

Devotion #16 - Searching For Sin

Psalm 139:23, 24 (NIV)

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

The one thing that really gets under my young son’s skin is when he feels a tag on his clothes. I was in the bathroom tonight with him, and he was wearing some adorable pj’s I had just put on him. He had been walking around in them for awhile when he suddenly turned his head, ever so slightly, and realized that there was a tag on his shirt. He began to scream, “Tag, tag...aaaaahhh....tag, tag!!” It was as if the thing was attacking him. He didn’t stop until I came in with scissors and removed it. The funny thing is that earlier in the week, I had removed the first tag from the same shirt, and intentionally left the second one in place. It took some time, but he finally noticed it was there. It’s become a bit of a routine to search for tags the minute he puts his clothes on. Imagine for a moment though, if you maintained that same awareness when it comes to sin in your life. What if you were constantly monitoring your daily actions, looking and checking for sin. And then, if you noticed there was sin present, didn’t stop until it was completely removed. It says in *Hebrews 12:1* that we are supposed to, *“throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.”* Unlike the tag that is manufactured to remain on clothing, we are supposed to get rid of the sin we find in our life. When was the last time you allowed the Holy Spirit to give you an honest update of your spiritual condition? Why not take some time today, and do a little searching? If you find anything that would be offensive to the Lord, just ask Him for forgiveness, and He will remove it. Until you get rid of the sin that is holding you back, you won’t be able to live in the freedom God offers, so don’t waste another moment.

Pressing Towards

Danny

Devotion #17 - A Heart To Give

Acts 2:44-47 (NIV)

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

I just had a major surgery that has left me with a lot of limitations for a season of my life, and because of that I have become child #5 for my wife to take care of. Now as amazing as she is, it would be even more overwhelming without all the help from our church family. The past two weeks have been made so much easier by our family and friends that we worship and serve alongside on a weekly basis. We have had so much help, encouragement and support that it is almost overwhelming. The reality is that we aren't special, we are simply a healthy part of a local body of believers who have a heart to give. What a joy to be surrounded by people who truly have a desire to be used by God and pour into others. There was another young couple that just started coming to our church a few weeks earlier, that were at the hospital at the same time and were going through some major surgery as well. I watched as our friends in the Lord gathered around them to be a blessing. You see it's not about giving to the preacher or to the popular people, it's about giving to "anyone" as they have a need. It says in *2 Corinthians 9:11* that, *“You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.”* We are blessed so that we can be a blessing. The more we have, the more we should be giving. Why? Because it brings glory to God and it is the kind of selfless act that begins to change the way we live. That leaves us with a few questions to ponder. Are you giving of your time, money and resources to minister to others in the church? Is your heart consumed with a desire to give? When letting go of your time and money is hard, this world has too much control over your life. Every time you purpose to give and help someone, you are breaking free from the selfish mind set that the world creates. Don't forget, the very nature and character of Jesus Christ is to give, so if we want to be like Him, we must become givers. Purposing to give is not a normal way of thinking, but it is a godly way. So look around your church and find out who has some needs. Schedule your life, and make decisions that will ensure you always have enough time and resources to be a blessing. When you do this, not only will the church grow, but your love for people will greatly increase as well.

Pressing Towards

Danny Houde

Devotion #18 - It's Not Fair

Exodus 16:2,3 (NIV)

"In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.'"

I had the non-pleasurable experience of spending last night surrounded by the whines of my 4-year old daughter. She is the cutest little girl, but was kind of stuck in a cranky rut all evening. She would get all worked up by comparing herself to the other kids. She would make statements like, "It's not fair!", "I need somebody to sit with me too!", "How come he gets to watch a movie?", "Why does she get to play on the computer?". And the last one of the evening was, "How come I have to be the first one in bed?" Now the answer to that final disgruntled question was a no-brainer, especially based on her attitude and tears all night. The simple truth of the situation was that she was choosing to be discontent. She was comparing what she got to do with everything all three of her siblings were doing. Her little mind couldn't grasp any of the natural reasons for the circumstances like: age, gender, homework, attitude, naps or anything else. It was just flat out jealousy over what everybody else was allowed to do. As I laid next to her in bed, my mind was whirling as I thought of how we still have the tendency to fall into the same trap. We look at other peoples' opportunities, cars, talents, friends, life-styles and then we whine to God like He is not treating us fairly. We look at what we don't have or aren't doing, instead of being thankful for what He has provided. In *1 Corinthians the 3rd chapter*, Paul speaks strongly to the believers as he says, *"You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires? You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord."* He is saying that jealousy and discontentment should not be in the character of a follower of Christ. In the passage you read in Exodus, we see God's chosen people who have forgotten all that God has done for them. They had started looking back to Egypt and what they used to have, and the result was whining and complaining. They had taken their eyes off the Lord and were looking at things from a natural standpoint. The moment we start looking at what others have or do, we will lose our peace. True maturity is understanding that God has a plan for your life, and that He will take care of you. If you will stay focused on your blessings, you'll have an attitude of gratitude and joy will follow. Discontentment is contagious, so don't pass it on. Take your eyes off others, and choose to fix them on Christ. *Psalms 34:10* encourages us by saying that, *"...those who seek the Lord lack no good thing."* The reality is that you aren't missing out, Jesus is everything you need!

