

Preparing our Heart to seek the Lord (Outline)

This is **one of the defining lines between success and failure**. Preparing our hearts to seek the Lord is a big deal. We should not take it lightly.

No matter how long you have been in ministry or born again, you do not want to quit preparing your heart to seek the Lord. This is a continual process.

There are three keywords in the title of this message:

- a) Prepare
- b) Heart
- c) Seek the Lord

Preparation of our hearts to seek the Lord, live a godly life, and to overcome temptation is not accidental. It does not just happen.

- Have you noticed that **we prepare in all areas of life** (battle, war, food, buying a house, retirement (if you will retire), sports or an athlete), but not this area, why is it?
- You will not live godly or overcome the temptation and evil of this life accidentally. There has to be **effort and work on your part**.
- Confidence is preparation. Our confidence comes from our preparation.

2 Chronicles 12:14 “And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.”

“...he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.” (2 Chronicles 12:1)
—King Rehoboam, son of King Solomon

One of the main reasons we the believers in the Lord do evil or live ungodly lives is because our hearts have not been prepared to seek the Lord.

Doing evil simply translates to an unprepared heart to seek the Lord or a heart that stopped seeking the Lord. It is because we got our eyes fixed on to the other things.

1. "Prepared"

The word "*prepared*" here in this verse is a Hebrew: "*Koon*" which means "To be erect (that is, stand perpendicular), to set up, to fix, apply, establish" or *figurative* (appoint, render, sure, proper or prosperous) (Strong's Concordance).

A. 1 Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye **steadfast**, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

- a) How do we avoid falling apart during tragedy or temptation and become stable, steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the works of the Lord?
- b) Preparing our hearts to seek the Lord will cause us to be **steadfast, immovable** (other words to define Prepared) and we will abound in the work of the Lord.

B. "The horse is **prepared** against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD." — Proverbs 21:31

- a) None of us would ever go to battle without preparation, but we live and go to the spiritual battle half-baked or unprepared. We would call that person crazy who went to battle unprepared yet do the same thing in the spiritual world.
- b) Do you ever wonder **why some people can live a godly life and victorious Christian life while others fail** to do the same?
 - i) Some have **taken time to prepare their hearts** while others have not.

c) The responsibility to prepare our hearts to seek the Lord is on us.

C. Psalms 57:7 “*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.*”

i) The word “fixed” is the same Hebrew word “**Koon**” that was translated “prepared” in 2 Chronicles 12:14.

ii) A psalm he wrote about the time he was hiding in a cave, and King Saul who was trying to kill David came into that exact cave.

iii) **Preparing our hearts = fixing our hearts on to the Lord and the things of the Spirit.**

iv) The word “*fixed*” means:

i) **Firmly, in position.**

ii) Stationary

iii) Not subject to change or variation.

iv) Constant

v) Firmly held in the mind.

e) Psalm 119:9-11 “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I **hid** in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

i) The Word “**Hid**” here means to “**protect.**” Hiding and protecting the Word in our hearts is a keyway to prepare and to fix our hearts upon the Lord.

ii) Our hearts have to be prepared (erected, fixed, established, set up) if we do not want to commit wickedness.

3. Self-effort or will power?

Fixing our hearts to seek the Lord is a thing you do not by yourself. The Lord will help you do this. He will teach you, but you have to show up for class.

- a) Philippians 2:13 “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”
- b) Psalm 10:17 says, “LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart.”
 - i) As we trust the Lord, we receive the strength and the guidance we need to keep our hearts not subject to change or variation.
 - ii) When our hearts are not fixed or constantly seeking the Lord, we are bound to do evil.
 - iii) Sin does not just fall upon us unawares; it is a result of not firmly and constantly seeking the Lord

2. Heart.

- a) Our hearts do not seek the Lord by themselves or by default. On the contrary, they tend towards evil or ungodliness.
- b) Proverbs 22:17 “*Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and **apply thine heart unto my knowledge.***”
 - i) The process of preparing our hearts to seek the Lord is very deliberate.
 - ii) It is going to take **some sacrifice on your part**. It is going to require **some effort on your part**.
- c) **Notice:** 2 Chronicles 12:14 did not say we prepare **our heads** to seek the Lord, but our hearts.

3. Seek the Lord.

Do you realize that the Lord has to be sought? We do not just find Him. If we do not pursue the Lord, we will not find Him. He wants to reveal Himself to those who are genuinely seeking.

