

Preparing for the Season Ahead

To prepare: to plan the details beforehand.

It is so linked to discipline. What is discipline? It is following through on what you have pre-decided is best for you despite your emotional state at the time. You can't talk about discipline without talking about planning and preparation.

People fail exams not because they are not smart, but because they haven't prepared adequately beforehand.

Sometimes you hear sports captains say after a match, "We were not mentally prepared enough."

A large part of our warfare as believers lies in the preparation phase before the warfare hits.

For some of you the season that lies ahead for you is next year, for others, the season that lies ahead is the holiday season coming up.

Close your eyes. Imagine you are planning any formal evening event, for example, a wedding. There are several important guests who will attend. What are some of the things that you will be thinking about? I am sure you will include:

- the ambience, the music, the décor
 - the seating arrangements, who will sit where
 - the menu/ what you will eat
 - the drinks on offer
 - what you will wear
- for those who love perfumes and fragrance, maybe you'll be thinking, eish, I need to get some more of my favourite perfume... I am out of it!

When you don't have a plan, strong personalities and forces around you take over. For example, there is often a cash limit at a wedding. Why? Because some people will maximize on free alcohol if there is no planned limit.

In the same way, I'd like us to think of the season coming up. You are the host. The God of heaven and earth will be joining you.

What ambience will you surround yourself with? Who will you spend time with? Who will you seat around you for company? How will you time your meals and what food will you eat? How will you refresh yourself?

Why don't you plan the details beforehand, so you don't get taken off guard and suffer the consequences?

1. What are you planning on eating?

Mat 4:1-4 NKJV

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS FROM THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" "

God's proceeding word is necessary. And we need to hide it in our hearts consistently so that when the moment of temptation or warfare arises, we have it in our hearts at our disposal and we aren't suddenly looking for relevant scripture to help us in our time of warfare.

Ps 119:11 NKJV

"Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You."

The proceeding word is needed in times of warfare

Eph 6:11-18 NKJV

"Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—"

The word is needed in all seasons for continual fruitfulness

Ps 1:1-3 NKJV

"Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper."

The word is needed to sustain us through difficult times

Ps 119:92-93 TPT

*Because your words are my deepest delight,
I didn't give up when all else was lost.
I can never forget the profound revelations you've taught me,
for they have kept me alive more than once.*

We are entering a season where the Spirit is saying to us "to arise and eat for the journey ahead is long."

The context of this scripture is that Elijah had confronted the prophets of Baal and won. Jezebel then threatened Elijah and he ran in fear from her. This is where we find him:

1 Ki 19:4-8 NKJV

"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!'" Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So, he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you." So, he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God."

Many of us have a moment to sit down so to speak. We have a respite coming up. And the Spirit is instructing us to prepare for the journey ahead. To arise and eat for we will need the strength of this food in the journey ahead.

What is your bible reading strategy for the holidays? When will you eat? What reading program or study program will you use?

2. What are you planning on drinking?

We drink different things for different reasons in life. The different things that we drink, have different purposes. E.g., energy drink with electrolytes, protein shake, water, etc.

We drink to refresh ourselves. How do you plan to refresh yourself this season?

How you refresh yourself will impact your strength and have consequences.

Is 55:1-3a AMP

*"Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you who have no money come, buy grain and eat.
Come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without cost [simply accept it as a gift from God].
"Why do you spend money for that which is not bread,
And your earnings for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And let your soul delight in abundance.
"Incline your ear [to listen] and come to Me;
Hear, so that your soul may live;*

- What strategy will you employ to ensure that you spend time refreshing yourself in His presence and listening to Him each day?

Times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord

Act 3:19 NKJV

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,"

Yes, our bodies need times of relaxation and recreation, but true refreshing always comes from times in the presence of the Lord. We can't neglect this. What is your plan for this?

The Word of God washes like water and refreshes

Eph 5:25-26 NKJV

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,"

The water from Jesus becomes in us a fountain of living water

Joh 4:13-14 NKJV

"Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." "

Jer 2:11-13 NKJV

"Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory For what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; Be very desolate," says the LORD. "For My people have committed

two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water."

