

## Devotion #11 - Find Your Way Back

Luke 15:20-24 (NIV)

*"So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."*

I ran into the sports store the other day to buy some paintballs. As I grabbed my items, my 3yr old son was at my side, holding my hand. When I went to checkout, I let him walk over to where another little boy was by the front door. I turned around to sign for my credit card, and when I turned back, he was gone. Immediately I started looking all around the store for him, and in minutes, the manager and a couple store clerks had joined in the search. They paged his name over the intercom system as I anxiously raced around. When I couldn't find him anywhere in the store, I dashed outside to have a look. Across the mall parking lot, a lady standing by my van yelled out, "Are you missing a little boy?" My mind was whirling as I ran over, thankful to find my boy standing by the side door of our van. I picked him up and hugged him. Through his tears, he began explaining how he couldn't find me. One minute he was playing and having fun, and then suddenly he didn't know where I was. When he couldn't see me, he journeyed across the parking lot to the only thing he knew - our van. So many times in life we take our focus off of God and get wrapped up in meaningless pursuits, or we get distracted from what really matters. When this happens, the question shouldn't be, "Why did it happen?" but rather, "What am I going to do about it?" My son did the only he could think of, and ran back out to the van. If you are lost, confused and life seems to be closing in around you, then it's time to find your way back to God. In the same way that the prodigal son went back to his Father, and my son went back to our vehicle, it's time to turn your life back towards Jesus. His unconditional love is ready and available. It says in *Hebrews 8:12*, "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." God's focus isn't punishment, his greatest desire is to be reunited with you. With that thought in mind, what is holding you back? It's time to just let go of everything and run into the open arms of Jesus. After all, there really is no life apart from Him.

Pressing Towards

Danny

## Devotion #12 - Holy Spirit Sensitivity

*Ephesians 4:17-19 (NIV)*

*"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more."*

My wife and I were privileged this past week to pray with another couple to give their lives to Christ. Their zeal for the things of God and the immediate change in their everyday life has been refreshing to watch. The Holy Spirit on the inside of them is alive and extremely sensitive. For example: without any instruction they went on-line and downloaded Christian music to replace what they normally listen to, they began to notice and be uncomfortable when others around them cussed, and they found themselves with an increased hunger for the things of God. My favorite example was when they rented a movie a couple of nights ago. They went in to grab a football movie they had seen previews for, but accidentally grabbed the wrong one. About twenty minutes into the movie, the husband commented to his wife, "Have you noticed that there hasn't been any cussing, nobody is drinking beer and there aren't any hot babes walking around?" They had grabbed a newly released Christian football story instead. The great thing is that they weren't upset, but instead found it to be a wonderful change of pace and enjoyed the show. They were able to recognize within minutes that something was different about the way that movie was made. With their new commitment to God, they are making a conscious effort to allow Him to lead and guide them. Their thinking and understanding is being renewed. Now the same Holy Spirit that is living on the inside of them, is the same Holy Spirit that is on the inside of us. God's principles and standards for living life do not change. That means that if you are allowing yourself to slip back into your old way of life, and are once again comfortable around ungodliness, something is wrong. You must be tuning out the voice of God's Spirit. Paul writes in *Romans 8:6* that, "*The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*" True life and peace can only come when we are sensitive to His leading and allow Him to dictate our choices and actions. As you grow in the your walk with the Lord, your spiritual sensitivity should also be increasing, not decreasing. In the book of Hebrews, chapter 4, it says, "*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.*" Simply put, don't shut out the things of God and allow the things of this world to desensitize you. If you make every effort you can to indulge in God's Word and in His presence, you will find a continual longing for more of Him. So start again today, by making a conscious effort to listen to the Holy Spirit, and then allow Him to guide your steps.

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## Devotion #13 - In The World, But Not Of It

John 15:19 (MSG)

*"If you lived on the world's terms, the world would love you as one of its own. But since I picked you to live on God's terms and no longer on the world's terms, the world is going to hate you."*