Pressing Towards

Danny

Devotion #19 -

1 Corinthians 12:12, 13 (NIV)

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

When I was 17 years old, I loaded up my Honda Civic and moved out. I was sick of all the pressure that I thought I had, so I decided to run away to the Rocky Mountains and just enjoy life with no hassles. After 2 days of driving, I ended up in Lake Louise, Alberta. It was late at night, on a long weekend, with my car almost out of gas, in a terrible snow storm that I realized I had left my wallet somewhere in the USA. I slept in the car that night, and when the sun came up and I was out of options - I made a collect phone call. It was the only thing I knew to do when I was stuck in a hard spot, so I called home to my mom. Even in the midst of my rebellion, I understood a little bit about the value of family. My mother was a little shocked at my circumstances. With me being hundreds of miles away, and all the banks and stores closed for the weekend, she was initially at a loss for answers. After some thought, she asked me exactly where I was calling from and then told me not to move because she was sending someone over. I hung up the phone confused, because we didn't know anybody in the area. She then dialed directory assistance and got the numbers of all her “family members” in Banff. She understood that she was a part of the family of God, and so she began calling different churches until somebody agreed to go and pick me up. Within the hour a complete stranger picked me up. He bought me lunch, gave me some money and paid for me to stay a couple of days in the Youth Hostile. I was floored that a complete stranger would do that for me. The reality was that my mother, and her brother in Christ, understood what it meant to become a part of the family of God. Neither of them hesitated in the midst of the circumstances, when they had never even met before. One of the greatest things that happens when you give your life to Christ is that you are adopted into a huge family. Paul goes on to say in verse 27 that, *“...you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”* As a family, there are privileges and there are responsibilities that go along with it. We are supposed to look out for each other and protect one another. Far too often though, we don't value each other and love one another like we should. In *Galatians 6:10* it says, *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”* Are you running from the family like I was, or are you running to help them? When is the last time you sacrificed something for another believer? Can your brothers and sisters count on you? It's time to recognize your role, and start looking for opportunities to do good to those God has placed in your life.

Pressing Towards

Danny

Devotion #20 - It's Time To Stand Up

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 (NIV)

“Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.”

I am more than impressed by how my children are willing to stand-up to things that are contrary to the Word of God. My 9-year old daughter, who is in 3rd grade, was given a small selection of books for her reading assignments. When she began reading one she found cuss words. She immediately brought it to our attention and we made a phone call to the school. Now we choose her books. The other day, she stood up in class and told the school counsellor that she would not watch this teaching video because it had to do with sorcery. She was released from class and told she could sit in the hallway. We got a letter in the mail from the counselor stating how impressed she was with our daughter's convictions and ability to stand up for what she believes - which was actually one of the main points in the video that she was “required” to watch. Why do we make it more difficult than it is. We dictate the role that society has in our lives. If my daughters can be bold in their public schools, than surely we should be able to stand up in a crowd as well. You must have a solid foundation to stand on though - so if you aren't controlling what goes on in the privacy of your own home, don't think you'll have the boldness to do it anywhere else. I've walked out of movies, I've turned off the TV, I've changed the direction of conversations and I have thrown all kinds of media away over the years to name a few. Why? Because I'm going to let the Holy Spirit on the inside of me, and the Word of God dictate what is acceptable in my life - not people or society. I've taken a stand, I've drawn the line, and no half-hearted people are dragging me down. In the passage you just read, Moses is challenging the people to stop being pulled back into the things of the world. He tells them to stop looking for somebody else to do things for them, and just make a decision themselves to stand up and obey the commandments. He goes on to say that, *“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life...”*. Our days are full of choices. It's time to start making the right ones and choosing those things that will produce life, not death. It's time to choose the blessings of obedience over the consequences of rebellion, it's really not that hard or beyond your reach. Make a decision today to stand on the Word of God and not settle for anything less than God's best for your life. You may stick out in a crowd, but after all, isn't that what we are called to do?

Pressing Towards

Danny