

## Devotion #31 - What Are You Looking At?

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NLT)

*“That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are quite small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever! So we don’t look at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever.”*

I just finished having hip surgery, so I’m on crutches for about three months and sorta laid up. My wife and kids had just taken off to church, and they left me at home alone for the first time. The only dilemma with the situation is that just before they left, somebody moved my crutches. One of my restrictions during the recovery process is that I can’t bend my hip over 60 degrees, so when I discovered that my crutches were on the floor by the bedroom door - I felt a little helpless. I was frustrated, feeling stuck, limited, and a bunch of other stuff. This was not part of my plan for the evening. After a few minutes I made the decision to not give up and waste my night, so I began the adventurous process of retrieving my source of mobility. My first idea was to wiggle my body towards the end of the bed. Very carefully I began to extend my good leg out. It was barely able to reach one of the crutches, but when it did, I slid my toes under it. I dragged it towards the bed and then flipped it up to where I could grab it. I then used the crutch that I had retrieved to reach the other one that was further away. Within a few minutes, I was mobile again. In a short amount of time, I turned the whole situation around. It really wasn’t that big of a deal. When I changed my focus, my present troubles didn’t last very long. The unfortunate thing is that most people turn little predicaments into huge ones. We get so wrapped up in little things that we see in the natural, that we lose our perspective. We think that we are stuck where we are at and don’t put any effort towards getting out. The tendency is to just sit around defeated and depressed. We look at situations and see the problems, rather than looking to the only One who can get us through them. How can you avoid the pitfalls and discouragement that comes with momentary struggles? It says in *Hebrews 12:2* that, *“We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish.”* Remember that our present troubles are pretty small in perspective to eternity. The only person who can get us from the starting line to the finish line is our Lord. So take your eyes off the natural things and fix them on Jesus. Don’t let little things hold you back and rob you of your joy. It’s time to change what you are looking at, so that you can start moving on.

Pressing Towards

Danny

## Devotion #32 - A Second Chance

*Romans 8:1 (NLT)*

*“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death.”*

Last night as I was relaxing in my room in front of the basketball game, my oldest daughter decided to bring me in a late night snack. It was a huge bowl of my favorite breakfast cereal. As she was walking into my room with a little spunk in her step, she accidentally dropped the bowl on the floor, sending milk and cereal everywhere. Immediately she dropped her head in shame and embarrassment. Without hesitating I said, “Don’t worry about it Sweetie, accidents happen. I’ll eat something else later.” Everything in her just wanted to crawl into a hole and cry. My wife immediately cleaned up the mess and then went into the kitchen to make another bowl. She called my daughter to the kitchen to get her to bring me my replacement. My sweet daughter was shaking as my wife handed her the new bowl, and there was no confidence in her eyes. Her younger sister even had the nerve to say, “Just give me the bowl, I’ll take it to Daddy!”, which didn’t make her feel any better. With some encouragement from my wife, she picked up her head, and very slowly walked to the bedroom. Her eyes began to get big as she came through the door to my room and handed me the snack. She let out a victory smile that was followed by a little chuckle, simply implying that she knew she could do it. By trying again, she freed herself from doubting her potential. In life, we face many obstacles. Most of us have a tendency, especially when we make a mistake, to think that there is no hope. Any act of disobedience is sin, but how we handle our mess-ups is what matters. I was so glad that my wife and I were on the same page with my daughter. We didn’t want a little mistake to destroy our precious girl’s confidence. We wouldn’t settle for anything less than giving her a second chance. After all, that’s the very nature of our God. You just read in the book of Romans how there is, “no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus”. That means when we fail to hit the mark, if we run to Jesus, the guilt and condemnation is gone. We are given a fresh start. If your desire is to please your Master, then don’t ever let the fear of failure stop you from trying. Paul goes on to encourage us in *Romans 8:37* by saying, “*No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*” You see, victory can be ours if we accept God’s grace and forgiveness. If you find yourself caught up in sin, discouraged and defeated - then run to Jesus. Life is so short, and God’s plan for our lives so big, to hang our heads and give up. We serve a God who is victorious, and through Him, that victory is ours. So it’s time to stand up and take another shot at it. Be encouraged, and be an encourager to others, and you’ll suddenly find yourself walking out boldly into God’s plan for your life.

Pressing Towards

Danny

## Devotion #33 - Under a Bowl

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)

