



Equipping Ourselves for Service

Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger, D.A.

Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 1	Staying prepared for opportunities	4
Chapter 2	Service to God may begin at a young age	12
Chapter 3	Combining prayer with preparation	19
Chapter 4	Jesus is preparing a place for his own	25
Chapter 5	The importance of planning	29

Forward

We may know God's promises to protect his people, but must not take them for granted. God's blessings are appropriated through prayer.

Fasting humbled the children during the time of Israel because going without food was a reminder of their complete dependence on God. Fasting also gave them more time to pray and meditate on God. Too often we pray glibly and superficially. Serious prayer, by contrast, requires concentration. It puts us in touch with God's will and can really change us.

Without serious prayer, we reduce God to a quick-service pharmacist with painkillers for our every ailment. Sometimes we feel that planning and structure are unspiritual activities that may hinder spontaneity in worship. But order and structure can free us to respond to God.

Order brings glory to God as we experience the joy, freedom, and calm that come when we have wisely prepared in advance.

Without preparation, a Christian worker will be unable to fulfill his calling perfectly.

The purpose for Great Commission Bible College is to prepare workers to make disciples for the kingdom of God.

Will you join in this effort to prepare and equip God called leaders throughout the world to bring the lost to a relationship with Jesus Christ for this last harvest?

Chapter 1



Staying prepared for opportunities

Genesis 40:23

Pharaoh's cupbearer, however, promptly forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.

When Pharaoh's cupbearer was freed from prison, he forgot about Joseph, even though he had Joseph to thank for his freedom. It was two full years before Joseph had another opportunity to be freed (Genesis 41:1). Yet Joseph's faith was deep, and he would be ready when the next chance came.

When we feel passed by, overlooked, or forgotten, we shouldn't be surprised that people are often ungrateful. In similar situations, trust God as Joseph did. More opportunities may be waiting.

Genesis 41:14

Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was brought hastily from the dungeon. After a quick shave and change of clothes, he went in and stood in Pharaoh's presence.

Our most important opportunities may come when we least expect them. Joseph was brought hastily from the dungeon and pushed before Pharaoh.

Did he have time to prepare? Yes and no. He had no warning that he would be suddenly pulled from prison and questioned by the king. Yet Joseph was ready for almost anything because of his right relationship with God.

It was not Joseph's knowledge of dreams that helped him interpret their meaning. It was his knowledge of God. Be ready for opportunities by getting to know more about God. Then you will be ready to call on him when opportunities come your way.

How God was preparing Moses for leadership

Exodus 3:1

One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he went deep into the wilderness near Sinai, the mountain of God.

What a contrast between Moses' life as an Egyptian prince and his life as a Midianite shepherd! As a prince he had everything done for him; he was the famous son of an Egyptian princess.

As a shepherd he had to do everything for himself; he was holding the very job he had been taught to despise (Genesis 43:32; Genesis 46:32-34), and he lived as an unknown foreigner.

What a humbling experience this must have been for Moses! But God was preparing him for leadership. Living the life of a shepherd and nomad, Moses learned about the ways of the people he would be leading and also about life in the desert.

Moses couldn't appreciate this lesson, but God was getting him ready to free Israel from Pharaoh's grasp.

Mount Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, where God would give the people his revealed law (Exodus 3:12).

Preparing ourselves for fulfillment of God's promises

Exodus 2:11

Many years later, when Moses had grown up, he went out to visit his people, the Israelites, and he saw how hard they were forced to work. During his visit, he saw an Egyptian beating one of the Hebrew slaves.

Moses tried to make sure no one was watching before he killed the Egyptian. But as it turned out, someone did see, and Moses had to flee the country.

Sometimes we mistakenly think we can get away with doing wrong if no one sees or catches us. Sooner or later, however, doing wrong will catch up with us as it did with Moses.

Even if we are not caught in this life, we will still have to face God and his evaluation of our actions.

Prepare leaders to succeed you

Numbers 27:15-21

Then Moses said to the Lord, "O Lord, the God of the spirits of all living things, please appoint a new leader for the community.

Give them someone who will lead them into battle, so the people of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

The Lord replied, "Take Joshua son of Nun, who has the Spirit in him, and lay your hands on him. Present him to Eleazar the priest before the whole community, and publicly commission him with the responsibility of leading the people.

