

This week, instead of 6 or 7 devotions, there are 10 devotions. This is because there will be no sermon devotions next week. For this reason, you will find some other devotional material interspersed among the sermon devotion this week.

What do you want to do when you grow up? Whether others ask that or we ask it of ourselves, that is a question that most of us have probably been asked. And because we get asked that question so frequently, sometimes we might get a little tired of hearing it.

But even if you are a little tired of it, I want to ask that question today. And please, don't think that I am only talking to the young in the seats. This question applies to all of us because, until the day we die, we really are all still growing up. So, let us consider the words before us with that question in mind: what do you want to do when you grow up?

Hebrews 11:24-26 By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter when he grew up. ²⁵He chose to be mistreated with God's people rather than enjoy sin for a little while. ²⁶He considered disgrace for the sake of Christ as greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

Do you remember Moses?

1. Just for fun, answer the question that begins this devotion. But then discuss how we can do that while still seeking to be faithful to God?

2. Share (if with others) / Consider (if by yourself) all the things you know and remember about Moses. Try to list some things about him that were both good and bad.

Prayer: Father, thank you for making us your children and thereby making us truly rich. Help us trust your promises and be content with your blessings. Amen.

Do you remember Moses? His entrance and upbringing in this world is one of the more dramatic ones recorded for us in the Bible. Born in Egypt at a time when Pharaoh commanded that all boys be killed, his believing parents knew they could not do this and so they cleverly hid him for three months. When they could no longer hide him, his mother placed him in a basket and put him among the reeds of the Nile River. It was here that Pharaoh's daughter found him and took him home as her own son.

As a result, Moses was raised in Pharaoh's palace. He had all the benefits a person could ever want. The world today still marvels at the great power, riches, and pleasures of ancient Egypt's glories. It was the type of life most people dream about.

But in our lesson we read, **“By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter when he grew up.”** Moses had it all. But the promise of the Messiah was more valuable to him than wealth, honor or power? What did Moses want to do when he grew up? It wasn't to chase the “Egyptian dream.” His sights weren't set on enjoying the pleasures of sin for a short time. His goals were different. What he wanted was to be counted among those who knew God by faith. For Moses - as he grew up - he wanted nothing more than to be faithful to God.

1. This question has many aspects to it. Try to answer it from all the angles each question poses. What are the goals of your life?

- a. What is God's goal for your life?

- b. How does your goal match up with God's goal?

- c. Where might you see conflict with your goal and God's goal?

2. Why did Moses refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter?

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us see how much you care for us in everything you do. Amen.

For Moses, faithfulness to God meant giving up power, riches, and pleasure. It meant leaving nobility behind and identifying himself with an enslaved people. He considered disgrace for the sake of Christ as greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. Moses is an example of a believer who looked ahead to something he could not see and let that unseen thing dictate his decisions in life. Such trouble for being faithful! But was it worth it? Yes.

Look here on the pages of Scripture; of God's own word. He's listed as a hero of faith. He appeared with Elijah and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. He received the greater treasure of heaven.

Hebrews 11 is known as the heroes of faith chapter in the Bible. And this chapter isn't so much a definition of faith but a description of what faith does and how it works. Faith brings the future into the present because it makes things hoped for as real as if we already had them. That is how Moses lived. And doesn't Moses' example urge us to check how we are living?

1. Is it a sin to have power and riches?
2. Why can this devotion say that Moses' trouble was worth it?
3. What does the sermon devotion mean when it says: "Faith brings the future into the present because it makes things hoped for as real as if we already had them"?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, author and perfecter of my faith, strengthen my resolve to live and serve you in spite of the world's rejection. Amen.

Moses didn't try to split his loyalties. He didn't, as one guest preacher this last Lenten season said, try to give God a part for the whole. He was all in. He wasn't willing to chase the so-called "good life" at the expense of the promises of God. Instead, by faith he knew that what was promised him by God was greater than what he could ever have in this world.

And as I look at Moses I find myself begin to blush. What would I have done? Would I have been willing to give up the luxuries of the world? Would I perhaps have tried to have it both ways? What about you? In fact, as I look out at you, as I peer into a mirror and look at myself, I see people who have made the things of this world the focus of our lives. I see people who have tried to divide our loyalties; who have tried to give God a part for the whole, who have thought that we could have our cake and eat it too.

