

## Crossroads Community Church: Be Prepared

Pastor Don prayed to God our Father, to reveal the parts in us needing to be prepared.

He thanked the Lord Jesus for the blessings already bestowed upon us, but to also prepare us for times of crisis; that the word Christian is more than a word, but a lifestyle as we grow in our relationship with Him. Let us truly work on being prepared.

Whenever you travel, go to the beach or just go out for the day, you must prepare for that specific activity. The Boy Scout's saying 'Be Prepared' means to be in a state of readiness in both mind and spirit.

Most worthwhile things take time to prepare.

We must prepare our hearts and minds to face any upcoming storms in our lives. 1 Peter 1:7

Today we are going to study preparing for the storms; for times that hit hard and unexpectedly. Matthew 25:1-2 tells a story about 10 bridesmaids; 5 were foolish and 5 were wise. On the wedding day in this culture, the bridegroom attended at the bride's house for the ceremony. At the end of the ceremony, the married couple, along with a great procession, would walk to the groom's home for a feast. This procession would weave in and around all the streets. It was uncertain as to what time the procession would begin. Matthew 25:3-5

The five wise bridesmaids brought along extra oil for their lamps while the five foolish ones did not. The bridegroom was delayed and, as stated in Matthew 25:7, the bridesmaids were roused by the shouts 'the bridegroom is coming.' They quickly prepared their lamps. Matthew 25:7-8

The five foolish women realized their lamps were low in oil and they had no reserve. They were not prepared. Although they knew extra oil was important, they overlooked their responsibility. You don't want to be unprepared when the storm hits. You mustn't ignore what you know to be important. In Verse 9, the foolish bridesmaids asked the wise for some oil but were firmly told they did not have enough to share and to go buy some oil.

The second lesson here is no one can do it for you. No one can oversee your preparation. We must be prepared and we need to do it ourselves. Just because you may have been raised in a Christian home, attended Sunday school, and memorized some scripture doesn't necessarily mean you have a relationship with Jesus.

You must develop your own faith; relationship. You can't catch it from someone who has it, or inherit it. Your faith is your own.

As stated in Matthew 31:9, we cannot just call ourselves Christians, because we have a bumper sticker or say it on a t-shirt. We must see the fruit of the Christian life. So, what happened to the five foolish bridesmaids off buying oil because they weren't prepared? While they were gone the bridegroom arrived and those who were prepared went in to the feast and the doors were locked.

The third lesson in this parable explains there comes a time when it's 'too late.' The bridegroom arrived and those who were prepared joined him. The others arrived, late, and were refused entry because they had not made the effort to be prepared.

Are you making the proper preparations? Are you growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ?

When Steve Jobs died, his sister was quoted as saying his last words were 'oh wow, oh wow, oh wow.'

Pastor Don wondered if this would be the thoughts of many who, upon death, see heaven opened and realize they are not prepared to stand before the judge of the universe. What then? Are you prepared to face the judge; the storms in life?

To have the resources needed in time of crisis, we need to prepare ahead. The very first thing we need is to ensure we have a strong relationship with God, Jesus Christ is our Lord and Saviour, and we are walking with Him day by day.

The Bible offers many vivid examples, but that doesn't mean God will always pull His children from the fire. Stephen was full of faith and the Holy Spirit, but was stoned to death. Acts 8:59-60

We were not present 2000+ years ago, but we do have access to the same strength men of the Bible used. As we walk with, and grow closer to our Lord, day by day, we too can say as the Apostle Paul says in Philippians 1:21 ? to live means to develop eternal values while explaining to others, Christ alone can help them see life from an eternal perspective.

The purpose of instruction manuals are to instruct us; keep us moving in the right direction. Our Bible is our guide for daily life; our instruction manual. We need to use it. In 1951, missionary Russell Morse was taken captive and imprisoned for 21 months.

He was told his family had been killed and for 15 months he was isolated in a tiny cell with food pushed through a slot twice a day. He was cut off from all human contact. After his release, he advised he would surely have gone insane if he hadn't been able to keep his mind active with Bible verses and hymns.

Sometimes we need to just stand on scripture such as James 4:7-8, Philippians 4:13 and Psalms 46:10. Find a scripture and memorize it.

Next in preparing for the storm, we need to make prayer a vital part of our life. Just like we take daily vitamins or other medication, prayer needs to be as disciplined; not just during times of crisis. Before the start of the Gulf War, the Brownsville Ministerial Association held a community prayer service.

Praying for God's guidance and mercy, the building was packed to overflowing. God answered these prayers with a shortened time of war with far less expected casualties.

Again, Brownsville held a community prayer service to thank God and only 20 people attended. We have also seen how people attend church during low times in their lives and stop coming when life improves.

We need the power of prayer. Today, we are under spiritual attack. Miracles do happen but we need to pray to be on God's side not the other way around. God does not promise to always deliver us, but He will always be with us. As the Apostle Paul warns us in Ephesians 6:12.

Finally we must ?Practice the Presence of Jesus?. We must ask first ?What would Jesus do?? before making decisions. Do we live our lives the way Jesus would? Christ made promises to His disciples in Matthew 28:20. We need to cultivate His presence in the daily routine of our lives; just as in Romans 8:31. Make God a vital part of your lives.

May God richly bless these His words. AMEN