**Preparation - Stories & Illustrations**

**Build up, build up, prepare the way,**

**remove every obstruction from my people’s way.**

***(Isaiah 57:14)***

**Go through, go through the gates;  
prepare the way of the people;  
make the highway smooth, gather out the stones;  
lift up a standard for the people.  
*(Isaiah 62:10)***

**Mating season for bats is autumn. But the females don’t become pregnant until spring. They retain the wherewithal through a sort of dormant period until they’re ready. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
  
Ray Bradbury, a prolific writer of science fiction, stuffs his mind with everything he can lay his hands on -- essays, poetry, plays, lithographs, music. “You have to feed yourself information every day,” he says.  “When I was a kid, I sneaked over to the grown-up section in the library. Now, to make sure I’m fully informed, I often go into the children’s section.” *(Dudley Lynch, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Butterflies have cold blood. They have to sit in the sun for awhile before they can take off. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**So up jumps Allen Funt with his Candid Camera show again. Excellent. Do you know how he first got that notion? During World War II, he was put on a project to develop concealment techniques. He not only learned how to hide men and arms, but cameras and microphones, too. At war’s end, he converted his technical savvy to that appealing Candid Camera game. *(L. M. Boyd, in Boyd’s Book of Odd Facts, p. 64)***

**What causes a caterpillar to suddenly find a quiet place to hang upside down, spin a bunch of threads around itself, and wait quietly for some catastrophic change to occur? *(Rev. Richard Stratford)*  
During World War I Agatha Christie worked in a hospital dispensary, and it was there she acquired her extensive knowledge of poisons. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 117)***

**You qualified for the clergy in medieval times if you could read the opening words of the last verse of the 51st Psalm.  *(L. M. Boyd)***

**In swimming especially, athletes use “peaking” to prepare for competitions, as follows:(1) Several months before the time, they train very, very hard, swimming 4-5 hours a day. (2) Then 4-5 days before the meet, they stop the intensive training and begin to peak. That is, they reduce the training to 1/2 hour a day, doing nothing to dissipate their energy, cut down on studies, rest in the afternoon, read and watch TV, eat and sleep. Given no outlet to their tensions which are now building up in them, at the competition, they will just explode! *(Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, p. 1281)*The U.S. Constitution was an outgrowth of many factors: 150 years of American colonial experience, the failed Confederation years, studies of other governmental systems as well as a bit of what is called “Yankee ingenuity.” It reflected a century and a half of practical political experience. *(Paul Kroll, in Plain Truth magazine)***

**In one out of every five court trials in New York, it takes longer to pick the jury than to try the case.  *(L. M. Boyd)***

**When Charles Wilson was president of General Electric, he was asked by the president of a small mid-western company how his experience as president of a major company could apply to the president of a very small company. Wilson answered by detailing a job he had had when he was a kid. He worked for a dairy, and his job was to fill milk bottles. The bottles were different sizes. Some were pint, some half-gallon, and others gallon bottles. They all had different size necks. On his way home from a ten-hour workday, he asked himself what he was learning. The answer was that no matter what size the bottle, the cream always came to the top. Improve yourself to become the cream. *(Joe Griffith, in Speaker’s Library of Business, p. 51)***

**Jesus recognized order as a fundamental factor in the law of increase.  When He fed the multitude He made them sit down in companies. If you study the story carefully you will see that there was a great deal of preliminary preparation before the demonstration was made. There was a recognition of the seed ideas, the loaves and fishes carried by the small boy. There was a prayer of thanks for that supply and then it was blessed. All this preceded the actual appearing and appropriation of the supply. Every demonstration is based on the same law of increase and goes through the same orderly steps. *(Charles Fillmore, in Prosperity, p. 84)***

