

Devotion #41 - Is It Costing You Anything?

Luke 21:1-4 (NIV)

“As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ‘I tell you the truth,’ he said, ‘this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.’”

When it comes to giving to God, we don't really know what it means to sacrifice for our Savior. For example, I remember one of my first missions trips to Mexico. At the work site one day, the Lord spoke to my heart and asked me to give something away. The idea seemed foolish to me in the natural, because it was so little. It was a funky surfer type chain that I thought was pretty cool, that I never took off - it was part of my image. There was a young Mexican boy who commented on how he liked it, and my first thought was that I should give it to him. Immediately my flesh rose up and got protective because I liked it. How's that for being selfish and consumed with stuff - I wasn't willing to give away something so trivial. I finally did hand it over, but I missed the blessing of immediate obedience. At that point, I realized that I wasn't really ready to sacrifice for God. There was something wrong in my heart, because I cherished "things" over obedience. What blesses our Lord is when out of obedience, we sacrifice things for Him, not just throw a little something at Him to make ourselves feel good. When it comes to finances, most people just tip God, and He knows it. If we can't sacrifice something in the natural, how will we ever be willing to lay down our lives? David understood this principle when he went to give God an offering in *2 Samuel 24*. A gentlemen offered to give David whatever he needed for his gift to God for free. David responded by saying, *“No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.”* David understood that if there wasn't a cost, then there wasn't a sacrifice. He wanted to give God something that showed where his heart was at. When you look at your giving history, what do you see? Where is your heart at? Do you sacrifice for the things of God, or do you just do what is easy? The widow laid down her natural wealth for the Lord, and He was blessed by her sacrifice. It's time to let go of our love and need for stuff, and start giving to God. So to sum it all up, is your giving costing you anything? If it's not, then it's time to look at what is in your heart!

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Devotion #42 - Where Are you?

Genesis 3:8-10 (NIV)

“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’”

On the way home from church tonight, my 4yr old daughter was caught telling a lie to my wife. We had let her off with a warning the other day for telling a fib, so she knew that there would be consequences this time. As soon as we got home, she ran to her room crying, shut the door and hid. We let her stay there for awhile, and then I opened her door and said, “I want you to come out now, so that we can talk.” She didn’t answer. I kept calling and searching, and eventually we found her under the bed. She was curled up and sound asleep. Her disobedience caused her to run away from me, instead of to me, like she normally would. This time she hid in fear, not wanting to deal with the ramifications of her actions. My wife woke her up, and we rectified the situation. After we were done, she crawled up next to me and snuggled on the bed. There was a sweet peace. Her wrong had been dealt with and things were back to normal. In the book of Genesis, an average day for Adam involved walking and talking with the Lord. God did not normally have to go searching for Adam, because Adam was right there waiting to be with Him. After he sinned though, he was afraid and hid from the Lord. God asked Adam to tell Him where he was. In this case, the question was not to find out Adam’s natural location, but rather to see if he would be honest about where he was at spiritually. Adam’s answer wasn’t, “I’m over here behind the bush!”. Adam responded by admitting to God the truth of the situation, which was that he was hiding in fear. It says in *1 John 1:9* that, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* Until you are willing to admit to God where you are at, you’ll just keep avoiding Him. God doesn’t want anything in your life to hinder you, so He keeps calling out for you, hoping that you’ll respond. He wants you to deal with the reality of your circumstances so that your relationship with Him can be restored. That brings us to this very simple question then, “Where are you?” Are you hiding or running from God because of sin in your life? God is still reaching out, longing for relationship with you. He is not afraid of your darkness and sin, because He has the power to get rid of it. It’s time to get real with God. Admit where you are at spiritually, and let His unconditional love restore you. Don’t let anything rob you of the peace that comes from walking daily with God.

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Devotion #43 - Go After Them

Luke 15:3-7 (NIV)

