

# The First Step In Spiritual Preparedness

Where are you on the scale?



**Life Under Control:** You're getting plenty of rest and devotional time every day – that "thoughtful hour". For the most part you find your mind is in a restful state. You wouldn't describe yourself as "stressed out". You're accomplishing the things you need to in an efficient and timely way.

**Life Out of Control:** Your mind is racing much of the time. You're feeling stressed out. You get to bed late and have to force yourself to get up early. You find yourself missing devotional time or rushing through it before you race off into the rest of your day. It seems you're always behind – not getting the things done you need to. Perhaps you're feeling overwhelmed.

## Christ Our Example...

*"And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Mark 4:36-41*

*"When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the 'Master of earth and sea and sky' that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, 'I can of Mine own self do nothing.' John 5:30. He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith--faith in God's love and care--that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God.*

*As Jesus rested by faith in the Father's care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour. If the disciples had trusted in Him, they would have been kept in peace. Their fear in the time of danger revealed their unbelief. In their efforts to save themselves, they forgot Jesus; and it was only when, in despair of self-dependence, they turned to Him that He could give them help.*

*How often the disciples' experience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle with the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. Though He sorrowfully reproves our unbelief and self-confidence, He never fails to give us the help we need. Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Saviour in our hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best." The Desire of Ages, 336*

**Step 1: Take Inventory:** List your responsibilities including devotional time, rest, exercise, etc..

**Step 2: Prioritize The List:** Arrange the items from step one in order of importance, with the most important on top. You may find as you think and pray that you will rearrange things several times before you're satisfied that they are in the order they should be.

**Step 3: Assign a time value for each item:** For most people, it will probably work best to assign a weekly time value since some of the items don't necessarily happen every day.

**Step 4: Evaluate your list:** Do the math. Is it workable? Are there enough hours in a week to accomplish everything on your list? It's important to be honest about this. And don't cheat on the important stuff, like rest and exercise.

**Step 5: Make adjustments if necessary:** If you've overcommitted yourself, you need to give up some of your responsibilities. Remember, doing the things you NEED to is not necessarily the same as doing all the things you WANT to. If you find this part difficult, ask yourself these questions:

Is it worth it to miss out on eternity, or to see a child or spouse miss out on eternity because you're unwilling to accept fewer outside responsibilities?

Is it worth it to sacrifice your health, potentially jeopardizing your influence and maybe even your presence in the life of your children or grandchildren – just so you can keep pursuing your ambitions to accomplish all the things you want to in this life?"

As Jesus put it,

*"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?" Mark 8:36-37*

*"Heaven with its attractions is before you, an eternal weight of glory, which you may lose or gain. Which shall it be? Your life and your character will testify the choice you have made. I feel the more anxious because I see so many indifferent upon the subjects of infinite importance. They are always busy here and there about matters of minor importance, and the one great subject is put out of their thoughts. They have no time to pray, no time to watch, no time to search the Scriptures. They are altogether too busy to make the necessary preparation for the future life. They cannot devote time to perfect Christian characters and in diligence to secure a title to heaven." Our High Calling, 44*

**List here activities you need to give up:**

**Step 6: Plan your daily schedule:** We've all done this before. The problem is, that for many, the schedule has gone by the wayside. So here are a few tips to help it stick this time.

- A. Plan your most important activities – like devotional time – early, when you're least likely to be interrupted.
- B. Schedule and discipline yourself to get to bed early. That's the only way you can consistently get up early. Notice this advice:

*"Make it a habit not to sit up after nine o'clock. Every light should be extinguished."* Daughters of God, 177

- C. Don't get discouraged when unavoidable and important interruptions come along – that's just the way life is. This is why many get discouraged with keeping a schedule. Here's the key: When that happens, learn to be fluid and flexible. Rearrange the rest of your day, but quickly reassess what remains to be done and make sure you do the more important things in the remaining time, rather than simply sticking with what's on your schedule.