

Summary: God is withdrawing his protection and blessing from America temporarily, but we have nothing to fear if we focus our attention on him and prepare ourselves. This article presents a biblical preparation strategy that will help us serve God more effectively by helping those in need.

In America and around the world, we're seeing increasing problems in virtually every aspect of life — the environment, society, national economy, politics, terrorism, wars, religious conflicts — but we have nothing to fear as long as we focus our attention on God and obey him. If we continue to think as the world does and share the world's values, we will suffer like everyone else. But if we transform our minds — our attitudes, standards, priorities, values — we will see God's glory and share its benefits. Perspective is the key. If we focus on the troubles, we will be dismayed and feel hopeless. But if we know his voice and follow him, we will be safe in his care, without fear and totally confident in him.

***Do not be afraid.*** We must turn to him for everything, live in complete dependence upon him, and conform ourselves to his nature and ways. Then it really doesn't matter what the future brings because he will provide everything we need.

Following is a recommended strategy.

### **Transform**

#### **Specifics**

Become Christlike, know God and his ways, have his perspective.

#### **Explanation**

Become Christlike: While making physical preparations may seem reasonable and prudent, that is relatively unimportant compared to becoming like Jesus. He is the Christ, the Son of God who became a man with three specific missions: (1) to live a sinless life as a man, setting an example for us to follow; (2) to destroy the enemy's works, again setting an example for us to follow; and (3) to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice for all of mankind's sin that we might be free from bondage to sin. When we accept his sacrifice for our sin, we take the first step toward becoming like him. Scripture calls him the firstborn of many, which means he is our prototype or model. Becoming Christlike, or like him, means we must commit ourselves to making every aspect of our thinking — our thoughts, values, standards, priorities, everything — conform to God's Word. This is true repentance, which literally means transforming our minds or changing the way we think. As we repent, God does the work in us that actually transforms us and our behavior changes as a result. God makes us like his Son as we submit ourselves to his redemptive process.

Know God and his ways: Being a Christian is having a genuine, loving relationship with God. Because of that relationship, you will want to serve him, to please him, to learn more about him and his ways; but those will be results of your relationship, not substitutes for it. God has made it possible for you to know him intimately, one-on-one, and he constantly invites you to move

closer to him. As you do, you will discover he is your loving Father, who constantly gives you new insight to his nature, cares for you, and longs to have you by his side. You will begin to see the many ways he enables you to face life's challenges, to become spiritually strong and mature. You will see that he is absolutely good.

Have his perspective: Everything God created was perfect, then Satan corrupted mankind and all of creation with sin, causing everything on earth to oppose God's will. When Jesus died on the cross, he defeated Satan, liberating us from the law of sin and death. Those of us who accept Jesus' sacrifice in faith become children of God and citizens of his kingdom. With God's help, we are becoming increasingly like him, participating in his work and serving him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. His work includes sharing the good news of the gospel to those enslaved to sin, healing those who are sick or diseased, liberating those who are bound by the enemy, countering ungodly attitudes and behavior with godliness; in general, destroying the enemy's works. That is our task until the Lord returns to establish his righteous kingdom on earth.

### **Biblical foundation for radical change** (all scriptures NIV translation)

“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Ro 8:29).

“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Co 3:18).

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (Jn 3:16-17).

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Ro 12:2).

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:22-24).

## **Engage**

### **Specifics**

Become an active citizen, present God and his kingdom, have his heart for people, be like salt and light.

### **Explanation**

Become an active citizen: The problems in our nation are primarily spiritual in nature, not political, but we cannot ignore the responsibilities that come with the privilege of being citizens of this great nation. We must use our civic rights as American citizens to influence our

government's laws and policies by voting, petitioning our representatives, holding public office, and such. Pray for our government — the President, elected representatives, officials at every level, and their staffs. Pray that they would receive the wisdom and skills they need; they would be protected from those who would harm them; they would receive righteous counsel, dreams, and revelation; and they would serve our nation according to God's will. Then contact them, tell them you're praying for them, and ask them to support your position.

