

# ATHENS *Prayer Network* USA

## Are You Ready?

In late May I had a dream. Now, I am a very visual person and I dream pretty much the moment I close my eyes until I open them in the morning. Often it is quite exhilarating, though sometimes it can be exhausting! But this dream gripped me, and I actually remembered it quite clearly. My oldest son, Deron, and my wife, Shellie, were taking me to the airport. We had all kinds of obstacles and stops. We even had to change vehicles along the way. Finally we arrived and I realized that I did not have my passport and would not be able to take my trip. There was no time to go home, grab my passport and get back for my flight. Then I woke up. It was a long dream with a fast climax! I thought that I was prepared, ready for my trip, only to discover at the last moment I actually wasn't ready. Isn't it a terrible feeling to suddenly discover you are not ready when you thought you were?

It's like a student studying for an exam only to get to class to find that the material on the test does not match what was studied! It's that feeling of being hit in your gut!

### **Now is the time to prepare**

Having been involved in many moves, you don't wait until the movers arrive to get ready for it. I have been there, done that. It is terrible and exhausting! Things get lost and broken.

You don't wait until the battle starts to get ready for it. Training on warfare, acquiring weapons and ammo, developing your strategies must happen before the bullets start flying. If you are not ready to fight, the enemy will overtake you!

You don't wait for the crisis to hit to prepare for it. In coastal areas as a hurricane bears down you need to board up your windows. If you are not ready with the materials you just may not be able to protect your house.

You can't wait until the trumpet sounds or you'll be left behind. Now is the time to choose Christ. Now is the day to prepare for eternity with Him.

Right now in our home we are preparing for a wedding. My son Deron is getting married on June 27. I have the honor of officiating this precious moment. A wedding is not something you just show up at and do, then dive into a great marriage. There are two vital components going on. The first is we have a task at hand, a wedding to pull off. It is something we've got to do. And the little things matter! From wedding party, guest lists and invitations to venues, caterers, cakes and clothes. You got rings and things, showers and flowers, DJ's and the honeymoon. And that's just the beginning. Let me tell you it is a big deal! But the more important component is the relationship. We can prepare for a great wedding and have a dud of a marriage. So in preparing for a wedding we must also prepare for the marriage. In fact, it would be better to have a dud wedding and have an awesome marriage. But fortunately you don't have to decide between the two, you can have both.

Check out this sobering passage about not being ready...

**Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV)**

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*

Here are some folks, in fact, many of them, who poured their lives out in service for Jesus. They cast out demons, which is a pretty intense ministry. They prophesied, speaking the heart of God to others. They even performed miracles, many miracles, releasing heaven on earth. From an outward appearance they would look like the heroes of the faith, the ones who would be getting the greatest rewards. They were at church every Sunday, they tithed, they served and they even prayed! But as they try to get into heaven Jesus speaks to them words that cut to the bone. He says, “Get away from Me. I never knew you!” Ouch!!! They knew Him or at least knew about Him enough to use His name effectively. They actually believed they were saved!!!

Later in Matthew 25 Jesus talks about 10 virgins who thought they were ready. Here were ten young ladies who had prepared for this very moment. They all believed they were ready. Yet only five actually were. To the five who were deceived into believing they were ready the bridegroom said, “I don’t know you!” He refused to open the door to them. We can think we are ready when we actually are not! Though their lack of “oil” is what delayed them, what kept them outside was the fact that the bridegroom did not know them!

Then in Revelation 19 we find that the bride has made herself ready. What sets the bride apart is that she is ready. We can know we are ready. But the key is not what we do but Who we know, or more importantly Who knows us!

Those who are ready know and are known by Jesus. This takes time! We were not saved because God needed workers in His kingdom. Jesus came and died for us because He wanted lovers. In Hebrews it says that for the joy set before Him (that’s a loving bride) Jesus endured the cross. It’s not about being doers. It’s all about being lovers! Working lovers will always out perform loving workers. Yes we have a task to do and it is vital we do it. But the most important thing, the one thing (Psalm 27:4), is to pursue Jesus.

The greatest thing we can do now is become lovers of God and lovers of people! He wants wholehearted, risk-taking lovers of Him! This does not happen accidently. This requires us to open up our hearts to Him through spending time with Him. It involves us allowing Him to search us and know us (Psalm 139). Lovers create a secret history between each other. They may even have their own language and names for each other. It is a secret place, a garden where they meet, embrace, share life, share dreams, share struggles and just hang out together. This is preparing for eternity now! Jesus is knocking at the door of our hearts (Rev 3:20). Are we going to open it up and let Him into our garden?

*Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory!*

*For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready.*

**Revelation 19:7 (NIV)**