“Choosing to Cheat”

Sermon Series

Created by Josh Ketchum
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Idea and Some Illustrations taken from
Andy Stanley’s book - *Choosing to Cheat*
New Edition of the Book - *When Work and Family Collide*

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Author’s Note: These are the sermon outlines as I wrote and preached. I have made some corrections, but please have grace upon them. You can reprint these or print these free of charge but please give credit to myself if a written work or in making copies.

Josh Ketchum - jketchum@sevenoakschurchofchrist.com or ketch_90@yahoo.com or 270-247-5201

Josh.theketchumklan.com -- Life in the Kingdom
Choosing to Cheat -- God
Lesson 1 in Series

Opening Illustration -- Story of Average Joe and His Wife Sally-

Joe is just an average guy he works in town at a local business. Sally his wife is a school teacher. They have 2 kids. Their kids play sports, one takes gymnastics and the boy is in scouts. Joe likes to hunt and Sally likes to shop. They love KY basketball. They are members of the local church. Joe and Sally spend their life feeling like they are caught as the rope in a great tug-a-war. Kids, jobs, parents, extended family, spouse, church, PTA, sports, money-stress, God, careers, education, on and on we can go. They feel like they never satisfy anyone and yet they never seem to have time for each other, themselves, and they are always seem to be failing at giving what they want to their jobs, the church, and to their family. Truthfully, both Joe and Sally are not growing in their spiritual life. Their church attendance is erratic, their involvement is sparse, their giving is low, their Bible reading is seldom, and their praying comes at night if they can stay awake long enough.

**Like Joe and Sally are struggling with priorities. This description fits so many of us doesn’t it. When we honor God’s order and priorities than everybody wins, but when we get them out of order, nobody wins but Satan.

The problem is they have got to learn to choose to cheat!

Andy Stanley’s book - Choosing to Cheat

Now the name may throw you off. It did me for a bit, but what the book really begins to talk about is the idea that in your life you will have to choose where you will cheat. We all choose to cheat every day. Now I’m not talking about cheating on tests or wives. I mean that we choose to take time, energy, money, devotion from one place and give it to another place. We are "cheating" one thing for another. We do it every day. We all know there is no way to give enough time to school, home, church, friends, hobbies, God, ourselves, ...and the list goes on. There is always more places to spend time.

Our goal should be for our lives to reflect the priorities of God.

So for the next four weeks we are going to discuss our priorities. Looking at it from the perspective of what we choose to cheat! It is a study of choices and priorities.
Premise of this lesson:

We are going to cheat on something or someone. God needs to be the top priority and not be cheated on in our lives. We must restructure our life so that God is not cheated!

Text: Daniel 6

The choice Daniel faces --

Who should he cheat? Will he cheat himself from the promotion he deserves? Will he cheat the King from the honor and obedience he deserves? Will he cheat God from the devotion, loyalty, and prayer he deserves?

Here is the choice that we have to make so many times:

Who will I honor with my choice and loyalty?

It is easy to think that Daniel was just this larger than life superhero.

But put yourself in his shoes. He was an old man. This was a significant success or promotion for him. Pride could certainly be a part of the picture. There was a real fear of being thrown to the lions. He could have rationalized that it is deception and evil that is causing this, thus it justifies him obeying the law for the 30 days. Why, it is only a short time?

How do we cheat on God?

A. Tough to be specific:

It involves: church attendance, prayer life, work, giving, devotion, duty to family, example.

Mat. 6:33, Mat. 22:37

Our consciences when educated by the Word of God and the Spirit of God know it.

B. The people in Malachi where cheating on God.

Ch. 1, 3

C. The Laodecians in Rev. 3:15-21 - where cheating God by being lukewarm in their service to Christ.

D. The Rich Young Ruler cheated God - Mat. 19:19-22
We think:

A. Feelings are what really matter.
   If I asked you who is most important in your life? Most everyone would say God. Do you love Jesus? yes -- That is our feeling. that is important, but is that what our life says.
   Do you have enough risk and courage to ask those closest to you; who watch you -- What do they see as your top priority?
   We judge our loyalties by how we feel? But that is not often an accurate assessment.
   The Rich Young Ruler had a strong feeling for God - But the actions were not there.
   James 2 - faith without works is dead

We think:

B. He understands. His grace and mercy will cover us.
   We think, “Well God knows the stress and needs I have in my life and he understands why I am not serving him now with my whole heart and life, it is b/c I am young and have a family, or I have to build my career, or I can’t be that weird and different in college, or it is b/c I am only a few years away from retirement and I got to catch up.”
   The problem with this thinking is that it really is a lack of dependence upon God. It is a failure to realize that life would go so much better and smoother if he was the top priority.

