

# PREPARE YOUR WAYS

## Youth Bible Study

- **Goal of Study**
  - Learn how to do a Bible study based on a thought or a word
    - study tools: definition – concordance – online messages – Bible characters
    - **Define** "prepare" (Strong's Concordance)
      - make something ready for use
      - to put together
      - to be firm, established
      - to fix
      - direct
  - 2 Chronicles 27:6 – "So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."
    - Jotham was mighty because he prepared his ways before the Lord
    - begin with a list of questions
      - how does this apply to my life?
      - what is God trying to teach me through this?
- **Preparing for Upcoming Life Events**
  - What life events might be in your near future?
    - new baby
    - college
    - finding a companion
    - moving
    - new job
    - marriage
- **Examples of Life Events**
  - **Preparing for a New Baby**
    - What will I need to take care of the baby?
    - Make room for him or her
      - throw out/give away things you do not need
      - clean the room (paint, shampoo, wash walls)
      - stock the room with baby supplies
    - Ask for advice from other parents
    - Study about the stages of pregnancy
      - Book: What to Expect When You're Expecting
    - Study about infant care
    - Make a birth plan
  - **Preparing to Take a Vacation**
    - Determine location
      - Ask for advice from others who have been there
    - Determine budget
    - How long will we be away?

- Plan route
- Pack supplies, clothes, food
- Check oil, windshield wiper fluid, gas
- Stop paper or mail
- Have someone check on your house
  - water your plants
  - pet care
  - make sure no one has broken in
  - make sure nothing has leaked
- **Preparing to Move**
  - give away/throw away unneeded furniture, dishes, clothes, etc.
    - have a yard sale
  - Fix up the house
    - repairs
    - paint
    - clean carpets
- **Preparing to Plant a Garden**
  - plan
    - what do I need to grow this year?
    - rotate crops
    - check supplies
    - check garden (anything needs to be removed – tree branches, trash)
    - "break up your fallow ground" (Hosea 10:12)
    - check the fence (repair)
- Compare preparing ourselves for upcoming life events to preparing for spiritual events
- **Preparing for Spiritual Life Events**
  - What spiritual life events might be in your future?
    - often a surprise – you don't know they are coming
      - unlike moving or a baby or a vacation – you know ahead of time
    - might be a position, a responsibility, an opportunity, or a severe trial
    - God is not limited by the constraints of time
      - He knows today what future events/situations we need to be preparing for
  - **Consider Personal Examples**
    - write down personal spiritual events that come to mind
    - were you in a good spiritual place?
    - did this hinder you or strengthen you?
    - what might you have done differently to have prepared?
  - **Reasons for Preparing for these (unknown) events**
    - events and/or opportunities will come (that is a known)
    - perhaps if we prepared, we would ...
      - **(1) be more alert** to those opportunities
      - **(2) have victory** in the trial
      - **(3) have better reactions** to difficult situations
    - stepping outside of our **comfort zone**

- for some, requires preparation
- **Bible Characters Who Prepared**
  - **Jacob** – returning to Bethel (Genesis, Chapter 35)
    - a cleaning up was needed
      - put away strange idols (idolatry)
      - be clean
      - change your garments
      - took off their earrings
        - "It is important for everyone to take stock of what they may have in their home that is ungodly ... and promptly get rid of those things" (Enduring Word Commentary).
    - Bethel – the place where God's presence was
    - Bethel – the place where God's guidance was sought for
    - "Some people need to return to where God's presence was real in their lives" (Roger Decker).
    - Bethel – returning to worship
      - personal worship
      - corporate worship
      - family worship
  - **Jotham** (2 Chronicles, Chapter 27)
    - Background
      - 25 years old when he became king
      - reigned 16 years (co-reigned with his father about 10 years)
      - did that which was right in the sight of God
      - built the Upper gate of the house of the Lord and the wall of Ophel
      - built cities, fortresses, and towers
      - defeated the king of the Ammorites who paid him tribute
      - listed in the lineage of Christ (Matthew 1:9)
    - 2 Chronicles 27:6 – "So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."
      - "prepared his ways"
        - something he did in advance
        - helps one to avoid making quick decisions "in the heat of the moment"
    - King Jotham's greatness ("mighty") is a direct result of his preparing his ways before the Lord
    - Other versions – "Prepared"
      - ordered, directed, maintained, walked purposefully, determined, established
    - Personal preparation
      - thought out in advance
      - intentionally and carefully planned
      - not "come-as-they-may"
      - not "winging it"
      - preparation shows strong convictions
        - possible questions to ask while dating:

