

## Devotion #36 - Cheating On God

James 4:4,5 (MSG)

*"You're cheating on God. If all you want is your own way, flirting with the world every chance you get, you end up enemies of God and his way. And do you suppose God doesn't care? The proverb has it that 'he's a fiercely jealous lover'."*

My beautiful wife and I have been married almost 12 years. Since the day we said our wedding vows, we have purposed to never allow anyone or anything to come between us. There have been times, for both of us, when we have felt that someone was getting too close to our spouse. We exposed what we were perceiving and then prayerfully dealt with it. We understand the value of our covenant marriage before God, and because of that we guard and protect it. On the same token, if we ever have a disagreement or misunderstanding, we have made the commitment to make it right as soon as possible. It says in *Ephesians 4:26*, "Don't go to bed angry." In other words, we will not allow ourselves to end a day until we have fixed the problem and reconnected with each other. We have purposed to not give the devil a foothold in our relationship. To the best of our abilities, we will not let anything come between us. Imagine, if as Christians, we had this same mentality when it comes to our relationship with our Savior. On a daily basis we are faced with distractions, frustrations and our heart is being pulled away by the things around us. Unfortunately we don't realize that we are flirting with the world, and cheating on God. Think about how strong our walk with the Lord could be if we exposed everything that tried to grab our heart and affections. What if we never let the sun go down without connecting with God? Why are we so prone to stay on top of relationships and things in the natural, but yet we don't guard the most important person in our life? Paul encourages his young friend in *1 Timothy 6:20* by saying, "And oh, my dear Timothy, guard the treasure you were given. Guard it with your life." Paul is reminding him of the great thing he has with God, and to not let anything destroy it! What does your relationship with the Lord look like? Do you guard and protect it, or are you prone to flirting? Don't let another day go by without reconnecting with the Creator of the Universe. Run to God and away from the world. Your relationship and commitment to the Lord is crucial, so it's time to do whatever it takes to be intimate with Him.

Pressing Towards

Danny

## Devotion #37 - The Keys

Matthew 16:19 (MSG)

*“And that’s not all. You will have complete and free access to God’s kingdom, keys to open any and every door: no more barriers between heaven and earth, earth and heaven. A yes on earth is yes in heaven. A no on earth is no in heaven.”*

My 4-year old daughter came walking into my room tonight holding a key and asked, “Daddy, I found this key, what is it for?” I told her that it was her older sister’s key to the front door. She thought for a second and then had a wonderful idea. She said, “I’m going to go outside the door and shut it. Then I’m going to open it with the key...but if I can’t do it, I’ll knock on the door and you can let me in!” It was the cutest thing to watch as she went and told my wife exactly what she was going to do, and then she went outside and shut the door. I could hear her trying to get the key in for about 20 seconds, determined to make it work, and then knocked on the door. She returned to inform me that it was too hard. I sent her older sister, as her helper, to take her back outside and show her how to do it. So out they went to try again. My daughter was very curious to see if the key would really work! It wasn’t a complicated task. My daughter had found a key and wisely asked what it was for. She didn’t stop there though, because once she knew what it was for, she wanted to give it a try for herself. Even when that effort failed, she was willing to go through the process again with her older sister helping her. That’s the exact attitude we should have as followers of Christ. We have been given the keys to the Kingdom of God. We hold in our hands the power to do great and mighty things. The problem is that most of us don’t take the time to find out what the keys are for. We have a tendency to not open up God’s Word and find out what we should be doing. It’s also a very common occurrence that when we find out how we are supposed to use them, that we immediately doubt what we’ve just heard - and don’t give it a shot. And on the rare occasion when we may take a step of faith and try a principle, we get frustrated if we don’t see immediate results. We so quickly give up when we are so full of potential. It says in *John 14:15, 16* that, *“If you love me, show it by doing what I’ve told you. I will talk with the Father, and he’ll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you.”* Jesus doesn’t ask us to do something that He’s not willing to walk us through. We have been given the greatest Helper in the world, the Holy Spirit. So I think it’s time to stand up, and start living the life God has called you to live. If you really love the Lord, then it’s time to show it by living out His principles and getting rid of the barriers that are holding you back. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see and understand how to use the wonderful keys that you have been given. Purpose to use them, and don’t be afraid to ask for help. When you do this, you’ll begin to unlock God’s many blessings and His plan for your life.