We think:

C. Other things are more pressing and temporary.
   One of the primary reasons we cheat on God is that other things are more pressing and temporary. God is always like that spare tire. We want Him there as a part of our life for insurance and reassurance, but we really don’t want him leading our life and walking with us everyday, b/c we think He is just too restrictive.
   Daniel could have easily bought into this idea. - 30 days, only prayer.
   We do it all the time. No time to read Bible, I got to run this errand instead of attending Bible class, I have got to get this work assignment done on
Sunday (even though Sat. was spent in recreation), I have to pay all these bills and there is just no money left at the end for God, etc. etc. God gets cheated b/c he is the last on the list and he is not nearly as demanding in our ears as a husband, boss, wife, or kids.

**How do we give God His place?**

We must determine to quit cheating God.

1. **It begins with a Decision to change.**

   Conversion should be a heart and life change. We have lost the meaning of the word, because it has become so common.

   - Paul on the Road to Damascus
   - Baptism - (Death, Burial, Resurrection) show its importance
   - Repentance

   Rev. 3:19 - He tells the lukewarm brethren at Laodicea to repent.

   So many times we want to set conditions, “When I” or “If I”, we put it off and put it off.

   We have to make a decision.

   - Daniel 6:10 - Daniel didn’t know what would all happen, but he had determined he would not cheat God.

   We have to make the decision and then let everything else work out and fall in line from that point forward. We want to work everything out and then quit cheating.

   By doing so we fail to trust in God. We fail to allow him to work. Daniel gave God an opportunity to come through for him.

2. **Develop New Patterns and Focuses**

   Most of us are deeply intrenched into our family and lifestyle patterns. It takes a real conscious effort to break forth out of those.

   Develop a specific plan and goals

   Not general and not subjective, but determine what God expects from you.
Illustrations:

Determine:

I am going to be in Bible class
I am going to attend Wed. nights
I am going to read my Bible ___ days a week
I am going to pray daily.
I am going to stop cursing, gossiping, etc.

Patterns have to be developed through establishing a habit.

Make God A part of all your life.

Take God out of the trunk and put him in the drivers seat.

This is about a relationship with God. - Look at Daniel and his relationship with God. Rich Young Ruler - thought is was just about keeping the commandments, Jesus says it is about his relationship from the heart with God. He wasn’t willing to go there.

Conclusion

Choosing to Cheat:

There is only so much of you to go around in this life. You only are given so much money, so much time, so much energy, so many opportunities. You have to choose how you spend it. Someone is going to get cheated and not get what you want to give them (yourself) or what you would like to give them. Is it God in your life?

Imagine the day of judgment standing before God. What answer are you going to give him for regularly cheating on him. Taking what should of been His and giving to others. Never having him as the real priority in your life.

You have your excuses. Your feelings for God may be good, and I know you are really busy, maybe it is simply a discipline and time-management issue. Maybe it is a lifestyle and patterns issue.

But what answer are you going to give God.

Look Jesus in the eyes - with the nail-pierced hands. I want you to say - Jesus I love you, but right now my job, my family, my hobby, my time, my money is more important than you are.
Choose to Cheat -- Spouse
Lesson 2 in Series

Opening Illustration:

Story of Jim and Phyllis on page 36 and following of Andy Stanley’s book *Choosing to Cheat*

Choose to Cheat concept that was introduced last week. We are all going to have to cheat something b/c life is too busy and there are not enough resources to go around.

**Are cheating your spouse?**

**Better question - Does your spouse feel cheated?**

**Goal of this series - restructure our lives so that our priorities are in line with God’s priorities.**

*Last week* - Cheating God

*This week* - Cheating our Spouse

I. **God expects us to prioritize our marriages.** *(Don’t spend much time on these details, just make the point that God expects us to prioritize our marriage relationship)*

   a. He gave marriage an exalted place.
      a. Garden - Gen. 2:18-25
      b. Christ emphasized the importance of marriage - Mat. 19:4-6
   b. He tells us to value our marriage.
      a. Deut. 24:5
      b. Eph. 5:28-33
   c. He has given us responsibility in marriage.
      a. Unique roles of husband and wife
      b. 1 Cor. 7:32-35
      c. Titus 2:4, Col. 3:19
      d. 1 Pet. 3:7

