

Devotions - June 1-7, 2008
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Sunday, June 1

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. - 1 Corinthians 2:12

God desires for us to know what He has freely given to us. One of the responsibilities of the Holy Spirit is to reveal His plans and purposes to us. They may be hidden for a time, but if we seek Him with our whole heart, we can know what He has given to us.

Once we understand what God has given to us, we can walk freely in our calling. However, if we strive to walk in a role that He never gave us, it will result in frustration and failure. God wants to reveal His plan to us by His Spirit. This requires a willingness to seek and accept what He gives us. It may be different from what we thought. It may require adjustments to follow His path for our lives.

Dear God, Thank you for your beautiful words of life, your Holy Bible full of wisdom, examples, guidance, instruction, promises, enlightenment, and life-giving knowledge. Please forgive me for not spending as much time in your Word as I should. Give me a thirst for more of it. Instill in me that desire for studying and learning and appreciating your Word. And please, ingrain your Word in my heart and mind that the Holy Spirit might bring passages to my remembrance whenever they are needed. Thank you, so much, for caring enough to provide your Word in print. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Monday, June 2

Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea. - Acts 8:40

Many times I've heard a man or woman say they cannot participate in an event, a service, or activity for God because of the time it will take away from their job. God has called each of us to be good stewards of our time and our resources. It is just as important to learn how to say yes as it is to say no, and we must be faithful to our employers if we do not have freedom to take time away. However, many times I sense that we justify a lack of obedience under the guise of stewardship.

So often we think that if we give our time outside our work life, our work will suffer. God redeemed the time for Philip by supernaturally transporting him to the next place he was to be. God always blesses those who serve Him. He can redeem lost time for those who willingly give of themselves for His purposes. Do not fall into the trap of believing that God cannot redeem the time you give for Him. If He calls you to give outside your normal work life, be assured He can make up that time. I have heard countless examples of those who experienced God's supernatural financial provision for time given for the sake of the gospel through unexpected business or unusual income that resulted after they made the commitment to take time away from their work for service to God.

God desires that we respond as Philip did in order to be used by Him in the life of another person. Listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit so that you can go and speak when He says go and speak. Do not fear the consequences of what that might mean if it requires leaving your work interests for a time. God will make it up. He always takes care of those who are obedient. He is more concerned about obedience than the bottom line.

Dear Father in Heaven, my hope is in Your unfailing love. I acknowledge that You are the source of all that I am. You are the one who gives me the ability to work, plan, and execute. Help me to keep my mind on Your abilities, not my abilities. Please show me how to maintain this balance of Your abilities and desire to do for me and through me and the abilities that You have given me to use in work and ministry. I pray that, with Your guidance, I will use my abilities to the fullest at home, work, and play, and that You will get the glory for all the good that is done. Thank You in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Tuesday, June 3

But I will establish My covenant with you, and you will enter the ark - you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. - Genesis 6:18

The Bible is filled with covenants made between God and people. Six of those covenants were made with Old Testament figures: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David. The seventh was made with His own Son, Jesus Christ. God is always the strongest partner in a covenant relationship.

God made a covenant with Noah in order to preserve the human race. The covenant provided all Noah needed to complete his mission in life. When God spoke to Noah to do this thing, he needed only to respond to God's call to do it. Noah could rest in knowing the covenant made with God was going to be fulfilled if he fulfilled his part.

If you have entered into a covenant relationship with God, you too can be assured that God will uphold His part of the covenant relationship. He is committed to fulfilling His covenant with you and to fulfill His purposes in and through your life. It only requires one thing on your part -- obedience. He will even provide grace and faith to you to help you fulfill your part of the covenant.

God, Thank you for Who you are. Thank you for all You do. I praise you Lord. Please help me through this journey, through the valley, through the days ahead. I don't understand all the "whys," but I know you are in control. Help me to trust You for the outcome and to learn from the experiences I face. I thank you for giving me the grace to endure. Please pick me up and give me strength for the day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wednesday, June 4

Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. - Acts 9:8a

There is a place of obedience for all of us. For Paul, it was being struck blind on the Damascus road. God literally knocked him to the ground with a blinding light. A voice from Heaven asked Paul why he was persecuting Him (Jesus). When Paul arose, he could not see. Jesus told him to go to Damascus and meet a man named Ananias. There, Jesus restored Paul's sight through Ananias.

Each of us has a place of obedience. For some, it requires only a nudge of pressure to gently lead us toward God. For others of us, a lightning bolt is necessary to get our undivided attention. Many who are hard-hearted rebel against the living God. Yet God's love for these individuals is so great that He takes extreme measures to gain their attention -- and their hearts. When you come in contact with people like this, do not fear their arrogance. Instead, see them as God sees them as people who need the Savior and who could be a powerful force in the Kingdom if God saved them. It is a sign to begin praying for them.

