

# Ready, but Not Rigid – A Discussion Guide for Leaders

The Spiritual Side of Preparation

**Approximate Time:** 45–60 minutes

**Purpose:** Help participants understand how spiritual preparation shapes not just what we teach, but how we lead — creating space for God to work beyond our plans.

**Best For:** Small group leaders, ministry teams, or anyone leading Bible studies or discussions.

**Facilitator Note:** Before leading this discussion, read the full blog post ‘Ready, but Not Rigid: The Spiritual Side of Preparation’ at [redeemedblog.com](http://redeemedblog.com) for deeper context on each section. Have notepaper or blank paper available for participants.

## OPENING

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*Read aloud or ask a participant to read:*

**Proverbs 21:31** — “The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.”

**Say something like:** *Before we dive in, I want to set the tone for our time together with this verse. A warrior doesn’t send a horse into battle unprepared — they equip it, train it, and ready it for what’s ahead. But notice where the victory comes from. Not the horse. Not the warrior. The Lord. That’s the tension we’re going to sit in today — preparation and surrender, working together. We prepare, and we trust God with the outcome. Today we are going to look at two things — first, why preparation matters, and then what preparation is not. Both are important, and together they will help us think differently about how we show up to lead.*

**Facilitator Instructions:** Give participants a moment to write their response before opening to the group. Allow the discussion to run naturally before moving on.

**Say something like:** *Before we get into the teaching, I want to hear from you. Take a moment to write down your answer to this question, and then we’ll share.*

**Opening Prompt:** *“How do you typically approach preparing for something you’re leading?”*

## PART 1: WHY PREPARATION MATTERS

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### 1. PREPARATION HONORS GOD

*Read aloud or ask a participant to read:*

**2 Timothy 2:15** — “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

**Say something like:** *Our first point is that preparation honors God. When we prepare to lead a Bible study, small group, or prayer meeting, we are showing reverence for God Himself. Preparation demonstrates that we take seriously the privilege of representing Him faithfully — rather than treating ministry as casual or secondary. It’s about glorifying God through faithful stewardship of the work He has entrusted to us.*

**Facilitator Instructions:** Instruct participants to fill in the blank before revealing the answer. Then lead a short discussion using the questions that follow.

**Say something like:** *Go ahead and fill in the blank for this section.*

Preparation shows \_\_\_\_\_ for God’s Word and respect for His \_\_\_\_\_.

**Answer:** Preparation shows **HONOR** for God’s Word and respect for His **CALLING**.

**Discussion:**

1. How does preparation show reverence for God?
2. In what ways can sloppy preparation dishonor Him?

## 2. PREPARATION DISPLAYS OUR LOVE FOR OTHERS

*Read aloud or ask a participant to read:*

**Philippians 2:3** — “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.”

**Say something like:** *Our second point is that preparation displays our love for others. Taking time to prepare a Bible study, small group discussion, or prayer meeting is an act of service. When we prepare, we are communicating to the people in our group that they matter enough for us to be thoughtful and intentional. Preparation means we value the people we are leading enough to plan a clear, meaningful time together. Every discussion question and teaching point reflects our care for their spiritual growth and well-being.*

**Facilitator Instructions:** Instruct participants to fill in the blank before revealing the answer. Then lead a short discussion using the questions that follow.

**Say something like:** *Go ahead and fill in the blank for this section.*

When we prepare, we \_\_\_\_\_ others well. Preparation is an act of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Answer:** When we prepare, we **SERVE** others well. Preparation is an act of **LOVE**.

**Discussion:**

1. How does preparation demonstrate humility?
2. What are ways preparation helps people feel valued?

### 3. PREPARATION MAKES US READY TO BE FLEXIBLE

Read aloud or ask a participant to read:

**Matthew 10:19–20** — “But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

**Say something like:** Our third point is that preparation makes us ready to be flexible. Here’s the irony — the better prepared we are, the freer we are to follow the Spirit in the moment. Jesus told His disciples not to worry about what to say when unexpected situations arose. But notice that He had already been training them. They weren’t unprepared — they were equipped. Preparation isn’t a cage that locks us into a rigid plan. It’s a launchpad that gives us the confidence to pivot when the Spirit leads — whether a question takes the discussion in a new direction, a prayer need surfaces, or something unexpected happens in the room.