Transfer your authority to him so the whole community of Israel will obey him. When direction from the Lord is needed, Joshua will stand before Eleazar the priest, who will determine the Lord's will by means of sacred lots. This is how Joshua and the rest of the community of Israel will discover what they should do."

Moses asked God to appoint a leader who was capable of directing both external and internal affairs—one who could lead them in battle, but who would also care for their needs. The Lord responded by appointing Joshua. Many people want to be known as leaders. Some are very capable of reaching their goals, while others care deeply for the people in their charge. The best leaders are both goal-oriented and people-oriented.

Moses did not want to leave his work without making sure a new leader was ready to replace him. First he asked God to help him find a replacement.

Then, when Joshua was selected, Moses gave him a variety of tasks to ease the transition into his new position. Moses also clearly told the people that Joshua had the authority and the ability to lead the nation. His display of confidence in Joshua was good for both Joshua and the people.

To minimize leadership gaps, anyone in a leadership position should train others to carry on the duties should he or she suddenly or eventually have to leave. While you have the opportunity, follow Moses' pattern: pray, select, develop, and commission.

Benefits of preparing for worship

Numbers 28:1-2

The Lord said to Moses, "Give these instructions to the people of Israel: The offerings you present to me by fire on the altar are my food, and they are very pleasing to me.

See to it that they are brought at the appointed times and offered according to my instructions.

God was teaching his people how to worship him. To do so, he needed ministers to oversee the operations of the tabernacle and to help the people maintain their relationship with God. These men were called priests and Levites, and they could only be members of the tribe of Levi. Exodus 28-29 gives some details about priests.

Not only was a priest from the tribe of Levi, but he also was a descendant of Aaron, Israel's first high priest. Priests had more responsibilities than Levites. As high priest, Aaron was in charge of all the priests and Levites.

The priests performed the daily sacrifices, maintained the tabernacle, and counseled the people on how to follow God. They were the people's representatives before God and thus were required to live worthy of their office.

Jesus is now our high priest (Hebrews 8). Daily sacrifices are no longer required because he sacrificed himself on the cross for our sins. Today ministers no longer sacrifice animals. Instead they lead us in prayer and teach us about both the benefits and the commandments that characterize our new life as Christians.

Preparation often involves difficulties

Deut. 1:1-2

This book records the words that Moses spoke to all the people of Israel while they were in the wilderness east of the Jordan River. They were camped in the Jordan Valley near Suph, between Paran on one side and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab on the other.

Normally it takes only eleven days to travel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-barnea, going by way of Mount Seir.

The Israelites spent 40 years on a journey that should have lasted 11 days. It wasn't distance that stood between them and the Promised Land. It was the condition of their hearts.

God's purpose went deeper than simply transporting a huge group of people to a new land. He was preparing them to live in obedience to him once they arrived.

What good was the Promised Land if the Israelites were just as wicked as the nations already living there? The journey was a painful but necessary part of their preparation.

Through it God taught the Israelites who he was: the living God, the Leader of their nation. He also taught them who they were: people who were fallen, sinful, and prone to rebellion and doubt.

He gave his rebellious people the law to help them understand how to relate to God and to other people.

Your spiritual pilgrimage may be lengthy, and you may face pain, discouragement, and difficulties. But remember that God isn't just trying to keep you alive. He wants to prepare you to live in service and devotion to him.

Good leaders prepare their people to function without them.

Deut. 3:26-28

"But the Lord was angry with me because of you, and he would not listen to me.

'That's enough!' he ordered. 'Speak of it no more. You can go to Pisgah Peak and view the land in every direction, but you may not cross the Jordan River.

But commission Joshua and encourage him, for he will lead the people across the Jordan. He will give them the land you now see before you.'

God had made it clear that Moses would not enter the Promised Land (Numbers 20:12). So God told Moses to commission Joshua as the new leader and encourage him in this new role. This is a good example to churches and organizations that must eventually replace their leaders.

Good leaders prepare their people to function without them by discovering those with leadership potential, providing the training they need, and looking for ways to encourage them.

Chapter 2



To serve God often begins at a young age.

Judges 13:25

And in Mahaneh-dan, which is located between the towns of Zorah and Eshtaol, the Spirit of the Lord began to take hold of him.

