

Making a Difference – The Power of Preparation

Joshua 7:13, *“So get started. Purify the people. Tell them to prepare for tomorrow by purifying yourselves. For this is what God, the God of Israel, says: ‘There are cursed things in the camp. You won’t be able to face your enemies until you have gotten rid of these cursed things’.*” Preparation wins battles! And especially if your preparation is by instruction from God. I believe that God’s word prepares us for every challenge in life. However, there is a practical side to “being prepared.”

In life, there's simply no substitute for preparation followed by hard work - for doing one's homework and basically preparing for every challenge. No one ever topped an exam, cleared a crucial hurdle or excelled at a particular sport by taking it easy and being totally unprepared. Preparation will fill you with confidence and a winning spirit, and it will help you achieve the goals you've set out for yourself.

Preparation also requires a lot of faith because you have no guarantee that your preparation will pay off. You simply have to believe, deep within yourself, that everything you do of a constructive nature will come back to you in some way. You have to know that every good effort is never wasted. *“That what you sow, you will surely reap. God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”* - Galatians 6:7.

Therefore, sometimes you have to be willing to sow for a long time before you reap, knowing that if you do sow in quality and quantity, the reaping will definitely come about within the force of this law.

In everything you do, in everything you plan, preparation is the key. If you want to be ready for success, you have to plant the seeds of success well in advance of the harvest that you expect. Do what other successful people do: “Think on paper.” The Bible says, “Write the vision down and make it plain to see, that you may be energised every time you read it.” And most of all, remember this: “Everything counts.” Everything you do is either moving you toward your goals or moving you away from them. Everything is either helping you or hurting you. Nothing is ever neutral!

It's all very much in the detail. Once you have clarified your ideas and looked at all your options, it's time to start putting some plans in place. What ever you've chosen to do, making it happen takes time and preparation. Having a clear plan keeps you on track, and allows you to see how much progress you've made and avoids wasting unnecessary time. Preparation is key to the success of any venture. Effective performance is preceded by painstaking preparation. The mark of any professional, in any field, is that he / she takes far more time to prepare than the average person. The non-serious (unprofessional) person always attempts to bluff or “wing it.” He tries to get by with minimum preparation and little effort. But be careful here, your level of preparation is blatantly evident to everyone around you.

Preparation requires faith but it calls for a good measure of self-discipline too. It demands self-discipline because our natural tendency is to do more and more of those things that come most easily to us, and to avoid those areas that we don't enjoy because we're not particularly good at them. It requires strength of character that allows us to admit our weaknesses in a particular area, and then the resolve to go back to work in order to develop those weaknesses so that they don't hold us back. Therefore, in your preparation for success you must remember to be honest with yourself, especially when examining your strengths and weaknesses.

One of the greatest changes that has ever taken place in our society happened in 1989 when the world changed from the Industrial Age to the Information Age. We are now living in an information-based society.

Because of the internet and other technological advances more than 60 percent of the working population is in the business of processing information in some way. This means that we are now living in a knowledge-based society and you have to be a person of “knowledge” if you’re going to succeed. To succeed you must be able to work with your mind, your mental talents and abilities. Gone are the days of labouring in the factories and the mills. Today you can succeed only by clear and concise thinking and the more effectively you think and the better prepared you are mentally, the more productive and positive you’ll be.

As a young man Abraham Lincoln said this, “I shall study and prepare myself and some day my chance will come.” If you study and prepare yourself, your chance will come as well. There is nothing you cannot accomplish if you’ll invest the effort to get yourself ready for the success that you desire. And there is nothing that can stop you but your own lack of preparation. Abraham Lincoln recognised early on, as do all great men and women, that painstaking preparation was the key that could unlock his future. Great successes are more than often determined by attention to the smallest details. One inaccuracy can make all the difference. And everything does count! So do your homework because inevitably it’s the details that will trip you up. Someone once said, “No one every gets bitten by an elephant, it’s the mosquitoes every single time.” It’s the little things that sting you and irritate your life.

Condition yourself to seek and find the real facts – this is wisdom. Don’t always go for the obvious ones, but on the other hand, avoid the obscure facts or the assumed facts. Get hold of the real, substantiated facts! Real facts don’t lie. Even after been checked and double-checked, the real facts always reveal the same information. And constantly remind yourself that your thinking and your decisions are only as good as the quality of the information you have to work with. Taking action before getting the real facts, or thinking through all the details, is a recipe for disaster – it breeds mediocrity and brings about failure. The reverse of this action, of course, is that action preceded by thorough planning, is the reason for virtually every success. This doesn’t mean that you will automatically succeed if you plan thoroughly in advance. But it does mean that you will almost always fail if you don’t! So don’t assume anything or take anything for granted. If it’s important enough to matter to you, then it’s important enough to check and double-check.

In every activity you can get involved in, whether it be a skill, a ministry or a profession, preparation is a vital key to your success. Therefore, take your time to think through your most important tasks and responsibilities. Then write them down. This way you can list every detail of the matter and review your notes carefully. And whenever necessary, get some advice. Try to obtain the thoughts and opinions of those you trust before you make a major decision or a serious commitment to anything. Look for someone who has been where you are and who has better skills than you at that particular moment in time. Ask yourself this, “What insights can he or she give me?”

We all need to keep learning in order to keep growing. Today, we live in a knowledge-based society, and knowledge in every field is doubling approximately every two to three years. This means that you must double your knowledge in your field every two to three years just to stay in touch. You’ve most likely already reached the ceiling in your career – using your current level of knowledge, talents and abilities. Therefore, if you want to go faster and farther, you must get back to work and begin to prepare yourself for greater things. To achieve this, you may need to turn off the television and politely excuse yourself from aimless socialising and get back to working on yourself. There’s no better investment in life than the good things you deposit in

yourself. Your possibilities are endless, your potential is unlimited, and your future will open up for you when you prepare yourself for the success that must inevitably be yours.

The key is to remain teachable (childlike) in all things. Matthew 18:2-5, *“For an answer Jesus called over a child, whom he stood in the middle of the room, and said, I'm telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you're not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom. What's more, when you receive the childlike on my account, it's the same as receiving me.”*