

12 Lessons for Preppers, Hidden in the Christmas Story

BY SIG SWANSTROM



The term “prepper” in its modern usage, can conjure up images of flaky people. Nonetheless, our need to be “prepared” for an emergency situation is a rock-solid concept. This is not just a sound modern life-principal of discerning people, it’s a concept endorsed by prominent people throughout history. It’s even a biblical concept, a topic we will explore here since the Christmas Story is one that is often repeated throughout this season. It is understandable why this aspect of the story is often neglected, but in it is a hidden-in-plain-sight message that is worth noting.

The fact is, Jesus’ parents were hardcore preppers. This is an aspect of the Christmas Story that you may not have considered, but it is the unvarnished human side of this supernatural, spiritual story of forgiveness and reconciliation. If we let it, the Christmas Story as recounted in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark will provide us with sage modern counsel, advice that will help us prepare for our own unfolding story. ([Click Here](#) for a PDF download of these Bible verses)

1. Prepare GO-Bags and provisions in advance. If they weren’t preppers before, Joseph and Mary became serious preppers when Caesar issued the decree of registration that forced the couple to travel to Bethlehem. That’s a 97-mile hike, with part of it through very hilly territory; a trek that would have probably required 33 hours of walking, probably more since Mary was very pregnant. Yes,

the tradition is that she rode on a donkey, but it would still have been an uncomfortable trip.

It was a fairly long one, too. It probably took them 4-6 days to make the journey, but due to Mary’s condition, it may have taken longer. After all, they did apparently arrive late, a detail suggested by the circumstance that there was no room for them in the inn.

Even with the help of a donkey, Joseph and Mary’s provisions would have needed to be comprehensive yet lightweight and compact. Since Joseph was not a rich man, they may have camped along the road and fixed their own meals. At the very least, they needed to be prepared for this eventuality since darkness, or Mary’s fatigue, may have overtaken them. So, they must have had what we call, GO-Bags.



2. Expect the unexpected. When they reached Bethlehem there was no room for them in the inn, but they weren’t distraught. After all, they

had their provision bags (GO-Bags). They made do with what they had, and they persevered through less than ideal circumstances. Both by attitude and by provisions and gear, they were ready to handle this unexpected circumstance.



3. Anticipate future needs in advance. When it came time to give birth, Mary probably had the help of a local midwife. Notwithstanding, since

they knew the road trip might quicken the arrival of baby Jesus, Joseph would have been ready to deal with this himself if that had become necessary.

Not only did they have cash, provisions, and gear in their GO-Bags, they must have also had a medical kit that was appropriate to their circumstances. The ability to handle medical needs when there is no

hospital, nor doctor, is a standard feature of a properly equipped GO-Bag. This need for supplies is *not* satisfied by a standard first aid kit. Therefore, we need to have a medical emergency kit, and training, for when we don't have access to emergency medical care.

In addition to a medical kit, a modern GO-Bag needs to contain not just what we would need today, but what we might need in the future when circumstances have changed. We can't carry everything that might be needed for every eventuality, but we can plan for those things like medical emergencies, that we can reasonably anticipate.



4. Have a healthy, honest Faith in the trustworthy nature of God. After Jesus was born, for some unstated reason they stayed in

Bethlehem and were able to move into a house. This is where the Magi (Wise Men) found them.

The church Holy Day, Epiphany, celebrated mainly by Catholic and Orthodox Christians, is the 12th day after Christmas (*a la* The Twelve Days of Christmas). It commemorates the arrival of the Magi. (In storybooks, incorrectly referred to as the Three Kings.)

In reality, this was not just three individuals, but an entire entourage including soldiers for protection. Their journey probably started in the area around Ctesiphon, Persia, which is modern-day Iraq. Upon arrival in Israel, first, they visited Jerusalem where they followed protocol and met with King Herod. Then they continued on to the little town of Bethlehem.

The Magi's journey was a dangerous trek of more than 700 miles (1,145 km). Even riding a camel (5kph), this journey would have probably taken nearly a month. So, either way, a 12-day old baby Jesus or a child that was a month or two old, this suggests that Joseph and Mary had chosen to stay in Bethlehem. Very likely, they made this decision

due to the ordeal of their travel and the conditions surrounding Jesus' birth, which must have been extremely taxing for Mary.

