

Life of David: How to Live Life Deliberately for God

Psalm 31

When God describes a person's life, He usually does so very succinctly and measures whether or not they served Him well. As we open to Acts 13, we are opening to God's assessment that David lived life deliberately for what pleased God. David sought and followed what God wanted done in life, not what David wanted done. There are only two choices on the shelf of life: doing what pleases me, or what pleases God.

David's life was summed up by the only One who can look at every moment of our life, from start to finish in one glance, and reduce us down to a statement. For David, that summary statement is mentioned by Paul in his sermon in Acts 13.

*Acts 13:36 (ESV) For David, **after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation**, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption*

What we see is that God has placed each of us on earth, in a specific time: for a specific purpose. God then measures whether we accomplished what He desired in that time period.

When we know the purposes of God (which are revealed for us in His Word), and live accordingly, we have a life that serves His purpose, and thus is lived deliberately for God. The lesson for us tonight is that we need to:

Live Life Deliberately

For most of us, we struggle with really knowing what it is that we are supposed to do for the Lord. That is why the prayer that Jesus commanded in Matthew 6 is so important.

As we turn back to Matthew 6, may I remind you of one of the simplest and yet most profound spiritual exercises that Jesus prescribed for us? The Lord's Prayer was an exercise designed to keep each of us in step with God's plan for our lives.

Remember that simple prayer that changes me?

Matthew 6:5-15 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray

to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.^[b] ⁷ And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.⁸ “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as *it is* in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.^[c]

¹⁴ “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

What we just read is what I like to call:

The Prayer That Changes Me

The seven simple steps, or lessons we are to live by, are found in the natural phrase divisions of this prayer:

1. God, **focus me** on who You are;
2. As I see You, **control me** each day.
3. I seek You to **lead me** through all the myriads of choices life presents each day.
4. Then I will trust that You will **supply me** with whatever I need to accomplish Your will.
5. **Cleanse me** so I stay in close touch with You and Your plan.
6. **Protect me** from everything that seeks to keep me from You.
7. **Empty me** so You get all the glory and honor for my life.

That prayer makes each of us ponder whether we like David, are deliberately doing what God desires for us to do in life; which leads us to our next Psalm from David’s life. Turn back with me now to Psalm 31, which is David’s meditation on his purpose in life.

As we listen, this Psalm confronts each of us with a serious question that is behind all that David wrote here: “Am I seeking the Lord deliberately with all my heart—or just coasting along spiritually?”¹

¹ 060910AM DSS-34

Please stand with me and listen to Psalm 31, a magnificent call to each of us from God that He:

focus, control, lead, supply, cleanse, protect, and empty me each day—

so that I accomplish His purposes and not mine own, each day He gives me to live!

Psalm 31:1-24 (NKJV)

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- 1 In You, O LORD, I put my trust;
Let me never be ashamed;
Deliver me in Your righteousness.
- 2 Bow down Your ear to me,
Deliver me speedily;
Be my rock of refuge,
A fortress of defense to save me.
- 3 For You are my rock and my fortress;
Therefore, for Your name's sake,
Lead me and guide me.
- 4 Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me,
For You are my strength.
- 5 Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.
- 6 I have hated those who regard useless idols;
But I trust in the LORD.
- 7 I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy,
For You have considered my trouble;
You have known my soul in adversities,
- 8 And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy;
You have set my feet in a wide place.
- 9 Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble;
My eye wastes away with grief,
Yes, my soul and my body!
- 10 For my life is spent with grief,
And my years with sighing;
My strength fails because of my iniquity,
And my bones waste away.
- 11 I am a reproach among all my enemies,
But especially among my neighbors,
And am repulsive to my acquaintances;
Those who see me outside flee from me.
- 12 I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind;
I am like a broken vessel.
- 13 For I hear the slander of many;
Fear is on every side;

While they take counsel together against me,
They scheme to take away my life.

14 But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."

15 My times are in Your hand;
Deliver me from the hand of my enemies,
And from those who persecute me.

16 Make Your face shine upon Your servant;
Save me for Your mercies' sake.

17 Do not let me be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called upon You;
Let the wicked be ashamed;
Let them be silent in the grave.

18 Let the lying lips be put to silence,
Which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

19 Oh, how great is Your goodness,
Which You have laid up for those who fear You,
Which You have prepared for those who trust in You
In the presence of the sons of men!

20 You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence
From the plots of man;
You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion
From the strife of tongues.

21 Blessed be the LORD,
For He has shown me His marvelous kindness in a strong city!

22 For I said in my haste,
"I am cut off from before Your eyes";
Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications
When I cried out to You.

23 Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints!
For the LORD preserves the faithful,
And fully repays the proud person.

24 Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart,
All you who hope in the LORD.

Pray

As we begin our look at Psalm 31, we find David's personal resolve, which captures why God thought so highly of him:

David's Simple Resolve

This psalm opens with a carefully crafted order of words: David directed our thoughts toward the Lord before he spoke of himself. God was the deliberate focus of his opening

verse, his psalm, and his entire life.

In You, O LORD, I put my trust ... (Psalm 31.1).

When we aren't deliberately, intentionally seeking to serve the Lord in life, we coast.

Many believers are just coasting through life, missing the plans God wants them to accomplish. The biggest danger of life is coasting. When we coast and don't deliberately seek the Lord we are wasting those days.