Samson's tribe, Dan, continued to wander in their inherited land (Judges 18:1), which was yet unconquered (Joshua 19:47-48).

Samson must have grown up with his warlike tribe's yearnings for a permanent and settled territory. Thus his visits to the tribal army camp stirred his heart, and God's Spirit began preparing him for his role as judge and leader against the Philistines.

Perhaps there are things that stir your heart. These may indicate areas where God wants to use you. God uses a variety of means to develop and prepare us: hereditary traits, environmental influences, and personal experiences.

As with Samson, this preparation often begins long before adulthood. Work at being sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading and

the tasks God has prepared for you. Your past may be more useful to you than you imagine.

Preparing children to fulfill God's call.

1 Chron. 22:7-10

"I wanted to build a Temple to honor the name of the Lord my God," David told him. "But the Lord said to me, 'You have killed many men in the great battles you have fought. And since you have shed so much blood before me, you will not be the one to build a Temple to honor my name.

But you will have a son who will experience peace and rest. I will give him peace with his enemies in all the surrounding lands. His name will be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel during his reign.

He is the one who will build a Temple to honor my name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.'

God told David he would not be the one to build the temple. Instead the task would be left to his son Solomon. David graciously accepted this “no” from God.

He was not jealous of the fact that his son would have the honor of building God’s temple, but instead made preparations for Solomon to carry out his task.

Similarly, we should take steps now to prepare the way for our children to find and fulfill God’s purpose.

Sooner or later our children will have to make their own decisions, but we can help by supplying them with the proper tools: showing them how to pray and study God's Word, the difference between right and wrong, and the importance of church involvement.

David's preparations for temple

1 Chron. 23:1

When David was an old man, he appointed his son Solomon to be king over Israel.

Although David couldn't build the temple, he could make preparations, and he took that job seriously. He not only gathered funds and materials for God's house, he also planned much of the administration and arranged the worship services.

The original readers of Chronicles were rebuilding the temple after invading armies had destroyed it, and this information about its procedures was invaluable to them. The next five chapters demonstrate that organization is essential for smooth and effective service.

2 Chron. 2:1

Solomon now decided that the time had come to build a Temple for the Lord and a royal palace for himself.

David had wanted to build a temple for God (2 Samuel 7).

God denied his request because David had been a warrior, but God said that David's son Solomon would build the temple.

God allowed David to make the plans and preparations for the temple (1 Chiron. 23-26; 1 Chron. 28:11-13).

David bought the land (2 Samuel 24:18-25; 1 Chron. 22:1), gathered most of the construction materials (1 Chron. 22:14-16), and received the plans from God (1 Chron. 28:11-12).

It was Solomon's responsibility to make the plans a reality. His job was made easier by his father's exhaustive preparations. God's work can be moved forward when the older generation paves the way for the younger.

Preparation leads to peace.

2 Chron. 14:7

Asa told the people of Judah, "Let us build towns and fortify them with walls, towers, gates, and bars. The land is ours because we sought the Lord our God, and he has given us rest from our enemies." So they went ahead with these projects and brought them to completion.

"Rest on every side" means that Judah had peace with all her neighbors. Times of peace are not just for resting. They allow us to prepare for times of trouble.

King Asa recognized the period of peace as the right time to build his defenses—the moment of attack would be too late. It is also

difficult to withstand spiritual attack unless defenses are prepared beforehand. Decisions about how to face temptations must be made with cool heads long before we feel the heat of temptation. Build your defenses now before temptation strikes.

Preparation vital to a project well done

Ezra 3:8

The construction of the Temple of God began in midspring, during the second year after they arrived in Jerusalem. The work force was made up of everyone who had returned from exile, including Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jehozadak and his fellow priests, and all the Levites.

The Levites who were twenty years old or older were put in charge of rebuilding the Lord's Temple.

Why was the Lord's temple begun first, even before the city wall? The temple was used for spiritual purposes; the wall, for military and political purposes.

God had always been the nation's protector, and the Jews knew that the strongest stonewall would not protect them if God was not with them. They knew that putting their spiritual lives in order was a far higher priority than assuring the national defense.

It took from September (Ezra 3:1; September was the seventh month because the year began in March) to June just to *prepare* to build the temple.

The exiles took time to make plans because the project was important to them. Preparation may not feel heroic or spiritual, but it is vital to any project meant to be done well.