But can we? Can we serve God and the cravings of our sinful nature at the same time? The answer is a definitive NO! Think of how insulting that is to God. Think of how insulting it would be if you were to say to your spouse, “I promise to be faithful to you—well, except for five days a year.” You are—mathematically, at least—offering a pretty big part of the whole. Yet it’s completely unacceptable, isn’t it? It’s either all or nothing!

1. What does it mean to try and give God a part for the whole?
2. If we try to split our loyalties, give God a part for the whole, what are we guilty of? (*be specific*)
3. In Luke 16:13 our Savior says, “No servant can serve two masters. Indeed, either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon (*mammon means “earthly stuff”*).” Explain the problem/impossibility of trying to serve the two masters mentioned in this verse.

Prayer: Dearest Jesus, cause us to follow you no matter the cost. Help us to put your kingdom ahead of our own. Enable us to follow you even when it is not easy. Amen.

So that brings me to our sermon theme and question today: What do you want to do when you grow up? When you look at your life, have these been your answers too many times? I don't want to have any debt. I want a job where I make good money so I can live the life I want. I want to be able to recreate more. I want to spend time with my family. While these things are not evil in and of themselves, when the chasing of the American dream comes before chasing faithfulness to God they become the greatest of evils.

What about when hardships come due to our connection to Christ. Are we quick to do all we can to avoid them no matter what we might have to compromise? Does this not reflect that the goal of our life may very well be comfort and prosperity rather than faithfulness to God? Like Moses, are we willing to give up the things of this life in order to keep our connection to Christ, or is a half-hearted faithfulness all we are willing to give?

Thing is, at what point does a half-hearted faithfulness become no faithfulness at all? At what point does love for the things of this world destroy our love for God? Don't side-step it - every single one of us has been guilty of doing this. What we need to do is look into our lives and see where it is? Then we need to repent of it and change. Because remember what Jesus says, anyone who loves the world, the love of the Father is not in them. We cannot serve both God and stuff. And anyone who thinks they can do both will find out the hard way that they can't. But it will be too late when the fires of hell are burning around them.

1. The sermon devotion speaks about chasing the "American dream." What is your version of that "dream?" Honestly evaluate if and when chasing that "dream" has come before chasing faithfulness to God. Then do as the devotion suggests – repent and change. Consider/discuss ways that you can and will change.

2. Consider/discuss ways that a person might compromise to avoid hardships that come from one's connection to Christ. Honestly evaluate which ones you have done. Then do as the devotion suggests – repent and change. Consider/discuss ways that you can and will change.

3. How does a Christian chase faithfulness to God?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you give us life and breath, a Savior from sin, and every other blessing. Just as our Savior Jesus served you selflessly and faithfully, help us to do the same. Amen.

Below is a devotion taken from a devotion book titled *On Giving Advice to God*.¹

Luke 18:1-8 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

⁴ “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’ ”

⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

What a strange way for Jesus to end the parable – “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” What a mighty war the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh wage against the promises of Jesus.

The devil tempts us with the oft-repeated boast of unbelief: “I only believe what I can see!” And what is it that we see? We see the prosperity of the wicked. We see the growing popularity of mocking unbelief. We see the flight from faith on the part of many who once professed it. We see defects in pastors and teachers. We see failure and defeat in our own struggles with some of the things that the Bible teaches and that we are, nevertheless, expected to believe and defend.

The world, for its part, promises the easy life, heaven in the here and now. We see with our eyes and hear with our ears the lure of sinful pleasure. Others “enjoy” their greed and lust for life to the fullest and seem, at least as far as we know, to suffer no ill effects. The poor need my generosity, but I want a bigger television set. The church needs money for an unending list of worthy projects, but I want a better vacation this year than the one I couldn’t afford last year. Why can’t I have a boat/a cottage by the sea/a house as big as the one my heathen brother-in-law has? Listening to God seems to get me none of these things; perhaps if I put myself first and don’t let the incessant demands of others – including God! – get in the way, I would come closer to having the easy life I crave and the world offers.

My sinful flesh wallows in these problems and then adds to the list. If I just fudge on my taxes or “adjust” my income by hiding some of it on applications for the government’s assistance in this and that program, I could afford a few things better in my life. Besides that, everybody does it. As for a chaste and decent life – well, we have the Internet, and vice is so easy to get and to conceal. It’s a wonder that decency survives at all; expecting me to resist vice and lust is just not reasonable in this day and age. And who can resist greed and envy, given the nonstop appeal of commercials that make me want what I don’t have, don’t need, and can’t afford anyway?!