Psalm 31 is David's reflective song about the dangers and painful consequences of coasting through our spiritual lives. David had carefully lived for the Lord most of his life.

He had seen the Hand of God so clearly as a lad facing Goliath.

He had felt the Presence of God as a young man fleeing from King Saul.

As a man, he had experienced the numerous blessings of God when leading the armies of Israel as king.

But somewhere along the way David disengaged his heart. His passion was no longer in the Lord; surrounded by so many blessings he had started to just coast spiritually. He went through all the motions, said all the same words, but neglected to guard his own heart.

In those unguarded moments he crashed. Everything in his spiritual life halted abruptly and stayed in neutral for nearly a year following his grievous sin against God involving Bathsheba.

In the spiritual woodshed of God's chastening, David learned that sin paid a heavy wage of consequences and no longer would his life be the same. He found out the hard way that he couldn't live on yesterday's manna or last month's spiritual disciplines and get away with it.

After his repentance and restoration, however, David changed.

He was different not because he had lost something, but because he now lived with acute awareness of God's complete forgiveness which gave him a second chance.

That caused him to live life so much more deliberately than ever before.

BEWARE OF COASTING SPIRITUALLY

One of the greatest dangers for a mature believer is that we disengage our engine (our hearts) and start coasting spiritually by slacking up on seeking the Lord with all our

being.

We soon begin feeding our souls on yesterday's blessings, last week's devotions, and last month's ministry. And then we pass up worshiping, neglect spiritual disciplines, and slowly drift away from ministry.

This serious risk warrants regular soul searching on our part: *Am I just coasting along in my walk with the Lord? Or, am I truly seeking God with my whole heart?*

In Psalm 31, through David's painful lessons we will be challenged to live life deliberately—intentionally living in a way that, as much as possible, is for the glory and purpose of the Lord our God. We will learn how to avoid coasting and the costly consequences of an unguarded heart.

Because Psalm 31 contains a kaleidoscope of settings, scholars are divided as to who wrote it. However, most seem to think the author was probably David reflecting back across the seasons of his life.

I view this psalm as being written by David:

- after the events of 1 Samuel 11-12 (David's sin and repentance),
- after the year of painful chastisement recorded in Psalm 32,
- after the magnificent prayer of repentance and return of Psalm 51,
- after the painful dash to the wilderness by David—away from his rebel son Absalom, as recorded in Psalm 3.

I believe David penned Psalm 31 as reflections upon his choice to return to God and henceforth deliberately build upon the lessons learned in both triumphs and failures.²

As part of his soul searching, he looked back over his life to pinpoint exactly when he stopped seeking the Lord with his whole heart. After reflecting upon God's Hand in his life in the past, he resolved to once again faithfully make intentional choices, careful steps, and measured responses to each event he would have to face as an outcome of his having coasted spiritually.

This was seen so clearly by David's initial response in Psalm 3 to Absalom's rebellion. He wept, worshiped, fled, and cried to God for help—all very carefully. The strong lesson David learned from his failures and sins convinced him he must spend the rest of his days living wholeheartedly for the Lord!

WITH ALL MY HEART

² Jeremiah, Jonah, and Jesus quoted directly from this psalm. Psalm 31:13's terror phrase (*magormisbib*) was used six times by Jeremiah (6:25; 20:3-4, 10; 46:5; 49:29; Lam. 2:22). Jonah quoted 31:6 in Jonah 2:6. David opened Psalm 71 with the same words. But most significantly, in Luke 23:46 Jesus quoted Psalm 31:5 as His last words on earth!

After his personal crash, David was careful. He guarded his heart, harnessed his moments, and established a new focus for his spiritual life. His renewed longing for the Lord could be summarized in the words of this short chorus I love to sing:

With All My Heart

*With all my heart I want to love You Lord,
and live my life each day to know You more.
All that is in me is Yours completely;
I'll serve You only, with all my heart.³*

The dictionary's definition of the word "deliberately" is quite applicable to our Christian walk with the Lord:

De·lib·er·ate·ly *adv.* With careful consideration, or deliberation; circumspectly; warily; not hastily or rashly; slowly; as, a purpose *deliberately* formed; as words and actions said or done on purpose. A life not hurried.

Is that where you are with God today? Or are you coasting? The following adds even further insights into this concept of living deliberately:

A Short Definition: intentional

Some Antonyms: A person who does not act deliberately acts—by chance, indeterminately, unintentionally, unmethodically, unsystematically, unwittingly.

In Psalm 3 David discovered anew how to face abuse and danger in a godly manner plus sleep peacefully in the face of both. This was the first lesson God taught him through the consequence of Absalom's rebellion.

The next lesson learned through this consequence led David to tell the Lord, "No longer will I spiritually coast through life! I am intentionally renewing my walk with You!"

David purposed to never again give into boredom as he did the night he peeked over the rooftops looking for something to interest him.

Nor would he walk defenselessly into unplanned situations.

And never more would he allow unguarded moments to lead him into an instant of passion and a lifetime of heartaches.

In other words, living deliberately for God meant intentionally neglecting anything that would hinder his walk with the Lord, as Romans 6 commands.

With All My Heart

³ Babbie Mason, 1990.

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and live my life each day to know You more.
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I'll serve You only, with all my heart.⁴*

⁴ **Babbie Mason, 1990.**