

Devotion #46 - Thinking Of Others

1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 (NIV)

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God - even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

A short time ago, my two oldest girls were given the opportunity to go roller-skating with a group of kids from the church. They were having a blast skating to the Christian music that was playing. My 7 yr. old daughter at one point skated over to my wife and asked if it was OK for them to be dancing to the music. At first it was just an attempt to tattle on her older sister, but as she began thinking about it, the reality of the struggle came to the surface. My wife responded to her question by saying that it was fine to dance. My daughter hesitated, and then quietly said, “I thought in my heart that it would make boys look at me, and so I knew that it wouldn’t be good to do.” She also explained how other girls were shaking their bodies when they were dancing, and that she knew that wasn’t right. I can’t tell you how much it blessed me that she was putting thought into her actions. She knew it was fine to be dancing to the Christian music and having fun, but was more concerned about how it might affect some of the boys at the rink. Even though she had permission to do it, she chose to stop because of those who were around her. I thought that was pretty mature for a young girl. This passage in *1 Corinthians* clearly states that as Christians, we should be aware at all times of our influence on those around us. The sad thing is that most people, even those who claim to be followers of Christ, still live with a selfish mindset. The tendency is to do what we want, when we want, and if others don’t like it - that’s their problem! In *1 Corinthians 10:24*, Paul says that, *“Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.”* That means when it comes to making decisions, we should go far beyond the obvious question of, “Is this a sin, or not?” We should stop and consider how our personal decisions could potentially hinder or affect those who are watching us. What is your thought process when it comes to your daily choices? Do you consider how they might affect or influence those who are watching you? Follow the example of Christ, and live on the high road of selflessness. Think of the impact on others before you speak, act or do anything. After all, whatever we do should be for the glory of God.

Pressing Towards

Danny

Devotion #47 - Perfecting Patience

Proverbs 16:32 (NIV)

“Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.”

This afternoon I was helping my 2 yr. old son go to the bathroom. He had just finished, so I was putting his shorts back on him. I got him situated and then set him on the ground so he could run and wash his hands. He tried to take a step, but he feel flat on the floor. I kinda chuckled, because I thought he was just goofing around. He started getting very upset though as he tried to stand up again and walk. I was trying to calm him down when I noticed the problem. I had accidently stuffed both of his legs through the same hole on his shorts. Being as sturdy as he is, they were more than squashed in there, making it impossible for him to move. I started laughing hysterically, and my son start screaming angrily. His first response to being held back and stuck was frustration and a fit. He is a little guy on the go, and being restricted was putting a serious cramp in his style and causing him to freak out. He didn't ask for help, but I picked him up anyway and corrected my mistake. Thankfully, that calmed him down. He immediately ran to the sink and then headed out of the bathroom on another mission. It only took a brief second to fix things, but his response would of made the average person think his life was in serious danger. As I think about this little encounter I had today, I can't help but be reminded of some of my own reactions when life hasn't gone my way. In the past, frustration, anger, finger pointing and the occasional fit of carnality have definitely followed some situations that I've encountered. It says in *Psalms 37:7* that we are to, *“be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.”* Just like my son demonstrated today, one of the hardest things for us to do is just be still and wait patiently for help. We try to fix things on our own and don't let God get involved. When our attempt doesn't work, we lose our patience and our peace. Are you patiently living a life of peace, or are you in constant turmoil at every turn? One of the greatest gifts the Lord has given you is the ability to not be moved by your circumstances or emotions. God has not called you to handle anything on your own, so it's time to just lay everything at His feet and trust that He'll get you through. Why not give Him the opportunity to fix the problem and bring some calm to the storm? If you allow God to give you a hand, you'll be able to hit the ground running again. So spend some time today perfecting patience, by stepping aside and waiting on the Lord.

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Devotion #48 - Control Freak

Luke 9:23, 24 (MSG)

"Then he told them what they could expect for themselves: 'Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat - I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self.'"