- what do you believe about this?
- how do you feel about this area of raising children?
- convictions about dating (prepare before dating)
  - what are you looking for in a mate?
  - what physical boundaries will there be in your dating?
- How did Jotham prepare his ways?
  - "built the upper gate of the house of the Lord"
    - "When leaders were concerned about the house of the Lord, it reflected some measure of spiritual revival" (Enduring Word Commentary)
    - rebuilt the link between home (palace) and church (temple)
      - the upper gate was a link between the palace & the temple
      - some kings wanted no link
      - his father took it too far (offered sacrifice himself in the temple)
  - "built cities in the mountains of Judah" – "fortresses and towers"
    - was concerned about helping the people (congregation)
    - what would keep God's people safe?
  - "Jotham must have been a man of prayer. He could not have prepared his ways thus anywhere except at the mercy-seat. He must have been in the habit of taking his daily troubles to his God, and of seeking guidance from him in his daily difficulties, and of blessing him for his daily mercies. He must have been in constant communion with his God, or else he could not have ordered his ways aright before him" (Charles Spurgeon).
- **"His ways"**
  - "course of life, moral character, a way of living or acting" (Strong's Concordance)
  - not just a heart preparation
  - "ways" – plural; the various aspects of his life
- **"Before the Lord his God"**
  - "before" – in the face of, in the presence of, under His eyes
  - Jotham lived his life in full view of God (no secrets)
  - Jotham didn't order his steps according to human wisdom
- **Preparing**
  - includes watching & avoiding the mistakes of others
  - Jotham's father went into the temple of the Lord (where only the priests were to go) and was struck with leprosy
  - Jotham "entered not into the temple of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 27:2)
    - quite possibly he learned from the mistake of his father
  - looking ahead carefully helps us to avoid pitfalls
    - "has this caused others to fall?"
- Jotham wasn't tainted by the culture (idol worship)
- Jotham had spiritual advisors
  - Isaiah
  - Hosea
  - Micah
- Some call this "The Jotham Principle"

- **David**
  - Definition of prepare = make something ready for use; to put together; to be firm, established; to fix; direct
  - David used this word (fixed) twice in Psalm 57:7, which was a psalm he wrote about the time he was hiding in a cave, and Saul, the king who was trying to kill David, came into that exact cave.
    - Psalm 57:7 – "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."
    - David's men were trying to get him to kill Saul
      - might this have been considered self defense?
    - Saul kept pursuing David
    - David had been anointed to be the next king
      - Couldn't he have gotten away with it?
    - David had already determined (fixed; prepared) that he would not take Saul's life
    - if David had not "prepared his heart," might he have given into the pressures of his men?
- **Daniel**
  - Daniel 1:8 – "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank."
    - did Daniel have to prepare for this event?
      - how?
    - understood the moral principle (upbringing, personal study)
    - practiced standing up for what was right long before
      - do you think this was the first time Daniel stood up for what was right?
    - had a close relationship with God
    - gave it much thought
- **How to Prepare Your Ways Before the Lord**
  - deliberate effort over a prolonged period of time (Andrew Womack ministries)
  - **#1 – Evaluate Your Ways (Before the Lord)**
    - are there things in your life that is hindering you?
    - are there things that are unnecessary (clutter)?
    - where are you weak?
    - what is missing or lacking (visitation, family worship)?
    - definition of insanity – "doing the same thing and expecting different results"
    - Proverbs 29:18 – "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."
      - what is your vision (and God's vision) of where you want to be spiritually?
    - Psalm 37:23 – "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way."
      - seek God's help
      - place your ways before God and ask for His opinion
  - **#2 – Take Out the Trash**
    - 2 Chronicles 19:3 – "Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou

hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God."