**Although at least half the original weight disappears in the process, cutting more than doubles the price of a diamond, for the labor involved is costly and arduous. The large rough gems have to be studied for days, or occasionally weeks, to determine how their grain runs. A decision is then made whether to saw against the grain or to cleave with it. If the decision is to saw, an entire day may be required for the whirring blade to slice through a single carat. If the decision is to cleave, the expert scratches a nick on the surface with a diamond chip (only diamonds are hard enough to cut diamonds), inserts a steel chisel in the groove, utters a silent prayer, and taps down sharply with a wooden or metal rod. If his calculations have been correct, the crystal will split neatly. If there is an invisible knot or fissure, the stone may shatter -- reducing a $10,000 investment to dust.  *(Ronald Schiller, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Other signals that indicate an earthquake: if the ground starts tilting suddenly, if the ground creeps, it there is unusual quiet or if there are changes in the speed with which waves go through the Earth.  *(Bill Scanlon, in Rocky Mountain News)***

**If you put your finger in ice water for 15 minutes four times a day, that finger will adapt in about a month, and thenceforward seemingly stay perfectly warm when so immersed. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Canada geese summer -- and feed -- in northern Quebec. To get ready for their long flight south, they put on seven times their normal weight.  *(L. M. Boyd)*  
Please note there were professional caddies long before there were professional golfers. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**If you have a calling, experiment with a full throttle. When Billy Graham was a student at Florida Bible Institute, he would paddle a canoe out to a tiny island and bellow out sermons to birds, alligators and tree stumps. He didn’t get converts, but he sure learned how to rock the rafters. *(Harvey MacKay, in Outswimming the Sharks)***

**What’s so unnatural about gaining 250 pounds in nine months? Some grown male grizzly bears store up that much extra fat between spring and fall to survive the next winter’s hibernation. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Last year Tony Gwynn of the San Diego Padres won his third consecutive National League batting crown (his fourth over all) and his third Rawlings Gold Glove Award for outfield excellence. His success derives from more than talent alone. Gwynn and his wife have set up a “video central” room in their house where they record every televised baseball game. Before playing in a game against, say, Los Angeles, Gwynn will watch a tape of the various pitches and pick-off moves of Dodger pitchers. He’ll also study all the Dodger hitters so that he can position himself properly in right field. To Gwynn, each success provides him with a new starting point in his quest to be the best outfielder in baseball, the smartest base runner and the first player since Ted Williams to hit .400 in a season. This is what baseball--and life--are all about. *(Syd Thrift & Barry Shapiro, adapted from The Game According to Syd)***

**One of the most successful writers of the 1970s developed his writing interest while in the Navy. For eight years he wrote a myriad of routine reports. After he returned to public life he wrote an array of stories and articles that never got published. Several years later he wrote a book that touched the world. Alex Haley and Roots made history. (Glenn Van Ekeren, in Speaker's Sourcebook II , p. 281)**

**Patrick Henry began his study of law only six weeks before he was admitted to the bar. *(E. C. McKenzie, in Tantalizing Facts, p. 62)***

**Barbara Walters offers this advice to prospective, anxious job seekers: “Homework. Homework helps enormously when you apply for a job.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Hurricanes differ in one especially noteworthy manner from such other lethal natural disasters as tornadoes, ice storms, earthquakes: After a hurricane warning, coastal residents can expect at least 10 hours of daylight before the deadly danger strikes. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**When our daughter’s boy friend was preparing for a job interview, he balked at having to dress up. “It’s a casual office,” he argued. “Why should I show up in a shirt and tie?” Our daughter Heather smiled and told him, “You have to make the team before you get to wear the uniform.” *(Dorothy Davis, in Reader’s Digest)***

**It was while making newspaper deliveries, trying to miss the bushes and hit the porch, that I first learned the importance of accuracy in journalism. *(Charles Osgood, in Defending Baltimore Against Enemy Attack)***