II. **Rock Illustration** (get a big visual aid for this point)

   A. Imagine taking a heavy rock and telling your spouse I need you to hold this for me. It is real important and I need you to do it. He says I need you to hold this until I return. You don’t like it or really understand but you love him and want to please him so you do what he asks. Several hours go by and he comes back relieves you for a little bit, then says, I need to go again and do this errand. He asks, “Can you hold the rock?” After a while a friend of his stops by and says he said it would be a little longer, do you mind holding the rock for some time more?
It is has been all day now and you are exhausted, your physical exhaustion has overcome your mental willingness. About that time your spouse pulls into the driveway. the rock slips out of your hand and shatters into a million pieces. He says, “Honey why did you drop my rock, here I brought you some flowers to make up for being gone all day!” (illustration taken from Andy Stanley’s book)

B. We leave our spouse holding the rock when we . . .
   1. ask them to carry our load as well as theirs
   2. absent at critical junctures in family life
   3. find ourselves pointing to the future to somehow make up for the past and the present
   4. assure them that things are going to change and they don’t

C. When the rock falls it creates horrible consequences and everybody knows it.
   1. typically it is one small thing that causes it to fall - straw breaks!
   2. like: being late one too many times, no-shows, a forgotten b-day, a phone call, a comment, a missed game, etc.
   3. Everybody knows when the rock collapses.
      a) It is an affair, a huge fight, an alcohol / drug addiction, radical change in behavior, loss of intimacy, someone moves out.

III. Does our spouse feel they are priority?
   A. What do family members want more than anything else?
      1. Is it love? not really!
      2. It is your priority -- They want to feel accepted and valued.
      3. You say they are the priority -- Not enough “to be” they must “feel”!
         a) A very busy corporate vice president kept assuring the preacher of how much he loved his wife and kids. Finally the preacher interrupted him and said, “The problem is you love your family in your heart, but you don’t love them in your schedule. And they can’t see your heart.”
         b) They must feel the acceptance, approval and love they want.
   B. To please us what family members do is they go along with life. They hold the rock up, thinking this will win them more approval and love. They hope this will win them more acceptance and approval. B/c they fear more than anything a loss in relationship. But over time the rock comes to stand for rejection.
   C. The more you take your loyalty, your time, energy, that you promised to give to your spouse on your wedding day and give it to someone or something else - the more they feel rejected!

IV. The What Proceeds the How!
   A. You have to determine what you are going to do first, then figure out how!! God primarily just tells us the “whats” in life. He gives us the brain to figure out the “how.”
   B. We have to trust God enough to fill in the gaps in the other areas of our life, when we assume the position he wants us to fill! - Husband, wife, father, mother
   C. The “what” is: I am going to quit cheating my spouse.
1. It may mean I am going to quit supporting my cheating spouse! I believe that every couple needs to be willing to sacrifice and life is not always about getting your needs met, but there comes a time, when you see your family headed for trouble that you take a stand and say, I am not going to hold the rock anymore.
2. Do something drastic before the rock shatters and the pieces are impossible to put back together.
3. Illustrate - Jim and Phyllis
4. Don’t facilitate their mis-prioritization.

V. How do we prioritize our spouse?
   A. Give them TIME!
      1. You have to spend large amounts of time working on your marriage. Go for walks, eat meals together, go on date, have some time each day just to connect.
   B. Give them CARE!
      1. You have to be there to emotionally care for their hurts, setbacks, struggles, and problems. Empathize, seek them, love them. Be accepting and caring.
   C. Give them HELP!
      1. Look for opportunities to help them in what they have going on in life. Dishes, laundry, the project, the coaching, etc.
      2. When you give help, it says I care about you and helping you is priority for me over other things.
   D. Give them PRIDE!
      1. Brag on them. Always compliment and encourage them. Let them know how proud you are of them. Express appreciation and love.

Conclusion:

Does your spouse feel cheated?
Ask them

If you are not willing to quite cheating them, then set them down and tell them what it is that you are doing that is taking priority over them - your work, hobby, kids, etc. - Tell them it is more important to you than they are right now.

