

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

BE PREPARED

By Elisabeth Beall

An Excerpt from Today's Gospel

Jesus told his disciples this parable:

*"The Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins
who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.*

Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

*The foolish ones, when taking their lamps,
brought no oil with them,*

but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. ...

The foolish ones said to the wise,

*'Give us some of your oil,
for our lamps are going out.'*

But the wise ones replied,

'No, for there may not be enough for us and you.

Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.'"

MATTHEW 25:1-4, 8-9

Reflection

The underlying message of this parable seems fairly straightforward: *Be prepared. Don't lose focus. Keep your eyes on the prize.*

Think of it in very mundane terms: if a young person eats only fast food, drinks only soda, and hardly ever exercises, perhaps the youthful metabolism will stave off negative impacts for a while. But once that young person hits middle age, the inevitable weight gain and muscle loss will take center stage – and the struggle to regain lost health may be a losing battle.

Just so with our relationship with God. If we do not foster that relationship through prayer, reading of scripture, faith-building activities, and community, then when our hearts cry out for it, we may not really know where to look for the abundant love that God holds out to us.

Of course we sometimes "fly by the seat of our pants" when our schedules are full, and we don't have enough time to commit to tasks that are not at the top of our priority list; maybe we weren't able to prepare well for a regular weekly meeting, we had to purchase cupcakes for a child's "classroom snacks" when we had intended to bake them, or we needed an extension on a deadline.

But our relationships *must* be at the top of our priority list -- and above all, our relationship with God. We can't be like the foolish virgins and hope that someone else will bail us out at the last minute simply because we didn't put the work in.

Life is not a sprint; it's a marathon. One step at a time, we can grow stronger, we can better follow Christ's teachings, we can become healthier, wiser, more loving. But just like playing an instrument or developing skills in another language, we can't give it a shot on Monday and then on Tuesday, be disappointed that we haven't suddenly achieved our goal. Step by step, day by day, we must continue to strive and to nourish the most important relationships in our lives, particularly the relationship with our Creator. Then when we need God, or when God calls to us, we'll know where to look and how to respond.



Jogger at Sunrise
Photo by tacojim

For Pondering

- When in your life have you been more like the foolish virgins? When have you been more like the wise virgins?
 - What do you think the lamps in this parable symbolize? What about the oil?
 - What is one step you can take today to strengthen your relationship with God?
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For Prayer

*God of mercy,
Guide me to continue growing closer to you.
Remind me that my relationship with you is central to my life,
especially when I am distracted by other situations and priorities.
Just as you hold out your hand to me in love,
help me to continue reaching out to the people around me.*

*Give me wisdom to focus on what truly is most important,
and give me persistence to continue striving.
Amen.*

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