

My Heart is Ready - Prepare to Meet the Lord

Preparation demands four D's: discipline, determination, dedication, and drive. In all facets of life, we are required to prepare. Whether you are a student, teacher, parent, athlete, employee, or boss, your role has specific goals to meet. The parable of the five wise and the five foolish virgins compares the wisdom of the virgins, who were prepared and saved a reserve of oil needed to trim their lamps should the groom arrive when it is dark, to the carelessness of the unprepared virgins, who did not think ahead and did not prepare for possibilities.¹ Thus, when the time came, the foolish missed their greatest and only opportunity, but the wise were satisfied.

In most regions of the world, people take precautions for weather conditions in their countries. For example, some cities, islands, and countries in the world brace themselves for hurricanes in summer months when weather conditions are favorable to develop hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and other severe storm watches and warnings. These weather disturbances require advanced preparation. People should have extra water, a generator, canned foods, medical supplies, medicine, and fill their cars with gasoline in case they need to evacuate. Other areas may be prone to earthquakes or mudslides or perhaps other devastating potentials. If they wait until the last minute, they will be destitute like the five foolish virgins who were unprepared and could not help themselves nor find anyone who would help them.

Most of us know very well the importance of preparation for school. You must read ahead of the expected material to be able to understand what the teacher or professor will discuss in the next class session. You must also do the assignments and homework as these exercises reinforce the material taught and provide an opportunity for practice in order to be able to grasp the new and more difficult material at a higher cognitive level. Review is then important to acquire the information deeper for recall and to discuss it and apply it.

The athlete also must train vigorously, eat healthy, and have a very disciplined way of life. If the athlete is negligent about his holistic wellbeing, he will not be able to maintain his stamina for the physical challenge and will not compete well against his opponent. Another contestant that may be less athletically talented but is better prepared will achieve the goal and win the prize. Even the apostle Paul used this analogy to describe spiritual diligence. "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it."

Relationships with others also need to be nurtured. The social component of our lives is very critical. However, you cannot spend every moment with your family and friends, or you will waste precious time and will not achieve success. Relationships need boundaries. Good friends and family members ought to desire the success of the other. The Holy Scripture captures many accounts of unique relationships that teach us the true qualities and essence of relationships. These include Elijah and Elisha; Ruth and Naomi; Ruth and Boaz; David and Jonathan; Barnabas

and Mark; Priscilla and Aquila; Paul and Timothy. These friends or family members all had the same spiritual vigilance for the success of their loved one.

The Holy Scripture cautions us to always be prepared in all circumstances. Our spiritual lives also demand rigor and seriousness. *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."*² If we apply the four D's to our spiritual lives, we will be prepared stewards and disciples of Christ in a realistic way and not just by some whimsical desire but still spiritually inept to make a real commitment.

1. Discipline-Develop the most optimum system that works for you. This should include prayers, meals, study, exercise, sleep, and social time. You should balance your commitments and not neglect your time for church or service.
2. Determination-Success requires work and sacrifice, but the decision is ultimately yours. Most often when students need to eliminate distractions in their lives to achieve academic accomplishments, they begin with church and their services. If you prioritize your spiritual life in an order with your spiritual father, you will find that God will bless your time and service and it will not distract you from your other responsibilities at all.
3. Dedication- At this juncture in your life, you do not need to pray all the prayers in the Agpeya, you do not need to read an entire book in the Holy Bible in one day, and you do not need to have too many services. However, coordinate your spiritual agenda with your confession father so that you can dedicate your prayers, readings, and services without any neglect.
4. Drive-Be purpose driven. Achievement is not a selfish goal for boasting. Actually, the more you achieve, the more humble you should be. All achievement is by the grace of God and for a specific purpose. The more you have, the more you give. It is not you, but Christ in you, as the apostle Paul teaches us. *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."*³

Therefore, if we apply these four D's in our daily lives-in the academic, athletic, social, and spiritual aspects of our lives, we will achieve success here on earth and prepare ourselves for the heavenly kingdom of God. *"Think nothing and do nothing without a purpose directed to God. For to journey without direction is wasted effort."*⁴

To God is the glory forever, Amen.