

In response to the redemption that is found in Christ, we desire to be devoted to Him. When we make this commitment, we understand that some things will be taken into the treasury, and some things will be burned, as God desires us to possess the glorious riches of His grace. The good things in our lives will be enhanced, and the things that do not reflect God's glory will be done away with, as God works in our lives to manifest his will. We are not passive in this experience, but participate in the process. It requires some wisdom to know how we are to participate, so let us spend some time this week working through the beginning of the process.

Day 1

On Mission

What is your life about? Unless we are intentional about defining the purpose of our lives, we will drift into what the culture defines for us as the normal, typical life. In our culture, this includes comfort, consumption, and entertainment as the proper goals of life. Go to Costco on a Saturday, and you will find this cultural drift at work, as most of the people pursue what society tells them they should without consideration. If your life is to be devoted to God, you must first be intentional about pursuing a life that honors him. What is your mission in life, and have you written it down? Take some time this week to define it and put it on paper. You want to glorify God with your life, but what will that look like? Think about your gifts, and what unique qualities God wants to redeem and glorify in you. What is important to you? What makes you excited and passionate? When God is fully glorified in you, how will that look different than anyone else? Once this mission is defined, it must be used as a guide for your life. Things that fit into the mission will stay, and things that don't will be discarded. In addition, as your life unfolds and you gain more discernment, you will continually refine your mission as you gain greater understanding of who God is and what he has made you to be. If you currently struggle with this, don't worry. Do the best you can, and don't pressure yourself to be perfect. If this process is difficult to you, try to do it poorly at first. Then, go back and change the poor aspects of it one by one to something better, until you run out of things to change. As you go about carrying it out, just keep making changes as they occur to you. You will soon find you have a very useful guide to living a devoted life.

Verses: Romans 8:28, Matthew 28:18-20, Psalm 138:8, 1 Peter 2:9

Prayer Topics: Purpose, Direction, Focus

Day 2

Gaining Vision

The next step in helping yourself to live a devoted life is to flesh out your mission statement. What will it look like for you to live out this life? What will your work life be like? What will your family look like? Will there be harmony and joy in the house? Will people in your family get along? Will they encourage each other? What will your free time look like? What will you do with your time and talents? What will you invest your money in? How will you spend it? What will your home look like? How will you use it? Who will be invited into it, and what will happen there? What will your relationships with your friends and neighbors look like? What will your place be in the church, and how will you use your gifts and talents to grow God's kingdom? When you have fleshed out this description of your life, you next need to outline the qualities and characteristics that will allow that life to happen. If there is to be harmony in your family, what things will need to go, to be burned up on the fire of devotion? What qualities will need to be grown and nurtured, in you and in your family members? Go through each of the aspects of your life and apply this process of definition. Why should we do this? If you had a problem in your plumbing, wouldn't you see what the problem was and what needed to be fixed? Why should we be so

passive about our lives when we will actively address any problem with our house or car? In the end, you will have a workable list of things that need to be removed from your life and things that need to be worked on, as well as things you need to excise or nurture in your family. Once you have this clarity, you can work to make progress to possess the glorious inheritance God has for you.

Verses: Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2, Luke 12:34

Prayer Topics: Clarity, Specificity, Details

Day 3

Blessings

When Israel entered the promised land, there was a ceremony conducted that took advantage of some unique geography in the area. Two mountains had between them an unusual valley, which made a perfect amphitheater and allowed a person's voice to carry and be heard over a very large area. In the middle of the two mountains Israel gathered, and they heard read out from the two mountains blessings and curses. The point of this ceremony was to induce Israel to consider and meditate on the two outcomes that would occur depending on their adherence to the covenant that God had established with them. If they drew near to God by obeying the covenant, they would encounter great blessings, but if they failed, there would be terrible curses. When we consider devoting ourselves to a relationship with God, we must consider the manifold blessings that will occur if we follow through and pursue a relationship with Him. As we have mentioned many times, one of the unique characteristics of God is that he serves us by being the ideal, which means that he is the highest good that is possible in every way that is possible. All great blessings are found in Him, so that drawing near to Him is to draw near to goodness itself, in all its possible forms. This is not the health and wealth gospel, as drawing near to him means sacrifice and often great difficulty, but we make those sacrifices not for the sake of sacrifice, but for the sake of greater reward. It is useful to meditate on the great blessings for our lives and those we love if we are to draw near to that goodness. How will your life improve if you dedicate yourself to God, and how will the lives of those around you improve? Is it worth the sacrifice that needs to be made? How can you start to move toward Him today?

Verses: Deuteronomy 11:26-32, Deuteronomy 28:1-14, Exodus 15:26

Prayer Topics: Wisdom, Submission, Joy

Day 4

Curses

Along with the great blessings that Israel was told would be theirs if they pursued the covenant with God, there was also a warning of great curses that would follow if they failed to do so. This was not an attempt by God to bribe them to be near to Him, but an explanation of the results of pursuing goodness in a relationship with Him, versus the catastrophe of failing to do so. When we rehearse these curses and how they might apply to us if we fail to devote ourselves to Him, we find useful motivation to make the necessary sacrifices devotion requires. How bad could things get if you fail to pursue God? Most of the time, we lack the imagination to understand the curses that could come from this failure. Israel found out just how bad things could get when the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem in 70AD, and Israel found themselves trapped in a city without food among factions that were fighting for control of the doomed capital. Things got so horrifically bad that we can hardly believe the descriptions given in the historical writings of the time. In my own extended family, the consequences of failing to devote ourselves to God have taken generations, but they have turned out worse than our family's elder's would

ever have dreamed. The problem is, people get used to a great deal of suffering, because the rate of suffering gets worse so slowly that they fail to perceive just how bad it is until someone comes along that has not grown accustomed to the unpleasantness. Right now, before you have grown used to it, spend some time meditating on what could happen should you fail to draw near to God, and what life will be like for your offspring. See the worst of the lives of those around you, and understand that could be your future or the future of your children.

Verses: Deuteronomy 28:15-68, Genesis 3:17, Galatians 3:13

Prayer Topics: Disfunction, Natural Consequences, Separation

Day 5

Consecration

Exodus 29:21 describes the process of the consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests, making them Holy so that they can serve in the tabernacle in the presence of the Lord. Blood and oil are sprinkled over their garments, and these things are significant for our lives today. We get life by feeding the flesh or the Spirit, and one of these things leads to everlasting life, while the other one brings death even though we think it brings life. I once watched a tv show about someone who was morbidly obese but was under the care of a doctor. The doctor was clear that if the obese patient continued to eat in the same way, they would be dead in a very short time, possibly a year or less. The patient took the warning seriously, but still had a hard time resisting the urge to eat. This urge did not come from physical necessity, but instead came from the joy that eating had brought to them. What seemed to be life was actually bringing death. I also saw a tv show about the same time that focused on a three-time winner of the CrossFit games. This person lived a life of strong discipline, doing things that most of us would find unpleasant, yet for the competitor brought joy. While the obese person took "life" from something that was really bringing death, the competitor took life from something that looked like "death". One person was feeding the spirit by putting to death the things that the body craved, while the other was bringing death by indulging what the body craved. If we are to be devoted to God, and ultimately be fit for service in His presence, we must allow the Spirit to put to death the things of the flesh. Paradoxically, this is the path to everlasting joy. I am not telling you to start training for CrossFit, but I am telling you to start training for Godliness, and there might be some overlap.

Verses: Exodus 29, 1 Timothy 4:8, Hebrews 12:11

Prayer Topics: Training, Strength, Spiritual Fitness