

## Devotion #6 - Put Of Falsehood

*Psalms 101:6-7 (NIV)*

*"My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me. No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence."*

The other day my wife was helping my 3 yr. old son put a new message on our home answering machine. She told him what to say, and then he tried to repeat it. He began by saying, "We're not home right now and I hope you leave a message." He hesitated, and then quickly corrected himself by saying, "Because we are home right now." After pausing again, he continued with, "No... actually we're not home right now...we're home right now, but actually we're not home right now!" Finally he just said, "So I'm just gonna leave you a message!" It was priceless. He wanted to listen to the instructions of his mother, but he stumbled when he was told to repeat something that he thought was wrong. My little guy just couldn't wrap his brain around the concept of saying something that was not true! In the today's culture, lies are so common place that they have become a part of life. People are comfortable telling half-truths, giving misinformation, not responding when they know the truth, or just misrepresenting who they are or what they do. *Ephesians 4:25* says that, "...each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor." What is coming out of your mouth? Do you relish the truth or are you prone to deception? In the same way that my son immediately corrected himself, we should be quick to acknowledge any attempt we make at falsehood. The passage you just read in the book of Psalms makes a pretty strong statement, "*No one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.*" It also states in *Proverbs 19:5* that, "*A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will not go free.*" The reality is that they are consequences when you attempt to deceive people. If you catch yourself being dishonest, humble yourself and make it right. If you don't, you'll soon develop a habit of lying which will rob you. Don't forfeit the blessings of God for the road of falsehood. When you go the extra mile to speak the truth, God's light can shine brightly through you to a world that is full of lies.

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## Devotion #7 - Restless

*Proverbs 19:23 (NIV)*

*“The fear of the LORD leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.”*

I was sitting on the couch late last night visiting with my wife when I suddenly heard this loud bang in the kitchen. I got up to find my 3 yr. old son underneath the kitchen table, holding on to the legs of a stool that he had just tipped over, with a very scared look on his face. My son has been very restless as of late, so he just gets out of his bed. He'll hide in his closet, underneath the furniture in the living room, or he will just tiptoe around the house until he finds a place that he thinks is fun. Whenever we find him, he always says, "I just wanted to ask you something!" He then proceeds to take a few minutes to try and think of some random question that he can ask - obviously trying to justify his disobedience! His adventure this time seemed like a good idea, at least until he got caught and hurt. Once again it started when he got antsy and didn't want to stay in the place that he was supposed to be, namely his bed. He chose to disobey, and paid the price. I'm pretty sure that my son is not the only person who gets restless though. Are you getting tired of the place where God has placed you in life? The passage you just read in the book of Proverbs states that the fruit of obedience is contentment and avoiding needless troubles. Simply put, when you maintain a healthy respect for God and His plan for you life, you will find yourself content and at rest in Him. It's when you take your eyes off Jesus that you get yourself in trouble. In *Genesis 4:12*, we read that one of the consequences for Cain's sin was that he would, "...*be a restless wanderer on the earth.*" Obviously, being restless is not what God desires for you. When you allow yourself to become unsettled with God's plans or provision, you are opening the door for the enemy. If you are wandering around aimlessly, then it's time to stop and get alone with God. Ask Him where you are supposed to be, and then settle in. Don't keep looking and longing for something new and exciting, instead make the most of the opportunities right before you. You'll never possess everything God has for you if you keep running, so it's time to stop and grow where God has planted you.

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## Devotion #8 - What Do You Really Want?

*Psalms 84:1-2 (NIV)*

*"How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."*

I was laying on my youngest daughter's bed last night helping her register a Webkinz on-line that she had received as a gift. As we were visiting and playing, one of my older daughters came in and said, "I really want to save up for my own computer!" That prompted my five year old to respond with, "I'm going to save up for a cellphone, a computer and an ipod!" I just sat there shocked that my preschooler was thinking about all these high-tech gadgets, let alone trying to figure out how she was going to purchase them. At such a young age, the worldly pursuit of things has already begun. She has set her heart and sights on things that have no real value. It says in *Proverbs 13:12* that, "*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.*" Obviously longing or wanting something is a natural process, the question though is what are you longing for? Feeding your flesh on the things of the world can really leave you unfilled and heartsick. However, true life and fulfillment will come out of a longing for intimacy with the Lord. David in the book of Psalms had created such a hunger and thirst for God, that even his flesh was crying out for time with Him. What is your flesh crying out for on a daily basis? What you surround yourself with, and what you feed yourself, will determine what your flesh craves. The danger is that if you don't intentionally fuel your desire for God, then the world around you will give you something to chase after. With that thought in mind, the most important decision you can make today is to determine what it is in life that you really want. Once you have that established, do whatever it takes to make it a reality!