For the Christian prepper, this part of the story is additionally significant.

Joseph was a carpenter, so not a rich man. He had done what he could to prepare for their journey, but he did not have the resources needed for the tough days surrounding Jesus' birth, nor the surprise that came next. Their trip to Egypt.

But God provided. Among other gifts, the Magi brought them gold and other barterable items. Joseph had prepared in advance. He had done everything in his power to get ready financially and with provisions.

God did the rest.

Joseph and Mary did not claim "faith in God" as a way to escape their personal responsibility. They had prepared as best they could. They had accomplished every preparation that their financial ability allowed. And, after they had done everything that they could do themselves, they trusted in God for the rest.

They trusted God for that which was beyond their ability. They didn't treat God like a sugar daddy. What they did was listen, pay attention to the Bible's instructions, obey God, and, they did their part to prepare.

God does not promise to bail us out when we make stupid decisions. He does not promise to come to our rescue when we have failed to do what we know we should do. However, He does promise to meet our needs (not wants) when we do our part; when we are righteous and faithful and obedient. Thankfully, God is merciful, He may rescue us in spite of our failure to prepare, but we can't expect that from Him. That's a wholly unreasonable expectation.



5. Readiness needs to be a way of life for us. No excuses. Joseph and Mary demonstrate to us yet another, very important prepper

characteristic. Both of them were prepared and ready to roll. They were ready for the unexpected on their planned trip, and for an unexpected emergency that occurred while they were on that trip.

Before the arrival of the Magi, Joseph had probably been thinking about how they were burning through his meager savings and his need to find work. Fortunately, he had a barterable skill, carpentry, but he still needed to find customers. Doubtless, he was thinking about this and perhaps taking steps to find temporary work.

A barterable skill is an often-forgotten aspect of readiness.

After Jesus was born, Joseph was a busy guy. While Mary's body was healing and she was busy caring for their little boy, Joseph would have been busy, too.

Consider the situation. Joseph was an upended traveler, a new father, a new husband, living in a new place, and he needed income. Notwithstanding, he didn't use these pressures as an excuse to side-step the tasks surrounding the need to reestablish his readiness.

The point is, Joseph was busy and doubtless distracted, and perhaps emotionally overloaded by the unprecedented circumstances, but he kept first-things the first-thing. He was a no-excuses kind of guy. Even after everything that had happened, Joseph was still ready to bug-out at a moment's notice.

6. Don't just be prepared with gear; be prepared to be resilient. Joseph was prepared and ready to roll even though he had been immersed in the mind-blowing circumstance of having Jesus born while on a trip, in a barn, followed by the shepherds

showing up and telling them a remarkable story about angels. And then, some weeks later, the impressive entourage of Magi arrive in town with the pomp and fanfare of a foreign delegation – to see *their* baby.

Later that night after the Magi had departed, after exhausted Joseph was able to get some rest, he is awakened by a dream. In that dream, God tells him to immediately leave town because the king is going to try and kill their newborn baby.

What an emotional rollercoaster!

What did Joseph do? Did he complain to God that he was tired, overloaded, or emotionally fragile and needed time? Did he wait until morning so he could evaluate things in the light of day, and then run around town to restock their provisions? No. He was already prepared. He was ready to roll.

This was a new threat and it hit him cold, but he was nevertheless ready for it. When Joseph and Mary left Nazareth and traveled to Bethlehem, he wasn't anticipating becoming a fugitive. He was a law-abiding, solid citizen. He wasn't expecting what happened, but he was 100% ready to face this new challenge. He was resilient.

As soon as Joseph awakened from his dream, he woke up Mary, wrapped-up newborn Jesus in warm cloths, and then headed out. In minutes, though it was still dark and they didn't have flashlights to help illuminate their path, they were gone.

Appropriate action + speed of action.

At this point, they were already in the midst of a very unusual trip, but they were still ready to escape without needing any additional time to prepare. And when it was time to go, they left like a firefighter who has been awakened by Dispatch and sent to a house fire. They were ready, and able, and had the mindset to leave without any delay. Appropriate action. Speed of action.

