

# *On People, Parachutes and Preparedness*

by  
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## **BACKGROUND**

I've been formally teaching concepts in preparedness since 1964 while I was still in high school, although in the beginning I did not recognize the idea of family preparedness. Back in the 60's and early 70's when I was asked to teach, on topics that now clearly relate to family preparedness, it was all aimed at recreation comfort and safety, especially about winter and cold weather.

Then in 1972 that all began to change as the idea of family emergency preparedness was presented to me, and it made sense (I had a family by then and my values and focus was changing in my life).

One other thing had a profound affect on me about that time, too. I'd been raised in a good Christian home and attended church, however, things had not finally clicked in my life on the topic of the Gospel until about that time. Out of the Gospel understanding and enlightenment coming into my life was the realization that this world has been going through changes and was not done yet. And in fact, there are some very serious changes ahead as the end of the reign of man comes to a close (you know, "us", trying to do it "our own" way).

That is when things about family and community preparedness really started to come into focus for me, and they have continued to develop these ensuing thirty-five years.

Well, that's a very limited time-line sketch on how I got here, and besides ... "So what."

## **THE CHALLENGE**

For years I was up against the difficulty of helping people understand the order of priority of how things really work. I'd see all the nice ideas about what you should buy being put forth by the people selling things. The problem was that the things they were selling were "nice-ities," but they were not the true necessities needed to get you through when things got really tough.

People, me included, are looking for the easy way to do things. We're in a hurry, our time is short and money is precious and more limited than we'd like. So we look for the simple, low cost, quick fix answers. In other words, give-me-a-list-and-I'll-just-go-buy-the-stuff-at-the-best-price-I-can-find-and-everything-will-be-OK. I'll refer the reader to a short article I wrote for the Preparedness Times in 1992: "Doctor, Quick. Give me a pill to solve my problem."

What I wrote there gives a quick explanation of the problem and the solutions, but people still want the short cut, and the truth that looks the long way around is actually the short cut to survival. The challenge was getting people to understand that the “nice-ities” they were being sold were not all that they were cracked up to be. The end result could be unnecessary misery, suffering, injury and death.

But that sounds so negative, and no one wants to hear it, especially if they just spent limited resources on getting a bunch of stuff that made them feel good about being prepared.

### **THE ANSWER**

In 1998-9 I began working closely with my oldest son, James, to produce and publish in video format the classes I’d been teaching for years. Live classes are fun, but you cannot reach very many people easily or quickly. It was during the public practice sessions preparing for the taping that the answer came to me ... (now you know where ideas like that come from don’t you?).

I tried it and it worked. People started to understand the critical order of priority I’d been teaching much more quickly. You can see that presentation in the DVD, “Self-Reliant Family No. 1: The Foundation – Your True Needs and Priorities.”

Here’s the idea as it has continued to develop.

### **THE PARACHUTE CONCEPT**

What is a parachute? What will it do for you? Do you need one to be prepared? What happens if you don’t have one?

I think we all have a good basic understanding of what a parachute is and what it is intended to do.

Since for us here and now gravity is an immutable law, a parachute could make all the difference in the world should we find ourselves tossed out of an airplane in flight.

If you found yourself falling to earth with the good intentions of buying a parachute next week, gravity would not care and thus would not alter its effect on you. Nor would it make any difference to gravity if you had a parachute back in the plane as you plummeted to earth.

If (due to lack of training and practice in what to do when thrown out of an airplane in flight) you failed to deploy the canopy because of blind terror while falling, the end result will be the same as having no parachute at all.

What if you buy a parachute like some people buy their emergency supplies ... “Pssst, hey buddy wanna buy a parachute real cheap! Only \$19.95 and it comes with a lifetime money back guarantee, if it fails to work properly, we’ll give you your money back.”

### **THE PARACHUTE PRINCIPLE**

1. You must have it before you really need it.
2. You must have it on when you need it.
3. You must know how to use it.
4. You must actually use it.
5. Your parachute must be of lifesaving quality.

Nobody is going to argue with those statements. They are so basic that it almost goes without saying. But here is where the rubber meets the road in your personal and family readiness.

### **THE FOUR PREPAREDNESS PARACHUTES**

The preparedness parachutes are all about things that will get you into trouble in a hurry, within minutes, hours or just a very few days.

For some, what I’m about to share may come as a surprise. But don’t reject what I’m about to tell you because you’ve never seen or heard of it before.

First we’re going to take into account the worst case scenarios. Why, because we’re a bunch of gloom and doom people?

Of course not. It’s the very practical concept that, “If you are prepared for the worst, then no matter what happens, it will be an adventure.”

**Number 1** - At the top of the preparedness parachute list is CLOTHING.

Remember the analogy of the parachute – when you fall out of a plane in flight, you don’t have a lot of time to solve the problem. Things happen at over a hundred miles and hour, and it’s over quickly.

If you are exposed to severe winter weather in thin inside-where-it-is-warm type clothing, pain, injury and death can come in rapid succession. In just minutes, or not many hours you can be in serious trouble, if not dead. Keep in mind that it does not even need to be below freezing for a person to die from hypothermia. Exposure outside to wind and rain at 40°F in blue jeans and a T-shirt can kill in just a few hours.

**Number 2** – Next on the list is WATER.

How long will you live without any water?

Well, just like the clothing issue, it will depend on the conditions. However, unlike clothing where if the conditions are balmy you can live without any clothes at all, you must have water to live. The hotter it is, or the colder it is the more water you need sooner to stay alive, no matter what else you may have.

**Number 3** – SANITATION is next.

If you do not take care of you and your surroundings properly immediately after an emergency/disaster, within the first few hours you can contract illnesses that might not normally be much of a problem, but with the breakdown of infrastructure, support and service it now becomes deadly.

You may not die the first day or two. It might take a week for you to become really ill and another week for you to die, but just the same you are dead. Even if your case is not fatal, lingering illness for weeks is neither pleasant for you nor helpful to the people around you.

Most diseases and epidemics that follow disasters are generated within the first few days, and linger for many weeks and months, and all of them come from unsanitary conditions.

**Number 4** – This is more of a catch-all group than a single item, SPECIAL NEEDS.

Notice that on our short list of four, food was not one of them.

How long does it take most people to starve to death? – Weeks. That is something that takes considerable time, therefore it is not a parachute item. (Please note that I did not say food is unimportant, or that you don't need to store it. It's just not a parachute item for most people.)

However, some people have metabolic and blood sugar issues where specifically what they eat and how often is critical for their health. For them specific foods are in fact a parachute item.

The special needs list includes the obvious medications, supplements, nutrients and eye/contact care. You must take into consideration the needs of the elderly, infirmed, children, infants, and handicapped. It also extends to the less obvious first aid, personal protection, and unique life support items.

Also take into consideration the need for mental, emotional, psychological and spiritual support during disasters and their aftermath.

## **A FINAL NOTE**

The other things that go into the whole mix when preparing for your “what if scenarios” include:

- Your general region, climate, and conditions to be faced
- Where are you located relative to the number of people you’ll have to deal with (both friendly and unfriendly)
- What are the most likely events you could face, even the fairly remote ones.

Remember that there is no doubt that tomorrow will come and there is no dispute that “things” happen, but how you are prepared to meet tomorrow will make all the difference in the world. If you are prepared for the worst, then no matter what happens, it will be an adventure.

I believe that life should be a most marvelous adventure, but it is up to you to see to it.

I do wish you the best of all, even if it turns out to be an adventure.

Have a great day,  
Jim Phillips – December 2006