The end result is that I don’t want to have wants and needs that I can’t see satisfied right now. And if God makes me wait or wait too long, well, then I may have to set aside my Christian clothes and run after the devil’s fig leaves, chase the lure of the world, and cater to the yearnings of my sinful flesh.

And then we hear Jesus’ sigh: “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Indeed, is there a doctrine in the Bible that the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh can’t find some reason to object to or complain about, ultimately to reject in unbelief? And now to top it all off, in this parable Jesus says that God hears my prayers and gives me justice in an unjust and unfair world, gives it speedily. That’s not the way I see it or feel it very often – if ever.

And so Jesus looks you in the eye and asks, “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Oh, may you look on his thorn-crowned brow and at his nail-pierced hands and feet and answer him: “Yes, Lord Jesus, if you come now, in this instant, you will find faith on the earth. For I believe that you claimed me as the Father’s own dear child in Baptism – that there you washed me and made me clean for all eternity. And I believe that in the Holy Supper, you have come to me, even to me, with the price of my salvation: your very own body and blood to forgive and assure me that I am still your own. Yes, and I believe that the absolution I have received in your Word through the voice of my pastor is your absolution, as sure and certain before your Father as if I heard you speaking it yourself.

~ Continued on the next page ~

¹ *On Giving Advice to God: Devotions on the Wisdom of God and the Foolishness of Man (Part 2).*

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So, Lord Jesus, I believe you and trust your Word. It's all such a wonder, a miracle of miracles. I believe you and trust your Word because of you and your Word, not because of me and my cleverness or strength. I believe and want nothing more in life than that to the hour of my death, your gift of faith would triumph over all the devil's mockery, the world's enticements, and the objections of my own sinful flesh. Look not, dear Savior, on my frailty and frequent battles with doubt. Instead, by your grace and the power of your gospel, move me ever more to look on you and your promises and to trust that you will continue faithful to your Word. Then, O my Redeemer, if you come while I live, you will still find faith on the earth to the glory of your own name and matchless grace.

Prayer: By your powerful Word, O Holy Spirit, keep us with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. Amen.

So, what do you want to do when you grow up? As a result of the faith so graciously brought about in us, may our answer be - to remain connected to Christ by faith. May our response be - to work on our relationship with Jesus. May it always be - to be faithful to God. That is, after all, what each and every single one of us promised to do on the day of our confirmation. And why wouldn't we want to. After all, God has been perfectly faithful to us.

Before you were born he was already planning the way to make it possible for you to spend eternity with him. Even when the world continued to reject him and his own people forsook him, he didn't waver from his plan to save us but remained faithful. And just as he promised, he came into our world to go to battle for us. He walked a lonely path where friends deserted him, the devil tormented him, and enemies stretched him out on a cruel instrument of torture and killed him.

But it was all part of his plan. It was all part of his plan for you; for each and every one of you. And just think, he did that for you knowing full well that there would be numerous times you'd be too embarrassed to claim him as your own. He did it knowing full well that there would be times you would push him aside for the fading glitter of this world. That didn't stop him from giving up his life to pay the penalty for your sin and winning forgiveness for these sins. It didn't stop him from making you his own through the waters of baptism. It hasn't stopped him from calling to you again and again, wooing you with his Word, and pouring out and promising blessings to you. It didn't stop him from securing for you a home in the never-ending glories of heaven and guaranteeing it to you through faith in him.

1. Below are the words (or a form of the words) spoken at your confirmation. Take time to reflect on them and the promise you made. Consider where you have fallen short. Ask God for help.

Minister: Do you intend faithfully to conform all your life to the teachings of God's Word, to be faithful in the use of the Word and sacrament, and in faith and action remain true to God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – as long as you live?

Response: I do, and I ask God to help me.

2. Consider/discuss what amazes you most about God's faithfulness to you.

Prayer: Precious Savior, inspire me by your walk to the cross to pick up mine and to keep following you. Amen.

The things of this world are temporary. Moses recognized this. We do too. The wealth of this world is temporary. That athletic skill is temporary. Time with family and friends, recreation and sports are temporary. Your house is temporary. The rendezvous with the seductive call of sin is temporary. But heaven is forever. Its joy is forever. Seeing Jesus face to face is forever. The absence of sin and its consequences are forever. And it is yours through faith in Jesus. But it is only yours through faith in Jesus. That faith makes Jesus the priority of our lives.