Joseph and Mary were already displaced from their hometown, but even in their temporary location, they kept themselves ready to roll. This is an important lesson for us. They didn't spend the next few days preparing for their long trip to Egypt, Joseph simply grabbed Mary and Jesus, and they hit the road.

Moreover, Joseph didn't second-guess the warning that came in a dream. Nor did Mary second-guess Joseph. They got busy and got going.

Joseph wasn't just obedient to God; he was immediately obedient. That's a key message for us to remember when we receive a clear warning. No excuses. No conflicting priorities. No distracting activities needed to be accomplished first.

The timeline at this point is clear. Joseph awoke from his dream, jumped out of bed, woke up Mary, dressed for travel, threw their things into their bags, and hit the road without any delay.

Later it would be determined that this swift departure saved them a lot of grief, and perhaps death. Leaving while it was still dark, before the town awoke, meant that there was no one to report to the authorities his route or intended destination. That turned out to be important.

We don't know this for sure, but the fact that King Herod concentrated his killing spree on Bethlehem rather than trying to follow them, suggests that he thought they were still in the area. So, Joseph's quick actions helped eliminate a future problem. Resiliency is made possible by knowing what to do (appropriate action) and doing it quickly (speed of action).

7. Have a mindset of flexibility. Joseph and Mary embraced uncertainty and uncomfortable change, with moxie. The circumstance they experienced was entirely new for them. It was not only new to them, but they also didn't know anyone who had experienced anything similar to the sudden, emergency situation they were facing. This must have been extremely unsettling for them, but they

were resolute. They rose to the challenge and embraced the flow of unforeseen circumstances.

Even for those of us who are well-traveled, the thought of bugging-out with a young infant and undertaking a long journey on foot to reach a place never previously visited, would be a daunting undertaking. But they took it all in stride. Their flexible mindset let them suddenly switch gears and power-forward in a new direction.



8. Danger is just another form of adversity to be overcome. We need to expect danger and adversity in our life. Even if we have never needed to face it before, it is likely in our future.

Joseph and Mary would have known that this new, unexpected road trip would be fraught with many dangers, uncertainties, and difficulties. Their route was one routinely taken by caravans of traders, but rarely by lone individuals. Certainly not a lone man, woman, and newborn baby, traveling alone. It was dangerous, but it would have been foolhardy to stay after being warned. This, too, is an important message for those prone to procrastination.

It was a high-risk trip. At least initially, Joseph and Mary didn't have the benefit of traveling in a caravan staffed by experienced road warriors who were heavily armed, provisioned, and acquainted with the route. They were doing this alone—*with a newborn baby*.

From Bethlehem, it's a 363-mile arduous hike through the barren wilderness to reach the first significant town in Egypt. If they walked 15-miles each day, which would have been a lot for a woman who had recently given birth and was nursing her infant child, it would have taken them 28-days to reach that first town.



More than this, if we take into account church tradition and period documents, these tell us that they eventually reached Tana Qirqos

Island. If this is accurate, their journey would have been unfathomable in distance, dangers, unknown threats, and time required to reach this destination where the Ark of the Covenant was reportedly under protective care.

Today that same trip would require a 7-hour commercial airline flight to travel the 1,378 *flight* miles. But for their trek into Egypt, whether they walked or traveled on the back of animals, their journey would have required incredible fortitude and tactical forethought. They wouldn't have just stumbled from one danger to the next and lived. They would have anticipated risks and problems and planned for them.

Even if the Ark of the Covenant story isn't factual, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were still living the life of fugitives. They stayed in Egypt for several years; it wasn't until King Herod finally died that it was safe for them to return to Israel. Either way, it was a tough life for Joseph, Mary, and young Jesus.

Danger comes in many different forms. Nonetheless, we need to not simply anticipate encountering danger, we need to *plan* and *prepare* to face danger.



