

## Ten Secrets to Lasting Consecration

Have you ever made a promise to the Lord, a deep down, from the core of your being kind of promise to the Lord, and later not keep it? Has it ever seemed to you that at times you feel so close to God, you were like joined to Him at the hip, His second self, and then at other times, He seemed so far away, you began to despair? Have you ever experienced such strong faith you could move mountains with God, and then not long after your faith is so weak you doubt if there even is a God? Can you relate at times to that father in the Bible who wanted so badly for Jesus to heal his son, but in his heart he had a mixture of both belief and unbelief?

If we are honest with each other all of us go through times where we swing from one extreme to another with God. I suppose the real question is not *if* we have experienced these things, but rather what we do about it *when* we experience these things. Since this experience seems so common to man, we're going to spend some time this communion service Sabbath learning about Consecration based on the story of the children of Israel, their flight from Egypt, and their sojourn in the Sinai wilderness. Over the years I have found their wayward journey with God very helpful to keep mine on track. I have identified ten secrets from their story to maintaining a lasting Consecration in our walk with God.

You may recall the children of Israel are in the land of Goshen Egypt, plagues against the Egyptians are happening all around them, but they don't seem to be affected by them directly. But then the tenth plague is about to hit, the one Pharaoh called down upon himself, the one that jeopardized the life of everyone's first born son, it required something from all who would be spared the hardship of losing their child...it required Consecration.

In their Consecration they were to follow very specific ceremonies, rid their house of all leaven...a symbol of sin, slay a lamb and place its blood on the doorposts of their house—an expression of their faith in God's salvation, eat certain foods, not eat others, and be dressed and packed for a journey, because on that night while the first born of unbelieving Egypt were dying, God would emancipate the believing Israelites from hundreds of years of Slavery.

This is the rudimentary workings of Consecration. Consecration isn't about us preparing ourselves for a work we will do. The first secret to a fully consecrated, enduring devotion to God is **(1) It's about us preparing ourselves for a work that God is going to do.** It involves every aspect of our life—diet, what we wear, home life, work life, church life, community life.

The same can be found of the Israelites at the base of Mt. Sinai. The first thing God did was set some boundaries around the base of the mountain. That's the second secret—**(2) respect God's boundaries.** God is going to have to call the shots when it comes to our consecration to Him. He was preparing the people for something He was about to do, and in Exodus 19:5, 6 He unveils what that was.

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

**(3) The third secret of lasting Consecration is understanding clearly what God's purpose is for you.** God wanted to make the Israelites a kingdom of priests...all of them, every tribe, every person. And the whole nation was to consecrate themselves to this purpose of God. The Israelites seemed to be in favor of God's plan for in Exodus 19:8, they responded...

“All that the Lord has spoken we will do.”

**(4) This is the fourth secret to lasting Consecration—agreeing with God. (5) The fifth secret is preparation.** We must prepare ourselves to be consecrated to God's purposes in our life. Exodus 19:10, 11.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.”

Notice, the anticipation is on what God is going to do. All eyes are upon Him. And they are getting ready for that by consecrating themselves. The instruction was to wash their clothes. They did this, but there was more to this instruction than just doing laundry. Their clothes are a symbol of something. Clean clothes represent clean souls, pure hearts, unsullied characters. **(6) Consecration involves removing those things from our lives that are not like God.** And this is the sixth secret.

For the seventh secret, you have to remember what we read about God wanting all Israel to be a kingdom of priests. At first the people agreed, but what did they say to that after seeing the mountain ablaze and shaking by the presence of God? Look at Exodus 20:18, 19...

Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

And here is a very important lesson for us all. God does not want the closest of relationships with Moses only. **(7) The seventh secret is realizing that He wants the closest of relationships with you personally.** A kingdom of priests requires we all consecrate ourselves to God personally, because he wants to work through us all. When the Israelites backed away from this part of their Consecration, things went south real quickly.

When the law was finally given on Mt. Sinai, the people should have been ready for anything. But something happened with Moses on Sinai. What happened? Delay. Moses was called up with

God on that mountain which was ablaze with the fire of God for 40 days! And when Moses finally did come down, Ten Commandments in hand, what did he find? Were the people still fully consecrated to the Lord? No they were not. They were worshipping a golden calf, the god in Egyptian thought that ferries you into the afterlife. In other words after 40 days, they suspected Moses was dead, and that God was coming after them next.