*"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

When I was in fifth grade, my family and I moved from a small Army base to the second largest city in our province. It was a bit of a culture shock. One of the most vivid memories I have though is of my first day of school. I got up and dressed like I normally did and made my way to class. When I walked in, I immediately recognized that what I was wearing was not fashionable. I had on a brand new pair of "baby" blue jeans with a matching cowboy shirt and gray velcro running shoes. Obviously, nobody else had on anything that was even close to what I was sporting. I was totally embarrassed and went home in tears. Up to that point in my life, I didn't care about things like clothes or image. I had never before faced any kind of social pressure to fit in by my appearance. Because of those circumstances, I made a terrible decision that day. I determined that from that point on, I would never be a social outcast again. Every penny I earned began to go towards buying clothes and stuff that would make me fit in. My whole life began to revolve around what others would think of me. Image became everything. This addiction carried over into high school, and then on into college. I was driven by a desire to be accepted. I wanted every part of my life to be something that people admired. I literally became consumed with self. Thankfully, at the age of 21 when I gave my life to Christ, the Lord set me free from this worthless struggle. It was only then that I was able to change my focus. I made the decision to stop pursuing who I could be and simply started pursuing God. Little by little, the Lord has stripped away all the things that I had spent so many years trying to create. In *Isaiah 53:2* it describes the image of Jesus by saying that, *"He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him."* Simply put, people weren't drawn to Jesus because of His outward looks or riches. There was something different about the way that Jesus carried himself that drew the crowds. His light was shining bright. As Christians, I think it is very important that we don't get all wrapped up in creating a certain look or life-style. We can build up such a wall that people can't see past it. It's like we take our light and put it under a bowl called image. Take a moment to think about how bright your light is shining. Are people drawn to you, or are they drawn to Christ in you? Are you spending your time, energy and money trying to be somebody in the natural - or are you trying to reflect Christ? One of the greatest things that the Lord has set us free from is self, so don't slip back into that bondage. Shift your focus back onto God, and then watch your little light shine!

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## Devotion #34 - Out With The Old

*Ephesians 4:22-24 (NLT)*

*“Throw of your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God’s likeness - righteous, holy, and true.”*

I will never forget one special morning at Bible College during our morning prayer time. Our director called my name out in front of the entire class, and over the microphone, spoke directly to the struggle going on inside of me. She shared that the Lord had shown her that I was consumed with lust and if I wanted free, to get up front. The only person who knew I was trying to get free was the Holy Spirit, and because of His love, he was providing me the opportunity I needed - not one that my flesh appreciated though. I had done everything that I thought I should do in the natural, but I still wasn't free. So there I stood, facing a pride-altering decision. By the grace of God, I made the right choice. As I walked up front, past all my peers, I felt this weight being lifted off of me. I surrendered my evil thoughts and desires to the Lord, and He set me free. Immediately after that encounter with God, the Holy Spirit showed me some things that I needed to change. I had been so wrapped up in the things of the world that my mind was still a cess pool. I determined to throw of some habits and things from my old way of life. I immediately stopped watching TV, got rid of all my non-Christian music, and made the decision to cut way back on movies. I realized that all these things were creating wrong desires in me. My heart's cry was becoming like David's in *Psalms 19:14* where he said, *“May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”* I made a decision to permanently change what I was putting in, because I wanted to stay free and please the Lord. I used most of my extra time to begin the disciplines of worship, prayer, reading the Word and just listening to God. It was amazing the transformation that began to take place inside of me. My desires changed, my words changed, and most importantly, my thoughts began to change. Because of my life-style adjustments, and time at His feet, I was spiritually being renewed. To this day, I am still maintaining those same disciplines. What does your life look like - not outwardly, but within your thoughts and attitudes? Have you seen a spiritual renewal take place since you made Jesus the Lord of your life? We are told in *Ephesians* that we *“must display a new nature”*, but the only way that can happen is if we do something different. So take a few moments to reflect upon where you are at. Do you still think and act like you used to? If you do, then find out what is feeding those old thoughts and desires. Make a decision today to permanently get rid of everything that holds you back. Believe me, the freedom and clarity of mind that comes with the new nature is worth it!

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## Devotion #35 - Who Are You Working For?

*John 6:27 (MSG)*

*“Don’t waste your energy striving for perishable food like that. Work for the food that sticks with you, food that nourishes your lasting life, food the Son of Man provides. He and what he does are guaranteed by God the Father to last.”*

One of the first jobs I had when I moved to Billings was waitering at a well-known local restaurant. After awhile I began to get frustrated and discontent, and lost my zeal for going in to work. As I was sitting back one night trying to figure out why this job was such a chore, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart. I realized that I was wasting my time by just working for money, and not for the Lord. In other words, I was looking at my job as a source of income, rather than as a place to be a light. Don't get me wrong, God was using that job to bless me financially, but what was more important was my witness. I purposed that night that I was going to change my perspective. The next day I prayed before work, and then I went in with purpose and vision, determined to give it my all. My whole countenance and attitude was different, and therefore people's response to me was different. Because of that, I had several opportunities to visit with some of the staff and was full of joy when dealing with the customers. It made the whole shift easier. Not only that, with my new work philosophy I found favor with my employer. They literally bent their rules to ensure that I would keep working there, even if it was only one day a week. In *Colossians 3:23* it says, *“And don’t just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Work from the heart for your real Master, for God, confident that you’ll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance.”* When I realized that I was just working for money that comes and goes, I decided to make a change. I began treating my job like Jesus was my boss. As I began to work for the Lord, rather than man, I became an employee that was valued and began reaching people. As Christians, we should never be doing just what gets us by. We should be going above and beyond, as if we are serving our true Master. To many times we just waste our time striving for a natural payoff instead of focusing on our eternal inheritance. What are you working for? If it's just for money, then your settling for the lesser reward. God wants to do so much more through your life. So purpose today to stop wasting your energy and begin working for something that will last an eternity. Let God use you where you have been planted!

Pressing Towards

Danny