Jeremiah 29:11-13 *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”*

Notice that “seeking” and “searching” are used interchangeably.

a) **Ezra 7:10** *“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”*

i) Notice that this verse interchangeably uses “seek the Lord” used in 2 Chronicles 12:14 with “seek the law of the Lord”

ii) From this verse we learn that seeking the Lord entails three things:

- Seeking His Word (John 1:1; 1 John 5:7)
Jesus is the Word. His Word reveals all we need to know about Him.
Relationship with Jesus. **We seek Jesus through His Word.**
- Doing the Word (James 1:22)
- Teaching the Word.

iii) **You need to get back to the Word.** Rehoboam forsook the Word of God (law) and did evil. In Forsaking God’s Word, He did not prepare His heart to seek the Lord

- Your relationship with the Lord is going to be proportional to your seeking of the Lord.
- You will experience God to the degree you prepare or fix your heart on seek Him.

b) **Seeking the Lord continually**

2 Chronicles 11:17 *“So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon.”*

- Rehoboam's **seeking the Lord** only lasted for three of the 17 years of his reign.
- You can **genuinely love the Lord at one time** and **excited about the things of God**, yet they grow cold. Why? You have to continually prepare your heart to seek the Lord.
 - i) Seek the Lord **daily over a long period of time**. It will sensitize our hearts towards the Lord.
 - ii) Most people will seek the Lord **in times of trouble**.
 - iii) **We cannot seek God only when it is necessary. This should be our lifestyle. We cannot seek God sporadically.** We should not only seek the Lord in tragedy but all the time.
 - We cannot take a **vacation** or **break** from seeking the Lord or preparing our hearts. There is no off day, retirement, or leave from preparing our hearts.
 - iv) It is in the place of preparing our hearts to seek the Lord that **we hear the voice of God and the leading of God**.
 - If you lack direction, begin to fix your heart to seek the Lord.
 - v) Because we prepare our hearts to seek the Lord ahead of time:
 - The result will be no panic in the face of trial, temptation, challenges, and tragedy.
 - We will not make the **wrong decision in the heat of the moment**.
 - vi) If we do not, prepare our hearts to seek the Lord **we may not always get the results we desire**.
 - vii) If you want to **only visit faith in times of trouble, you will not get the same results as those who live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4)**.

c) **Memory**

- i) 1 Chronicles 29:18 “O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee.”
- ii) **Our memory and imagination are crucial to staying true to the Lord and preparing our hearts to seek the Lord.**
- iii) **We cannot truly seek the Lord without remembrance—thoughts of the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord.**
- iv) **Remember the pit you crawled out of? Isaiah 51:1**
- v) Psalm 103:1-5 **God speaks over and over about remembering the things He did for the children of Israel.**
 - That was the very reason for landmarks or memorials.
- vi) **We need to continually engage your memory if you want to prepare your heart to seek the Lord.**

d) **Stability through Preparing our hearts to seek the Lord**

- i) **Why** are some people firm and unshaken in the midst of temptation, challenges, tragedies, and difficult times?
- ii) There are **reasons why** some people are stable and firm through the storm while others are falling apart.

A story about Buck: Jim Buck Story of a son that committed suicide:

He said “3 years of Charis is the reason I stand today. This tragedy could have destroyed my life. He said had he not spent time with the Lord before this and got to know the Lord, he would probably be in the grave next to his son. Prepared time is not wasted time.

- This underscores the need to prepare our hearts to continually seek the Lord.
 - **What we do when there is no pressure, or no crisis determines what we will do and how we will react when pressure and crisis hits.**
 - A time of hardship, tragedy, and storm is not the time to prepare your heart to seek the Lord.
 - I believe it is time to **act on the preparation of your heart to seek the Lord** that you have been doing before the tragedy.
 - This is not to say that we should never seek the Lord during such times, but **we are more effective when we do so before the storm.**
 - Preparation time is the main part of your **ministry and calling.**
 - The more prepared you are the more chances you have to make it in ministry and also survive tragedy when it hits.
 - David took twenty years preparing or being prepared to be king over all Israel for forty years. We must prepare, and we must be patient.
 - **If we quit preparing your heart to seek the Lord, our flesh is capable of anything. You name it! ANYTHING!**
- i) There are reasons why some people get breakthroughs and others do not.
- Example: Farming**
- ii) **Praying over the soil (ground) is not a substitute for prepping it for planting a seed in it!**

- iii) **The quality and quantity of your harvest** is going to be determined by your prepping of the ground and the seed was sown.
- iv) You can pray all you want, but it reaches a point where you cannot receive if no **seed was planted in the ground. Seed must be planted.**
- v) A farmer that did not plant cannot expect a harvest. We accept this natural law but neglect or reject the same spiritual law.
- vi) Preparing our hearts is like prepping the ground for planting seed. No seed, no harvest.

e) **Take an example of the following:**

They all were men who sought the Lord and prepared their hearts to seek Him. **Their hearts were fixed upon the Lord.** Their results and boldness were a **by-product of a prepared heart to seek the Lord.**

- i) Jesus—Luke 2:49 “And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”
 - Jesus at a very young age was busy preparing His heart to seek the Lord. Our hearts must be prepared to come to a place where we are fully consumed with the Father’s business.
 - It is similar to being the manager of a business, you are continuously thinking of that business. You are consumed by it.
- ii) **Jehoshaphat**—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.”
 - One of the main things I love about King Jehoshaphat is that he was a man **who prepared his heart to seek the Lord (2 Chronicles 19:3).** It takes a lot of effort and dedication to seek the Lord.

