

Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life

Thrive with us by following on Instagram and YouTube
@FlagNazChurch, and FlagNaz.org



Prepare to Inspire

If you are charged with throwing a *party* for some occasion, what do you want to know?

With that *party* in mind, in what role do you imagine yourself as one of the organizers?

What opportunities do you have now to engage in constant *prayerful preparation* for the *great party* Jesus wants us to throw?

Acts 1:12-14 – Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. 13When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

I) To-Do List...

Natural hosts understand what it takes to host a *great party*. The space, food, combination of guests, entertainment, theme. Guests may not perceive anything out of the ordinary, just another night at their friend's home. Not so. It took thoughtful *preparation*. If we are to be the Thriving Church Jesus expects and deserves, we too must be diligent in our thoughtful *preparation* as we throw the notorious parties that are an inspiring atmosphere. This is not natural – it is unnatural...supernatural. Christian *preparation* is *prayerful preparation*.

◆ **It's overwhelming**: There are many of us afraid to throw *great parties*. The idea bursts into our minds, attracts us, momentarily excites us. Then, poof, reality sets in and all the details that would need attention come into focus. There's no time, and I do not want to

February 5th, 2023

or cannot make the *preparations*. So we daydream about the *great party* we would have thrown. Maybe that's okay in a life with little meaning, but that does not cut it in Jesus's kingdom. As the apostles continued "gazing toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, *why do you stand looking up toward heaven (Acts 1:10-11)?*'" Lives infused with God's purpose require action, *carpe diem*, seize the day. We will develop the inspiring atmosphere in which Jesus fulfills His mission. We will *prepare* to host *great parties*.

◆ **Where to start?** Big projects often begin with someone asking, *where do I begin*. We know, at least vaguely, what we want to occur. We probably have a partial to-do list in our heads. Which one to do first? Is the list complete? Who should I recruit to help? The Bible suggests that the very thing that often dissuades us from acting can be the remedy to this malady. "Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away (v12)." The apostles lived actively. Their active lifestyles provided moments when they could think, talk, reflect. We imagine the apostles walking while eagerly discussing what to do next as they contemplated how to build the church Jesus entrusted to them now that He is gone. We, too, can focus our hearts and minds during some of life's action to work out where to start. It is tempting for us to dream that they knew precisely what to do. Let's be clear – Jesus left them no instruction manual. He did, however, give them a model in the life He lived.

II) **Begin With the End in Mind...**

Watching talented party hosts, we observe a method. Most start with the end in mind. *What's the point of this party?* Celebrating someone or an occasion, introducing people to one another, a gathering among friends? This drives all the details. Sometimes there are many options to get produce the intended effect. Others, the purpose allows but one way. God's kingdom is similar. Its distinctiveness is the author of the purpose.

◆ **Know your audience:** Most weddings culminate in a reception. A *great party* thrown to celebrate the newlyweds. A wedding planner is invaluable to many of these. Someone talented at hosting parties not distracted by actually getting married. Excellent wedding planners invest much of their time interviewing the bride-to-be. What matters to her? How big or small a crowd? Formal, informal? Raucous, subdued? Essentially, what it means *to the bride-to-be* to be celebrated as a

newlywed. Throughout the gospels, it is written that Jesus prayed or taught others to pray no fewer than 43 times. The writing suggests some of these were examples of His common routine. Jesus, the original notorious partier, sought to fulfill the purpose of His Father, saying "I can do nothing on my own...I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me (John 5:30)." Implied is that Jesus *prepared* for each *great party* He threw by interviewing – *praying to* – His Father. As we read, He threw parties large and small, formal and informal, and they always fulfilled their purpose. Following this model, the apostles "were constantly devoting themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14)." If we want to throw *great parties*, the place to start is *prayer as preparation*.

◆ **It takes a team:** The most excellent wedding planners do not work alone. They recruit caterers, florists, servers, decorators – DJs! Each of these engages with the couple and the planner to discuss the details of their role in the party. The team works together to achieve a common purpose, a single vision perfectly orchestrated. Concluding their trip home, the apostles "went to the room upstairs where they were staying (v13)." Not some of them, all of them. This is important enough the Bible explicitly names them. Then, the number is increased to include "certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers (v14)." The *great party* of the church is going to take a big team.

III) **Prepare for Greatness...**

Our mission as the Thriving Church is to create an inspiring atmosphere in which the Holy Spirit will operate. We start by boldly telling our inspiring stories of God's presence and power in our lives. Our boldness flows from confidence in God and faith that the Holy Spirit is opening eyes and ears. Next, we celebrate joyfully all He is doing, affirming the attraction in those inspired by our stories to "come and see (John 1:39)." Our joyful, *notorious parties* are the perfect expression of the presence of Jesus and His love in the here and now. They are this perfect expression because we enter them united in *prayerful preparation*, inquiring with Jesus what He has in mind, what role each of us gets to perform. Such privilege that we – you and I – get to host *parties* in Jesus's name! Will you join in constant devotion to prayer as we *prepare* to achieve greatness through a lifestyle of celebration?