I am begging you that if you are leaving your spouse holding the rock, please make a change. B/c when that rock crashes it hurts everybody.
   The pieces don't go back together easily.
Choosing to Cheat - Kids
Lesson 3 in Series

Story of James Dobson’s father

The year was 1952. A Nazarene preacher was growing in popularity across the Southwest United States. He was a traveling evangelist. He had a four year slate of meetings filled up. He was on the road most of the time. His wife was back at home raising their child. When their child turned 16 he began to get testy. He was flirting with rebellion and was not respecting his mother. One night the mom called dad on the phone. She said, “I need you.” He called off a 4 year slate of meetings, sold their home out west, moved 700 hundred miles away to take a position with a church until he finished high school. It was an enormous sacrifice, which he never fully recovered from professionally. Dad was home with him during those volatile years, when he could have gotten into serious trouble. His parents gave priority to him when he was sliding close to the brink.

The father was James Dobson Sr., the son - James Dobson Jr.. Now I don’t support all that James has done or all of his doctrinal beliefs, but he has made a tremendous difference in the last 40 years for families across America. His books on parenting are classics and have influenced many for God. It was likely all made possible b/c a dad said, my son is my priority at this time in my life.

We have been discussing priorities around the theme - Choosing to Cheat.

We want to restructure our lives in a way that reflect the priorities of God.

This is a challenging lesson. Anytime you talk about priorities it is sensitive and challenging. Anytime you talk about parenting it is sensitive and challenging. You put them together and it is really is sensitive.

So let me begin by saying:
1) I don’t think we are the perfect model by any means. We are a work in progress. And one of the reasons I study and teach on this is b/c I want to get better too.
2) I am not trying to add guilt, but inspire present change!
3) Apply this to your current situation. You can cheat your kids at any age.

I. God expects us to prioritize Kids
   A. Gen. 1:28
   B. Noah - Heb. 11:7 - “in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.”
   C. Jesus loved little children and said we should care about how we raise them and what we teach them. - Mat. 18:3-6
D. Ephesians 6:4 - “Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”
E. Titus 2:4 -- Mothers are to “Love their children”

II. Leaving them Holding the Rock

   Rock illustration - see Lesson 2 and have the same visual aid.

   The key is that eventually their mental willingness is overcome by their physical exhaustion.

   Kids are wanting acceptance, value, and love. They fear rejection. They want to feel your approval. They want to feel like they are your priority.

   Think back to your own childhood. How important was it for you to feel priority in your father’s world? If you grew up wondering where you fit into his priorities you know the myriad of confusing emotions that that creates as you go through childhood and adolescences.

   What about your mom? Did you have to always compete for your mom’s affection, attention, and love?

   Here is the thing we don’t realize is that family relationships are not about performance they are about priority.

   Work is about how you perform. To a certain degree other friendships and associate relationships are about what you can do for them and give them.

   Family is not about performance but relationships. They want you to just be there. You go to work to get things done; you come home but you are never done! It is just about your presence, your emotions, your heart, your priority.

III. How Do We Cheat Kids?

A. Physically

   1. Neglecting Time With them
      a) Over-scheduling our kids. What are some of your best memories? Typically impromptu things around the house just being together as a family.
      b) When we have time with them we can be so busy doing house chores and hobbies we don’t focus on them.
         (1) Wives - you can cheat your kids for your home!
         (2) Men - tv, ballgames, read, paper, want to relax, unwind
(3) Grandmoms - can be bad at this one. always got to be doing work at home, instead of just enjoying time with kids and family.
(4) parents with adult children - make time for them.

2. Don’t Discipline them or Set limits
   a) Prov. 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,
   b) Prov. 13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.
   c) Kids need guidance and discipline. They are cheated and left holding the rock without discipline.
   d) Often teenagers are given too much freedom and choice at too early of an age. They may want to make decisions, but they don’t need to make their own decisions. They need to be guided and steered in the right direction. Prov. 22:6
      a) Teenagers should not be allowed to decide if they will come to church or Bible class
      b) They should not be allowed unfiltered access to cell phones, TV, or internet. They need supervision and guidance.

3. Give them TOO MANY or TOO LITTLE Responsibilities
   a) Some kids have to grow up too fast. Especially older kids with younger siblings. They often are given the job of the parents.
   b) Others b/c parents are always away have to do too much. They can’t just be a kid.
   c) While others are given too little responsibility. They never have any chores or learn about work. They don’t know the value of a dollar or the pride that comes after a hard day’s work. They are spoiled.

Illustration from book:

VP of a company and outstanding leader. She would try to quit or cut back and they would increase her pay and benefits. She felt she could not afford to go home. She loved her husband, kids and job. But she knew the job was getting her primary attention. She was constantly trying to fill in gaps, patch up holes, and keep the family together. Finally she said, “I am quitting, I don’t care how much money you offer me. I am quitting and going home.”

