

TITLE: PRACTICAL KEYS TO A BETTER LIFE: DON'T GO YOUR OWN WAY!

TEXT: 2 CHRON. 7:12-22; 2 CHRON. 10-11

KEYS: 1. Follow God closely. Maintain a healthy and growing relationship with God.
2. Create personal space. Don't rush to react – based on a gut reaction, or on tradition.
3. Seek God first and then follow His will (pray, read His Word, obtain Godly Counsel).

All Christians need to pray – but life seems to work against us, from busyness to distractions. Here are 8 simple words to help you lead a more successful life.

- 'Let me get back to you on that.' OR 'Let's give this to the Lord in prayer.'
- Allows you time to thoughtfully evaluate & consider how it fits your priorities & calling.

What do you stand for?

When Solomon dies, his son Rehoboam ascends to the throne. Perhaps as a concession to the Ephraimites, who felt as though they were an inferior group of people, Rehoboam agrees to hold his coronation in the town of Shechem instead of Jerusalem. Shechem was a place 'all of Israel' could agree to meet [1 Kings 12:1].

2 Chron. 10

1-4 Israel requests less responsibility

5 'come back in 3 days for my answer'

6-11 sought counsel from old/young advisers

12-14 followed counsel of younger advisers

15-16 Israel upset with King's response – rebellion

17-18 rushed to Jerusalem to prepare for war – to restore the kingdom

2 Chron. 11

1-4 God says do not fight against your relatives

5-11 returned home and fortified towns of Judah and Benjamin

12-16 Priests and Levites abandoned their property and moved to Judah & Jerusalem

17 This strengthened the kingdom of Judah – they faithfully followed in the footsteps of David and Solomon

God first! – In what areas of our life must we put Him first?

1. Finances

2. Prayer 3. Etc.,

A. solitude [DISCONNECT FROM THE WORLD AND CONNECT TO OUR SOUL]

"We are so afraid of silence that we chase ourselves from one event to the next in order not to have to spend a moment alone with ourselves, in order not to have to look at ourselves in the mirror." – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

SCRIPTURE: READ **ROMANS 12:1-2MSG; LUKE 5:14-16MSG; ECC.3:7**

DESIRE: to get away and enter into time alone with God.

DEFINITION: involves scheduling enough uninterrupted time in a distraction-free environment that you experience isolation and are alone with God.

PRACTICE: give God time/space that's not in competition w/social contact, noise or stimulation.

BENEFIT:

- quiets the internal noise so we can better listen to God
After Elijah's power encounter on Mt Carmel with the Baal worshippers he fled because he heard that Queen Jezebel had a price on his head. He hid in a cave and whined to God. God told him to step outside the cave and cover his face because he was about to speak to him. A storm and wind and earthquake and fire appeared, but God was not in any of those. Rather, God spoke in a whisper. 1Kings 19.2...And after the fire came a gentle whisper.
- gives yourself time and space to internalize what you already know
- liberation from the demands and/or pressures of others
- IT CLEARS OUR MIND OF THE STORMS OF LIFE
- IT CREATES INNER SPACE TO HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD
- IT BRINGS SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

Henry Nouwen said, "In solitude, I get rid of my scaffolding." Scaffolding is the stuff we use to keep ourselves propped up, friends, family, TV, radio, books, job, technology, work, achievement, our bank account, etc.

TO PRACTICE:

- FIND A PLACE WHERE YOU CANNOT BE INTERRUPTED
- INTENTIONALLY PLACE YOURSELF IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD
- RECOGNIZE THAT THE LORD IS AS NEAR AS YOUR OWN BREATHING
- INHALE GOD'S BREATH OF LIFE; EXHALE ALL THAT WEIGHS ON YOU
- SIMPLY BE ALONE WITH GOD
- WHEN IT IS TIME TO RETURN, LEAVE THE PRESENCE OF GOD GENTLY
- CARRY THE SENSE OF BEING ALONE WITH GOD WITH YOU INTO THE NEXT THING

READ: PSALM 51 ...vs 10 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me.'

1. SPEND 15 MINUTES OR MORE ALONE WITH GOD
2. USE THE TIME YOU SPEND IN THE SHOWER [PRESENT YOURSELF TO THE CREATOR, LET HIM WASH AWAY THE FILTH AND PREPARE YOU FOR THE NEW DAY; AND THANK HIM FOR THE ALONE TIME HE SPENDS WITH YOU.
3. SET ASIDE HALF OF THE DAY FOR TIME ALONE WITH GOD. GO SOMEWHERE. TAKE ONLY YOUR BIBLE.