

Predetermined Dedication
in
Spiritual Disciplines

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.*

I was awed by fellow students who had already imbedded these disciplines in their lives in high school, and I determined to catch up. Let me offer some suggestions I also had to learn as a student at Florida Bible College. I found it was all about decisions we make—Predetermined Dedication to a task.

1. 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 are still a neophyte.
*Most believers I have met try to find time in the morning before the days' activities begin to dictate their time.
Select an alternative time. Our schedules some days get unavoidably crazy.
Maybe find a secluded spot on campus where you can retreat to between classes
on days you weren't able to get alone with the Lord before you left home.*
2. Choose the same chair every time. Sit down at the same time. Keep a pen handy and a pad of paper to jot prayer requests/answers.
3. 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 is reasonable. 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. As you begin 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, I'd like to know that you've read most of the 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 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 [HEDGE]
your pastor
One of my seminary profs gave me an 8-column prompter to help ramp up my prayer life. Wow! I've attached one.
*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.*
6. End your time meditating on what you have read. Go back and look at all the things you underlined.
7. 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 on your soul. *It may take a long time. Keep at it!*
8. Hold yourself accountable. As an FBC student myself, 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 Cokes no music
no _____?
9. 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.*

Don't ignore God with the hope that "Christian busyness" will please Him.

He eagerly waits for your presence at the foot of His throne.

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