Present God and his kingdom: Christianity is not a spectator event; rather, it's an active relationship with the living God and includes actively influencing our world as his representatives and members of the body of Christ. We are Christ's ambassadors, delivering his message of forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

Have his heart for people: God created every human being in his image and sent his Son Jesus to die for all of humanity's sins. This shows the value God places on every person, regardless of their spiritual condition. When we honor people, we honor God their Creator. When we protect and care for those in need, we honor God's love for them and share his heart.

Be like salt: Simply living an exemplary life as a silent witness is totally inadequate. We are to be salt in this world by aggressively overcoming the decay caused by sin. Identify and pray against spiritual forces or beings that are creating the problems in our nation. Salt also improves flavor, so we also improve the nature of our culture.

Be like light: We are the light of this world, so it is our responsibility to expel the darkness of evil. When we offer the good news of the gospel to people, we honor the sacrifice Jesus made for them. Just as light exposes what is hidden in darkness, we also must identify and expose ungodliness that is affecting our nation.

### **Biblical foundation for being actively involved**

“You are the salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13).

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:14-16).

“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Co 5:19-20).

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Ti 2:1-2).

“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (1 Jn 3:17)

## Prepare

### Specifics

Get your finances in order, make emergency preparations, surround yourself with spiritual family.

### Explanation

Get your finances in order: If you have more on your credit cards than you're able to pay off each month or have a second mortgage on your home, you probably are living beyond your means and are extremely vulnerable to national economic problems. Beginning immediately (and in this order), you need to pay your tithes, get your spending below your income, sell off what you don't absolutely need, start being generous to others, and pay off that debt. The more progress you can make now, the less trouble you will have later. Because it's likely banks will close temporarily due to panic withdrawals or electronic fund transfer failures, which also could shut down credit card systems, it would be wise to have some cash on-hand.

Make emergency preparations: Any time the public becomes afraid, grocery store shelves empty immediately and even a temporary disruption to our food supplies can cause extended shortages. Start stocking up now on food and other items you use frequently, buying additional items when you shop, especially if they're on sale. It would be wise to have enough canned and dry goods on hand to last an absolute minimum of two weeks; preferably four or more. Once you have enough food and supplies for a few weeks, see "Resources" (below) for additional recommendations and prayerfully consider what additional preparations you should make. We consider insurance, a spare tire in your car, or a fire extinguisher in your home to be prudent measures and are everyday forms of emergency preparedness — preparing yourself for possible future needs. This is not about hoarding or fear. This is about making sure you take reasonable precautions to provide for the ones in your care, including others you may be able to help if things get bad. However you prepare, make sure your trust is in the Lord, not your preparations.

Surround yourself with spiritual family: Other Christians are your spiritual family and their strength, encouragement, and prayers are invaluable. Spiritually mature believers can help you determine whether you are hearing from God and how you should respond. You also can see what other mature Christians are doing, which can help you decide what you should do. It would be foolish to think you can face the future by yourself. Surrounding yourself with a community of like-minded and mature Christians — the Body of Christ — will make the difference between failure and fulfilling your destiny in challenging times.

### Biblical foundation for common sense preparations

Jesus told the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25), in which only half of them had enough supplies. He called the ones who weren't adequately prepared "foolish." The theme of the parable is being ready for the Lord's return, but he used physical preparations as an analogy. In Luke 14:28-32, he first used the analogy of someone building a tower then of a king preparing for war, and in both cases he pointed out the importance of carefully planning ahead. In Matthew 24:43, he referred to someone keeping watch over his house, being prepared in case a thief tries

to break in. The story of Joseph stockpiling grain in Egypt in preparation for a famine also shows the wisdom of emergency preparedness (Gen 41:28-36). These all support common sense preparation for what one thinks is likely to happen or gathering in advance what he is likely to need.