I am not going to cheat my husband and children anymore. Many times we are trading in what is most valuable to us for dollars. That mother made the choice to prioritize her kids and give them the time they needed.

B. Emotionally
   1. Overexposure that takes away their innocence
      a) Mat. 18:2-6
      b) How do we do this?
         (1) too much of the world - TV, Movies, internet
(2) too much of our own problems
(3) put them in the middle in family relationships
c) We have a responsibility to protect our children.

2. Damaging their Self-image
   a) Now I think that much of the new psychological stuff that is so bent toward
   protecting the child’s self-esteem to the degree that you don’t discipline,
   train, or direct is wrong, but parents must consider the emotional well-
   being of their children.
   b) Build them up rather than tear them down - Col. 3:21
   c) It is one thing to always expect their best and another to make them feel
   like they are never good enough for you and never able to live up to your
   standards. Like your approval is always a carrot on a stick.
   d) The words: “I am proud of you.” “I love you.” “You did a good job” are so
   desired to be heard. By young children yes, but by men and women.
   Dad’s those words you can speak mean so much to your kids.
   e) People think that as they get older it will not matter as much not having the
   approval and love of their parents, it actually bothers them more the older
   they get.

3. Divorce
   a) This is a sensitive and tender subject b/c of all the pain and circumstances
   that surround it. But I had to say this. When you get a divorce you are
   cheating your kids!
   b) Many kids will spend the rest of their life even though they know it is not
   rational blaming themselves for their parents divorce. They want so much
   for mommy and daddy to live together and be happy. There is a real
   sense in that when you chose to bring the child into the world together, you
   were making a pledge to live together in doing such.
   c) Malachi 2:14-15
   d) Greatest gift you can give your children is a healthy marriage.
   Cheat your children for the sake of your husband/wife.
   Your marriage will determine the personal security of your kids.
   It allows them to have future healthy relationships with others.

C. Spiritually
   1. Sammy Jones stated regarding his three sons, “The most important job you
   have as a parent is to spiritually empower your children.” If they are
   successful in everything else but not Christians then we will have great
   sorrow. 3 John 4 - “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in
   the truth.”
   2. We can cheat them by NOT living the Christian life
      a) Your example is so important. It overshadows your words.
      b) They cannot hear what you say, b/c what you are screams so loudly.
   3. Not Taking them to Bible Class and Worship
      a) Kids love Bible class
      b) Kids love the devotionals and youth group activities
      c) But they have to be taken and scheduled to get there.
d) You also cheat your kids when you allow them to choose not to go.
e) Kids you should appreciate your parents for the time they spend running you from place to place.

4. Not Talking to your Kids about Jesus
   a) You need to discuss faith issues
   b) Talk to them about the challenges in life.
      (1) worship issues, all the churches out there, suffering, death,
      (2) creation / evolution, marriage, baptism, etc.
      (3) relationship with God and Jesus
   c) Praying with them
   d) Family devotionals
   e) They need your guidance and mentoring.
   f) Deut. 6:7-9

IV. How Do We Quit Cheating Our Kids?
   A. It is about RELATIONSHIPS!
      1. It is about saying I am going to focus on building and maintaining a close relationship with my family.
      2. Studies from Dr. Dobson’s book - Raising up Boys - p. 91-92
         a) His conclusion: *Parental involvement is the key to getting kids through the storms of adolescence.* Family relationships are what matters to kids.
      3. I don’t care what the age of your kids are. You can be blessed and blessed them by renewing your focus on that relationship.
         a) giving more time to it.
         b) giving more acts and deeds to it
         c) giving more words to it.
      4. You can’t raise your kids focused on quality time in bursts of you. No - You raise your kids by giving them quantity of time and yourself, therefore the quality times and moments will happen!
   B. It is about your relationship with God.
      1. You can’t give your kids what you don’t have.
      2. You got to get your priorities in line with God.

Conclusion:

What changes are you going to make?

Can you tell your kids the other things that are taking your priority are more important than they are?

If we leave our kids holding the rock, eventually the rock falls? When it does it creates a mess that is hard to put back together.
Choosing to Cheat - Work
Lesson 4 in Series

Opening Illustration:
Story of Grant -- p. 116-119 in book Choosing to Cheat by Andy Stanley

Value and Place of Work
God created work and it has a valuable place.
God expects us to work. 2 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:8

In this lesson we want to focus on how work is a place that often robs God and the family. We wrongly choose to cheat on God and family so we can give to work. I am also considering hobbies or recreational interests too.

