

Digests

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Introduction

¹ God loves all people and wants each of us to find joy and satisfaction. ¹ To help us towards that goal, God gave us reason, conscience, and the ability to choose. ¹ Our responsibility is to follow, sincerely, the dictates of that conscience, while respecting the equal privilege of others to do the same. ¹ We are accountable to God for our choices. ¹ Each of us can have a personal relationship with God. ¹ God communicates with each of us as needed. ¹ God sends messengers to different times, places, and cultures to guide us. Studying the messages intended for us can enlighten our understanding. ¹ God knows the vastness of human diversity. Just as a skilled optometrist prescribes eyeglasses to compensate for a patient's shortcomings, God guides us to a prescription that's optimized for our spiritual growth. Our prescription

may differ from, or coincide with, that of our peers. ¹ Because of this diversity, a community of believers can strengthen and inspire one another. ¹ Details about God's nature and methods are largely a distraction from the proper focus of our lives: a lifelong migration towards joy through our personal choices.

¹ While striving to live the preceding principles, I felt guided to prayerfully undertake the actions below. The results are for my own benefit and likely won't benefit others in the same way.

¹ Create a prioritized list of essential commandments to help me focus on what matters most and to resolve conflicts that may arise between those commandments. This became the Digest of Priorities.

¹ Write pairs of essential virtues whose opposing demands I have to balance in my own life. This became the Digest of Virtues.

¹ Try different methods of prayer, listening carefully to understand which are most effective at strengthening my relationship with God. Codify those practices and observe them faithfully. This became the Digest of Prayer.

¹ Record the parables that God has used to clarify my understanding of certain principles. This became the Digest of Parables.

¹ Study the messages of those who are widely considered to be prophets of God. Abridge those messages by selecting the teachings that are the most practical and important for guiding my life. This became the Messages. I refer to them as A Message through Moses, A Message through Jesus, etc.

Priorities

¹ You have reason and conscience to govern your choices. ² These priorities are a guide to keep conscience within proper bounds. ³ They are listed by decreasing importance. ⁴ Try to observe all the priorities. ⁵ If two must conflict, prefer the more important one.

⁶ Only use compulsion to stop an immediate threat to life, property, or free will. ⁷ Do worthwhile things that are difficult for you. ⁸ Choose what you will have at the expense of what you won't. ⁹ Give no importance to that which has none. ¹⁰ Tend to your own affairs.

¹¹ Be honest. ¹² Make promises sparingly. ¹³ Keep your word. ¹⁴ Make amends. ¹⁵ Be humble. ¹⁶ Be patient. ¹⁷ Be grateful.

¹⁸ Take care of yourself. ¹⁹ Be sparing and cautious with behaviors that might be addictive. ²⁰ Spend some time each

day quiet and alone.

²¹ Respect others. ²² Speak kindly and quietly. ²³ Maintain a few strong relationships. ²⁴ Maintain stable, long-term relationships with your spouse(s). ²⁵ Obtain consent from your spouse(s) for all sexual relations. ²⁶ Have children with your spouse(s).

²⁷ Pray daily. ²⁸ Study the Digests and Messages daily, maintaining a healthy balance between literal and figurative interpretation.

²⁹ Avoid contention. ³⁰ Seek moderation in all things. ³¹ Respect property, yours and other's. ³² Forgive wrongs, real and perceived.

³³ Maintain political neutrality. ³⁴ Obey the laws of the land.

³⁵ Acquire useful knowledge. ³⁶ Engage skillfully in an occupation, trade, or craft. ³⁷ Make an honest profit. ³⁸ Use debt rarely and sparingly, and pay it back quickly. ³⁹ Ten percent of your annual expenditures should be

donations. ⁴⁰ Keep a modest reserve of useful assets. ⁴¹ Make a will to peacefully disperse your assets at your death.

⁴² Smile. ⁴³ Serve anonymously, without remuneration.