Using common sense is not the opposite of trusting God to care for you, unless you trust your own reasoning and ignore what he tells you. If you were to see things from his perspective, you'd realize that everything he tells you makes perfect sense. Pray about whether you should prepare and what preparations you should make. Some would argue that preparations are motivated by fear, that real trust mandates we do nothing other than allow God to provide everything we need. However, I would suggest that using the insight, intelligence, and decision-making ability God gave you is an expression of your God-like nature. If God specifically tells you not to prepare, then do not prepare; otherwise, follow the scriptural example of preparing for future needs.

“A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it” (Pr 22:3).

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Gal 6:10, emphasis added).

The Body of Christ, the family of believers “grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph 4:16).

## **Resources**

The following are a few of the many resources available. We offer this list only for your information, without implying any endorsement. Pray for wisdom and prepare without fear.

- Insight to our likely future
  - ChrisMartenson.com “The Crash Course” and related resources
- Emergency readiness
  - CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams) preparedness info and training to serve your family and community; find CERT councils by ZIP code. This is excellent training for personal preparedness, even if you don't participate in CERT.
- Family & household preparations
  - 72Hours.org comprehensive recommendations
  - ChrisMartenson comprehensive recommendations
  - Emergency Preparedness Plan from God's Plan to Protect His People in the Coming Depression, by David Wilkerson
  - CDC Emergency Preparedness & Response
  - FEMA
  - LDS Preparedness Manual
  - Virginia Dept of Emergency Management
- Household food & supplies
  - Be Prepared
  - Emergency Preparedness Center

- MaxLifeFoods
- Nitro-Pak
- Preparedness.com
- Ready Reserve Foods
- Shelf Reliance
- Survival Equipment.net
- The Ready Store
- You Prepare Now
- Your Food Storage
- Vehicle emergency kit checklists (build your own “go bag”; keep at least a basic one in your vehicle!!)
  - Consumer Reports
  - McAlvany Intelligence Advisor (thorough)

## **Anticipate**

### **Specifics**

Expect God to show you what to do, use you and your preparations to help others, care for you regardless of circumstances, and take you home when your work here is complete.

### **Explanation**

Expect God to show you what to do: The scriptures and recommendations under “Prepare” (above) clearly show that God expects us to prepare for what we expect to happen. Obviously, you do not have unlimited resources, but God knows every detail of what you will face in the future and will show you what you should do. Trust him for the wisdom you need and if he gives you specific instructions, make sure you do exactly what he says. If you do not sense anything specific from him, use the wisdom he gave you.

Expect God to use you and your preparations to help others: The world’s attitude is to take care of yourself and even defend your resources from others (hoarding). God’s nature, in contrast, is to give generously to anyone in need. As a Christian, you are God’s representative to the world so you are to properly represent his nature, his purpose, and his ways. As you represent him faithfully and offer what you have to others, you can expect God to give you wisdom, grace, and any additional resources you need. Don’t be surprised if he literally multiplies your resources to provide for more people than you can imagine; in fact, expect him to do so, but keep being generous even if he doesn’t multiply them.

Expect God to care for you regardless of circumstances: Due to the unique nature of your relationship with God, which is defined as a covenant, it is your responsibility to serve God and his responsibility to care for you; you do your part and he does his. When you have done what you can, God will honor your preparations and do what you cannot. He is Lord of everything, including that which is impossible to us.

Expect God to take you home when your work here is complete: God is your loving Father and he longs for you to be with him, but he wants you to remain here until you have finished what he

wants you to do in life; that is, until you have fulfilled your destiny. Because he is God Almighty, you literally can trust him with your life, to care for you until he says it's time for you to go home.

### **Biblical foundation for trusting God**

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”

“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself” (Mt 6:25-34).

Remember the stories about Jesus feeding 5000 men plus women and children with a boy's lunch (Mt 14:14-21) and 4000 men plus women and children with a small amount of food (Mt 15:32-38)? Be prepared to offer your resources to others in need and watch God multiply them. One reason we're here as believers is to demonstrate God's love to a hurting world. Jesus said that by providing food, drink, shelter, clothes, and care for those in need — especially other believers (“one of the least of these brothers of mine”) — we do it to him (Mt 25:34-40). So get ready to serve others, then watch him meet their needs through you.