9. Adapt; life is unpredictable. Treat it as an adventure. Joseph and Mary were not fixated on their schedule or preconceived

expectations. They built adaptability into their planning and were not upset when their plans and schedules changed. They embraced life as an adventure. They were quick to adapt, and their anticipated timeline and life-plans were fluid and adaptable.

Nor were they distracted by an aching desire to quickly return home to family and friends. They didn't obsess on the past, nor did they long for the 'good old days' and how things were before their world was turned upside down.

When Joseph and Mary left Nazareth, they expected to be home in a couple of weeks. That's certainly not how it worked out. They would have anticipated a 2-3-week unconventional honeymoon, but they ended up being gone from home for perhaps as long as 6-8 years!

What this teaches us is that when an emergency situation surfaces, we need to be ready to dump our schedule, and embrace the tasks ahead without restraint. (Of course, if our actions would inhibit the ability of others to react properly to the situation, that needs to be addressed.)

During an emergency situation, inexperienced people often put an assumed timeline on the situation. This can adversely affect our response. We can't let our preconceived ideas on timing, get in the way of what needs to be done. We must adapt to our new reality, and take on a spirit of adventure for the duration. This can help us thrive, not just survive the circumstance.

10. Be flexible, and maintain flexibility. Preconceived ideas are an enemy to flexibility. Even after Joseph and Mary returned to Israel, their world was never the same.

That's often what happens when we heed signs-of-the-times warnings or are obedient to God's leading. These circumstances do not fit neatly into a time slot on our calendar, nor do they always align with the routines to which we have become accustomed. These changes may produce very different results from those that we painstakingly designed and pre-packaged as our life-plan.

Flexibility is a virtue. For the person of Faith, it lets God do His work, His way. For both Christian and non-Christian alike, it lets circumstances inform our flexibility so that we can be resilient. It lets us make plans that remain adaptable. For the Christian,

obedience provides joy, but it does not guarantee happiness or an easy life. And for all of us, even a life that has been predictable in the past, may not be in the future. The point of this biblical life-lesson is that we must maintain this virtue. Flexibility does not stop after our initial decision to change our plans. It must be continuously maintained and refreshed.

A new Proverb to consider adopting, "*Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape.*"

11. Resiliency is learned; it's not an attribute that is accidentally acquired. Joseph and Mary were flexible by nature, and they were impressively *resilient*. This is an attribute to be sought and intentionally added to flexibility.

Resiliency is an attitude of flexibility that has been combined with planning and appropriate preparations. It relates to our capacity to recover quickly from difficult situations; it is elasticity applied to life. It makes it possible for us to adapt and be successful during times of change, and like Joseph and Mary, to be ready to move from one unusual situation to the next challenge.

Emergency begets emergency. One emergency situation is often followed by others. Resiliency makes it possible for us to keep winning. After each 'win,' this is how we are able to move forward with direction and purpose.

It is resiliency that made it possible for Joseph and Mary to handle Bethlehem and then immediately transition to escaping from the new danger created by King Herod, followed by their extended evacuation into Egypt.

For us today, the Christmas Story of the Bible teaches us many things, but in addition to the traditional reflections, it contains an unstated admonition for us to all be 'preppers' like Joseph and Mary. With this, we are reminded that our own 'plan' for life may not include what is actually going to happen.

We must focus our time and resources on the tasks associated with getting fully prepared for an uncertain future. This can't be just another item we add to our task list. Prudence dictates that we undertake this as a priority effort that we put ahead of unessential aspects of life, like comfort, fun, and unnecessary possessions. Here at 36Ready.com, we don't want to rain on your parade, but we do want to prepare you for an increasingly unstable future.

Plus, we need to be ready emotionally, to adapt to changing circumstances. We need to be flexible problem-solvers with a can-do attitude. And, we need to be physically healthy and physically fit, so we can tackle the tasks that are required to be an overcomer.

Joseph and Mary left the comforts and predictability of a secure middle-class life. They fled their homeland to a foreign country where they didn't know the language or customs, where they didn't have family, friends, or connections. They followed a path of uncertainty that they knew would involve hardship, including adverse effects on their little baby, but still, they were unwavering in their obedience to what they knew in their hearts to be true. Talk about taking the road less traveled!