**Facilitator Instructions:** Instruct participants to fill in the blank before revealing the answer. Then lead a short discussion using the questions that follow.

**Say something like:** Go ahead and fill in the blank for this section.

The better \_\_\_\_\_ we are, the more \_\_\_\_\_ we are to follow the Spirit.

**Answer:** The better **PREPARED** we are, the more **FREE** we are to follow the Spirit.

**Discussion:**

1. Jesus trained his disciples, yet he also reminded them not to worry in the moment. What’s the difference between flexibility and lack of preparation?
2. How have you experienced a moment when preparation allowed you to be flexible?

## PART 2: WHAT PREPARATION IS NOT

### 4. PREPARATION SHOULD NOT BE ABOUT CONTROL

Read aloud or ask a participant to read:

**James 4:15** — “Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’”

**Say something like:** Our fourth point is that preparation should not be about control. This is an easy trap to fall into — we prepare so thoroughly that we start to grip the plan tightly, and when things don’t go the way we expected, we get frustrated or anxious. But James reminds us that our plans are always held loosely in God’s hands. Control says, “Everything must go my way.” Preparation says, “We’ve done our part to lead well, but we trust God with the outcome.” The goal of preparation is surrender, not control — we show up ready, and we release the rest to Him.

**Facilitator Instructions:** Instruct participants to fill in the blank before revealing the answer. Then lead a short discussion using the questions that follow.

**Say something like:** *Go ahead and fill in the blank for this section.*

Preparation is about \_\_\_\_\_, not about total \_\_\_\_\_.

**Answer:** Preparation is about **TRUST**, not about total **CONTROL**.

**Discussion:**

1. How do you know when preparation turns into control?
2. What's one practical way to prepare while still trusting God with the outcome?

## 5. PREPARATION IS NOT ABOUT PERFECTION

*Read aloud or ask a participant to read:*

**2 Corinthians 4:7** — *“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”*

**Say something like:** *Our fifth point is that preparation is not about perfection. Perfectionism is a trap for leaders because it shifts the focus from God to us. When we obsess over having everything just right, we are subtly saying that our performance is what matters most. But Paul reminds us that we are jars of clay — ordinary, imperfect vessels carrying an extraordinary treasure. We prepare with excellence, but not to appear flawless. Our goal is to rely on God so that He is glorified through the ministry we lead, not us. When we embrace our imperfection, we actually make more room for God to show up.*

**Facilitator Instructions:** Instruct participants to fill in the blank before revealing the answer. Then lead a short discussion using the questions that follow.

**Say something like:** *Go ahead and fill in the blank for this section.*

God calls us to \_\_\_\_\_, not \_\_\_\_\_.

**Answer:** God calls us to **FAITHFULNESS**, not **PERFECTION**.

**Discussion:**

1. Why is perfectionism a trap for leaders?
2. How can embracing imperfection point people toward God?

## CLOSING THOUGHT

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Read aloud or ask a participant to read:

**Proverbs 16:3** — “Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.”

**Say something like:** We started today with a verse from Proverbs about a warrior preparing a horse for battle, trusting God with the victory. We end with another Proverbs verse that ties it all together. Commit to the Lord whatever you do — and He will establish your plans. That is the heart of everything we have talked about today. We prepare because we honor God and love our people. We study, we plan, we show up ready. And then we commit it all to Him and trust that He will work through our faithfulness in ways we cannot always see or plan for. Preparation is more than planning — it's a spiritual practice that honors God, serves others, and creates space for the Spirit to move. The goal is never a flawless lesson — it's a faithful leader.

**Facilitator Instructions:** Instruct participants to fill in the blank before revealing the answer. Then lead a short discussion using the questions that follow.

**Say something like:** Go ahead and fill in the blank for this final section.

Preparation is more than planning — it's a \_\_\_\_\_.

**Answer:** Preparation is more than planning — it's a **SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**.

**Discussion:**

1. What's one step you can take this week to honor God through your preparation?

**Closing Prayer:** Close by inviting one or two participants to share their commitment for the week, then pray together over those commitments.