Whenever God begins this process in the life of a sinner, He has others standing by to assist. Ananias was the person in Paul's life. He found it unbelievable that Paul really could have been saved. An angel had to convince him. Has God placed such an individual in your path? Perhaps God desires to use you to be an "Ananias" in the life of one of His wayward children. To do so requires a willingness to come alongside that one who needs your help. Who knows, that person could be the next apostle Paul.

Oh God, most gracious heavenly Father, that you would bless me indeed, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain (to You, my loved ones, my church family, to those who stand in need of your love, mercy, and salvation--or to myself). May You be glorified. Thank You in Jesus' name, Amen.

Thursday, June 5

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will. - Romans 12:2

What audience do you play to? Each day you are seen by many who will make a judgment about the way you handle yourself among different audiences. Politicians have learned to play to their audiences, customizing messages for the needs of their particular groups. Musicians have learned to play to their audiences. Pastors play to their congregations each Sunday morning. Workers play to the audiences who will buy their product.

Christ has called us to play to one audience - the audience of Himself. Pure obedience to pleasing God in our lives will often meet the needs of those around us, look to the interests of others before ourselves. This will result in meeting many needs of the audiences in our lives.

However, there are other times when our audiences are asking for something contrary to God's will. Politicians are often forced to appease their audiences, even though it may go against God's laws. When we are asked to go with the flow, we discover which audience is most important in our lives. Is it the audience of One, or the audience of many?

Today, be aware of which audience you are playing to. Ask yourself why you are taking a particular action. Is it to please the audience of One? Or is it to please the audience of others who might negatively impact you should you not play to their tune?

Dear God, Thank you for this beautiful day. Thank you for the seasons that change and the awesome wonder of nature that you gave us to enjoy and to oversee. Thank you for family together times and friends and festivals and all your abundant blessings. Thank you for keeping me safe, for watching over my loved ones, and for meeting our needs. Thank you, God, for hearing me, for accepting my praise, and for answering my heart's prayers. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Friday, June 6

We went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance. - Psalm 66:12b

It is nice to hear that God desires to bring us into abundance. In fact, many a preacher has promoted the goodness of the Lord and His ability to prosper His children. Alas, my experience is that this gospel of material abundance has little to do with the gospel of the Kingdom as our Lord works in the realm of the sanctified soul. The passage above tells us that God does in fact bring us into places of abundance. However, upon further study of the entire passage, we learn the route to this abundance.

For you, O God, tested us; You refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but You brought us to a place of abundance (Psalm 66:10-12).

God's economy of abundance often has little to do with material blessing. In God's economy, abundance is often measured in wisdom and knowledge of Himself. It is then that we are truly blessed. Wisdom cannot be gained through intellectual pursuits. Wisdom comes only through experience. Real wisdom comes from the kinds of experiences that come only through the deepest tests. Lessons of refinement, including prison accompanied by burdens, lead us through the fire and water. This is the territory that must be traveled to reach that place of abundance. It would seem strange that a loving God would use such means with His children. What we often fail to realize is that God's measuring stick is the character and likeness of Jesus Christ Himself in each of us. This cannot be gained through a life of ease and pleasure. Ease and pleasure fail to refine.

Dear Father in Heaven, You know how hard it is to see your children and families hurting when they do not communicate with you and one another, when they are self-centered, out of your will, and following the wrong paths. Maybe they get too busy to nourish the really important relationships in their lives. I pray that you would protect all from the evil one; surround them with guardian angels; and keep their family under your wings of love and guidance. Thank you, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Saturday, June 7

Everyone will be salted with fire. - Mark 9:49

Jesus used parables to communicate principles of the Kingdom of God. He said each believer's life should have the same impact on his or her world as salt has on food. Salt gives food flavor and brings out the best, while at the same time it serves as a preservative.

What allows a Christian to become salty? Fire. God knows that each believer needs a degree of testing by fire in order for Christ's fragrance to be manifested. We cannot become salty without this deeper work of the Holy Spirit's fire in our lives. Fire purifies all that is not of Christ. It takes away all the impurities that prevent His nature from being revealed in us.

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Are you a salty Christian? If not, pray a prayer that the immature are unwilling to pray. Pray that God makes you a salty Christian. It will result in praise and glory at the throne of God.

Dear God, I know that you must believe in adoption. I thank you so much for adopting me into your family through the blood of Jesus and my belief, faith, and repentance. I am so happy and thankful to be part of such a loving and privileged family. I pray for strength, protection, patience, togetherness, care and concern within every family. May each one be strong and be blessed as they follow you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.