THE DEVOTIONAL LIFE OF A SERVANT OF GOD

Our devotional life is the life of our devotion (John 15:1-8). A servant of God needs to live close to heaven; his devotional life is like the umbilical cord, which connects him to God, the aorta, which carries his spiritual lifeblood, and the taproot, which anchors him deeply in the soil of divine grace. Failure at devotion makes us like a branch severed from the vine. It is the devotional life that makes a man of God. He who would daily occupy the honourable office of a servant of God must diligently occupy the humble office of an earnest seeker of God, who rewards those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

## PURPOSE OF MINISTERIAL DEVOTION

The key aim of ministerial devotion is to be spiritually fit to live for God and fulfil the ministry. Specifically, ministerial devotion serves the following purposes:

1. **It is the place of daily refreshing (Psalm 1:1-3)**. It is the place to gather daily spiritual manna for the nourishment of the soul (Exodus 16:4). It the place to be renewed for the journey of life (I Kings 19:4-8; Isaiah 40:31). It is there he receives the divine touch that makes his life fresh and strong; there he gets oil for the light (Exodus 27:20; Leviticus 24:2; Numbers 4:16; Matthew 25:3,4).
2. **It is the place to receive regular divine instruction, to hear from God and to get our path directed.** As the minister ponders on God´s word, it becomes a lamp to his feet and light to his path (Psalm 119:105; Acts 13:1-3; 16:9).
3. **It is the place to align our lives with the purpose of God.** The primary and sole aim of Christian ministry is to glorify God. The minister of God who will achieve this aim consistently must come apart for a while regularly (Mark 6:30-32). Sometimes, this is the place God´s servant receives a sharp, personal rebuke to restore him into the purpose of God (Joshua 7:6-12).
4. **It is the place of restoration of pure love and unflinching allegiance.** It is the place to wet the altar of God with pure tears of repentance, to renew our marital vow with Jesus, to re-consecrate our life and all, to regain heavenly focus, to rejoice in nothing but God and His goodness (Psalm 23:1-3). It is the place to pour our most precious ointment on our most adored Saviour and not count the cost (Mark 14:3). It is the place to consecrate in devotion so that we can be committed in deed.
5. **It is a place of revival of faith and power.** The ministerial life is full of challenges. He who would meet these challenges valiantly cannot afford to run dry. As God has access to us at the time of devotion, He can build our faith and strength up (Jude 20,21; Acts 27:21-25). Many times, He will even warn us of Pharaoh´s intention and scheming so that we are not caught by surprise like the generality of the people (Exodus 14:1-4).
6. **It is the place to handle personal disappointments, frustrations, anxieties, fears, etc**, so that thereafter, we can travel light without excess luggage in the many times weary road of ministerial duty (Numbers 11:10-17; I Kings 3-8; II Corinthians 12:8-10). At such periods of intense engagement with God, the once sorrowful countenance changes after the soul is poured out in earnest prayer unto God (I Samuel 1:15-18).
7. **Lastly, it is the place to consolidate our labour as unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10).** There we report all we have done and taught (Mark 6:30). There we submit our ministerial report to be reviewed by the Lord in the light of eternity. There we review our decisions, actions, words, policies, interactions, relationships and so on. There we bring everything under the searching light of divine truth. There we have opportunity to make amendments (II Corinthians 13:5).

## PRACTICE OF MINISTERIAL DEVOTION

Ministerial devotion is our regular daily devotion with the added emphasis of a ministerial perspective. An adult eats just like a child does, but with the added emphasis of adulthood (the purpose, content, size, etc). Let us examine how Moses the man of God observed his ministerial devotion (Exodus 34:1-9).

In the first instance, Moses prepared for his meeting with God. **One**, his heart was made ready (Exodus 34:1,2). To receive from God, we need a willing, ready heart that values communion with God above anything else (Psalm 42:1,2; 73:25). **Two**, there was an appointed hour and Moses gave it first priority in his life (Exodus 34:2). The minister cannot afford to push his devotion to a time when he is no longer alert. In fact, we are told of Martin Luther, who would spend a protracted length of time in the morning with God especially because he had so much to do during the day! Our devotion should be done when the heart is most disposed to hearing God. The morning hour, first thing in the day, should be devoted to this holy exercise (Mark 1:35; Psalm 63:1). And then our communion with Him will last the whole day! **Three**, God called Moses to an appointed place where he could fellowship with Him without distraction (Exodus 34:2). Many ministers do not enjoy communion with God because their heart or environment is not still. For us to know God, we must be still. Moses needed complete solitude (Exodus 34:3). Personal devotion demands being alone with God without the distraction of a third party (Mark 1:35). For a deep meditation in the Word, our environment must be still (Psalm 4:4; 46:10). And **four**, Moses needed focused attention (Exodus 34:3). Wandering thoughts are like grazing animals around the mount. Worries about people (especially the Church) are like a distracting presence of people around the mount. If we treasure our devotion with the Lord, our hearts must be there also (Matthew 6:21).

Thereafter, Moses went up to have devotion with God. If we truly prepare our heart, the time of devotion should be a time of spiritual renewal and edification. There is a lot to learn about practical devotion in the life of Moses. **One**, there must be readiness and promptness (Exodus 34:4). Moses rose up early in the morning. Early morning should signify to us priority. No matter the ministerial schedule, devotion should be priority. **Two**, we need an expectant heart (Exodus 34:4). Moses took tables of stone to God because he expected a message from God. Do you expect God to speak to you? Then make your heart ready; bring a notebook before the Lord on which you will jot down His lessons to you! **Three**, we must believe and watch out for the promised presence (Exodus 34:5). Moses waited for God´s presence. It is the Lord who has called us to this daily devotion, and HE IS ALWAYS PRESENT at the altar of communion (Genesis 18:22,33). **Four**, we should wait patiently for, and readily absorb the revelation of His Word (Exodus 34:6,7). Moses waited for God´s revelation. It was his main purpose in devotion. As we meditate deeply and prayerfully in the Word, the Holy Spirit shines the light both on the Word and on our hearts. Ask yourself, Are there promises to claim? Are there commandments to keep? Are there warnings to heed? Are there pitfalls to avoid? Lay up His Word in your heart and personalise it as Moses did. **Five**, there should be reverential worship (Exodus 34:8). Moses bowed before the Lord and worshiped. Our approach at the throne of grace should be of contrition, humility, reverence and worship (Isaiah 66:2; Dan. 6:10). And **six**, sufficient time should be spent in “praying the Word in” (Exodus 34:9). After the revelation, Moses spent time to pray till God in fact gave him further promises (Exodus 34:10). The revelation of God’s Word should induce in us the heart and burden for prayer. It is only in this way that what we learn can remain in our lives.

Ministerial devotion is a practical, enriching venture. Servants of God who neglect it live defeated lives (Hosea 8:3); but those who choose this good thing will be commended by the Lord and they will grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 10:41,42; II Peter 3:18). They will still bring forth fruit in old age. Their path will be as an ever increasing light (Psalm 92:12-15; Proverbs 4:18).