

Tuesday, July 23, 2013 – Be Prepared

Life often comes in bunches. For the last 20 months I have, in my secular job, led a project in Canada which is rapidly coming to an end. During this time my daughter graduated from college, gained employment for the first time, and was married just a few weeks ago. My son graduated from high school and will in a few weeks be moving to college some 10 hours away from home. My family, also during this timeframe, suffered the death of my mother and father in a span of 26 hours of each other. As I began to reflect on the changes our family has gone through, I often think to myself, “How could we ever have been prepared for all the happenings that left our lives different than it was January 1, 2012.

Life events are to be expected. The important question is how prepared are you to deal with the changes. Psychologists, psychiatrists and doctors will tell you that the human life is divided into 5 phases:

1) Infancy and Early Childhood (Birth–Age 5) - Beginning with the first years of life, the early influences of the biological and social clocks occur; how children develop, and how they gain confidence and curiosity are explored.

2) Childhood and Adolescence (Ages 6-20) - The years before and during adolescence and the stressful task of molding an identity while the biological and social clocks are out of synch.

3) Early Adulthood (Ages 20-40) - Young adults hear the first of many messages from the social clock: to separate from family, get a job, find a mate, set goals, and face reality in this period of intense social growth and pressure. Life consists of leaving home for the first time, going to college, getting your first job and most likely getting married and having a family.

4) Middle Adulthood (Ages 40-60) - Older adults are concerned with creating a legacy for the next generation, changes in life direction, and personal goal achievement.

5) Late Adulthood (Ages 60+) - An examination of the last stage of life, when people consider what they might still do to change or add to their lives.

Society will tell you that your preparation to meet the challenges at each of these phases of life is based upon worldly measurements such as what school you go to, what job you have, how much money you make, what kind of house and car you buy, etc. No thought or consideration is given to the fact that many people will never live to see the fifth season of life.

For Christians, the scriptures tell us a much different story about how we should look at our life. Christ tells us in Mark 8:36-37, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain

the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Materialistic gain cannot be the purpose for our life. It can't be the foundation upon which we live our lives, base our decisions or counted upon to help us deal with life events.

Peter tells us in 2 Peter 3:10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." All of our earthly possessions will be burned up; become worthless. He then asks us a question in verses 11 and 12, "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?"

We are also told that our life on this earth is short. James 4:13-14 states, "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." We are not guaranteed how many "phases" we will see!

If the possessions, the world tells us are important to obtain, are going to be burned up, and the breathe of life is precious and can end at any time, then what should we look toward to sustain us through the challenges of life? Christ gives us that answer in Matt. 6:33-34 when he states, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things." Regardless the events of life, whether they be good or bad, our anchor is our Faith in Jesus Christ and the promise we have of heaven.

There are so many things to being a Christian and seeking the kingdom of God, but I want to share with you a few that might be helpful in our daily walk with God:

1. Be prepared at all times
 - 1.1.1 Pet. 3:15 - "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. Search the Scriptures
 - 2.1. John 5:39 - "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."
3. Be doers of the Word

- 3.1. James 1:22 - "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."
4. Obey the Gospel
 - 4.1. Rom. 1:16 - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
 - 4.2.2 Tim. 3:16-17 - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, **that the man of God may be complete**, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
5. Add the Christian graces
 - 5.1.2 Pet. 1:4-11 - "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
6. Persevere
 - 6.1. Matthew 10:22 - "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." Christians long for only one season; the season of the Lord.

A wise person once said: "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again" (2 Samuel 14:14). Life is a period of preparation for eternity.

Abraham recognized that life is but a sojourn that eventually leads to the eternal beyond, and so he cast his eyes toward the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:9-10). We would be wise ourselves to "walk in the steps of that faith" which characterized Abraham (Romans 4:12).

In the Lord's parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the key element that separated the two groups was that of preparation. Those prepared were received into the wedding feast; those unprepared were not (Matthew 25:1-13).

1 Thes. 4:15-18 - For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Are you ready?