

PREDETERMINED DEDICATION

Making a decision before you face a temptation

A brief story

(Tell this story to your sons and grandsons.)

As I began to date my mom urged me never go into a girl's house unless her parents were at home. Sounded good. I made that decision for myself when I was probably in 9th grade.

While I was in college I had a date with a girl from our church, let's just call her Ann. She had a beat up Citroen car and we had fun that evening. The dashboard was a jumble of wires with no cover.

We got back to her house around 9 pm and she asked me to come in and grab a bite to eat or something. I just happened to ask if her folks were home. She said yes, she lied. We sat on the couch and talked for quite a while. The conversation wandered all over and along the way she asked me if I'd like to see her bedroom upstairs. A caution light came on.

Her Junior High brother came down the stairs and poked his head into the living room and said, "When are mom and dad coming home?" Oops, blinking red light!

I stood up, scared, nervous, and a little shaky and abruptly said something like, "I've got to go now." Ann said, "Why? Is it something I said?"

I have no idea how I answered her. But I knew I had made a promise to myself years ago. I left and never saw her again.

Predetermined dedication. A decision made before temptation comes knocking.

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

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

As a college grad I was awed when I met a crowd of teenagers who had already imbedded many spiritual disciplines in their lives during 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.

Eleven decisions

1. We 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.

2. Choose the same chair every time. Sit down at the same time. Keep a pen handy to underline important words or phrases in your Bibles that the Holy Spirit seems to point out.
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 as reasonable for adults. Most chapters take 5 minutes to read the words, but it often takes longer because you need to meditate, underline, and even re-read some verses.
4. 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.
5. 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
6. 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
 - * thankfulness for something specific every day
 - * a missionary's personal needs *see my blog www.PhilMyersBlog.com (alphabetically)*
The HEDGE: 300 ways to pray for a friend
 - * your pastor
 - * yourself
7. End your time meditating on what you have read. Go back and look at some of 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 to read my Bible 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?	no coffee?	
10. Make a friend at church who will pray for you and 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

Since 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 any awkward situation you can anticipate, . . .

decide what will please God ahead of time.”

Just do it!

Predetermined Dedication.

I have a contingency plan for my:

- greed
- grudges
- dishonesty
- unkindness
- impatience
- immodest passersby
- pride (*always a tough one*)
- vengeance, feeling of “getting back”
- traffic
- speed laws
- ad infinitum
- All of them involve deep confession first to my Father, and then to others.
*Yes, even “little” sins need earnest confession with sorrow.
If they are such little sins, why are they so hard to stop?*

[see www.PhilMyersBlog.com](http://www.PhilMyersBlog.com)

[12 Ways to Read Thru the Bible](#)