Making spiritual preparations

Ezra 8:21-23

And there by the Agave Canal, I gave orders for all of us to fast and humble ourselves before our God. We prayed that he would give us a safe journey and protect us, our children, and our goods as we traveled.

For I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to accompany us and protect us from enemies along the way. After all, we had told the king, "Our God protects all those who worship him, but his fierce anger rages against those who abandon him."

So we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and he heard our prayer.

Ezra and the people traveled approximately 900 miles on foot. The trip took them through dangerous and difficult territory and lasted about four months.

They prayed that God would give them a safe journey. Our journeys today may not be as difficult and dangerous as Ezra's, but we should recognize our need to ask God for guidance and protection.

Before making all the physical preparations for the journey, Ezra made spiritual preparations. Their prayers and fasting prepared them spiritually by showing their dependence on God for

protection, their faith that God was in control, and their affirmation that they were not strong enough to make the trip without him.

When we take time to put God first in any endeavor, we are preparing well for whatever lies ahead.

Ezra knew God's promises to protect his people, but he didn't take them for granted. He also knew that God's blessings are appropriated through prayer; so Ezra and the people humbled themselves by fasting and praying.

And their prayers were answered. Fasting humbled them because going without food was a reminder of their complete dependence on God. Fasting also gave them more time to pray and meditate on God.

Too often we pray glibly and superficially. Serious prayer, by contrast, requires concentration. It puts us in touch with God's will and can really change us. Without serious prayer, we reduce God to a quick-service pharmacist with painkillers for our every ailment.

Chapter 3



Combining prayer with preparation

Neh. 4:9

But we prayed to our God and guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves.

Nehemiah constantly combined prayer with preparation and planning. His people trusted God and at the same time kept vigilant watch over what had been entrusted to them.

Too often we pray without looking for what God wants us to do. We show God we are serious when we combine prayer with thought, preparation, and effort.

Preparation for temptation

Proverbs 5:11-13

Afterward you will groan in anguish when disease consumes your body, and you will say, "How I hated discipline! If only I had not demanded my own way!"

Oh, why didn't I listen to my teachers? Why didn't I pay attention to those who gave me instruction?

At the end of your life, it will be too late to ask for advice. When desire is fully activated, people don't want advice—they want satisfaction.

The best time to learn the dangers and foolishness of going after forbidden sex (or anything else that is harmful) is long before the temptation comes.

Resistance is easier if the decision has already been made. Don't wait to see what happens. Prepare for temptation by deciding *now* how you will act when you face it.

Preparation to meet Jesus

Matthew 3:3

Isaiah had spoken of John when he said,

**"He is a voice shouting in the wilderness:
'Prepare a pathway for the Lord's coming!
Make a straight road for him!' "**

The prophet quoted is Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3), one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament and one of the most quoted in the New.

Like Isaiah, John was a prophet who urged the people to confess their sins and live for God.

Both prophets taught that the message of repentance is good news to those who listen and seek the healing forgiveness of God's love, but terrible news to those who refuse to listen and thus cut off their only hope.

John the Baptist *prepared* the way for Jesus. People who do not know Jesus need to be prepared to meet him.

We can prepare them by explaining their need for forgiveness, demonstrating Christ's teachings by our conduct, and telling them how Christ can give their lives meaning.

We can "make straight paths for him" by correcting misconceptions that might be hindering people from approaching Christ.

Someone you know may be open to a relationship with Christ. What can you do to prepare the way for this person?

Mark 1:5

People from Jerusalem and from all over Judea traveled out into the wilderness to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

The purpose of John's preaching was to prepare people to accept Jesus as God's Son.

When John challenged the people to confess sin individually, he signaled the start of a new way to relate to God.

Is change needed in your life before you can hear and understand Jesus' message? You have to admit that you need forgiveness before you can accept it.

To prepare to receive Christ, repent. Denounce the world's dead-end attractions, sinful temptations, and harmful attitudes.

1 Thes. 5:1-3

I really don't need to write to you about how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters.

For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.

When people are saying, "All is well; everything is peaceful and secure," and then disaster will fall upon them as suddenly as a woman's birth pains begin when her child is about to be born. And there will be no escape.

