Determination

What kind of determination is important to have?

BIBLE READING: 1 Samuel 7:3-17
KEY BIBLE VERSE: Samuel said to all the people of Israel, "If you are really serious about wanting to return to the LORD, get rid of your foreign gods and your images of Ashtoreth. Determine to obey only the LORD; then he will rescue you from the Philistines." (1 Samuel 7:3)

Determine to obey God. Samuel told the people they had to "determine to obey only the Lord." To determine means to set your mind on a course of action. This kind of commitment means that you don't back out, but you work toward the goal you have set. If you have made a decision to follow God, don't allow excuses, distractions, or second thoughts to deter you from your goal.

KEY BIBLE VERSE: As the time drew near for his return to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51)

Determine to follow Jesus in spite of obstacles. Although Jesus knew he would face persecution and death in Jerusalem, he was determined to go there. That kind of resolve should characterize our life too. When God gives us a course of action, we must move steadily toward our destination, no matter what potential hazards await us there.
DEVOTION
What kind of devotion should we have towards God?

BIBLE READING: Exodus 33:7-23
KEY BIBLE VERSE: Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Take these people up to the Promised Land.' But you haven't told me whom you will send with me. You call me by name and tell me I have found favor with you. Please, if this is really so, show me your intentions so I will understand you more fully and do exactly what you want me to do. Besides, don't forget that this nation is your very own people." (Exodus 33:12-13)

We should treat God as our closest friend. God and Moses talked face to face in the Tent of Meeting, just as friends do. Why did Moses find such favor with God? It certainly was not because he was perfect, gifted, or powerful. Rather, it was because God chose Moses, and Moses in turn relied wholeheartedly on God's wisdom and direction. Friendship with God was a true privilege for Moses, out of reach for the other Hebrews. But it is not out of reach for us today. Jesus called his disciples—and, by extension, all of his followers—his friends (John 15:15). He has called you to be his friend. Will you trust him as Moses did?

BIBLE READING: 1 Chron. 28:1-10
KEY BIBLE VERSE: Solomon, my son, get to know the God of your ancestors. Worship and serve him with your whole heart and with a willing mind. For the LORD sees every heart and understands and knows every plan and thought. If you seek him, you will find him. But if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. (1 Chron. 28:9)

Our devotion to God should be wholehearted. Nothing can be hidden from God. He sees and understands everything in our heart. David found this out the hard way when God sent Nathan to expose David's sins of adultery and murder (2 Samuel 12). David told Solomon to be completely open with God and dedicated to him. It makes no sense to try to hide any thoughts or actions from an all-knowing God. This should cause us joy, not fear, because God knows even the worst about us and loves us anyway.

BIBLE READING: Mark 15:42-47
KEY BIBLE VERSE: Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus' body was laid. (Mark 15:47)

Even small things can be acts of devotion. These women could do very little. They couldn't speak before the Sanhedrin in Jesus' defense; they couldn't appeal to Pilate; they couldn't stand against the crowds; they couldn't overpower the Roman guards. But they did what they could. They stayed at the cross when the disciples had fled; they followed Jesus' body to the tomb; and they
prepared spices for his body. Because these women used the opportunities they had, they were the first to witness the Resurrection. God blessed their devotion and diligence. As believers, we should take advantage of the opportunities we have and do what we can for Christ, instead of worrying about what we cannot do.

DEDICATION

What does it mean to be dedicated to God?

BIBLE READING: 2 Chron. 7:1-22
KEY BIBLE VERSE: King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. And so the king and all the people dedicated the Temple of God. (2 Chron. 7:5)

God's purposes become our priorities. The temple was dedicated to God, and Solomon and the people prepared to worship him. Dedication means setting apart a place, an object, or a person for an exclusive purpose. The purpose of this dedication was to set apart the temple as a special place to worship God. Today, our bodies are God's temple (2 Cor. 6:16). Solomon's dedication of the temple shows us that we should dedicate ourselves to carry out God's special purpose (Ephes. 1:11-12).

BIBLE READING: Luke 17:7-10
KEY BIBLE VERSE: When you obey me you should say, "We are not worthy of praise. We are servants who have simply done our duty." (Luke 17:10)

Dedication to God is our duty. If we have obeyed God, we have only done our duty. We should regard it as a privilege. Do you sometimes feel that you deserve extra credit for serving God? Remember, obedience is not something extra we do; it is our duty. Jesus is not saying that our service is meaningless or useless, nor is he doing away with rewards. He is attacking unwarranted self-esteem and spiritual pride.

KEY BIBLE VERSE: Jesus told him, "Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62)

Jesus commands our dedication. What does Jesus want from us? Total dedication, not halfhearted commitment. We can't pick and choose among Jesus' ideas and follow him selectively; we have to accept the cross along with the crown, judgment as well as mercy. We must count the cost and be willing to abandon everything else that has given us security. With our focus on Jesus, we should allow nothing to distract us from the manner of living that he calls good and true.
DELEGATION

How does the Bible illustrate the importance of delegation?

BIBLE READING: Exodus 18:1-27
KEY BIBLE VERSE: You're going to wear yourself out—and the people, too. This job is too heavy a burden for you to handle all by yourself. (Exodus 18:18)

Moses had to learn to delegate. Moses was spending so much time and energy hearing the Hebrews' complaints that he could not get to other important work. Jethro suggested that Moses delegate most of this work to others and focus his efforts on jobs only he could do. People in positions of responsibility sometimes feel they are the only ones who can do necessary tasks, but others are capable of handling part of the load. Delegation relieved Moses' stress and improved the quality of the government. It helped prepare the Israelites for the system of government later set up in Canaan. Proper delegation can multiply your effectiveness while giving others a chance to grow.

DIRECTION

What are our best sources for direction in life?

BIBLE READING: Psalm 25:1-22
KEY BIBLE VERSE: He leads the humble in what is right, teaching them his way. (Psalm 25:9)

If we will humble ourselves before him, God will guide us. We are bombarded today with relentless appeals to go in various directions. Television advertising alone places hundreds of options before us, in addition to appeals made by political parties, cults, false religions, and dozens of other groups. Numerous organizations, including Christian organizations, seek to motivate us to support a cause. Add to that the dozens of decisions we must make concerning our job, our family, our money, our society, and we become desperate for someone to show us the right way. If you find yourself pulled in several directions, remember that God teaches the humble his way.
BIBLE READING: Matthew 2:1-12
KEY BIBLE VERSE: When it was time to leave, they went home another way, because God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod. (Matthew 2:12)

Following Jesus involves taking a completely new direction in life. After finding Jesus and worshiping him, the magi were warned by God not to return through Jerusalem as they had intended. Finding Jesus may mean that your life must take a different direction, one that is responsive and obedient to God's Word. Are you willing to be led a different way?

BIBLE READING: John 12:12-19
KEY BIBLE VERSE: His disciples didn't realize at the time that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered that these Scriptures had come true before their eyes. (John 12:16)

The longer we know Jesus, the better we will understand his ways. After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples understood for the first time many of the prophecies that they had missed along the way. Jesus' words and actions took on new meaning and made more sense. In retrospect, the disciples saw how Jesus had led them into a deeper and better understanding of his truth. Stop now and think about the events in your life leading up to where you are now. How has God led you to this point? As you grow older, you will look back and see God's involvement more clearly than you do now.

AMEN!