3. What are you planning on wearing?

Dress in Praise

Anointed to...

Isa 61:3 AMP

"To grant [consolation and joy] to those who mourn in Zion—to give them an ornament (a garland or diadem) of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, the garment [expressive] of praise instead of a heavy, burdened, and failing spirit—that they may be called oaks of righteousness [lofty, strong, and magnificent, distinguished for uprightness, justice, and right standing with God], the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified."

Ps 33:1 TPT

*It's time to sing and shout for joy!
Go ahead, all you redeemed ones, do it!
Praise him with all you have,
for praise looks lovely on the lips of God's lovers.*

Psa 33:1 AMP

"REJOICE IN the Lord, O you [uncompromisingly] righteous [you upright in right standing with God]; for praise is becoming and appropriate for those who are upright [in heart]."

Psa 33:1 KJV+

"Rejoice H7442 in the LORD, H3068 O ye righteous: H6662 for praise H8416 is comely H5000 for the upright. H3477 "

Comely = Beautiful.

Praise looks good on you!

Psa 100:4-5 NKJV

"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations."

If you struggle to give thanks and to praise Him, here is a helpful scripture:

Jam 1:17 NIV

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

Every good gift. What is good in your life? Thank Him for that. Praise Him from this revelation.

We thank Him for what He has done and praise Him for who He is.

We need to dress ourselves in a garment of praise.**Example: A crafted prayer of thanksgiving and praise**

Father we come humbly before you today, acknowledging that You are God. You are Lord. You are the great "I Am". The Alpha and Omega. Beginning and End. You uphold all things by the Word of your power. You are King overall. There is none that compares to you. And there is nothing hidden from your sight. You are all-seeing, all-knowing, all-powerful, almighty and victorious. And you hear our prayers. You truly are our good King. The protocol in your Kingdom is that we enter your courts with thanksgiving and praise.

We thank you Father for your goodness, for your kindness, for your mercies which are new every morning. Thank you that you are our faithful King. Jehovah Jireh who faithfully provides. You made a way for us when we were in sin and you continue to make a way for us. You have provided food in our bellies, roofs over our heads, shoes on our feet and clothes to cover us. You have provided natural family, spiritual family and meaningful relationships. You are so good to us. You have led and guided us, taught us, spoken to us, heard our prayers and cries and been patient with our weakness. You have sent people to challenge us, to cause us to grow, to encourage and strengthen us and reveal your heart towards us. You are the God who goes before and makes crooked places straight, you break in pieces gates of bronze and cut bars of iron, you open doors which man cannot shut and close doors so that they cannot be opened. You are the way-maker. Just like you made a way through the Red Sea for the Israelites, you make a way for us today. Thank you, Father.

You are our Prince of Peace. You guard our hearts and minds. You are our Keeper; you watch over our coming and going and keep us. Thank you. Thank you for your protection, your covering, for the safety we have in You. You are our Good Shepherd, - You lead us beside the still waters and restore our souls. You bring us into green pastures and feed us. You protect and discipline us. You provide a feast for us even in the presence of our enemies. You are God who is with us always, through the darkest valleys, in the intense warfare and on the mountain tops. You never leave us. Thank you. You are the God who heals, Jehovah Rapha. You restore. You give life. You gave your life. You are compassionate and kind, longsuffering and gracious. Thank

you. Your understanding is unsearchable. You are truly amazing. Thank you for your heart towards us, your love for us, and your work within us.

You are glorious, worthy of the praise and adoration. No-one else can take your glory, Lord. None compares to you. You are beautiful. Holy. Just. Powerful. Mighty. Good. You are love. You are life. You are Creator. We worship you Lord.

Forgive us for when we have taken our eyes off who you are. When we have allowed our eyes to settle on circumstances, or on ourselves. Today we lift our eyes to You. We fix our eyes on You and who You are.

- Play praise and worship in your house. Control the environment.
- Play crafted prayers in your house.