Efforts to determine the date of Christ's return are foolish. Don't be misled by anyone who claims to know.

We are told here that no one knows and that even believers will be surprised. The Lord will return suddenly and unexpectedly, warns Paul, so be ready!

Because no one knows when Jesus will come back to earth, we should be ready at all times. Suppose he were to return today. How would he find you living?

Are you ready to meet him? Live each day prepared to welcome Christ.

How to prepare for Jesus' return

Matthew 24:3

Later, Jesus sat on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and asked, "When will all this take place? And will there be any sign ahead of time to signal your return and the end of the world?"

Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the very place where the prophet Zechariah had predicted that the Messiah would stand when he came to establish his kingdom (Zech. 14:4).

It was a fitting place for the disciples to ask Jesus when he would come in power and what they could expect then. Jesus' reply emphasized the events that would take place before the end of the age.

He pointed out that his disciples should be less concerned with knowing the exact date and more concerned with being prepared—living God's way consistently so that no matter when Jesus came in glory, he would claim them as his own.

Matthew 24:44

You also must be ready all the time. For the Son of Man will come when least expected.

Jesus' purpose in telling about his return is not to stimulate predictions and calculations about the date, but to warn us to be prepared.

Will you be ready? The only safe choice is to obey him *today* (Matthew 24:46).

Matthew 24:45-47

"Who is a faithful, sensible servant, to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his household and feeding his family?

If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. I assure you, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns.

Jesus asks us to spend the time of waiting taking care of his people and doing his work here on earth, both within the church and outside it. This is the best way to prepare for Christ's return.

Chapter 4



Jesus preparing a place for his own

John 14:2-3

There are many rooms in my Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly.

When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.

There are few verses in Scripture that describe eternal life, but these few verses are rich with promises. Here Jesus says, “I am going there to prepare a place for you,” and “I will come back.”

We can look forward to eternal life because Jesus has promised it to all who believe in him. Although the details of eternity are unknown, we need not fear because Jesus is preparing for us and will spend eternity with us.

1 Cor. 11:27-34

So if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, that person is guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking from the cup.

For if you eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily, not honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.

But if we examine ourselves, we will not be examined by God and judged in this way. But when we are judged and disciplined by the Lord, we will not be condemned with the world.

So, dear brothers and sisters, when you gather for the Lord's Supper, wait for each other. If you are really hungry, eat at home so you won't bring judgment upon yourselves when you meet together. I'll give you instructions about the other matters after I arrive.

The Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20) is a visible representation of the Good News of the death of Christ for our sins. It reminds us of Christ's death and the glorious hope of his return.

Our participation in it strengthens our faith through fellowship with Christ and with other believers.

Preparing is important in serving God effectively.

Galatians 2:1

Then fourteen years later I went back to Jerusalem again, this time with Barnabas; and Titus came along, too.

After his conversion, Paul spent many years preparing for the ministry to which God had called him.

This preparation period included time alone with God (Galatians 1:16-17), as well as time conferring with other Christians.

Often new Christians, in their zeal, want to begin a full-time ministry without investing the necessary time studying the Bible and learning from qualified teachers.

We need not wait to share Christ with our friends, but we may need more preparation before embarking on a special ministry, whether volunteer or paid. While we wait for God's timing, we should continue to study, learn, and grow.

Preparing for those who challenge your faith.

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the special favor and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**To him be all glory and honor, both now and forevermore.
Amen.**

Peter concludes this brief letter as he began, by urging his readers to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—to get to know him better and better.

This is the most important step in refuting false teachers.

No matter where we are in our spiritual journey, no matter how mature we are in our faith, the sinful world always will challenge our faith.

We still have much room for growth. If every day we find some way to draw closer to Christ, we will be prepared to stand for truth in any and all circumstances.

Chapter 5



The importance of planning

Genesis 41:28-36

This will happen just as I have described it, for God has shown you what he is about to do.

The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten and wiped out.

Famine will destroy the land. This famine will be so terrible that even the memory of the good years will be erased. As for having the dream twice, it means that the matter has been decreed by God and that he will make these events happen soon.

"My suggestion is that you find the wisest man in Egypt and put him in charge of a nationwide program. Let Pharaoh appoint officials over the land, and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years.