**Abraham Lincoln, like most writers of great prose, began by writing bad poetry. Early experiments with words are almost always stilted, formal, tentative. Economy of words, grip, precision, come later (if at all. A Gettysburg Address does not precede rhetoric but burns its way through the lesser toward the greater eloquence, by long discipline.  Lincoln not only exemplifies this process but studied it, in himself and others. He was a student of the word. *(Garry Wills, in Atlantic Monthly)***

**There are locusts that have an adult life span of only a few weeks or so, after having lived in the ground as grubs for fifteen years. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 87)***

**On the “David Susskind Show” a few years ago, he had three guests who were self-made millionaires. These men, in their mid-thirties, had averaged being in eighteen different businesses before they hit it big.  
*(Joe Griffith, in Speaker’s Library of Business, p. 251)***

**A house mouse is ready to breed when it’s little more than a month old. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**When we were in Florida a few years ago a citrus fruit grower told us many interesting things about the growth of his orchards. There are many swamps in Florida. He had instructed his men to go out into these swamps, into the muddy black waters infested with creeping things, there to dig up the wild-lemon saplings with their strong, vigorous roots, to transplant them into well-prepared soil, and then to graft into them buds from his prize domestic fruit trees. Thus new trees laden with golden fruit appeared in due time. The strong vigorous root of the wild lemon gave the new fruit added flavor and quality. *(Charles & Cora Fillmore, in Teach Us To Pray, p. 19)*  
  
The great pianist, Paderewski, was giving a command performance for a royal family in Europe. After his concert a duchess came to him, bubbling with enthusiasm, and said, “Maestro, you are a genius!” He replied, “Ah yes, but before I was a genius I was a clod.” In other words the moment of genius was the result of years of discipline and overcoming and practice, practice, practice. *(Eric Butterworth, in Unity Magazine, April, 1994, p. 12)***

**I know of a manufacturer who likes to drive back and forth to work so that he can think about business problems without interruption. “One morning,” he relates, “I suddenly realized that problems were always coming up that I had not anticipated. How could I think about crises before they ever happened? Only by prayer. Right there I began to pray that I might meet wisely and well the problems of the day ahead.  I arrived at my office feeling refreshed and confident, and I had one of my best days. I soon realized that I had hit upon a wonderful technique.  Instead of praying to get pulled out of troubles. I was now conditioning myself in advance to make calm, rational and sound decisions on any problem that came up.” *(Fulton Oursler)***

**Foundation courses for understanding quantum mechanics: Arithmetic, High school algebra, Euclidian geometry, Differential and integral calculus, Ordinary and partial differential equations, Vector calculus, Mathematical physics, Matrix algebra, and Group theory. *(Carl Sagan, in The Demon-Haunted World)***

**Clemson University sophomore quarterback Nealon Greene doesn’t get rattled easily – certainly not by something like an oncoming defense. Greene is one of six quarterbacks in Clemson history to throw a touchdown pass in his first game, and he even enjoyed playing in front of 80,000 howling fans. The reason he’s so composed? Greene grew up in a tough section of Yonkers, N.Y., that was filled with crime, drugs and broken dreams. Despite the demons, though, Green was never tempted. “I was one of those kids who knew what they had to do. I didn’t get in trouble. My mother always knew where I was.” *(Jim Henry, in College Sports)***

**Ronald Reagan’s upbeat personality developed early in life as a way to both accept and transcend a beloved alcoholic father. But years of performing and public speaking molded it into a persona that helped win landslides and kept his enemies off balance. Reagan could go to Berlin and tell Mikhail Gorbachev to “tear down this wall!” just months after negotiating earnestly with the Soviet leader at Reykjavik, all the while withholding concessions on the development of the Strategic Defense Initiative, the very thing Gorbachev most wanted. *(Richard Bookhiser, in Time)***

**Frank Lloyd Wright never went around ringing doorbells to find out what kind of homes people liked. The most heavily researched car in history was the ill-fated Edsel. *(William L. Mitchell, in New York Times)***

