

Born ready? I doubt it!

Our son and daughter have been on quite a few short term mission trips, both here in California and to foreign countries. Whether they last a few days or a few weeks, each trip involves planning, preparation and training. We're in the planning and preparation stage of a trip right now, outfitting our daughter for a 6 week mission overseas. The people organizing the trip gave us a booklet which includes a packing list; it's a good thing we started filling it several weeks before the departure date, because it turns out that getting ready for this trip is not as easy as it seemed at first glance. (*"We don't have a mess kit – knife, fork, spoon, plate, bowl, cup – lying around the house? Add it to the shopping list."*) No one is born ready; readiness takes effort.

God calls us to a state of readiness too. He tells us many times in the Bible to be ready, prepare ourselves, and watch for the opportunities he sends our way. This week we will see that this preparedness is a call to become closer to Christ because of the hope he has given us, a call to move away from the world's standards and toward God's perfect standard. We shall see that this is God's call to action, that Christ is preparing the way for us to go, and that the Holy Spirit empowers us along the way. Let's get ready.

Monday – Prepared for Action

"Sainthood lies in the habit of referring the smallest actions to God." C.S. Lewis, 20th c. Anglo-Irish writer

1. Please read 1 Peter 1:13-16. What type of preparation is Peter calling for in verse 13? What does this look like in practical terms? How does self-control figure into this?
2. In Romans 12:2, how is this preparation of the mind characterized. What does having a transformed mind allow you to do regarding God's will?

Digging Deeper: Where does the ability to transform our minds come from according to Galatians 5:16-26? How does the fruit of the Spirit contrast with the acts of the sinful nature?

Making it Personal: Pray that God would work through you to transform your mind, to follow him and not your sinful nature.

Tuesday – Waiting in Hope

"I took a course in speed waiting. Now I can wait an hour in only ten minutes." Steven Wright, American comic

1. Please read 1 Peter 1:13-16 (focusing on verse 13). What are we to set our hope on? How will God's grace be shown to us when Christ is revealed?
2. Look at Psalm 65:1-13 and identify the ways God's grace is revealed. How do verses 3 and 5 help you understand his grace in your life today?

Digging Deeper: Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 and describe the grace we will receive when Christ returns.

Wednesday – Childish Ignorance, or Childlike Obedience

"Forgiveness is the answer to the child's dream of a miracle by which what is broken is made whole again, what is soiled is again made clean." Dag Hammarskjöld, 20th c. Swedish diplomat, UN Secretary-General

1. Please read 1 Peter 1:13-16 (focusing on verse 14). What desires do you think you need to avoid?

Text Insight: Roman law not only required strict obedience from children, but gave fathers absolute power of life and death over children. Even Jewish custom at that time did not value children as members of society.

2. How did Jesus challenge the views of both Jewish society and Roman rule in Mark 10:13-16? What do you think this meant to those children? Their families? Jesus' disciples?
3. Now continue with Mark 10:17-31. What assurance do you find here for the care you will receive from God as you come to him with childlike faith?

Making it Personal: What is your faith like? Do you trust God as a child trusts a loving parent?

Thursday – Holy, Holy, Holy

"Virtue is not the absence of vices or the avoidance of moral dangers; virtue is a vivid and separate thing, like pain or a particular smell." G.K. Chesterton, 19th-20th c. British journalist and philosopher

1. Please read 1 Peter 1:13-16 (focusing on verse 15-16). What is your first reaction to this command? Why?

Text Insight: The biblical concept of holiness is always connected to becoming more like God and less like the world. Our goal in pursuing holiness should be to become Christ-like in all we do.

2. What do you learn about God's perfection in James 1:17? How does this help you understand your obligation in Matthew 5:43-48?
3. According to Leviticus 20:7-8, where does our holiness come from? What does this tell you about your ability to be holy?

Prayer Focus: Pray that God's people would be known as holy, set apart for God and his loving purposes.

Friday – Dead in Sin, Alive in Christ

"Oft times the test of courage becomes rather to live than to die." Vittorio Alfieri, 18th c. Italian dramatist

1. Let's continue to explore yesterday's theme of becoming holy. Please read 1 John 1:8-9, and describe our sinfulness and God's grace.
2. What are you to do according to Romans 6:11-14? What specifically does this mean in your life?
3. Now read Romans 6:15-23, focusing on verse 21, and describe what it is like to continue to pursue sin. When have you seen this in your own life? Now focus on verse 23; how does this affect you?

Making it Personal: Spend time thanking God for his good and perfect gift of life through Christ.

For the Weekend: Read Psalm 51:1-7 and describe David's problem and his hope. Now consider the Centurion's faith in Matthew 8:5-13, particularly verse 8. How does this bear out David's hope in Psalm 51:7?