That faith is to shape our lives. That's how Moses lived. He shaped his life around the unseen things he knew existed simply because God said they did. That is how the Lord wants us to live. Sometimes it may seem as if there is no glory in living as a follower of Christ. Sometimes we might wonder if it is worth it? But our true rest is waiting for us. The true riches are in store for us. We don't see it, but we shape our lives around it nevertheless.

1. Why is it so important to remember that the things of this world are temporary?

2. This devotion speaks about the joy and bliss of heaven. Sometimes the question is asked, "Will we still have the same relationships in heaven with those whom we know in this life?" How should we answer?

3. Is faithfulness to Christ worth the trouble it brings?

Prayer: Dear Lord, as I wait for the day when I go home to heaven, keep me focused on your Word. Strengthen my faith so that I never lose sight of the glories you have in store for me in heaven. Amen.

What do we want to do when we grow up? We want to be faithful to God. We want to stay connected to Christ by faith. And what does that look like? It means setting your hearts on things above. It means avoiding a sinful attachment to the things of this world. It means a willingness to give up things in this world to make sure God and his Word get first place. It means struggling against the desires of your sinful nature. It means sitting at the feet of Jesus in worship and in your own homes. It means letting God's Word direct every aspect of our lives.

What do you want to do when you grow up? At first, there are probably a lot of things that come to mind when you hear that question. But my prayer today is that after having heard God's Word, and after expounding on it in this sermon, that the first thing you think of from now until the day of your death is this: I want to remain in the faith. I want to work on my relationship with Jesus every day. I want to be faithful to God. I want to live for him. I want to keep focused on following Christ because the joy of heaven will be worth it.

1. In this devotion we hear that we are to set our hearts on things above. It echoes the words of Colossians 3:1,2 – “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” What does it mean to set your heart/mind on things above?
2. You have come to the end of these 10 devotions. Let’s start where we began. Now after having done these devotions, how would you answer the question: What do you want to do when you grow up?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for the riches you give me that will never be taken away! Fill my heart with contentment as I reflect on how truly rich you have made me. Amen.

Below is a devotion taken from a devotion book titled *On Giving Advice to God*.²

Matthew 4:1,2 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Jesus baptism is really his inauguration into his public ministry. But we might want to give God some more advice here: *Is this any way to inaugurate your Son into his public ministry?!* For what happens in our world when a high official is inaugurated? There's a parade. There's a party. There's a celebration for all to see how wonderful and how powerful the new president or governor is. Wouldn't this inauguration have been a wonderful time for some form of testimonial from people who would echo the Father's testimony at the baptism? Wouldn't this have been a fine time for Mary to step forward and rehearse for an attending crowd what she knew and had experienced? She could have brought all present to wonder and awe as she told of the angel's announcement of his coming. She could have spoken of the worship of the shepherds and then of the wise men from the east. She could have told everyone about the testimony of Simeon in the temple, about the preservation of the family on the flight to Egypt and during their time there. What wonderful stories she might have told about Jesus' childhood. And others too could have come forward to tell what they knew and had experienced with Jesus during his first 30 years.

But that's not the way it was for Jesus. He had not come to be exalted in this life. No, exactly the opposite was his lot in life. His life was a march to the cross. The Holy Trinity had promised and prepared for this work since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. And now the time had come. God is eager to get on with it, to get on with the work of our redemption! And so, immediately – without delay, minus any kind of outward celebration or glory – the Holy Spirit urges him on into the desert. And for what purpose? To be tempted by the devil!

What a beginning for his redeeming work! It begins as it will end – with struggle, with battle. Unseen by anyone else, Jesus goes into the desert. He will devote himself there completely to a loving obedience to his Father. And he will show it as none of us is asked to, as not one of us ever could: For 40 days and 40 nights he will eat nothing. In his human nature he will rely on his Father to sustain him.

At the end of the 40 days, he was hungry. This hunger shows us that he was not just some phantom with what appeared to be a body; no, he was a true human being. And even though miraculously sustained during that 40-day fast, he nevertheless was hungry at its close. We are not to think of his work for our redemption as some sort of easy shadow boxing. No, the entire work will require a struggle, a battle of heroic dimensions. And it is a battle that he must not lose, not even in its first skirmishes, because our salvation is at stake here!

And so Jesus goes from his baptism not to glory but to his first steps on the way to the cross!

To a certain extent that's the way it is for us too. We too do not go from our baptism to outward glory. To be sure, in our baptism we become God's own children by adoption. But we follow Jesus into the wilderness, as it were, to be tempted by the devil. We are not driven there to win a victory for our salvation; that was Jesus' work and his alone. But we do follow him into battle – into a lifelong struggle against the temptations of the devil. As Jesus' struggle was real, so too is ours; it too is no shadow boxing.

