

CFAMC DEVOTIONAL PAGE
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I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.
--Romans 12: 1-3

We call extraneous objects “clutter.” They take up room in the spaces of our lives. This means that there is less actual space in our lives, and in such a situation, we begin to feel claustrophobic, limited, and there are worse consequences, such as illness due to dust, mold, etc.

But this is what could be termed the external side. The internal side is confusion, lack of focus, inability to know how to make a decision, inability to know or enact one’s mission, a use of your resources that is very far from your capability.

A mission in life could be to be a great painter, an amazing parent, a great performer, an entrepreneur, a doctor, a powerful evangelist, and countless others. Really, a person’s mission is utterly unique and given only to them. The mission given to Moses, Paul, John the Baptist defined the entirety of their existence after God supplied that new life to each one directly. The key here is “directly.” Each of these people knew God’s intent not by guessing or trying to figure it out. We don’t know this about John the Baptist for certain, but we can make a good guess of it. God very directly and personally told them in no uncertain terms what to do. And from that moment forward, it was the Olympics every day. Sublime Focus. It’s hard to imagine Moses, Jesus, or Da Vinci wasting much of their time on idle pursuits, or on purchasing the latest faddish outfit, or talking wastefully. Could we imagine Joshua wandering aimlessly through a huge outdoor bazaar or flipping through channels? It has an absurd ring to it, because we knew that Joshua was utterly focused and had a crystal clear sense of vision.

A core point of my practice theology is that every aspect of one’s life, including the objects that one is surrounded with, ones friends, and ones activities, should all be tightly bound directly to the mission that God has placed upon you. And anything outside of that vision, you have to very carefully decide if you are willing to divide yourself. As with a great performance of a great work of music, the practical reality of the self-in-union-with-God requires a life with no seams and breaks. Some say that Jesus’ seamless tunic can be seen as a symbol of this wholeness and integration. We know that the seamless tunic was also much more difficult to make than a standard tunic, which was made of segments of

cloth sewn together. It required much more skill on the part of the weaver of the garment, and thus were more rare. It is a good metaphor, if we take the tunic to be our own self in a fulsome sense of the word.

So, taking the seamless tunic as a metaphor for indivisible super-completeness in, with and through God, it's important and even critical to understand the ramifications of self-division — or having seams in ones life. Let's say that Paul decided that he was going to focus on perfecting his chess game in his "spare time" (what spare time?). This is tantamount to self-division in that God has given him a clear talent, situation and command, and he is dividing himself into "God Time", and "Me Time." A highly-integrated person can never make that division, because it feels like a terrible crime to do so. Rather, they gradually peel away those activities as the Holy Spirit refines and purifies his entire existence, removing those things, actions and persons in their lives which have nothing to do with the Lord's work or are even in deadly enmity with it.

Now consider, unless God were to tell Paul to perfect his chess game, then what possible value could doing so have? Yes, Paul could exercise his mind in strategic/competitive imagination, he could have some enjoyable downtime with his friends, he could perhaps strengthen some synaptic pathways and build neurons staving off early dementia potential. But unless chess specifically served his God-given ministry and was an intrinsic part of its development, then he would be cheating God like an employee who uses the company phone to make personal phone calls, or doesn't do their absolute best to bring excellence to their job. They're being paid to provide a specific value, but they're cheating their employer while still taking the wage. Just getting by. Paul was an incredibly dedicated man, it's hard to imagine him as being divided within himself on any matter at all. He was certainly blessedly assured.

Of course this includes rest. Very often, stillness and rest are the most powerful things we can do to serve the Lord. In stillness, we can - perhaps more easily - hear the voice of the divine and the heavenly realm, we can relax the body and mind more readily, and strengthen for the next round. We need to jump ship from "the box" of living, and it requires being in a restful relaxed frame of mind to do so, but not so relaxed as to be asleep. Relaxed enough to be unconcerned with other activities and able to focus in on one thing. Even in the intensity of a boxing match, there are rest periods in which each boxer goes back to their corner, and their community comes together and tends to them, preparing them for the next attack. Would the boxer put just anyone in his corner? Or would he put people there very carefully, those who could help him win? God calls on individuals, just as he called on Betzalel specifically to build the implements for the tabernacle. He didn't call on "someone", he said "Betzalel". People cannot be replaced or swapped out — ever. And that is because each person is placed, like Betzalel, in the infinity of now for a specific precise reason and mission, and who they are as an individual is constructed by God before their birth.

Therefore, who I am as an individual person needs to be looked at as a purely individual person, outside of family, lineage, and time, and only in terms of God's creation and action. This is not to deny the truth of your lineage, race, etc. these are important secondary factors when it comes down to action. But you need to understand yourself as a completely unique being without catering to outside definitions of yourself, without catering to your own cherished confusions about the nature of yourself, and without even catering to the accepted ontological nature of the self or to what you think it means to "be" and "have" a self. God's definition of what you are is beyond any imagining you may have, so you at must begin with an unlimited sense of whom you are capable of being as the starting point, and that means that all notions of what can and can't be done — our conditioning — need to be fundamentally discarded.

Who can doubt that we are highly conditioned beings? We have responses to our daily activities which we did not invent or create, but are there nevertheless. What are they doing there and how did they get there? Some of these conditioned responses may be incredibly useful, and others may be highly self-limiting. But we can see all of these responses simply by noticing thoughts pop up in our minds. Being aware of our inner thoughts is a basic requirement in a genuine spiritual life. Our conditioned responses come in the form of proverbs, directives or advice coming from our mind. For good or not so good, our brains are doling out advisory messages to us throughout the day, and we can notice that very many of these messages are not the result of your own contemplation, and also are not geared to you as a complete individual with a complete and unique purpose. Many of these proverbs and instructions doled out by the inner mind are fantastically effective and should be absolutely kept, strengthened and nourished. And many lead a person into personal self-enmity with one's mission, which shatters the integrated sense of a person.

To render complete the union and fulsome life with God we all seek, we need to continually examine the brevity of life for what is purposeful and what is purposeless, with scripture as our backing. And then mercilessly - in an act of compassion and love - cleave off those aimless objects, thoughts, actions, behaviors and processes which will not bring us to the goal we seek and the closeness we attain through working directly with our Lord and Master. Cleave them off again and again and route all of your anointed powers to your mission where they belong. God is doing that work for us through divine grace, and we are also made part of that work which He is doing, because we are possessed of a free will. God wrote the Bible, but it requires us to open it. We pray "open my mouth so my lips may declare your praise" to ask for divine grace and anointing, but it is we that are making that request, and God that is doing the work, and ultimately it is our mouth that is opening. Of course, God gave us even the capacity, breath and acuity to request that prayer, or gave us the circumstances for others to pray that over us, so all is under His grace, but we — in like wise — need to use our free will and all that which God gave us to - willfully - deepen our life in Him and to give our inner and outer lives integrity and completeness in Him, free from "clutter" as completely unique emissaries of His will anointed with very exact purpose.