

Day 1: Who Are You Worshiping?

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Read: Exodus 20:3 and Romans 12:1-2

As we dance our way thorough life it can be easy to perform for the applause of other people. We dress a certain way to get attention from guys, or we talk a certain way because our friends do. Sometimes we even watch certain TV shows and listen to a specific style of music just to fit in.

When I was a freshman in high school everyone around me listened to Ska music. I absolutely hated it—or more accurately I just didn't get what the hype was all about. Yet I owned all the CDs. I listened to the music and went to all the concerts because I wanted my friends to like me. I didn't want to be the outsider in the group.

Wanting to fit in is a normal feeling, and going to a bunch of Christian Ska concerts wasn't detrimental to my spiritual health. But by the time I got to my senior year I was running with a different crowd, and the desire to fit in brought with it different pressures—going to parties where people would be drinking, dating guys who weren't Christians, etc...

Luckily, by then I had learned an important truth. We can only worship one thing at a time. If I claimed I wanted to worship God with my life then I couldn't esteem the opinions of my friends more highly than God's opinion. In Exodus 20:3 He clearly says we are to have no other gods before Him. That means we can't set up idols for ourselves. If we aren't careful people can easily become idols. If we are seeking their approval before God's approval then they *are* idols.



You can either dance for God's applause or you can dance for man's applause. But you can't do both at the same time. One passage of Scripture that was extremely helpful to me was Romans 12:1-2.

When we offer our lives to God as living sacrifices He considers that worship. Whoever you offering yourself to, whoever you are aiming to please, is who you are worshiping. That's something to think about as you dance your way through life. If you are always seeking someone else's approval then you worshiping and idolizing them. You can only worship one god. Who are you worshiping today?

Reflect: Who have you been trying to please lately? Is your life one constant quest to win the approval of others? How would you respond if you were asked to do something you knew was wrong but saying no would be unpopular?

Day 2: When Others Don't Clap

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Read: 2 Samuel 6:12-22

Words can hurt. That's why we find ourselves doing things that will elicit praise and avoiding things that will bring on criticism. It never feels good to be made fun of or insulted—even if we are doing the right thing.

When the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Jerusalem King David danced before the Lord as an act of worship. In fact, the Bible tells us he stripped down and danced before the Lord in a linen ephod—the equivalent of pajamas or underwear. He wasn't afraid to make a spectacle of himself in order to worship God. But his wife, Michal, saw from the window and the Bible tells us “she despised [David] in her heart”. When he got home she even made fun of him.



Sometimes in our own lives we will have to be willing to be despised by others in order to please God. If you are going to live a life that is truly pleasing to God there will be moments people won't like it because you won't do what they want you to do.

It may be something as simple as refusing to participate in something you know is wrong while playing a game of Truth or Dare with your friends, or if it could be as complex as pulling away when your boyfriend begins to make advances you are uncomfortable with.

When life becomes a war between purity and popularity you must be prepared to choose. Michal's comments seemed to roll off David's back because he had his heart set on pleasing God. In fact 1 Samuel 13:14 even refers to David as a man after God's own heart.

In high school I lost a chance at the Homecoming crown because I wouldn't go out and party with some of the other girls who were running. Although I was disappointed I wasn't devastated because pleasing God was more important to me than winning the approval of people who would only like me as long as I did what they said.

Your life will be full of your own defining moments. The best way to be ready for them when they come is to decide how you will respond before those moments ever come. Will you choose purity or popularity?

Reflect: What are some areas you can see yourself being tempted in someday? If you had to make a choice today would you choose purity or popularity? How would you go about making your decision? Walk yourself through the process now so you will know what to do when the time comes.

Day 3: Bad Company = Bad Counsel

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Read: Job 1:22, 2:9, 42:10 and Proverbs 15:22

“He was staring at you. I saw it.”

“He totally likes you.”

“He doesn’t like her—are you crazy?”

These were the words I heard from my closest friends my junior year of high school. I had a major crush on a guy friend and I was trying to figure out if he liked me. Week after week, every time we all hung out, I would run to my friends asking for advice and insight on any clues my guy friend may have given me.

Unfortunately, my friends had no idea how to interpret his signals and they completely missed the fact that he was in love with someone else. When he asked her to the Prom I was devastated.

We’ve all received bad advice from well meaning friends. Sometimes it’s no big deal—like when they tell us to buy the green top and not the blue one. Other times it can be a bummer—like the time I spent prom night alone at home. But there are even times when getting bad counsel from friends, can be detrimental to our spiritual health.

