

# Preparedness – Part 1

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Proverbs 22:3 states that a wise man sees trouble ahead, but a foolish man goes merrily on his way.

Believers must be the “wise man” in days ahead, and preparedness is essential.

My husband Jerry and I have a long history of preparedness; for more than 20 years we have seen trouble ahead. It has been tough at times exclaiming "the sky is falling" when no one else around was seeing that. Indeed, life has been changing and is going to continue drastically changing in the coming years. Those ready for it will not only survive it, but some will even prosper in it.

The issue of preparedness often results in extremist reactions. Some head for the hills and become hoarders, while others react to the hoarding and just blow it off with a "God will provide" attitude! The truth lies in the middle.

We are commanded to "study to show [ourselves] approved unto God; a workman that needs not be ashamed" (2 Tim 2:15, NKJV). This does not mean just studying the Word of God; it also means to be a student of the times and seasons, researching, and putting faith together with works. As Jerry often states, it means "looking squarely at the facts, unflinching, yet believing you are to be victorious in the end."

Part of that "unflinching" is boldly taking a self-exam to see just how ready you really would be in the face of a disaster. We are already experiencing events happening around our world that take our breath away.

Since February 2011, I have experienced the following in my area (Texas):

-A freeze that lasted *ten* days - icy streets, freezing temperatures, and the stores cleaned out because the trucks could not get to the stores.

-Straight-sideways wind storms that had me hiding under a table with a blanket on top of it. All electricity off, I had a cell phone that allowed me to stay in contact with my son who kept me updated as to when the storm would pass by. I also had an emergency-weather radio which I kissed at the end of the storm.

-Vandals stole copper out of our small town water towers, shutting them down for four days. No warning and no water! Guess what "no water" means! No flushing!

-A drought the likes of which I have never seen. There was 117-degree heat, stock ponds dried up, crops failing, and ranchers selling off stock because they could not afford to feed and water them. The ground literally groaned when you walked across the field. Unless you have experienced it, you cannot imagine the dreadful sound of cows laying by water tanks crying for water. (Note: you have to control the water intake of cattle as they will drink themselves to death in high heat. Not fun.)

-A fire that had neighbors running to help each other, but at the same time turning our water on only to find absolutely NO pressure, which meant trying to bale water out of an above-ground

pool with a bucket! Then we were asking each other if we knew where the insurance policy was, where the title was, turning the cars out facing the street for a fast get away if needed.

-Electricity going out repeatedly over the last several months. Finally we said, "Okay, Lord, we get it." Though we are more prepared than most, it was time to really get it together. A little bit of preparedness goes a long way in not just surviving, but going through the challenges a little more comfortably than if no preparedness occurred beforehand.

Over a series of articles, I want to offer the wisdom we have learned from our own experiences, both good and bad, and explore the practical aspects of being prepared.

Through the years I have bought and given away food dehydrators, meat cutters, canning jars, blankets, coats, several sizes of clothes, etc. I have killed more gardens than you can imagine. Once Jerry faithfully roto-tilled my garden patch only to have me kill the whole garden in one night by failing to read the label of a bug killer properly. I share this as a reality check and as the first principle in preparedness!

*Be realistic in what you can and cannot do.* I am not a gardener, I do not like to garden, and I have killed more than I have grown! Jerry is tired of hundred-dollar, single tomatoes.

The absolute most important principle is *the principle of studying*. I have read books, gotten online, studied and studied, so that I know what I can do and what I can't, and what is realistic for our family to do and what is not. And while I may not do everything, at least I have knowledge of what to do in a crunch. The know-how is at least half of the solution!

Before proceeding any further, I want to address the issue of hoarding and the issue of just throwing up the hands with the platitude of "God will provide."

First, on the issue of hoarding:

I have seen and done many things in this twenty-year trek. I have personally visited many survival farms and preparedness places, the best being Echo Farms in Florida. This is one farm that has it right! They understand that they are not stocking up for themselves, but rather, they are there to teach and facilitate survival skills. They are absolutely an amazing organization. They teach gardening for citizens of many nations. They use tin cans to hold soils and to build roof tops, and they use old tires as containers. They offer classes for internationals and locals, anyone interested in really learning food survival skills. They are worth the trip!