- Looking at the leadership of King Rehoboam, we see the very opposite of Jehoshaphat. Rehoboam did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord, and therefore he did evil (2 Chronicles 12:14).
- We should seek the Lord every time, and when trouble comes, we will have our fellowship, relationship with the Lord will pull us through. Our endurance, faith, and wisdom could be produced from our continual seeking of the Lord.
- **Minutes of seeking the Lord will not produce the same results as years of preparing our hearts to seek the Lord.**
- Have you heard someone say, "I prayed just as they did, but I didn't get the same results? Why is it? Is God fair?" Such folks only see the minute-long prayer, but they do not see years of seeking, fellowship, and preparing our hearts to seek the Lord. It takes time and years to know the Lord. It is a growth process for each one of us and you should not skip yours because it takes a while. We all have been there.
- "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little;" (Isaiah 28:10, 13).
- What we envy, wish for, admire, see, or even desire in other people's lives takes time and years of **cultivation, preparation, seeking, and fellowshiping with the Lord.**
- It took someone forty years to get to a place where they do what they do effectively. It did not take just one day of fasting and prayer. No shortcuts. You must put in the time.
- **Preparation time is not wasted time.**

iii) Joseph—Genesis 39:9 “There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

- This statement and commitment to the Lord did not happen overnight. It was not cram work or head knowledge.
- I would argue that this was a by-product of a prepared heart to seek the Lord.
- Joseph rejecting this ungodly sex appeal was because he had prepared his heart to seek the Lord.

iv) David—1 Samuel 17:34-37 “²⁰And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and **shouted for the battle**. ³⁴And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: **and this uncircumcised Philistine** shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee. ⁴⁵Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: **but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts**, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. ⁴⁶**This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand**; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel ⁴⁷And all this assembly shall **know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear**: for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hands.

- David **shouted for the battle**, which implies he was **neither afraid nor scared**. He was **excited**

- Uncircumcised Philistine was a reference to a covenant
- David had history with the Lord **because he had prepared his heart to seek the Lord while he was still in the bush keeping sheep.** This is the reason David did not flee into hiding when all the rest were fleeing. He was not paralyzed by the threat of Goliath. His heart was prepared (2 Chronicles 12:14) and fixed ahead of time, before this crisis came.
- A heart prepared to seek the Lord faces all things in the name of the Lord.
- A heart prepared to seek the Lord expects deliverance, victory, and God's intervention today, not tomorrow.
- A heart prepared to seek the Lord is bold. It is not afraid.
- A heart prepared to seek the Lord has its confidence in the Lord not in physical things or man's strength.

v) Daniel—Daniel 6:10-11 “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did formerly. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.”

- Where did this boldness come from?
- Why was there no panic?
- Do you know that you can arrive at the same place?
- What we have on the inside of us is extremely greater than what Daniel had. We are at a greater advantage yet the results we are getting are not even close to these men in the Old covenant.

vi) Meshack, Shadrack, and Abednego.

Daniel 3:12-19 “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

- Where did this boldness come from?
- Why was there no panic?
- Do you know that you can arrive at the same place?
- What we have on the inside of us is extremely greater than what Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael had. We are at a greater advantage yet the results we are getting are not even close to these men in the Old covenant.

f) Many people want the **impact and results** of all these men, but very few are willing to pay the price or go the mile they went.

i) Everyone **wants microwave stuff**. An **oven** and/or **crockpot** cooks and tastes better.

ii) **There are results you will not and cannot get** if you do not prepare your heart to seek the Lord.

g) **Time (Quality and Quantity) is critical in preparing our hearts to seek the Lord. The more our hearts are prepared, the more sensitive they will be towards the Lord!**

i) **A hardened heart is a non-prepared heart.**

ii) **Men of integrity and character are not born that way.** They cultivate their hearts and prepare their hearts to seek the Lord.

- iii) You need both quality time and quantity time, not either-or. The more we fix and prepare our hearts to seek after the Lord the more sensitive it gets.
- iv) Prepare your heart for yourself, not for the purpose of preaching to others.
 - We need to prepare the messenger, not the message.

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” — Benjamin Franklin

“Prepare the umbrella before it rains.” — Malay Proverb

“Proper preparation prevents poor performance.” — Stephen Keague

Call to action

My challenge to you is will you make a commitment to prepare your heart to seek the Lord. What is the Holy Spirit speaking to you that you need to put away to accomplish this? A new year resolution like no other is one that is set out to seek the Lord and grow in our relationship with Him.

Prayer

Father, these your people are making a commitment to seek you wholeheartedly. I pray for your strength and guidance as they embark on this life-changing journey.

Your Word says that if we seek you with all our hearts, we shall find You. Father, we start today and right now. We make a decision to pursue You like a drug addict pursues his drugs. I understand that we have found You through accepting Jesus as our Lord and savior, but we all believe that there is more, and we are setting out our hearts to seek You and to know You more than we have done before.

Today makes a new season in our lives. Hallelujah. Thank You, Jesus.