They were consecrating themselves to that which was not God, rather than consecrating themselves to the one true God. How quickly they stopped following the Lord's instruction, and how quickly they resorted to that which was familiar to them, rather than risk the unknown with the One who had rescued them from Egyptian slavery. **(8) The eighth secret to lasting Consecration is this: if we start sliding in our commitments to God, we must stop the slip ASAP**, because the downward spiral once started works very fast.

Another step away from their Consecration was when they began complaining to Moses, or complaining about Moses, or seeking to replace Moses with "better" leaders. Complaining takes the things God was doing through His chosen instruments, and makes them into an altogether human endeavor. By not recognizing that God is at work in his leaders the unconsecrated heart begins to think any leader will do; especially if it's not the one we currently have! **(9) The ninth secret to Consecration is respecting God's appointed leaders, and cooperating with them.**

**(10) The final secret I have to share for a fully consecrated life to God is being willing to receive instruction from God**, even if it goes against your cherished beliefs. God wishes to instruct us. There are things in our belief system that are not of God, and He wants to correct them. But oh how hard this is! I have seen it time and again. God's people assemble to witness the mighty acts of God, to celebrate His goodness among His people, and to receive His instruction, everything is going swimmingly until God's messenger says something to cross the people's cherished views. Consecration is about surrender to God. It is taking the posture of a learner, a receiver, and letting God be the giver of instruction. It's about listening, accepting, agreeing with God.

I have been given a message to bear to the church in Prescott in our near future. This message will come straight from God's word. For some this message will be corrective. For others deeply affirming. Some will find it very hard to swallow, and will criticize the messenger. Others will recognize it by its true source. But I have been instructed it will do none of us any good unless we consecrate ourselves first wholly to God. I cannot preach it unless we take the posture of a learner, a receiver of God's instruction. So this Sabbath, in anticipation of that Sabbath we are taking the time to learn about Consecration.

1. Every time we meet we need to anticipate God is going to show up and do something truly divine among us.
2. We need to respect God's boundaries, His words.
3. We need to understand clearly what God's purpose is for us personally.
4. We need to come into agreement with God, and His purposes for us.

5. We need to prepare ourselves for that purpose.
6. We need to remove those things from our lives that are not like God.
7. We need to realize He wants the closest of relationships with us personally.
8. If we start sliding in our Consecration, we need to stop the slip ASAP.
9. We need to respect God's appointed leaders and cooperate with them.
10. We need to be willing to receive instruction from God.

Today as we celebrate communion, my prayer for us all is that it will begin a period of renewal for us as we consecrate ourselves to God. As we wash one another's feet allow those things that are unlike God, ungodly attitudes, spiritual pride, divisive expressions, undercurrents of hostility toward established leaders, whatever your things is, let them be washed from us. Take this time with God personally, go deeper than you ever have before. God has more for you, embrace it. Agree with it, do it. If you lack courage ask for it. If the idea of going all the way with God petrifies you, plead with God for the perseverance to stick it out with God until you emerge from that fear with a spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind.

I close today's message with a statement I like to refer to often that summarizes these thoughts very well. It is found in *The Desire of Ages*, p. 250.

In the apostles of our Lord there was nothing to bring glory to themselves. It was evident that the success of their labors was due only to God. The lives of these men, the characters they developed, and the mighty work that God wrought through them, are a testimony to what He will do for all who are teachable and obedient. He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. If men will endure the necessary discipline, without complaining or fainting by the way, God will teach them hour by hour, and day by day. He longs to reveal His grace. If His people will remove the obstructions, He will pour forth the waters of salvation in abundant streams through the human channels. If men in humble life were encouraged to do all the good they could do, if restraining hands were not laid upon them to repress their zeal, there would be a hundred workers for Christ where now there is one.

I am so ready for this. A kingdom of priests. A people devoted, wholly consecrated to God. All of us yielded to His Holy Spirit, ready to obey His word, and accomplish His purposes for us, no matter the cost. Enduring God's corrective discipline without complaint. Led by God personally hour by hour, day by day. Encouraged to do all the good we can do, no limits to our usefulness. Can you join me in a prayer of that kind of enduring Consecration? Will you join me as we start this deeper experience with God? This is what God wants for us all. Every man, woman, and child here today.