Have them gather all the food and grain of these good years into the royal storehouses, and store it away so there will be

food in the cities. That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come. Otherwise disaster will surely strike the land, and all the people will die."

After interpreting Pharaoh's dream, Joseph gave the king a survival plan for the next 14 years.

The only way to prevent starvation was through careful planning; without a famine plan Egypt would have turned from prosperity to ruin.

Many find detailed planning boring and unnecessary. But planning is a responsibility, not an option. Joseph was able to save a nation by translating God's plan for Egypt into practical actions (implementation).

We must take time to translate God's plan for us into practical actions too.

Consider the long-range consequences of planning

1 Exodus 21:1

"Here are some other instructions you must present to Israel:

These laws were given because everything we do has consequences. It is vital to think before acting, to consider the effects of our choices. Think of your plans for today and consider what their long-range results will be.

As we deal with others, we should keep the principles of these laws in mind. We should act responsibly and justly with all people—friends and enemies alike.

Planning can aid in worship.

1 Chron. 24:1

This is how Aaron's descendants, the priests, were divided into groups for service. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

The temple service was highly structured, but this did not hinder the Spirit of God. Rather, it provided an orderly context for worship. (Compare 1 Cor. 14:40.)

Sometimes we feel that planning and structure are unspiritual activities that may hinder spontaneity in worship. But order and structure can free us to respond to God.

Order brings glory to God as we experience the joy, freedom, and calm that come when we have wisely prepared in advance.

Planning ahead

Neh. 2:11-17

Three days after my arrival at Jerusalem, I slipped out during the night, taking only a few others with me. I had not told anyone about the plans God had put in my heart for Jerusalem. We took no pack animals with us, except the donkey that I myself was riding.

I went out through the Valley Gate, past the Jackal's Well, and over to the Dung Gate to inspect the broken walls and burned gates.

Then I went to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but my donkey couldn't get through the rubble. So I went up the Kidron Valley instead, inspecting the wall before I turned back and entered again at the Valley Gate.

The city officials did not know I had been out there or what I was doing, for I had not yet said anything to anyone about my plans. I had not yet spoken to the religious and political leaders, the officials, or anyone else in the administration.

But now I said to them, "You know full well the tragedy of our city. It lies in ruins, and its gates are burned. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and rid ourselves of this disgrace!"

Nehemiah arrived quietly in Jerusalem and spent several days carefully observing and assessing the damage to the walls. Following this time of thoughtful consideration, he confidently presented his plan. Nehemiah demonstrated an excellent approach to problem solving. He got firsthand information and carefully considered the situation. Then he presented a realistic strategy. Before jumping into a project, follow Nehemiah's example and plan ahead. Check your information to make sure your ideas will work—be realistic. Then you will be able to present your plan with confidence.

The walls were so broken down that Nehemiah's mount couldn't get through, so Nehemiah had to inspect that section on foot.

Nehemiah kept his mission a secret and surveyed the walls by moonlight to avoid unhealthy gossip about his arrival and to prevent enemies from being alerted to his plans. Only after planning carefully would he be ready to go public with his mission from God.

A premature announcement could have caused rivalry among the Jews as to the best way to begin. In this case, Nehemiah didn't need tedious planning sessions; he needed one plan that would bring quick action.

Spiritual renewal often begins with one person's vision. Nehemiah had a vision, and he shared it with enthusiasm, inspiring Jerusalem's leaders to rebuild the walls.

We frequently underestimate people and don't challenge them with our dreams for God's work in the world. When God plants an idea in your mind to accomplish something for him, share it with others and trust the Holy Spirit to impress them with similar thoughts.

Don't regard yourself as the only one through whom God is working. Often God uses one person to express the vision and others to turn it into reality. When you encourage and inspire others, you put teamwork into action to accomplish God's goals.

The difference between planning and worrying

Matthew 6:34

"So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Planning for tomorrow is time well spent; worrying about tomorrow is time wasted.

Sometimes it's difficult to tell the difference. Careful planning is thinking ahead about goals, steps, and schedules, and trusting in God's guidance.

When done well, planning can help alleviate worry. Worriers, by contrast, are consumed by fear and find it difficult to trust God. They let their plans interfere with their relationship with God. Don't let worries about tomorrow affect your relationship with God today.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: New Living Bible translation.

Additional comments and charts are taken from:

Life Application Study Bible. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print