⁴⁴ Maintain your body in strength, speed, flexibility, and balance. ⁴⁵ Exert yourself physically six days in seven.

⁴⁶ Devote one day in seven to spiritual growth.

⁴⁷ Improve your surroundings. ⁴⁸ If it can change, it should change occasionally.

Virtues

¹ Every virtue taken to extreme becomes vice. ² The virtues below are listed in pairs. ³ Balance the two virtues in a pair. ⁴ If you're unsure how to balance them, err on the side of the first.

⁵ The pairs are listed alphabetically, with no relative importance intended.

⁶ Companionship and solitude. ⁷ Contentment and ambition. ⁸ Detachment and attachment. ⁹ Evidence and faith. ¹⁰ Flexibility and tenacity. ¹¹ Generosity and frugality. ¹² Holistic and atomistic. ¹³ Innovation and tradition. ¹⁴ Mercy and justice. ¹⁵ Preparation and improvisation. ¹⁶ Scarcity and abundance. ¹⁷ Silence and communication. ¹⁸ Solemnity and humor. ¹⁹ Stability and volatility. ²⁰ Transparency and privacy. ²¹ Work and repose.

Prayer

¹ Offer formal prayer one, two, or three times each day, ² with at least one performed outside. ³ When praying outside, it can be helpful to turn your back towards the approximate location of the sun. ⁴ Formal prayers should be spaced roughly evenly during your waking hours. ⁵ Make your best effort to perform each posture, even if it's not perfect.

⁶ Gratitude: Stand with your eyes closed and your face turned toward the sky until you are tranquil. ⁷ Recite, "God in heaven, I thank you for life, air to breathe, quiet places, and the ability to choose; ⁸ for challenges, work, emotion, and the gift of reason." ⁹ In your own words, express heartfelt gratitude to God.

¹⁰ Confession: Bow, eyes closed, hands on knees, face downward. ¹¹ Recite, "God in heaven, I strive to keep the

Priorities, to balance the Virtues, and to learn from my failures when I don't. ¹² I want to be more faithful. ¹³ I fall short in these ways." ¹⁴ In your own words, confess to God your failures, weaknesses, and ways you need to improve.

¹⁵ Petition: Squat, arms outstretched, hands cupped to form a bowl, your face forward. ¹⁶ Recite, "God in heaven, you have given me a beautiful world to live in, messengers to teach me, and guidance when I ask. ¹⁷ Hear my prayer." ¹⁸ In your own words, request God's guidance in achieving your righteous desires.

¹⁹ Listen: Stand with your face downward. ²⁰ Recite, "God in heaven, you let the sun rise on good and evil people alike. ²¹ You send guidance through a gentle thought, a quiet feeling, or a soft voice. ²² I'm listening." Listen for God's guidance.

²³ Action: Bow, eyes closed, hands on

knees, face downward. ²⁴ Recite, “God in heaven, the greatest gift brings no profit when left unused. ²⁵ I thank you for giving me guidance. ²⁶ I plan to act.” ²⁷ In your own words, tell God how you will act on the guidance you have received.

Parables

^{1:1} An optometrist arrived in a village. ² The residents each asked him for help correcting their vision. ³ He skillfully crafted glasses for each patient; ⁴ a different prescription according to each person’s needs.

^{1:5} Some people discovered that the optometrist had given them the same prescription as a neighbor. These people could swap glasses with one another and still see clearly. ⁶ However, swapping glasses with others blurred and

distorted their vision. ⁷ Those with identical prescriptions gathered together, saying among themselves, ⁸ “The optometrist gave us the true prescription. Other prescriptions are confusing and mistaken. If everyone were to wear our prescription, they would see clearly just like we do.”

^{1:9} So it is with the religions of the world.

^{2:1} A young child asks his mother, “How is a baby made?” ² Knowing the child’s rudimentary understanding, she responds, ³ “The father places a seed in the mother’s belly. The mother nourishes that seed and it grows into a baby.”