But I have also been involved with other people who just keep stocking it away. I know of one man, the most prepared of any I have ever met, who spent his life finding the right place to live (at the top of a mountain where no one has polluted the water, etc.) He died suddenly of a heart attack. Shortly after his death, his whole ranch went under water in a hundred-year flood. In a few days, his life's work floated down a river. This, as well as other illustrations, sobered me up and, as you will soon see, caused Jerry and I to do a serious reality check.

The other side is the "God will provide" side:

Yes, He will! I have seen this many times in the 30 years of owning our own business and watching as God provided funds for an unorthodox cancer trek. I have lived the "God will provide" side in true faith for a very long time. But, you know, I have also discovered that with planning, studying, and really putting some work to my faith, I do not have to keep God on

constant red alert for a miracle. At the same time, I like peace. I am commanded to seek peace and pursue it. Living on the ragged edge of unpreparedness, "hope" gets old for me, so I practically prepare.

Each one of us will personally have to spend time with the Lord in order to determine what He is saying about how to prepare for what may be a very rocky future. We prepare not in fear, but in obedience to what we believe we have heard from the Lord.

Someone once asked me how I made it through almost seven years of a very difficult cancer battle. This person said, "Wow! You must have had incredible faith." Truth be told, Jerry and I were in one of the fiercest wrestling matches of faith we had ever encountered, but the one thing that saved us was an incredible sense of *obedience*.

During that time period, I learned something I have called the "divine yes". It was not a matter of what I wanted. Yes, I wanted out of the test, but Jerry and I determined that it was not over until it was over. We felt at times like we were losing our grip while trying to hold onto a sinking ship. We prayed, "Lord, in this place where we are too weak to hold on, tie us to the mast." Then we exercised the principle of the "divine yes". No matter how difficult or involved, how costly or time consuming, whether we had the money or not, or a thousand different other "what ifs", we determined to seek God to the best of our ability, and then say yes to His will.

Many divine yes's and many years later, those yes's added up to a "suddenly", and the testing time for that issue was over. As we all know, no test lasts forever. With this in mind, if you believe the Lord is saying a challenging future is ahead, seek for yourself the divine yes, and in obedience step out and begin to prepare. He will provide when we seek and keep on seeking, ask and keep on asking.

In order to begin this process, I suggest that you do some preparedness fire drills! Jerry and I went on a two week preparedness trip this summer that lasted 10 days! We learned a great deal, but let me tell you it was *hard* - this from someone that has been trying to prepare for a long time.

We took off in a very small tent trailer and headed into the woods - no electricity, no bathroom, and with what water we could carry. The trip started out as an adventure and at some points became a real test. Believe it or not, the first obstacle we encountered was *over preparedness*! We soon discovered we brought too much and that less was more. By the end of ten days, we were living on less and less, discovering how little we *could* live on and that "less" made life much easier.

As a result of this trip, I came home and realized that over the years, I had collected a bunch of *stuff*! And someone out there may need that *stuff* now! I loaded up bags and bags of coats and blankets and a bunch of other *stuff* and took it to where I knew people would use it now. This trip taught us that we need basic things, like good sleeping bags and teflon fire-proof sheets that fold into a packet the size of a wallet, but *stuff* we do not need. Because I gave my unnecessary stuff away, someone out there thought my stuff was their miracle. Good feeling, I must admit.

Even if you are not brave enough to head out into the woods, pick a weekend, turn off all your electricity and maybe even your water source. Determine not to go to the store for any reason. Note what you use and how much water you need. Ask yourself questions like: "How do I flush the toilet with no water?" "What are my heating sources?" "What food sources do I have and are they enough?" "If I only have canned beans, can I tolerate canned beans without

cooking them?” “Do I have a plan to meet up with family and friends if I have no cell phone, internet, or gasoline?” Trust me; you will not be the same after just one weekend. It will be a good fire drill!

Future articles will include the nuts and bolts of preparedness. What I have found is that the REAL issues are the “heart issues”, the things must be dealt with first. Your motives and your fears must be addressed before anyone can move on with the practicality of preparedness. If this is not addressed first, you will waste a great deal of time and money.

- Ask the Lord to show you where you are not saying the “divine yes” for your life in regards to the issue of preparedness.
- Ask the Lord to begin to open doors and show you where to start.
- Remember – no start is too small, as long as you are moving in obedience.
- Begin to pray about doing a “fire drill” weekend and ask the Lord to clear your schedules and make this a priority.