I took my wife on a date the other night to a really expensive restaurant. It was so far out of the norm, that we had a hard time even deciding how we were supposed to dress. Once we got to the place, it seemed like we were having one awkward moment after another. For example, when the waiter brought my wife's salad out, we both just stared at this large chunk of uncut lettuce that had dressing poured all over it. Noticing our shock, he asked if there was a problem. My wife said, "I was expecting a normal salad, and I don't think I can eat that!" So we sent it back. Next came our 14-oz. steak that we were going to share. Knowing the price of the meals, I was very nervous when the waiter served us two identical plates of food, each with a very large piece of meat. I nervously told him that there must have been a misunderstanding because we only ordered one steak. He replied with this sarcastic question, "You're not OK with that fact that I took the liberty of splitting your meal?" I quickly apologized, and he informed me that they are not some cheap steak house. I was definitely not feeling any love from the waiter! We were not in our familiar little world, and it really showed. We both just felt like we were out of our element. The Bible says in *1 Peter 2:11* that, *"this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it."* Are you alright just conforming to the world's life-style? Does the world around you just think you are one of them? In the same way my wife and I were having a hard time blending into the fancy restaurant, as a Christian you should have a hard time being comfortable in the world's way of living. The passage you just read out of the book of John gives a pretty easy way to judge your obedience to Christ - do you fit in to the world? Don't take me wrong - I'm not addressing your financial status, but rather your spiritual one. If you are truly living your life in obedience to the Lord's commands, then you are going to stand out in a crowd. If you are really walking out your daily life in obedience to God, you will ruffle some feathers. Your life-style will represent your true convictions. So take a moment and do an analysis of your spiritual status. If your life looks just like others who are living in the world, then it's time for a change. Purpose today to no longer accept the terms or standards that the world has handed you, and start living on God's terms. You are called to be in the world, but definitely should not be of it!

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## Devotion #14 - What's The Big Deal

Romans 2:4-5 (NLT)

*"Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin? But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."*

Our family was sitting down for supper the other night, when my wife and I noticed my 3 yr. old son kinda bouncing in his seat. My wife asked him, "Do you have to go potty?" He responded quickly with a, "No mom!" That statement was followed by a short pause, and then he said in a matter-of-fact way, "I peed in my pants just a little!" My wife immediately responded with the obvious question, "Why?" Without even taking a breath, and still bouncing up and down, he answered, "Because I just wanted to keep eating!" He wasn't embarrassed, ashamed or even uncomfortable - he was just fine sitting there and enjoying his dinner. It was as if he was saying, "So what! What's the big deal? I wanted to keep eating - and that's all that matters!" Needless to say, that attitude was not OK with us. It was a classic example though of how our natural tendency is to ignore what we should be doing, because of how much we are enjoying what we are doing - even when we know it is wrong. Our stubborn flesh will always error on the side of what feels right, instead of what is right. That's the pitfall of sin, it's usually enjoyable - at least until the consequences start coming. Moses understood this principle, because it says in *Hebrews 11:25 (NIV)* that, *"He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time."* Moses wasn't willing to sacrifice for what felt good in the moment. If you struggle with that principle, then please listen again to this strong warning from the book of Romans. It states that if, *"you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself."* Does that statement at all describe your attitude when it comes to the sin in your life? Are you being stubborn? Have you gotten to the point where maybe you are no longer embarrassed, ashamed or even uncomfortable doing what you know is contrary to God's heart? If so, please heed this warning. Make a decision today to repent, so that you can receive His forgiveness and freedom. Don't brush of God's love; instead surrender to it, and experience the long term blessings of obedience. It's not worth settling for the momentary pleasures that in the end, like it or not, are going to be a big deal.

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## Devotion #15 - Obedience

Romans 6:16-18(NLT)

*"Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval. Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you have obeyed with all your heart the new teaching God has given you."*

I was very blessed today when I got a phone call from my oldest daughter who is in 3rd Grade. She was excited about a devotion she had written that she wanted to share with me. Here is an unedited copy of what she wrote:

DEVOTIONS - One night my sister Tessa was not obeying quickly so mom and dad decided that when she doesn't obey quickly she gets a spanking. We were in the car when mom told her that. Then I realized why they were doing that. They were doing it because they love her and because when she is an adult when God tells her something she won't obey quickly. Think about it: Do you obey quickly? If you do obey quickly it is good. But if you don't you should start because it will help you when you are older.

Sincerely Danika Houde age 9

My young daughter was able to see, from her sister's actions, how disobedience can affect a person's life. She was able to identify that a seed of rebellion can produce a life of sin. My young daughter actually grabbed a hold of the truth written in *Colossians 3:20*, "*Children obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*" She was able to connect natural obedience with our willingness to obey God. How well do you walk out in submission to the Holy Spirit who is living on the inside of you? Are you trying to tune into his voice, or are you intentionally blocking Him out? Are you quick to obey, or is it a chore? If obedience is difficult, then look and see if you have been planting seeds of rebellion anywhere. Repent of any disobedience and then work on saying "YES" immediately. Remember, whatever you obey will become your master!

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Danny