12. No Whining. You'll notice that neither Joseph nor Mary exhibited any woe-is-me attitude of self-pity. They weren't experienced in the tasks they had to suddenly accept, but throughout, they maintained a can-do and no-complaints attitude. This was new territory for them, both physically and emotionally, but their attitude was one of a warrior, not a wimp.

No amount of reasonable preparations would have readied them for the problems that were ahead. But still, they didn't bemoan their circumstance.

Joseph and Mary were doubtless surprised by the adversity they suddenly experienced. But they were nevertheless resilient. They were tough. They

knew how to 'cowboy-up' without complaining; without whining.

No whining. None at all. Impressive. The words of Mary to Gabriel sum it up, "*Be it done to me according to your word*" (Luke 1:38).

Fortunately, this fortitude, positive attitude, and resiliency was something that Joseph and Mary shared. How hard it is to move from victim to victor if even one person has a bad attitude or doesn't have their head in the game. But when both husband and wife are on the same page with a God-honoring attitude, then what seems difficult, or even impossible, can often be accomplished.

In this Christmas Story, the hidden message is that being prepared to meet our physical needs during an emergency situation is not enough. We also need to be diligent about our mental and spiritual preparations. Christian or non-Christian, a person of Faith or not, we need to be spiritually prepared. A materialistic worldview crumbles when it is hit by serious adversity; spiritual health is essential.

Relationally, we need to be even-keeled, accommodating, and forgiving. If married, we need to be a team-of-two with our spouse. If children are in the picture, they need to be mentally prepared to face sudden change, too. This can and should be accomplished without instilling fear. Activities such as surprise camping trips, and outings to new places, will help children learn to be adaptable.

All of us need to practice having a positive, upbeat, can-do, relationally-uplifting, overcomers attitude. If we can't do this in good times, how can we expect to overcome adversity in the future when we are faced with an emergency situation?

We need to prepare physically with provisions, gear, and know-how. We need to practice and hone our skills. We need to strive to keep our bodies healthy and physically fit. And, we need to practice virtue, character, and attitude adjustment.

For the Christian, we aren't to become like the greeting-card baby Jesus meek and mild, we are to be bold and emulate the character of adult Jesus, who willingly [suffered](#) and told us to expect to suffer for His sake.

Bottomline



This Christmas season, let's not be lulled into the false narrative of sweet little baby Jesus, the meek, mild, and demure child. That 'Jesus' never existed, not even in His infancy. From the time in the womb and throughout the first years of His life, Jesus was hardened by tough circumstances and hard-road experiences.

We may not suffer the hardships of Joseph and Mary, but we need to learn from them. We need to focus on what is truly important, and put-on a hardened mindset, as well. We need to be situationally aware. We can't let the distractions of modern life become a normalcy bias that distracts us from Jesus' better Way.

Jesus' parents were hardcore. They were serious preppers who embraced the tough, volatile, and violent times that came with service to God. Also to their credit, they were a married couple who shared a deep faith in God, and they were quick and willing to obey His promptings without procrastination.

Joseph and Mary didn't shy away from adversity, whether it was the name-calling they endured about the legitimacy of Mary's pregnancy, nor the hard road that came with obedience to God's call on their life. They were hardcore preppers, and they were also hard-core in their Faith in God.

Let's learn the main lesson of the Christmas Story, but let's also learn from the story that is hidden inside the Story of the birth of Jesus. Yes, life-lessons such as these are trivial compared to the

Bible story of redemption and Jesus' life which fulfilled more than 400 Bible prophecies, nevertheless, they are powerful reminders for responsible people.

[Click Here](#) to download a PDF copy of the Bible's Christmas Story.

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Consider giving gifts of preparedness gear and supplies. Or, for family members and friends, assemble [KOP Kits](#) or [GO-Bags](#). If they aren't already on board with the need to prepare, give them these basic tools that support an emergency response plan.

Or, give them one of these books:

[Prepared, Ready to Roll - Book1 - Why Responsible People are Preparing](#), by SIG Swanstrom

[Prepared, Ready to Roll - Book 2-3 - Evacuation and Safe Haven Selection](#), by SIG Swanstrom