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

I was outside today enjoying the wonderful weather with my family. My oldest daughter brought out several bowls of homemade strawberry ice cream for us to have as a snack. I sat on the stairs to enjoy mine, and my 2 yr old son stood next to me eating his. Within a minute, he accidentally dropped a small bite of ice cream on the sidewalk. He gave me a look of disgust as I quickly picked it up with my hands and threw it away; as if to say that I had just tossed something that he wanted. Just moments later, he dropped an even bigger chunk on the ground. Without any hesitation this time, he got on his hands and knees, and stuck his mouth over the fallen treat. He began sucking and licking, trying to rescue every last drop of ice cream of the ground. It was disgusting, but he stood up with a smile when he was finished. My son had placed value on his ice cream, and was willing to get down and dirty in order to get it, and wasn't afraid to do it right in front of me. As long as he was around, not one more drop would be wasted. He wasn't focused on the circumstances, he was focused on the prize. To him, saving the ice cream meant more than anything else. When our Savior went to the cross, He had one consuming thought - a love for us. He laid down His life, setting aside the natural circumstances in order to rescue our souls. If that's the price that Jesus was willing to pay for us, shouldn't we live our lives with that same fervency. In other words, we should be moved with a passion for the lost. It says in *2 Peter 3:9* that God is, *“not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”* There isn't one single life that God wants to be wasted. He has placed value on the soul of every human being. That is why it says that, *“there will be rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents.”* It blesses the heart of God when someone is pulled up out of sin. What is your perspective on the lost? Do you see every person as valuable, no matter their circumstances? Are you willing to do whatever it takes to reach those who are confused and hurting? Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with love, and to open your eyes to see those in need around you. Don't settle for just a few opportunities, go after every soul that Jesus bought. It's time to roll up your sleeves and start diligently pursuing those on the wrong path. When you start living your life this way, you'll begin to feel the exhilarating joy and satisfaction that comes when a sinner repents.

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Devotion #44 - How's Your Vision?

Psalm 119:105 (NIV)

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."

My 7 yr. old daughter has beautiful brown hair, brown eyes and glasses. She just got a new pair the other day, and they fit her style perfectly. She walked around pretty excited about them. One of the reasons I wanted to get her new glasses is because her old pair would slide down her nose. Whenever they would do that, she would simply start looking over top of them, instead of through them - effectively defeating the purpose of wearing them. The very first day after I picked up her new glasses, she put them on and started running around. Even though they fit better, it still didn't take long for her to tilt her head down and start looking over the top of them. I don't get it! Why would she choose to have blurred vision when everything is clearer through the corrective lenses she has? It's not that she didn't love her new glasses, she just wasn't willing to use them to their fullest potential. Obviously this is a habit that needs to be broken in her life. It kind of reminds me of how we as Christians go about our lives. Even though we have been given the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to help us see clearly, we have a tendency to ignore that they are there - we bypass them, instead of going through them. We develop the habit of routinely looking at life on our own, often unsure exactly where it is we are even going. When you begin to look at everything in your life through God's Word, the corrective lens He has given you, everything will begin to take shape. Walking through your daily life is much more manageable when you listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit, because He will give you a different perspective. How's your vision? It says in *Proverbs 29:18* that, "*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*" So if you can't see clearly where you are going, you're going to end up going down the wrong road. God desires for your vision to be clear, and the road you follow to be full of light. The only way that can happen is if you purpose to look at life through His Word, and allow the Holy Spirit to guide you. Why not purpose today to get rid of your blurred vision. Drop the old habit of trying to see things on your own, and start using what God has given you to the fullest potential. You don't need to get anything else to help your vision, you already have what you need - so start using them. Once you see how clear things can be when they are filtered through the Word and the Holy Spirit, you won't ever want it any other way.

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Devotion #45 - Be A Good Listener

Proverbs 18:1, 2 (NIV)

“An unfriendly man pursues selfish ends: he defies all sound judgment. A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.”

Currently I am on crutches, which apparently is not very normal because people sure love to look. It's actually quite funny how some kids just stare, and look me up from top to bottom. Some of the children have enough guts to ask me point blank, "What happened to you?" They actually want to know, and are willing to listen to my whole story if I'll tell it. Now when it comes to adults, it's a completely different story. Two different times this past week adults have asked me the same question, only to check out before I finished answering. In other words, in the middle of the conversation they just got distracted and forgot that I was talking. It was the craziest thing to watch. In one moment, probably out of courtesy, they wanted to have a conversation. Within a minute, they are back into their own world and disengaged, literally walking away while I am still sharing. I wasn't offended, I was just shocked at how foolish they looked and were. They didn't even realize they were doing it because they were so wrapped up in their own little world. Now when it comes to how you interact with people, it's important to understand that people and relationships are valuable. God has commanded you in *Mark 12:31* to "love your neighbors as yourself." The only way to love somebody is with your heart. That means that to truly love those you come in contact with, your neighbors, you have to open up your heart to them. The passage in Proverbs you just read says that an "unfriendly man", which is someone who doesn't value relationships, defies all sound judgment. It then goes on to say that you are a fool if you don't try to understand or relate with people, but instead get all caught up with voicing your own thoughts. In other words, don't just talk, but listen and be relational. If we don't value people, every relationship or encounter we have will be shallow and meaningless. How friendly are you? Do you purpose to interact and engage people in heart felt conversation, or do you walk around and away from them? Purpose today to get the focus off of yourself, and shift your attention to those God will bring across your path. Don't allow your life to become one of solitude and self-absorbance. Teach yourself to be a good listener, and allow the love of God to flow through you. When you begin focusing on others, you'll soon find yourself surrounded by friends.

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