I had this horrible experience when I was in fourth grade that I've never forgotten about. I was walking home from school when my bladder started calling. I don't know where the brilliant idea came from, but I decided that I could control my fleshly need to go to the bathroom. Something came over me, and I decided to try and do my entire paper route before I would allow myself to go. It was this manly, "I can control anything" attitude. I had barely picked up my papers from the drop spot when my body started shaking because I had to go so bad. I quickly grabbed my papers and started running to the houses to deliver them. I finished my route and was on the way home when the inevitable happened. My body overrode my will, I lost control, and I went in my pants. I was horrified. I ran home to quickly take a bath and get rid of the evidence. As I was in the bathroom trying to clean up, my mother came home. I felt so foolish as I hid in there with the door locked, trying to come up with an explanation of why a 9 yr. old would wet his pants. There was no logical reason other than just sheer foolishness. For some reason, I thought I had arrived at a point where I could control my natural desires. I think the root of my childhood dilemma is evident in all our lives - we are control freaks. We like to call the shots, make the decisions, determine the outcome and on it goes. It's pretty humbling when we realize that with ourselves in the driver seat, we'll just make a mess of things - just like I did! It really is amazing how much we trust ourselves, and our ability to accomplish things without God's help. It says in *Philippians 3:3* that we are to, *"put no confidence in the flesh..."* In other words, it's arrogant to start trusting in your own ability to control things. The trick is to just slide over into the passenger seat, and deny your carnal desire to rule. Allow God to take charge. If you look at your life, you'll see areas where you are still trying to sit on the throne and call the shots. Remember what you just read, *"Self-help is no help at all"*, so don't wait until you've failed and made a mess of things. Make a decision today to humble yourself before God and let Him guide you. The only way for you to truly live is to say "No" when it comes to being a control freak.

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Devotion #49 - Shift Your Focus

Hebrews 13:5 (NIV)

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.””

I took the family out for dinner tonight to a local restaurant that was having a “Kid’s Night”. Their meals were half price, and there was a drawing for a bicycle. As I looked around the restaurant, I only saw a couple other children, and having four of our own, I knew our odds of winning were pretty good. Sure enough, when I got home I received a call saying that my 7 yr. old daughter had won the bike. She was eustatic when I told her. Unfortunately, it made my oldest daughter very jealous. To make matters a little more interesting, the winning daughter began to rub it in her face. The jeering started with comments like “I’m never going to let you ride my new bike!” Those were the reactions that stemmed from a simple material blessing. Before we went out that night, everything was fine between the girls, and they were content with what they had. Suddenly, because of a free bike, everything changed. The treat of eating a dinner out, wasn’t even good enough any more. My children’s reactions are pretty typical of most people. We take pride in our money and stuff, and don’t use it to bless others. The second reaction of jealousy, which leads to discontentment, is far too common as well. It says in *Romans 12:15* that we are to, “*Rejoice with those who rejoice*”, which simply means that we should never take our focus off of people. If my oldest daughter would have shared in the joy that her sister felt, there wouldn’t have been a problem. If my 7 yr. old would have realized that she now had something that would bless her sister, they could have shared the moment and gift together. How much of your contentment is dependant upon natural stuff? God doesn’t want you to be moved by natural things, he wants you to be moved by people. So as you go about your day today, don’t be sidetracked by what you have or don’t have. Walk out in the power of God’s love, and watch how He will use your life to minister to others. You can keep your life free from the love of money, by just shifting your focus back onto others.

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Devotion #50 - Exposed

Hebrews 4:13 (NIV)

“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

We were on vacation with my family in California one summer, and my brother-in-law offered to take me surfing. He loaned me a wetsuit and a board, and off we went into the ocean. After several hours of getting beaten up by the surf, we decided to head back to the vehicle. As we started to load up, I unzipped my suit and noticed that I had acquired a rash on my chest. I asked the guys if this was a normal reaction to a wetsuit. That is when it was brought to my attention that the only guys who get rashes are those who shave their chests. “That’s weird”, was my awkward response. The reality was that just the day before, after I showered, I made the decision to clean up my chest hair a little. Because of that decision, my day of reckoning came. What I had done in secret, was suddenly brought out into the open. Even though I wanted to deny it, the evidence was there. I was pretty embarrassed. When you think about the passage you just read in Hebrews, one of the key words would definitely be the word, “everything.” The reality then is that whatever you’ve done, and whatever is in your heart, will one day be brought to the surface. That means there is nothing that is hidden from God. The good news is that it says in *1 John 1:9* that, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* So if you are willing to look inside yourself, and humbly confess, you can get a fresh start. Why not take a moment and do a little self-evaluation. Expose your sins and ask the Lord to forgive you. When you do this, you’ll receive the freedom and joy that comes from a clean record. Paul states in *1 Corinthians 4:5* that, *“He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts.”* Simply stated, if you aren’t willing to expose your sins, God will! So don’t wait any longer. Make things right with Him today so that you can experience the exhilaration of running your race without any hindrances.

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