Pressing Towards

Danny

## Devotion #38 - The Heart Of A Friend

*John 15:12 (NLT)*

*"I command you to love each other the same way that I love you. And here is how to measure it - the greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends."*

This morning as I was laying in bed, my 2-year old son was snuggled next to me. We both woke up to my 9-year old daughter screaming. Without hesitating, my son immediately jumps out of bed and goes running into the bathroom where she was. With a red-face, and a bit of an attitude, he sternly asked, "What are you doing to my Tessa?" It was priceless. The second he heard that his sister was in trouble, he ran to the rescue. Fortunately, she wasn't really getting hurt, she was just being over sensitive as my wife was fixing her hair for school. The fact that a 2-year old was willing to jump out of his warm cozy bed and defend his sister - that really spoke to me. He had this natural desire to stand up for somebody he loved. As mature people, we seem to have lost this godly attribute. In the passage you just read from the book of John, Jesus is commanding us to live our lives selflessly by defending those that we are close to. How do we measure our progress? We measure it by our willingness to set aside what is easy in the moment in order to protect them. When was the last time you forgot about yourself and stood up for somebody you cared about? Most of us won't have the physical opportunity like Jesus to actually die in someone's place, but we can do it from the heart with our actions. By listening to gossip, by being judgmental, and simply by not believing the best in our friends - we are missing the mark and not loving those that we say we care about. What kind of friend are you? Do you let others beat people you know and care about down with their words, but never say a thing? In *1 Corinthians 13*, when defining love, it says that, "*It always protects.*" If you really care about somebody, you will not tolerate anyone attacking who they are; not just in their presence, but most importantly in their absence. Your motive should always be to guard what people may say or think about others. Why is it that we have lost this God-given desire that my son displayed to protect those we know and love? We should never entertain conversations or participate by our actions in anything that would hurt someone. Take a moment and reflect. Have you been displaying the heart of a true friend? If not, purpose today to start valuing and protecting those relationships that God has blessed you with, because that's exactly what love would do.

Pressing Towards

Danny

## Devotion #39 - What Do They See?

Genesis 39:2-5 (NIV)

“The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.”

It wasn't very long ago that I was visiting with a former teen from our Youth Group. He was now a young adult, totally consumed with the things of the world, and miserable. We had invited him and his girlfriend over with their kids to try and connect. As we were visiting in the back yard, he began to share how he wanted the life that I had. He made comments like, “Man it feels peaceful when I'm in your house...you've always been there if I called...you have this great marriage, and a great family...I want what you have.” As we visited and talked about his life, he would compare the differences between us. I reassured him that I was far from perfect, and that he always seemed to catch me on a good day. I shared how the biggest difference was that I simply purposed to live my life with Christ. What amazed me though was this - after all those years of sitting under my preaching, the thing that ministered to him the most was the way I lived?! Obviously my words never got through to him. He did however see that my wife and I were different, and that's what he wanted. The passage you just read in Genesis does not describe Joseph as a great speaker, but someone who had God's hand on his life. The scriptures tell us that when Potiphar “saw that the Lord was with him” he was moved to trust him. Joseph became influential because of how he lived, not by the things that he said. Paul says it like this in *1 Corinthians 2:4*, “*My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.*” Paul knew that what people saw God doing through him would go further than anything he could ever say. That is why the most important thing for us to do is stay connected with God. If we aren't plugged in to the Power Source, how can we shine? So what do people see when they look at your life and your actions? Do you just blend in with the crowd, or are the fingerprints of God all over you? I think it's time for Christians to stop talking about God, and just start walking with Him. Why not purpose today to yield yourself to the Holy Spirit, so that your life can boldly proclaim God's power?

Pressing Towards

Danny

## Devotion #40 - He Lives So We Can Live

*John 11:25 (MSG)*

*"You don't have to wait for the End. I am right now. Resurrection and Life. The one who believes in me, even though he or she dies, will live. And everyone who lives believing in me does not ultimately die at all. Do you believe this?"*

For most of my teenage and college years I lived under the deception that serving God wasn't much of a life. In an effort to live it up, I tried many of the things that the world offered. Time and time again though, I found myself looking at my choices and thinking, "There has got to be more?" I was broken, tormented, frustrated, depressed and lacking any real purpose. All sin did was produce death in me spiritually. The night that I surrendered control of my life to Christ was when I finally got a taste of what it feels like to be alive. When I chose to walk away from everything in the world and consume myself with God's love, I suddenly found myself rejuvenated and full of life. My thoughts changed, my words changed, my actions changed - ultimately I went from just existing, to really living. Paul put it this way in *Romans 6:11* by saying that, "*You are dead to sin and alive in God.*" That means that we shouldn't be trying to find life or pleasure in sin, but rather staying energized by connecting with God. What does your resurrected life look like? Are you full of joy and purpose, free from the death hold of sin? Don't listen to the lies that say life can be found apart from Christ. Jesus didn't pay the price so that someday we can live. He rose from the grave so that we can experience the abundant life right now, and into eternity. "Do you believe this?" If you really have faith that God has arranged for your freedom, then it's time to run to Him. Why would you wait one more day, when there is absolutely no other way to live?

Pressing Towards

Danny