

PREDETERMINED DEDICATION

Spiritual Disciplines for Teachers & Leaders

Sometimes we abuse grace in our lives and so need to establish some personal parameters then trust our Savior to hold us accountable. It is easy to be shoddy in our Quiet Time with our Father, to neglect confession of sin, to slack off on seeking the lost, or to presume on the Lord's willingness to listen to our prayers.

It is in times like these that we "buffet our bodies," and "put to death the deeds of the flesh," as well as
 "make no provision for the flesh." Romans 13.14
 "exercise [*discipline*] thyself rather, unto godliness." I Timothy 4.7

*The Law was given so that we can learn grace.
 If you've abused grace in neglecting to seek God's presence regularly,
 I strongly encourage you to establish your own law soon.*

As a college grad I was awed by teenagers who had already imbedded many spiritual disciplines in their lives in high school, and I determined to catch up. So I enrolled in Bible college. Let me share some of the changes I had to establish in my own life. I found it was all about decisions—our Predetermined Dedication to a task.

Begin by deciding to dedicate part of our day to read, meditate, and pray. Carve out a reasonable amount to time. I strongly encourage you to allow no less than 20-30 minutes of unhurried time alone with the Savior. Use an alarm if you must.

"Regular" does not demand 7-days-a-week. Remember you may still be a neophyte.
*Let me suggest mornings before breakfast, and an alternative time when your schedule goes upside down..
 Find a secluded spot where you can retreat.*

1. Choose the same chair every time. Sit down at the same time. Keep a pen handy to underline important words or phrases in your Bible.
2. Find a system for your reading. A book-at-a-time is my suggestion. Don't let "finishing a certain number of chapters" be the determining factor, although I generally suggest a couple chapters as reasonable for adults. Most chapters take 5+ minutes to read the words, but it always takes longer because we need to meditate, underline, and mull as we read.
3. As you develop this habit, I want to encourage you to read the whole New Testament through 4 times before launching into the Old Testament. Don't be afraid to read several of the books a couple times in a row. Eventually, you may enjoy reading the 26 shorter books all the way through at one sitting.
4. Think hard with your heart.
 Look for:
 - commands to obey
 - attributes of God [*kindness, patience, hatred for sin, love for people, etc.*]
 - names and descriptions of God
 - sins to avoid
 - examples to follow
 - promises to claim
5. Pray. Pray while you read. I strongly urge you to use a list to keep your brain on track as you learn to pray.
 - * people, always people
 - * your ministry, one kid by name
 - * thankfulness for something specific every day
 - * one missionary's personal needs *see my blog, The HEDGE: 300 ways to pray for a friend*
 - * your pastor

6. One of my seminary profs gave me an 8-column prompter to help ramp up my prayer life. Wow! I've attached one on the next page.
Promise yourself that four months from the start of this trek you will take a very long walk early some Sunday morning and pray for an entire hour.
7. End your time meditating on what you have read. Go back and look at all the things you underlined.
8. If you get out of rhythm, don't despair, just restart your initial commitment until those quiet times of sitting in the Savior's lap becomes an irresistible magnet to your soul. *It may take a long time. Keep at it!*
9. Hold yourself accountable. As an eager but not very strong believer, I wrote at the top of one page in the NT, "No Bible—No Breakfast." It was my self-imposed stipulation until my resolve became a habit. You may find a restriction better suited to your own temperament:
- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|
| NO Bible. . . | no sleep? | no lunch? | no TV? |
| | no Cokes? | no music? | no video games? |
| | no Smartphone? | | |
10. Make a friend at church who will pray for you to hold you accountable once a month. If he/she doesn't ask you how you're doing, go to him/her and report on your progress for at least 4-6 months. *If you give them a couple things about your ministry and classes to pray for, that's also a great way to be sure to have additional prayer support.*
11. Predetermined dedication extends to many areas besides prayer and Bible reading. It covers:
- resisting sin
Determine: never lie, never gossip, never. . . .
 - explaining the Gospel to others
Going through seminary I had a house painting business. I had a simple company policy: "Witness to every customer!" I didn't have to pray about it. I didn't have to look for an opportunity. I didn't even have feel it was the "right time" or feel comfortable.
 - handling money
 - confessing sin
 - deciding what will please God
I decided at age 16 I would never speed, and have never had a moving violation. Now I have a crotch-rocket motorcycle—and keep the speed laws, although reluctantly.
 - helping others
 - immoral websites
If I could make a decision in the 4th grade never to use profanity—and keep it for my entire life, it was a no-brainer to make the decision that I would never go onto a porno site on my computer. I never have, . . .at least not intentionally!
- . . .and especially facing awkward situations
NASCAR drivers plan emergency responses to every possible situation they might face during a race. You can do it, too.

Before you hit every awkward situation you can anticipate, . . .

decide what will please God ahead of time."

Just do it!

Predetermined Dedication.

EVERY DAY
help me pray

THIS IS THE DAY. . .
My pastor & Church

My whole family : write initials



A friend

A missionary

My favorite verse

[write reference]

SUNDAY

A favorite song for Sunday



One family member

Another friend

Pray for myself to love God more

Pray for an unsaved friend [or

MONDAY

A Monday favorite song

'nother family member

Myself - an attitude or habit I have to work on

Someone who doesn't like you



Some ministry or organization you know of

Philippians 4.6
In everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be

ΤΥΕΣΔΑΨ

Tuesday's song

A distant family member

People who really need prayer

• _____

• _____

• _____

• _____

Three countries that need missionaries

1 2 3

Luke 10.2

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest that He would send forth laborers into His Harvest.



Psalm 19.14
Let the words of my mouth
And the meditations of my
heart
Be acceptable in Thy sight
O Lord, my Strength
and my Redeemer

People you know who are
faithful in explaining
salvation to others
*
*
*

Someone each week you
haven't prayed for in a long
time

Saturday's song is

SATURDAY

Proverbs 15.8
The prayer of the upright is
His [God's] delight.



And a missionary
you know of

Another country that needs
missionaries



Family again: pray for the
person who is hardest to
pray for



Now sing any song out
loud [or hum!]

Examine your heart. Confess
what doesn't belong
there.

FRIDAY

Psalm 66.18
If I regard [chensh] iniquity in
my heart, the Lord will not hear
me.



And that you'll be faithful
in reading your Bible



Pray that you'll listen
better

An unsaved friend

* being sweet
* forgiving

Pray that everyone in your
family [start from your youngest
cousin to the oldest grandpa]

A tune for Thursday

THURSDAY

Psalm 55.17
Evening, and morning, and at
noon, I will pray and He shall
hear my voice.

Thank God for someone who
loves you even tho' you mess up



Pray for someone
whom you hardly
know.

Pray for the youth ministry at
your Church and 2 other
ministries at Church.

Pray for yourself to forgive really
fast

Pray for your parents

Sing "Alleluia!"

WEDNESDAY