What then shall we say? Will we run away from the battle? We know only too well how unfit we are for it in our still-fallen nature. Will we try to pretend that there really is no battle, that we are already close enough to good enough as we are? After all, we have gotten used to whatever faults we may have – and God will just have to get used to them too.

Oh, may it never be! We do not need to run away, even if we could. For Jesus in the struggle has been victorious – victorious as our substitute. He won his victory so that he could give it to us by forgiving – as he already has in our baptism – all of our failures in the struggle. In his human nature he won where we have lost, and he won for us.

~ Continued on the next page ~

² *On Giving Advice to God: Devotions on the Wisdom of God and the Foolishness of Man (Part 1).*

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Nevertheless, there is still a battle for us. Pretending that, since Jesus won the victory for us, we are now free from the battle and can sin as much as we want is to throw away his so dearly won struggle on our behalf. That's one of the great paradoxes of our faith: Our victory is won entirely by Jesus, but to refuse to struggle in the wilderness and instead to embrace and wallow in our sins is to throw away that already-won victory.

So then, clothed in the victory garment of forgiveness and with the status of adopted children of God – of brothers and sisters of Jesus – we follow after him to the struggle that will only end with the crown of glory in heaven. Of course we are not alone in the battle. Jesus is there with us, he who has already won our victory. So we will not shun the fight. We count it as an honor – or at least the Christian part of our nature that was born and created in us in our baptism counts it as an honor – to show our love and gratitude for victory by striving after submission to the Word of God with heart and soul, with mind and strength.

Jesus, in his own struggle, will show us how.

ANSWER PAGES

PAGE 1

1. Just for fun, answer the question that begins this devotion. But then discuss how we can do that while still seeking to be faithful to God? The first part of this question is going to vary by person. And understand adults, you too can answer this question. Most of us daydream about things we might like to do, or other things we might have done rather than the profession we are in – even if we truly enjoy our profession. Think about those things. Now, think about how what you are currently doing needs to fit in line with faithfulness to God. Parents, here is a great place to have a discussion with children about the goal of growing up. It isn't money and an easy life. It isn't being able to do all the things you want to do. Rather, speak to them about how they want to choose a profession that will not hinder them in their faithfulness to God. Speak to them about how choosing a spouse needs to be done in light of faithfulness to God. Help them see that there is a bigger picture than a nice car, nice house, a full bank account, and a "stress free" financial life. As you talk about this, examine what you are/have been teaching them as they see you work and talk about work and things. Are you demonstrating to them a faithfulness to God in the work you do?
2. Share (if with others) / Consider (if by yourself) all the things you know and remember about Moses. Try to list some things about him that were both good and bad. There are a lot of things about Moses. Tomorrow's devotion will talk about some of them. We see that his parents recognized something special about him. They hid him for 3 months. He was put in a basket in the Nile. Drawn out by a servant girl and raised by Pharaoh's daughter - but only after Moses' mother nursed him for a while. We know Moses killed an Egyptian. We know he fled Egypt. He married a daughter of Jethro. The Lord spoke to him at the burning bush. We know he was reluctant to be God's servant and lead Israel out of Egypt. We know that he was patient with the rebellious people of Israel. We know he interceded on their behalf on more than one occasion. We know that in frustration he struck a rock when he was to speak to it and he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. We know that he appeared with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration next to Jesus. You, no doubt, may have thought of more.

PAGE 2

1. This question has many aspects to it. Try to answer it from all the angles each question poses. What are the goals of your life? Answers will vary
 - a. What is God's goal for your life? God's goal for your life is to safely bring you through this world with your faith intact so that you might enter the glories of heaven. Flowing from that goal, his goals for you are that you feed yourself with his Word on a regular basis. That you bring glory to him in the way you live your life. And that you share the message with others that they might be brought into his kingdom.
 - b. How does your goal match up with God's goal? You will have to answer this on the basis of what your goals are
 - c. Where might you see conflict with your goal and God's goal? Be honest. Be forthright. Where has there been conflict? The problems aren't God's goals. The problems are when we let our goals crowd out God's goals for us
2. Why did Moses refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter? Because the way of life that would have been there for him as the son of Pharaoh's daughter would have pulled him away from the Lord. On the basis of the words of our lesson (vs. 25), the power, prestige, position, wealth and freedom from problems was for Moses sin. It's not to say that in every situation in a Christian's life today that these things are sin, but Moses saw that these things kept him from a proper relationship with God and from being an heir of the promise – the promise of deliverance from Egypt, the promise of the Promised Land, and the promise of deliverance from sin and heaven that the deliverance from Egypt and entrance into the Promised Land symbolized.