^{2:4} So it is when God teaches us.

^{3:1} A king had two vaults filled with treasure, each protected by its own lock. ² The king said that whoever opened a vault could have the treasure inside. ³ Two men sought the treasure.

3:4 The first man turned the dials of the lock. ⁵ He listened carefully as the mechanism moved inside. ⁶ He noticed patterns of sound and vibration within the dials. ⁷ After many days of persistence and study, he discovered the combination and unlocked the vault.

3:8 The second man offered to be the king's servant. ⁹ He listened carefully to the king's wishes, and executed them faithfully. ¹⁰ He noticed patterns among the king's requests and anticipated his wishes. ¹¹ After many days of persistence and service, the second man asked the king for the combination and received it.

3:13 Both men received treasure. ¹⁴ So it is with knowledge.

4:1 There were two lakes. ² The first lake said to himself, "I will retain every drop of water that flows into me so that I can be great." ³ His waters became salty and putrid. ⁴ His fish died

and the plants along his shore wilted.
5 Animals and travelers avoided him.

4:6 The second lake said to himself, "I want to prosper all life on the mountain below me. I will retain a modest pool for myself then allow each drop to pass down the river to those who might use it." 7 His waters became clean and sweet. 8 His fish grew large and the plants along his shore prospered. 9 Animals and travelers came from afar to enjoy his splendor.

4:10 So it is with all assets.

5:1 Rain, freshly fallen from a cloud, is clean and good to drink. 2 As it flows down mountains and across plains, it becomes soiled and bitter. 3 The sun must extract pure water from the sea again, leaving impurities behind, to produce fresh rain once more.

5:4 So it is with messages from heaven.

6:1 A horse, a dolphin, and an eagle each consume their own kind of nour-

ishment, ² and yet each grows to full stature and majesty.

^{6:3} So it is with spirituality.

^{7:1} A child asks his mother, "Please get me a cup from the top shelf." ² The mother reaches the cup for him. ³ A grown man asks his mother, "Please get me a cup from the top shelf." ⁴ She responds, "You can reach it yourself."

^{7:5} So it is with prayer.

^{8:1} A man mixed one measure of sugar and the juice from one lemon into 2,000 measures of water, ² then served it to his guests as lemonade.

^{8:3} So it is with many religions.

^{9:1} A man brought eggs home from the market. ² Upon arriving, he announced, "I brought home one dozen eggs." ³ His wife said, "No you didn't. You brought home twelve individual eggs." ⁴ A son said, "You're both wrong. There are clearly three rows of four eggs each."

⁵ A daughter disagreed, “Not at all. There are actually four columns of three eggs each.”

^{9:6} So it is with discussions about God’s nature and methods.

^{10:1} A man decided to climb a mountain. ² He fixed his gaze permanently on the summit and began hiking. ³ He tripped over unseen rocks at his feet, ⁴ and was unable to reach the mountain top.

^{10:5} Another man chose to climb the same mountain. ⁶ He gazed permanently at his feet, to avoid the errors of the first man, and began hiking. ⁷ Without tripping once, he wandered off into a valley, ⁸ and was unable to reach the mountain top.

^{10:9} So it is when balancing virtues.

^{11:1} A man noticed a few small pieces of a jigsaw puzzle resting on a table. ² He wanted to assemble the new puzzle, but there weren’t enough pieces to

complete the task. He also didn't know how the puzzle should look when it was finished.

^{11:3} From time to time a new piece would appear on the table, but there still weren't enough to guess the puzzle's final form. ⁴ One day, a sketch of the finished puzzle appeared next to the scattered pieces. ⁵ The man began to assemble what he had only to realize that some pieces were still missing. ⁶ He returned each day, sometimes to find a new piece, sometimes to find an old piece that had been accidentally bumped loose, and sometimes to find no changes at all. ⁷ In time, all the pieces arrived and he gathered the puzzle together into its beautiful, complete form.

^{11:8} So it is with personal revelation.