



Preparation for Vision

Adapted from "Where is He Leading You" series by Jimmy White

Preparation is the key to building anything of lasting value. If one is going to build a house, taking time to adequately prepare the foundation will help ensure a quality house will be constructed. Consider the following story that demonstrates the need for preparation.

In 1876, Western Union had a monopoly on the telegraph, the world's most advanced communications technology. This made it one of America's richest and most powerful companies, with \$41 million in capital and the pocketbooks of the financial world behind it. So when Gardiner Greene Hubbard, a wealthy Bostonian, approached [William] Orton with an offer to sell the patent for a new invention Hubbard had helped to fund, Orton treated it as a joke. Hubbard was asking for \$100,000!

Orton bypassed Hubbard and drafted a response directly to the inventor. "Mr. Bell," he wrote, "after careful consideration of your invention, while it is a very interesting novelty, we have come to the conclusion that it has no commercial possibilities... What use could this company make of an electrical toy?"

The invention, the telephone, would have been perfect for Western Union. The company had a nationwide network of telegraph wires in place, and the inventor, 29-year-old Alexander Graham Bell, had shown that his telephone worked quite well on telegraph lines. All the company had to do was hook telephones up to its existing lines and it would have had the world's first nationwide telephone network in a matter of months.

Instead, Bell kept the patent and in a few decades his telephone company, renamed American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T), had become the largest corporation in America ... The Bell patent - offered to Orton for a measly \$100,000 - became the single most valuable patent in history. Ironically, less than two years of turning Bell down, Orton realized the magnitude of his mistake and spent millions of dollars challenging Bell's patents while attempting to build his own telephone network (which he was ultimately forced to hand over to Bell.)

Instead of going down in history as one of the architects of the telephone age, he is instead remembered for having made one of the worst decisions in American business history.¹

¹ "Who Needs an Electrical Toy?" Illustration Exchange, February 26, 2016, <https://illustrationexchange.com/illustrations?category=591> (accessed August 2, 2017).

COURAGE

C1: Every person desires to have an understanding of the times. Read the following and answer the questions.

1 Chronicles 12:32 (NLT) From the tribe of Issachar, there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. All these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take.

- What does this verse communicate to you regarding being a person who can understand the times?
- What are you doing currently to become a person who understands the times?

C2: When you think of understanding the times, three types of sights must be examined. They are hindsight, foresight, and insight.

- Describe, in your own words, each of the three “sights” listed.
- Which “sight” do you gravitate towards? Why?
- Which “sight” is most conducive to carry out God’s vision for your life, family, and church?

C3: Take fifteen minutes a day and for thirty days spend them in prayer and reflection.

- What understanding is God speaking to you regarding the times of your:
 - Personal life

- Family
 - Church
 - Vocation
- Share your insights with a trusted friend. What was their response? Did you agree or disagree with their response? Why?

STRENGTH

S1: It has been said that prayer is the means by which life is assimilated into the world.

Acts 4:31–32 (NLT)

- For the next eight weeks, spend fifteen minutes a day, five days a week in prayer for the following:
 - Yourself
 - Your family
 - Your church
 - Your city
 - Your vocation

- Write down what you sense the Holy Spirit is speaking to you. Meet with a trusted friend to share what you sense the Holy Spirit is speaking to you. What was their response to what you shared with them? How did you feel about their response?

S2: In the Wesleyan Revival of England in the 1700's, John Wesley introduced the concept that God can use ordinary people as ministers of the gospel.

- Currently, what active ministry role are you involved in?

- If you are not involved in ministry, what is your plan to begin to participate in active ministry in the next thirty days?

- Share your plan with a trusted friend. Who is going to hold you accountable for the next thirty days to this plan?

S3: What is the difference between vocation and ministry? How do you see vocation and ministry working together?

ENDURANCE

E1: We grow in relevancy and authenticity as we draw closer to God. As men, we like to know the details and all the ramifications as we enter into unknown territory. Read and answer the following.

Joshua 3:5–8 (NLT)

- How do you think Joshua might have felt facing the unknown?
- How do you feel when you face unknown situations in your life and future?
- What you can you do to position yourself with confidence when you are facing unknown situations and an unknown future?

E2: The enemy plays a cruel trick on believers. He tries to convince them that if they do not agree on every point of doctrine there is no possible way they can work together for the Kingdom of God.

- What is the difference between spiritual unity and doctrinal uniformity?
- How well do you engage with those who do not agree with you in all points of doctrine?

E3: Read the following and answer the questions.

1 John 3:16 (NLT)

1 John 4:7 (NLT)

- What do these verses mean to you in light of spiritual unity?

- How hard is it for you to love someone whom you do not agree with in all points of doctrine?
 - Write out your plan on how you can improve in this area.