.

It matters to Me that your relationship with Me is based on nothing other than holy love.

And it matters to Me that you will be fully prepared for our eventual Face to face meeting.

These are the things that matter. Everything else is temporal.

Turning Points

Are you preparing?

⇒ God says: "There is another turning point you should know about, and it will happen in a time of revival...all of your spiritual dryness is blown away and replaced with the deepest conviction, joy, peace, holiness..."

From God's Word:

"Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?"

"Who are you, Lord?: Saul asked."

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting: He replied. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Acts 9:1, 3-6

From God's Heart

Ordinary events normally unfold gradually. But extra-ordinary events usually happen suddenly.

Suddenly you are fired from your job. Suddenly you are promoted to an unexpected position. Suddenly you are taken to the hospital. Suddenly you inherit a substantial sum of money. Suddenly you are convicted of sin. Suddenly a scripture you need jumps off the page and into your heart. Suddenly the Lord calls you to a new work. Suddenly . . .

Most ordinary events are not memorable. They don't stand out. They aren't special. But extraordinary events jump up and down. They are different—special. They call attention to themselves because. They are turning points in your life.

When you get married, you experience a turning point. Life will never be the same after this point in time. When you have your first child, you experience another turning point. And when you retire, you experience still another turning point. This is natural for everyone.

How are you preparing?

But some turning points are not natural; they are supernatural. For example, when you truly surrender your life to Jesus Christ, experience forgiveness, and are empowered by the Holy Spirit, this is a turning point. Everything changes after these miracles take place.

There are many other turning points in a Christian's life: when you experience the joy of leading someone to salvation, when you receive a much needed answer to prayer, when you hear My voice regarding some major decision, and you respond in faith, when you discover the special gifts and ministry I am bringing you into, and so on. All of these unique events leave a holy mark on your soul. You cannot forget them.

There is another turning point you should know about, and it will happen in a time of revival. This may take place in a series of meetings at church, or in your basement one morning as you pray, or in a chair late at night as you read a powerful Christian biography, or in some other way. But one thing is certain, when revival comes, you will know My Presence in a new and profound way.

There is more to revival than a few heightened feelings. There is a holy change that takes place in your heart and will. There is a coming to life of things that were previously lifeless. There is a deep sensing of My Presence both in you and around you. There is a fresh and profound assurance that my word can be trusted completely. There is a new way of viewing your circumstances through a supernatural lens of faith. There is a turning...a new direction for your life. This is revival.

How are you preparing?

What the church sometimes calls revival is nothing more or less than a series of meetings with a speaker. But I have something else in mind. In My kind of revival there is a series of personal and collective encounters with a Resurrected Savior! In My kind of revival all of your spiritual dryness is blown away and replaced with the deepest conviction, joy, peace, holiness, and commitment you can imagine.

This kind of revival can happen and it can happen more than once in your lifetime. In fact, it can occur many times. There is nothing you, your home, your church, or your community needs more than this kind of revival. Desire it. Pray for it. Prepare for it. Wait for it.

Prepare for it:

- ⇒ Do you need to read this book a second time or third?
- ⇒ Does a friend or your pastor need to get a copy of this book?
- ⇒ Does your entire church need to read and follow any of these messages?