PAGE 3

1. Is it a sin to have power and riches? The answer is no, and it is important to understand this. There are many examples in the Bible of godly men and women who had riches and power. Think of Abraham and King David. It is a blessing when God grants such things to his people and his people use that power and

those riches as a blessing for others. But in the case of Moses we see that to choose the riches and power offered to him as a member of Pharaoh's house would have been wrong – for our lesson reads, “He chose to be mistreated with God's people rather than enjoy sin for a little while.” To choose that life of pleasure would have been turning his back on the promises of God. It would have been choosing this life over the one to come. That is what we need to watch out for. While riches and power are not sinful in themselves, they can easily become the driving force of our lives. When that happens, our lives are dictated by these rather than the will and Word of God. That is sin. It is a sin against the First Commandment. It is a failure to fear and love God above all things. And another reason we need to be so careful is because this shift in focus can be so subtle that we don't even notice it. But a good question to ask is: are the decisions and choices I make in life being directed and guided by God and his Word alone or by what I want and my finances and “saving face” around others? Look long and hard and you might be surprised, and sadly so, to see what is really directing your life.

2. Why can this devotion say that Moses' trouble was worth it? Because trouble for the sake of Christ is always worth it because heaven is worth the trouble. You see, the riches and glories of heaven far outweigh anything we can ever receive on this earth. The things of this earth are temporary. Heaven is eternal. Not only that, but if we chase after and only look for the things of this life – and thus avoid trouble by not putting God first, the torment of hell is what waits for the person for eternity. Then we can say the pleasures of this life, which are only temporary, were not worth the torments of hell which last forever.
3. What does the sermon devotion mean when it says: “Faith brings the future into the present because it makes things hoped for as real as if we already had them”? The idea behind this statement is this. Many of God's promises, especially the promise of heaven, is something that is in the future. It is not something that we possess in its fullness and splendor right now. Right now we are still living in a world chalk-full of sin and problems. However, faith takes those promises that lay in the future, and leads us to believe that though it lies in the future, it is as good as already done. For Moses, he looked at God's promise of deliverance from Egypt and entrance into the Promised Land, as well as the promised Savior, as if it was already done. Our faith leads us to see and believe that heaven is already our possession now and our entrance into it is as good as done. This then directs the way we live our lives.

PAGE 4

1. What does it mean to try and give God a part for the whole? Some examples of giving a part for the whole could be this: Sometimes people accept a part for the whole when the whole wasn't worth that much anyway, and they figure it's not worth the hassle necessary to get it. “Hey, it looks like my share of the bill for dinner is \$17. I have a 10 and a 5. Good enough?” “Sure. Let's move on with life.” Or when you go to the car rental counter, and they say to you, “Hmm, looks like you reserved a midsize sedan. Tell you what, we're going to give you a compact instead. You think you're holding the cards, and you say, “No, you're not. Then they say, “Well, we don't have any midsize sedans left on the lot, so it's a compact or nothing.” “Oh. Ok. Then I guess I'll take the compact.” When it comes to trying to give God a part for the whole, it looks like this: “Well God, I know that this is what you want me to do, but I want to do this. How about I do this once and while and I do what I want the rest of the time. At least you got a part of me. But God doesn't tell us to “be holy—but I'll take whatever you can give me.” He doesn't say, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart—or at least with everything that's left over after you make a deal with evil.” God is not satisfied with partial obedience. There is no part for the whole that is satisfactory to God. That's also the case when it comes to paying the debt we owe him because of our sins. God is not a bill collection agency trying to gauge how much blood he can get from a turnip and settling for that. God doesn't make a settlement based on our ability to pay. Jesus tells a parable of a man who owes an enormous debt to his master, one that he could never pay back. When the man offers to work in order to pay back at least a portion of it, the master doesn't agree to the arrangement. He won't accept a part for the whole. In the end, he throws the man into prison forever (Matthew 18:21-35). If we think that we're somehow going to pay our debt by doing things better in the future, we are fools. First, even if we did everything perfectly from now on, all we would be doing is giving God what we owe him today—not paying anything for yesterday. Second, we aren't even capable of doing everything perfectly in the future. At best, we might somewhat