Just look at Job. When tragedy struck his wife told him to curse God and die. And his closest friends told him God was punishing him for hidden sin—although the Bible clearly states that Job was more righteous than anyone in his day.

When you are looking for advice, who do you go to? When you question God’s goodness or wrestle with some major issues in life where do you turn? What about when you are trying to make an important decision?

The Bible repeatedly talks about the importance of seeking wise counsel. And God even rebuked Job’s friends for misrepresenting Him to Job. Had he listened, Job would have distanced himself from God. Job’s bad company resulted in getting bad counsel.

Proverbs 15:22 says having multiple counselors is important to success. Do you need to make some adjustments to your advisory team?

Reflect: When you need advice who do you turn to? List three people who give you clear and godly counsel. Are there any advisors you consult that may be leading you away from God and not to Him? How can you change that?



Day 4: Resolving Conflict

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Read: Romans 12:18 Proverbs 17:17



Living at peace with all people can be hard. Loving our friends at all times seems nearly impossible. If your life is like mine it's probably filled with more conflict that you would like to admit.

Sometimes conflict happens over things that were unintentional—I didn't see someone's text message so I didn't respond. Other times it's a lot more major—like when I invited one friend to go somewhere with me and left others out. Sometimes conflict even happens because I was the one who was ignored or forgotten.

We can just write someone off every time something goes wrong. So how do we appropriately deal with conflict in our relationships? Let me offer four steps to resolving conflict:

- First, we need to *research* the situation to see where things went wrong. It takes two to tango as they say, and all conflicts have at least two sides. We need to objectively evaluate the situation and perhaps get the insight of a godly mentor. When you turn to peers instead of mentors for advice in times like these, the situation usually turns into a gossip fest instead of a time for edifying eye-opening.
- Secondly, we must *repent*. Ask God for forgiveness, and then approach your friend. Ask for her forgiveness, too, even if she doesn't apologize. Apologize without seeking an apology from the other side.
- That flows right along with the third step of *restoration*. Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." Try to make the friendship work. Allow room for healing and for new growth.
- And finally, once you have repented and taken the steps toward healing the hurt, you need to *release* it. You need to choose not to dwell on the memory of the incident that tore you and your friend apart. If your friend never forgives you, then so be it. You have done your part pursuing peace with all people.

Now, these four steps don't always work because sometimes the other person involved just doesn't want to make things work. In cases like that you need to continue making an effort to act in a loving way toward that person. Loving people at all times means loving them even when they aren't loving you.

Whenever possible try to repair and restore broken relationships.

Reflect: Identify a relationship where you are currently experiencing a conflict. Have you gone through any of the steps mentioned above? How can you begin applying them to the conflict you are experiencing today?

Day 5

“I Can’t Stop Thinking About This Guy”

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Read: Galatians 5:23, 1 Corinthians 10:13 and Proverbs 4:23

If you can’t stop thinking about a guy, you may need a lesson in controlling your thoughts.

Galatians 5:23 says that a Christian who bears fruit will exercise self control. Self control means that you are simply controlling yourself—your mind, your actions, your words, your thoughts, etc...

Think about your thoughts the same way you think about driving a car. Someone has to steer a car that’s in motion, right? Well, when you are thinking your mind is in motion but you have the power to steer your thoughts in whatever direction you choose. So, stop letting yourself think about your guy friend in a way you wouldn’t think about your brother.

Don’t replay his last conversation with you over and over again in your mind. *He said ‘Talk to you later.’ Does that mean he’s going to call me? Should I charge me cell phone?*

Instead think about something else. Pick a memory verse. Every time your mind wanders and you find that you’re not guarding your heart mediate on the verse instead.

1 Corinthians 10:13 talks about God always providing a way out of temptation. That means when your emotions become so overpowering that you think you can’t help but gush about your crush and read into his actions there is still a way of escape. You can consciously turn your mind to other thoughts and prevent yourself from talking about your friend in a romantic way.



Find a friend you can call that will help get you back on track. Someone who is willing to say, “Stop thinking of him like that. He’s not thinking of *you* like that.” It will really help.

Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else guard your heart.” That means protecting your heart should be priority number one. So don’t give it away to your crush.

Reflect: Why do you find yourself thinking about this guy so much? Do you find you normally think of him when you feel bored or lonely? How can you fill your time so you have better things to think about? Make a list of three things you can do next time he starts flooding your thoughts. Write a verse to memorize on a 3x5 card so you can have it at the ready when you need to focus on something else.