- removed idols and places of false worship
- there are many idols today that we must be aware of
- 2 Timothy 2:21 – "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."
  - purge himself from these – things of dishonor
    - a self cleansing
  - sanctified – set apart
    - "Just as much as there are certain bowls and plates that we use more than others, or are set aside to some honorable purpose, so some people are more sanctified and useful to God than others. They are more prepared for every good work than others. ... some Christians are more able to be used by God than others, because they have cleansed themselves, and made themselves more usable to God" (Enduring Word Commentary).
  - how to purge, or cleanse one's self (verses 22-23)
    - flee youthful lusts – things that we tend to struggle with in our youth
      - sexual temptations
      - temptations to make a lot of money
      - temptations of longing for praise, fame
      - You can't really say "yes" to God until you can say "no" to some other things
    - follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace
      - "Cleansing can never be a matter of just avoiding bad things. It must also be the pursuit of good things. Therefore, there are both things that we must flee from and things we must pursue" (Enduring Word).
- **#3 – Prepare Your Mind**
  - 1 Peter 1:13 – "gird up the loins of your mind"
    - AMP – prepare your minds for action
    - ERV – prepare your minds for service
  - Revelation 2:7 – "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith"
    - to have "an ear" requires preparation
  - "It is through the mind that a person is often tripped up and kept from fulfilling their calling in Christ" (Bible.org).
    - consider the importance of a believer's thought life in serving God
    - what are some unbiblical mindsets?
    - preparing our ways = changing old patterns of thinking
    - take Christ through our thought patterns
    - get rid of mental baggage (anxiety, worries, insecurity, whatever causes you to stumble)
    - 2 Corinthians 10:5 – "bringing into captivity every thought"
      - confront those thoughts with a verse of Scripture and prayer
    - Believers must not only confront sin with Scripture but continually saturate

- their mind with Scripture in order for it to be girded.
- Ephesians 6:14 – "loins girt about with truth"
  - the Word sets us free from the mindset of our culture
  - too many Christians fail to do what God has called them to do because of the way culture has trained them (discuss/consider)
- 1 Peter 1:13 – "be sober"
    - AMP – "be completely sober [in spirit–steadfast, self-disciplined, spiritually and morally alert]"
    - be spiritually sober
      - too many Christians are not spiritually sober
      - the things of this world can drug you mentally
        - how do you feel after binging on movies, TV shows, social media, texting?
        - is there anything in your life that is a "spiritual intoxicant"?
        - we cannot drive properly when we are intoxicated
          - possibly hurt someone
        - likewise, we might hurt other people when we are spiritually intoxicated
        - what is clouding your thinking?
        - be sober mentally!
    - be more self-controlled
      - Mark 8:34 – "... Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
      - what might we do to become more self-controlled?
        - fasting (from food, from entertainments)
        - practice restraint in purchases, in conversation
        - reduce media consumption
        - reduce phone time
  - **#4 – Strengthen Your Memory**
    - 1 Chronicles 29:18 – "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee."
      - "in the imagination of the thoughts" – framework; meditation (Strong's Concordance)
      - "keep this for ever"
        - David had just been given offerings for the building of the temple
          - commentators say it had to have been "billions"
          - must have been quite overwhelming
          - David prayed that the memory of this would prepare the people's hearts
        - The power of memory is a vital part of preparing our own hearts.
      - (discuss/consider how you can strengthen your memory)
        - give a testimony
        - read
  - **#5 – Prepare Your Heart**
    - 2 Chronicles 12:14 – "And he [King Rehoboam] did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord."