**Joaquin Phoenix attended a rock ‘n’ roll “boot camp” to train for his role as Johnny Cash in 2005’s Walk the Line. The hard work paid off, though; he sang every note in the film, to rave reviews. Co-star Reese Witherspoon not only sang her own songs, she also learned to play the autoharp, which, she revealed, made her job doubly difficult. *(Tidbits of Loveland)***

**So shy are some people that if they must go to parties, they show up early, so they don’t have to walk into rooms already crowded. They need “getting used to it” time. Actor Van Johnson once said he was like that. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Soldiers of old Rome signed up for 20 years and took basic training for four, sometimes five years. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Before the space shuttle Discovery was cleared for launch, NASA ran off 160 million virtual missions of the shuttle on a computer to head off any catastrophic malfunctions. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, July 22, 2005)***

**Battle of Gettysburg: Edward Everett was invited on September 23rd, to appear October 23rd, 1863. That would leave all of November for filling the graves. But a month was not sufficient time for Everett to make his customary preparation for a major speech. He did careful research on the battles he was commemorating -- a task made difficult in this case by the fact that official accounts of the engagement were just appearing. Everett would have to make his own inquiries.  He could not be ready before November 19th. *(Garry Wills, in Atlantic Monthly magazine)***

**To clarify an earlier item, before the squirrel buries the nut it takes it out of the husk, but not the shell. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Diane Sawyer’s success formula for TV: It’s in the preparation -- in those dreary pedestrian virtues they taught you in the seventh grade and you didn’t believe. It’s making the extra call and caring a lot. *(Bits & Pieces)*  
The only man who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measure anew every time he sees me, whilst all the rest go on with their old measurements, and expect them to fit me.  *(George Bernard Shaw, in Man and Superman)***

**Animal trainer: Because of a sprained ankle, Gunther Gebel-Williams couldn’t get his badly swollen foot into a boot. He decided to do the act in black tie. A tux would go with the soft black slippers he was wearing to favor his foot. Gunther should have remembered that at the beginning of every season, he walks up and down outside the steel cages, speaking reassuringly until the tigers within are used to his new costume. This day, Gebel-Williams entered the big cage without preparing them, and the snarling tigers came to kill him. “Hey!  It’s me!  It’s me!” he yelled, tearing off his jacket and shirt, letting the cats pick up his scent. The tigers lunged angrily. Gunther limped painfully backward, forcing himself to use the same firm, quiet tone the tigers knew. First one and then another tiger recognized him -- and Gunther Gebel-Williams again survived to tell the tale. *(John Culhane, in Reader’s Digest)***

**A lot of people about to take trips come down with little illnesses in the week before they’re supposed to leave. Statistically, the minor ailment rate among them reportedly runs about twice as high as in the general population. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**R & B singer Tina Turner developed her powerful voice as a child in a farm town where no one had a phone, so they used to shout to each other from house to house. *(Bob Fenster, in They Did What!?, p. 28)***

**Another form of fine art being appreciated more and more as a business investment is fine tapestry. The artist-weaver who designed and made tapestries a couple of hundred years ago could weave only about a square yard in a year! (These are the ones filled with battle scenes and lots of soldiers, nobles, horses, etc.) Before a person could start weaving in earnest, that square yard a year, he first had to spend fifteen years learning the art. *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 213)***

**A woman’s age in ancient Greece was counted from the day she married. In the philosophical view of that time and place, every year before the wedding was preparation for the woman’s real life. Thus, today’s 36-year-old woman who’d married at 20 could consider herself as age 16 right now. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Renee Zellweger likes to say that her singing career began in the shower, crooning along to Beatles hits. Fans of Bridget Jones’s Diary that remember Zellweger’s painful karaoke rendition of “Without You” were probably shocked to later find out that the actress can, indeed, carry a tune. That was really Zellweger hitting the high notes in her role as Roxie in the 2002 film adaptation of Chicago. *(Tidbits of Loveland)***

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