slow our rate of outward sin so that our debt—like one of those wildly spinning national debt clocks you sometimes see—spins and accumulates slightly less wildly. If we think like that, we’re not only foolish, we’re also insulting God. Thank God that Jesus didn’t do that when he came to this earth as our substitute. Thank God that Jesus didn’t say, “How about if I keep seven of the commandments—or if I keep them all, but only 70% of the time?” Jesus’ commitment was not a commitment in part, but a commitment in whole. The same was true when it came to his payment for our sins. When Jesus prayed in the Garden of the Gethsemane, he didn’t say, “Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. And if it’s not possible, how about I drink 70% of it? That’s as far as I’m willing to go. I’ll leave the other 30% for them to drink.” Nor did Jesus say on the cross, “It is finished. At least, 70% is finished, anyway. You need to handle the rest. I’m done.” Instead, he paid the full price, every last bit of punishment God was owed for our sins.

2. If we try to split our loyalties, give God a part for the whole, what are we guilty of? (*be specific*) It’s not that we are just guilty of sin, it is that we are guilty of rebelling against and trampling the 1st and greatest commandment which tells us to fear and love God above everything. If we try to split our loyalties and give God a part for the whole, we are not taking God and his word seriously.
3. In Luke 16:13 our Savior says, “No servant can serve two masters. Indeed, either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon (*mammon means “earthly stuff”*).” Explain the problem/impossibility of trying to serve the two masters mentioned in this verse. The two masters of God and stuff are completely opposite. One directs and pulls in one direction and the other directs and pulls in the opposite direction. A servant trying to serve two masters like that will find it impossible to do so with equal love and respect because they cannot go in both directions. You see, the goal of the world is to use stuff to serve self. The goal of the believer is to glorify God. Those are opposite.

PAGE 5

1. The sermon devotion speaks about chasing the “American dream.” What is your version of that “dream?” Honestly evaluate if and when chasing that “dream” has come before chasing faithfulness to God. Then do as the devotion suggests – repent and change. Consider/discuss ways that you can and will change. The ways in which you answer and discuss this question will vary. You will have to do it yourself. But please, don’t pass it by too quickly. Consider it in depth. That’s what meditating on the word and letting it speak to us means.
2. Consider/discuss ways that a person might compromise to avoid hardships that come from one’s connection to Christ. Honestly evaluate which ones you have done. Then do as the devotion suggests – repent and change. Consider/discuss ways that you can and will change. Answers will vary. But here are some thoughts to prime the pump. A person may avoid defending a friend (which Jesus commands us to do) because it might cause us to lose friends. A person may really like a boy or girl, but that boy or girl doesn’t believe in Jesus and has no intention of studying the Bible. A person may still go ahead with that relationship and choose earthly joy with that person even though they know it will be detrimental to their own faith. There are a lot of examples that can come from our struggle with our sinful nature. Because we are Christians we fight against that nature, but a compromise would be to give into that temptation or pet sin because it’s just easier than constantly fighting against it. Or what about the compromise that is made when it comes to desires to recreate or do something else vs. hearing the word of God. How often don’t we compromise by saying, “Oh, we’ll go next week, that will be good enough.” There are many more. Don’t pass by this one too quickly either. Give real consideration to things that you have done.
3. How does a Christian chase faithfulness to God? This is done first and foremost by making time spent in God’s word our number one priority. Jesus said to Martha and to us – the word is the one thing needful. But it isn’t just a matter of being in the word for the sake of being in the word. We want to be in the word and “inwardly digest” what it is that we are hearing. We want it to touch and affect faith. We can become Pharisaic in our mindset if we think that all we need to do is sit in church and that is all faithfulness is. It needs to touch our heart. Change our thinking. Affect the way we live. That too is part of faithfulness to God and chasing faithfulness. This also includes a daily “regimen” of confession and repentance. Spiritual life starts with this recognition of our sin and guilt and our desperate need for a Savior, and then continues by finding and receiving and believing that we have full forgiveness in his merits and sacrifice.

PAGE 8

1. Below are the words (or a form of the words) spoken at your confirmation. Take time to reflect on them and the promise you made. Consider where you have fallen short. Ask God for help.

Minister: Do you intend faithfully to conform all your life to the teachings of God's Word, to be faithful in the use of the Word and sacrament, and in faith and action remain true to God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – as long as you live?

Response: I do, and I ask God to help me.