- rarely do Christians backslid on purpose
- a failure to prepare one's heart
- this speaks of Rehoboam (grandson of David)
  - became king at 41
  - initially had a sensitive heart to the Lord
    - Sensitive – he turned back from battle simply because of a prophet who spoke to him in the name of the Lord (2 Chronicles 11:1-4).
    - However, his seeking the Lord only lasted for 3 of the 17 years of his reign (2 Chronicles 11:17).
    - many new Christians start out well – sensitive to the Lord's directions
    - in time they grow cold; why?
    - "prepared not his heart to seek the Lord"
- Discuss/consider how to remain sensitive to the leading of God's Spirit
- **#6 – Prepare Your Body**
  - 1 Corinthians 9:25 – "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things."
    - AMP – "is disciplined and exercises self-control in all things"
    - whole-life stewardship – we are not owners, but managers
    - how can we prepare our body when preparing our ways before God?
      - **question:** does regularly consuming unhealthy food, drugs, beverages affect our preparedness for future trials or tasks?
      - fasting from food
      - removing things that make us sick or not feeling good
        - certain foods you might have to avoid
        - certain foods you need to be your best
  - preparing physically (healthier eating, getting enough sleep, exercise)
- **#7 – Humble Thyself**
  - Psalm 10:17 – "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."
    - desire a prepared heart
    - some preparing God does – some things you need to do
  - in whatever capacity God is calling you – stay humble
  - how?
    - always give God praise
    - keep in mind your inabilities
    - admit when you're wrong
- 2 Timothy 2:21-22 – "... prepared unto every good work ... follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace"
  - peace – right relationships with others (Romans 12:18)
  - let others take the credit
  - let others have the last word or be right
    - this requires humbleness on your part
- **#8 – Learn From Others**
  - 2 Timothy 2:22 – "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart"



- the need of Christian friends, mentors, etc.
- "A smart man learns from his mistakes, but a wise man learns from the mistakes of others" (author unknown).
- Jotham learned from his father's mistakes
- **Other Thoughts on How to Prepare Your Ways?**
  - make a plan
    - where do I want to see myself spiritually in a year?
    - what do I need to remove from or add to my "ways"?
    - write it down; create goals
  - prepare financially
    - budgeting money
  - practice time management (Stewardship)

### Source to Help in Preparing Your Ways

- **Consider Book** My Heart, Christ's Home
  - take Christ through every room in our house
- **Youth Sunday School Lessons & Youth Lessons** (GodsAcres.org)
  - Spiritual Disciplines (Reading, Praying, Studying, Meditation, Fasting)
  - Idolatry
  - An Uncontrolled Thought Life
  - Worship
  - Service
  - Addictions
  - Witnessing
  - Youth Lesson: Whole-Life Stewardship

### One Man's Preparation

- sets aside a weekly time to have a "lengthy period of time with God"
- reads the Word & talk to God
- plans his calendar for the week; talks to God about it & commits it to Him
- talks to God about his vision of his life & commits it to God
- asks God to line his thoughts up with God's thoughts
- asks God to make "His priorities my priorities"
- Proverbs 3:6 – "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
- live deliberately
  - not drifting along
  - not just reacting
  - not being influenced by the world
  - not allowing the word to monopolize my time, my energy, and my focus

### One Woman's Thoughts About Preparation

- Preparing for God's Next Move, Whatever It Is
  - "waiting to receive my next assignment from God"
  - "my current job is not all He has for me"

- (The Purpose-Driven Life – more than one life purpose)
- "God, how can I prepare for something I don't know about?" God told me that I need to prepare to hear from Him.

(Source: <http://teamjesusmag.com/preparing-gods-next-move-whatever/>)

### **Closing Thoughts**

- What are you preparing for?
- Are you preparing for something?
- What does preparation do?
  - removes hindrances (clutter)
  - puts us in a place where we can hear from God
  - puts us in a listening mode
  - reminds us of what God has done and who we are
- Someone who prepares his ways before God makes every decision with God in mind.
- Do you have a heart prepared to hear what God has to say?
- Are your ways prepared for a spiritual test or for a spiritual calling or for a specific task?