

>>>Plugging In

3 Devotions on Connecting With What God is Doing

Staying Connected

PURPOSE: The purpose of this devotion is to both get you thinking about **how sin can really hurt** your closeness with God, and to help you think about any sin in your life that **you're not addressing**.

Our mobile phones are our connections to the world. We can connect to people with a text message, a social network post, or with an old-fashioned telephone call. But all of this hinges on the most important part of the phone: the battery. If our battery dies, the phone quits working and we lose our ability to stay connected.

If you want to connect with God and with what He is doing in this world you must keep your spiritual battery charged. The purpose of these three devotions is to allow you the chance to think about your relationship with God, and whether or not your spiritual battery is fully charged.

Before you can charge your battery, you have to make sure everything is in order. In your relationship with God, this means **looking at your life for any unaddressed sin**. Throughout the Bible, you can watch God move in response to the "brokenness" of his people. God honors our efforts to deal with the sin in our lives.

King David is a great example of this. David not only committed adultery, but he orchestrated a murder, as well! He slept with Bathsheba, the wife of a soldier named Uriah. When she became pregnant, David ordered Uriah home from war, hoping Uriah would sleep with Bathsheba. David figured if Uriah got Bathsheba pregnant, he could hide the fact that he had gotten her pregnant himself. When Uriah refused the invitation, David had him placed in the heat of a battle, where he died.

Did you know that King David wrote Psalm 51 after the prophet Nathan confronted him with his sin? David confessed his sin to the Lord, asked God to cleanse him, and then asked not to be kicked out of God's presence. *David knew that true joy could only be found when people stay connected to God.* And this starts by dealing with your sin and committing to living the kind of life God wants you to live.

Take a moment to read Psalm 51.

Hopefully, you're not dealing with sin on David's level. (Though if you are, God still desires to be in relationship with you!) But remember, David's road to rebellion started with a simple, tempting glance at Bathsheba while she was bathing. *Sin is a spiritual battery killer.* And the only way to recharge and regain that connection with God is to follow the steps King David took:

- **Be aware of your sin**
- **Confess your sin to God**
- **Enjoy restoring your connection with God**

FOLLOW THROUGH

- How would you describe your relationship with God right now?
- Ask God to show you any sin in your life that needs to be confessed.
- Repent, or turn from that sin, and strive to live a life that pleases and honors God.
- Get pumped that you've reconnected with an awesome relationship with God.

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Touching The World

PURPOSE: The purpose of this devotion will lead you to look outward, to see if you are fulfilling Christ's call to use your life to meet the needs of the less fortunate.

Here's a fun thought to consider: What if Jesus were to show up at your church the next time your youth group got together? The Son of God walking into your youth room . . .

Can you imagine the rush to the water fountain if Jesus were to say He was thirsty? Or the mad dash to the pizza box if He said He was hungry? You would all spare no expense of time or money to meet the needs of the Savior. And you'd be exactly right in doing so! But think for a minute about the needs of the hungry person in your town or the student at your school whose family is struggling to get by . . . **Should you meet their needs with the same urgency?** Jesus actually had some had some pretty strong words about this very thing.

In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, Jesus tells the story of two groups of people standing before Him at Judgment Day. Jesus addressed the first group, the group He referred to as the Righteous, in Matthew 25:35-36. Stop for a second and read what Jesus said there.

Got it? Great. Now, Jesus addressed the second group of people in Matthew 25:35-36. Take another second and see what Jesus said to *this* group.

Here's the interesting thing: Both the groups whom Jesus addressed responded to Him in the same way: "When did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison?" Jesus surprised them with these powerful words:

" . . . I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me . . . Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." (Matthew 25:40; 45)

Whoa! Jesus was letting His disciples know that they had to be **ON MISSION** with God. This includes not only *telling* people about the love of God, but *showing* people the love of God. Jesus was calling on them, and us, to meet the physical, emotional, and relational needs of people, as well as their spiritual needs.

As teenagers, it's easy to get caught up in the grand vision of changing the world in a big way. **And that's awesome.** But most of the time, connecting with what God is doing means meeting the daily needs of the people around you, many of whom Jesus called, "the least of these." And when we meet the needs of the needy, it's as if we were serving Jesus, Himself!

FOLLOW THROUGH

- What opportunities are available in your community to help meet the needs of people?
- What can you do to **create opportunities** to meet the needs of people in your community and around the world? If you need an idea, here are some suggestions:
 - Promote *Operation Christmas Child*, a ministry that provides Christmas boxes for children around the world. (www.samaritanspurse.com)
 - Get your youth group involved in the *Souper Bowl of Caring*, which takes place on Super Bowl Sunday each year. (www.souperbowl.org)
 - Think about sponsoring a child through *Compassion International* or *World Vision*. (www.compassion.com or www.worldvision.org)

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Love Is The Key

PURPOSE: The purpose of this devotion is to help you understand that love is the key to connecting us to both God and to what He is doing in our world.

Love is the focus of a seemingly infinite number of songs, movies, books, poems, etc. Love is something we all recognize when we see it or feel it. *But what is real love?* Is it that thing the world uses as bait to get us to buy everything from clothing to hamburgers? Is it found in the messaging used by the media to get you to watch reality shows, go to the movies, or purchase music? **Is there even such a thing as real love?** After all, so many people who say they love each other treat each other so horribly . . .

The answer to that question is a great big YES! God is the source of a love that is real, unique, and has the power to change the world. Look at what the Bible says about real love.

God Is The Source Of Real Love

- Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.—1 John 4:8
- Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.’—Matthew 22:37-38

Real Love Is Unique

- Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”—John 13:35
- Jesus said, “If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?”—Matthew 5:46
- And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.—Colossians 3:14

Real Love Can Change The World

- Jesus said, “And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’—Matthew 22:39
- Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.—Romans 13:8

Real love is the key that connects us to our heavenly Father and in turn gives us the compassion to accept His mission to make a difference in our world. *The only place to find that love is in a relationship with God through His son Jesus Christ.* With God’s love flowing through us, we will be able to see what He is doing in the world. His love can change the world. **And His love will change us.**

FOLLOW THROUGH

- How do you see your world? Is it a place where you simply live out a day-to-day existence? Or is it a place filled with exciting opportunities to share the love of God with people?
- The love of God will change your worldview. Pray and ask God to fill you with His love and help you see the world through His eyes.
- Consider some practical ways you can show God’s love to someone in your life that had been particularly hard to love lately.

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