2. Consider/discuss what amazes you most about God's faithfulness to you. There are no shortages of answers that can be given to this question. I can't list them all. But I'll consider some that amaze me. It amazes me that God hasn't given up on me, even after all the times I have fallen short with THE SAME EXACT SINS. It amazes me that God would stick with his plan through this world's history when you consider what his people, people in general, and we ourselves have done. It amazes me that God would do this when he needs nothing from me. It amazes me that this is all so I can be with him forever in heaven.

PAGE 9

1. Why is it so important to remember that the things of this world are temporary? Remembering that the things of this world are temporary helps us to see how foolish it is to chase after them at the expense of our relationship with our Savior. It reminds us of how dumb it is to make the things of this world our priority. For as one person once said, "I've never seen a hearse with a luggage rack." Or similarly, "I've never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul." We can't take the things of this world with us. As the old T-shirt said, "The one who dies with the most toys...still dies." So, remember that the things of this life are temporary and set your mind and hearts on things above.
2. This devotion speaks about the joy and bliss of heaven. Sometimes the question is asked, "Will we still have the same relationships in heaven with those whom we know in this life?" How should we answer? There are two sides to the answer to this question. First, consider Jesus' answer to the Sadducees in Matthew 22:23ff: "That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?" Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." The Sadducees neither believed in the eternity of the soul nor in the resurrection of the body. They tried to ridicule any idea of eternal life by raising the question of a woman who was married to seven husbands, all who preceded her in death. Whose wife will she be? they wondered. As part of his reply to their question, Jesus said, "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven." From those words it seems best to say that marriage and family life as we know it in this life will not continue. While that may sadden us, remember that one of the reasons we rejoice in family in this sinful world is that family surrounds us with people who care deeply about us in an uncaring world. In heaven the family of God functions in perfect love for every family member. We don't really suffer a loss at all but a gain as we enjoy the perfect companionship of the full family of God. In other words, our concept of a joyful reunion in heaven is not too large. It is too small when we think of it only as the reunion of husband and wife or the reunion of dear friends we have known here. We will be reunited with all believers who will have perfect and full love for us in heaven.

But there is another side to this question. Even though marriage and family life as we know them cease in eternity, that does not mean that we suddenly lose our identity or our significance to others. For instance, consider Jesus' transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared with him on the mountain. Although they were living in heaven, they had not ceased being Moses and Elijah. They had not lost their identities or life

histories when they entered heaven. So too it we will remain who we are – and so will those we have known.

Part of the problem we struggle with here is the fact that heaven is so wondrous that we have no concrete experience or words from this life to fully describe it. Paul had that difficulty after he was given a vision of the glory of heaven: “He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted [which could also be translated: “things that it is not possible...”] to tell” (2 Corinthians 12:4). Rest assured, not one of us will be disappointed nor will we ask for a refund of the price Christ paid to win heaven for us!

3. Is faithfulness to Christ worth the trouble it brings? Yes. When we know that these sufferings are for the sake of Christ who bought us and made us his heirs, they are worth the trouble. We confess Christ even in the face of trouble for his name because we belong to Christ and look forward to an inheritance that no suffering, no evil, no attack can take away from us. Heaven makes it all worth it!

PAGE 10

1. In this devotion we hear that we are to set our hearts on things above. It echoes the words of Colossians 3:1,2 – “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” What does it mean to set your heart/mind on things above? The terms “things above” and “earthly things” do not refer simply to life in heaven and life on earth. Paul is not saying that Christians should occupy themselves only with the heavenly and spiritual to the total exclusion of anything earthly and physical. The contrast here is between those things that are fitting for a person whose life here on earth is only a prelude to the eternal life waiting for him in heaven and those things which are not. “Earthly things” are those thoughts, words and actions which are a reflection of their former life without God and without hope. Paul encourages the Colossians to concentrate and focus on those things that reflect their new life in Christ and to turn away from everything else.
2. You have come to the end of these 10 devotions. Let’s start where we began. Now after having done these devotions, how would you answer the question: What do you want to do when you grow up? As you discuss or consider this question, my prayer is that the first things that come to mind are thing that deal with your relationship with Jesus. But don’t stop there. Also discuss how our everyday Christian lives, and the things we do in our lives, need to have Christ at its center too. I want to have Christ at the center when I am carrying out my vocation at work, home or school. I want Christ at the center when I am looking for a spouse. I want Christ at the center when I choose a college to go to, when I consider the employment I will pursue, when I consider the recreation I will do and how often. I want Christ and my relationship with him to influence everything I do in my life.