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## Devotion #9 - So Much Love, So Much Hate

*Matthew 10:21-22 (MSG)*

*“When people realize it is the living God you are presenting and not some idol that makes them feel good, they are going to turn on you, even people in your own family. There is a great irony here: proclaiming so much love, experiencing so much hate! But don’t quit. Don’t cave in. It is all well worth it in the end.”*

As we are approaching Easter, it’s hard for me as a Christian to not think about the price that Jesus paid for me. I had just finished preaching about that subject at youth group when this question came up, “What part of the crucifixion process do you think was the hardest for Jesus?” After discussing it briefly, and then pondering it for the last couple of days, I believe the answer is found in *Luke 23:18*. It says that, “*At that, the crowd went wild: ‘Kill him! Give us Barabbas!’*” Jesus had spent His life loving and helping people, trying to lead them to God, but in the end they turned on Him. The reality is that some of the very people who had praised Him as King a week earlier, as He entered Jerusalem, were now saying that they wanted Him crucified. Actually, they were stating that it would be better to let a murderer go than to release Him. After doing so much good for people, those words of rejection must have gone deep into Jesus’ heart. To be verbally attacked and so misunderstood - that’s heartbreaking! What His physical body went through was horrible, but I can’t even begin to fathom the emotional pain that He experienced on the way to the cross. Have you ever been misunderstood or not received when you tried to lovingly share the love of God with someone? The passage you just read in the book of Matthew is part of Jesus’ warnings to those who are going to go out and preach the Truth. People will turn on you, because not everyone is ready to receive the message. If you have been rejected, mislabelled or even attacked because of your love for God, you’re not alone. The most important thing to remember is that it’s not you they are rejecting, it’s Jesus. It’s pretty obvious that the Bible isn’t always a “feel good” message, and people usually don’t like to face the truth, so don’t let their reactions stop you - just keep on living, loving and preaching. Be the salt and light that God has called you to be. In the same way that Jesus never quit, allow the Holy Spirit to pull you through. In the end, you’ll realize that the momentary rejection and heartache you experienced was well worth it!

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## Devotion #10 - Say "NO" To Yourself

Luke 9:23-24 (NLT)

*"Then he said to the crowd, 'If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.'"*

Our church family is currently in the middle of a 21 day fast. The goal is to refrain from worldly pleasures so that we can spend more time delighting ourselves in the Lord. My wife and I made some personal commitments for the three weeks, but we also decided along with our children to fast pop and candy. It's been so awesome to watch my 3 young girls make daily decisions that put their flesh down. They have gone to birthday parties, received candy at school, gone out to dinner, and had junk food offered to them time and time again. Despite all that, they have maintained their commitment to the Lord. It hasn't been easy for them, but they are learning to turn from their selfish ways. The first day or two into the fast they were constantly whining and complaining, but now they have become keenly aware of their agreement and are honoring it. It's wonderful to see the results. Up to this point in their lives they haven't really ever purposed to deny themselves anything, so that is why it was kind of rough at first. Jesus responds to a question about fasting in *Mark 2:19-20* by saying, *"Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. They can't fast while the groom is with them. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast."* Jesus is stating that while He is gone, fasting will be a characteristic of His followers. With that thought in mind, when was the last time you gave something up for the Lord? Are you dying to yourself daily, or is your old nature flourishing? If you aren't purposing to say no to yourself, then you're probably struggling with your flesh. To really find out how alive your carnal nature is, just start saying "no" to yourself. Remember that Jesus said specifically that His followers *"...will fast."* So why not start developing that attribute. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what consumes your thoughts and time, and then give it up for a season, or maybe even forever. When you start crucifying your flesh and living a fasted life-style, you will find yourself coming spiritually alive like never before.

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