Dress in good deeds

1 Ti 2:8-10 NIV

"Therefore, I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God."

Put on love

Col 3:12-14 NKJV

"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

4. What fragrance do you plan to use?

We have 5 spiritual senses. We have a scent in the spirit realm. We begin to smell like the company we keep.

We carry an aroma in the spirit realm. What aroma will you plan to put on?

Prayer is like incense before the Lord

Rev 5:8 NKJV

"Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

Ps 141:2 NKJV

"Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."

Generosity stemming from love is a sweet-smelling aroma

Eph 5:1-5 NKJV

"Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children. And walk-in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

Php 4:15-19 NKJV

"Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica, you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed, I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

5. What will you fix your eyes upon?

People focus on different things when at events. My husband will tend to focus on the faces. My natural focus will be on the gaps, cracks and anything that needs to be done so that the event can flow smoothly.... Does everyone have a chair? Does everyone know what to do? Is there enough food? And so forth.

Sometimes we can be so focused on ourselves.... The colour of our dress, or what we think other people are thinking of us, that we miss the main point of the event by focusing on things outside of our control.

You can tell a lot about a person by observing the direction of their eyes, where their eyes remain, or what their eyes are fixed upon. I am speaking naturally and figuratively. I am speaking spiritually too.

Have you ever been in a meeting with someone, trying to convey something and the person's eyes constantly move from your eyes to other people or things around you? What message is conveyed to you?

Have you ever observed a man in a room when a woman walks through the room? He may even be with his wife. Where do his eyes go and linger?

You can tell a lot by observing people's eyes and where they remain.

We choose consciously, or passively, what our mind lingers on. God can tell a lot about where our hearts are from this.

A few weeks ago, many of you are aware, I was stung by a wasp in my mouth on my palate whilst cycling. Don't ask why my mouth was open.... I think I was breathing heavily and smiling all at once ☺. My mouth swelled up and it was so uncomfortable. Last week my son was on a school camp and walked into a wasp nest of some sort and was stung on his face and back. He also ended up with a swollen face and red blotches all over his back. Then this last weekend on Saturday, one of our miniature daschund puppies was playing on Samuel's balcony and got stung on his face or on his mouth. His whole head and snout and mouth was just swelling and swelling and swelling. We had to rush him to the vet for a cortisone injection and some antihistamines. He was fine afterwards and the swelling went down. But I was in the house marvelling at the coincidence, or not, or not, of all of us being stung on our faces/mouths in the space of a few weeks.... Talking to the Lord and commenting that it seemed to be the work of the enemy. I was thinking about it quite a lot and speaking to the Lord and saying that I thought it must be the enemy. Three different family members in the space of a few weeks all being stung on the face by wasps... And the Holy Spirit challenged me. I felt Him saying that yes, of course it was the enemy, but why be amazed and marvel at that? Why marvel at wasp stings? Why not marvel at God's miracles and breakthrough this year? Why not marvel and be amazed at the goodness of God? I felt really challenged concerning what I was allowing my eyes to be fixed upon.

What will you fix your eyes upon this holidays? Determine beforehand. What will you allow into your eyes. Where will you allow them to linger? What will hold your attention and focus?

I am speaking spiritually and naturally.

Naturally:

Rom 6:13 AMP

"Do not continue offering or yielding your bodily members [and faculties] to sin as instruments (tools) of wickedness. But offer and yield yourselves to God as though you have been raised from the dead to [perpetual] life, and your bodily members [and faculties] to God, presenting them as implements of righteousness."

Spiritually:

Heb 12:1-2 NKJV

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

2 Peter 1:5-9 NKJV

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

Conclusion

When we are inviting important guests to a ball or function we are hosting, we are inevitably very organised and specific with the plans around what we will eat, drink, wear, and so forth. As we approach these holidays, I would like to encourage you. You are an important host. The God of heaven and earth will be joining you. It will be a long celebration. A number of weeks. I hope you will plan and make ready the dress code, fragrance, ambience, feast and refreshments that are appropriate and desirable. I trust you will decide beforehand what will capture your attention and your eyes.