

## Prepare the Way



*Make the most of your chances  
to tell others the Good News.*

COLOSSIANS 4:5

Will this be the year, month, week, or even the day when Jesus returns? He tells us to “stay awake and be prepared” (Matt. 25:13). Doing so involves more than just sitting and observing the signs of the times. As Christian writers, we have the privilege and responsibility to wait actively, pointing to those signs and presenting Christ’s life alternative to our hurting world. We share with John the Baptist the task of preparing the way for Christ’s coming.

This work of preparation needs to begin on a personal level. Like John, we need to be doing specific things in order to become the best possible communicators of God’s truth. John didn’t just stumble into his ministry as a forerunner. He prepared himself. He lived alone in the wilderness. He wore clothes woven from camel hair and a leather belt and ate locusts and wild honey (Mark 1:4, 6).

I’m not suggesting we leave our homes and families and move to some desolate spot. Nor am I suggesting we throw out our wardrobes and go on a fad diet. I know I couldn’t eat a locust! But we do need to give some prayerful thought to John’s example of preparation.

John gave top priority to spending time with God and listening to his voice. He knew it was essential that he keep a servant's heart and not lose sight of his call to point to the Christ. "He must become greater; I must become less," he said (John 3:30, NIV). How much time have we committed to being with the Lord, listening to him, and making certain our actions are in line with his will for our lives?

John lived a very simple lifestyle. What steps are we taking to free ourselves from the clutter of things and activities in order to respond to God's call to write?

John ate natural foods. He took care of his health. Do we regularly examine our eating habits and make needed changes? Have we gotten lazy about exercise? (See chapter 22.) Remember, our bodies are the temples of God's Holy Spirit. He expects us to take care of them.

What was John's message? Isaiah foretold that he would be "a voice shouting from the barren wilderness, 'Prepare a road for the Lord to travel on! Widen the pathway before him!'" (Luke 3:4).

Having prepared ourselves daily for the ministry of writing, we need, in faith, to see that ministry widening and expanding. It's time to take the limits off God! If you know he has given you a message that needs to be written, then write it. If you've had some work published but lately you've gotten lazy, you need to recommit yourself to your writing ministry. Prayerfully set some measurable goals and get to work.

If you're a beginner and are reluctant to submit that first manuscript, then get up the courage to read it to a critique group. Make the necessary revisions, take a leap of faith, and mail it. It will never touch anyone in your desk drawer. If you know you need to learn more, join a workshop, go to a conference, take a creative writing class, or enroll in a correspondence course. But do something! Make room in your heart and life for the work God is calling you to do. Widen that pathway!

"Level the mountains! Fill up the valleys! Straighten the curves! Smooth out the ruts!" (Luke 3:5). This verse speaks to me about the need for maturity.

Our work as writers cannot be ruled by the ups and downs of our feelings. Beyond every mountain is another valley. Some days our writing efforts will seem futile. Like the early settlers who

walked beside their wagons all the way to the west coast, we may wonder if we'll ever get there. But God encourages us to "stand firm" on legs that are often shaky and "mark out a straight, smooth path" for our feet (Heb. 12:12-13).

He calls us to follow him over the mountains and through the valleys—to stay on that narrow road that leads to life (Matt. 7:14). He challenges us to walk in obedience and watch out for the ruts along the way that can so easily cause us to stumble. The ruts are different for each one of us. For me, they are the bad habits I keep falling into that limit my effectiveness and cause me to become discouraged. I need to look before I step. With his help, I can walk around that negative thought, the telephone, procrastination, etc.

It takes hard work to conquer bad habits, walk in obedience, prepare the way for Christ's return. Weariness, frustration, and discouragement can become troublesome traveling companions. They certainly must have been for John. Repeatedly, he was grilled by representatives of the "top pops" in Jerusalem. They wanted to know if he was the Messiah, Elijah, or the Prophet. When he answered no, they wanted to know what right he had to baptize (John 1:19-27). But John boldly continued preaching.

John's call to repentance infuriated those who thought they were righteous. Eventually John's honesty and unwillingness to compromise his message led to his arrest. But even in prison, chains could not bind John's spirit. He had a vision! He knew that one day "all mankind shall see the Savior sent from God" (Luke 3:6).

As the day of Christ's return draws ever nearer, let us "remember why he is waiting. He is giving us time to get his message of salvation out to others" (2 Pet. 3:15). Many are facing problems that seem like mountains. Their valleys are so deep they may turn to alcohol or drugs. Others, including teenagers, may try to take their lives. Some will succeed. But we can write words that will point them to the One who can heal their hurts and enable them to cope with life.

He is coming! When he comes I want to be doing the work he has called me to do, making the most of every opportunity to share the Good News (Col. 4:5).

I encourage you to catch a vision for the work he is calling you to do. Commit yourself to it and to him and trust in his promises.

Today is the day to begin preparing the way! Trust him to “make the darkness bright before [you] and smooth and straighten out the road ahead” (Isa. 42:16).



### RESPONDING TO GOD’S CALL TO WRITE

In the words of Dennis Rainey, National Director of Family Ministry, Campus Crusade for Christ, “Do you believe that God can give you a vision for your world that will capture you for the rest of your life? . . . What are you uniquely burdened for? What injustice causes you to pound the table and weep?” (“My Soapbox” letter, February 10, 1986). Write your responses below.

*Do you really believe God can use you to address these issues? Why or why not?*

*Ask yourself, “When Jesus returns, what manuscript do I most want to lay at his feet?” Get to work claiming his promise. “Now you have every grace and blessing; very spiritual gift and power for doing his will are yours during this time of waiting for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:7).*