Daniel 1

In 605 B.C. the Babylonians invaded Judah and sacked Jerusalem. They sought to destroy the identity and culture of Israel. They made it a slave state and took the best and brightest of their young into captivity. They were taught a new language and trained in all the knowledge and wisdom of the Babylonians. They were even given a new name and new clothes.

v. 5 - They receive a daily portion of the king's food.
v. 9 - Daniel drew the line with eating the food.

The food likely had pagan symbolism. They worshipped their pagan gods through offerings of meat and wine. The leftovers were eaten by the king and his court as a final gesture of loyalty. Eating it was a symbol of submission to their authority. It would be a way of giving the gods credit for their wisdom and abilities.

v. 9 -- It was a clear violation of Daniel’s loyalty to God.

Daniel could have thought -- Why rock the boat?
Why should I serve God? Can life can any lower for me? What will a little food hurt?

There were clearly two parties who wanted something from Daniel and he could not satisfy them both: King Nebuchadnezzar or Lord God

Who do you think is going to be more understanding?

When we look at his situation the right thing to do is clear to us.

Notice how Daniel deals with this problem.

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1. **He Makes Up His Mind - v. 8**
   a. He was decisive and determined.
   b. His loyalty was tested by what he ate. Ours is typically tested by how we use our time, resources, and abilities.
   c. Before he knew the outcome of his decision, he resolved not to defile himself. He staked his life on this decision. He would remain faithful to God.

2. **He Developed a Plan - v. 8-9**
   a. He decided to ask the captors to change the rules for him. An incredibly brave and risky move.

3. **He Sets up a Trial - v. 10-20**
   a. He realized the request put’s the king’s official in danger, so he arranges a test or trial.
   b. He says let’s try it for 10 days and see if it makes a difference.
   c. God continues to bless their decisions.

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**Let’s Apply Daniel’s Blueprint to Our lives:**

1. **Make up our mind**
   a. Our excuses -- “but if I do that” - we then become fortune tellers; that is we can list off all of the reasons we can’t stop cheating our families for work.
   b. We are tempted to substitute a condition for a commitment. “When this happens”; “If I . . . “
   c. Re-prioritizing your world around God and family is not just a good idea, it is a God idea. We don’t have an option as Christians.
      i. Scripture doesn’t say, “love your career like Christ loved the church” or “lay down our lives for our retirement” No we “do work” and we “love God and family.”
      ii. The Story of Mike and His bicycle. p. 90-92 - book *Choosing to Cheat*
   d. We have to make up our mind.
      i. You have been hearing these lessons each week. When are you going to make up your mind to really change things. When are you going to quit allowing others to hold your rock!
      ii. Cheating God -- Baptism / Repentance
      iii. Cheating Spouse - Kids - Apologize and Change Behavior
2. **Develop a plan**  
   a. Daniel developed a specific plan.  
      i. He had some non-negotiable parts of his plan. No food or wine from the king. Just promising to do better will not cut it.  
      ii. What change would God most like you to make in your spiritual life?  
      iii. What change would your spouse / kids most like you to make in your schedule and home life?  
   b. Work so many times gets the chief part of our energy and life.  
   c. **The blessings of God are never attained by violating the principles of God.**  
   d. Here is what we so often do. We expect or ask God to fill in the gaps at home, b/c we are so busy and needed filling in the gaps at work. When in actually we are neglecting our families and our role in the kingdom for God to do work, hobbies, etc. that a 1,000 others could do and will do someday; when we are the only one that can fill our role at home.  
   e. Why not ask God to fill the gaps at work or financially for your family, while you do what only you can do at home?

3. **Set up a trial.**  
   a. Daniel did not begin by demanding. He made a request. If you are going to make changes that involve other people use tact.  
   b. He asked for a change in his work conditions.  
   c. He listened to objections from his supervisor and set up a trial.  
   d. 30 day trial would be good.  
      i. I want to challenge you to a 30 day trial.  
      ii. Readjust your schedule, your time, your money to reflect the priorities of God. Determine you are going to give a certain amount, be at worship, read Bible, spend so much time with wife, be at kid’s events, help with homework, spend a Saturday as a family. Have 5 meals a week together at night.  
      iii. Try it for 30 days and look for the “Now God” moments.  
      iv. **Illustration** -- Experiment w/ College students who were given two choices: Go to hear a favorite author who was speaking on campus or go to the library and study - only 23% said go to the library. Given three choices - Go to hear favorite author, go see a new foreign film they had been wanting to see, or go to the library and study -- some 41% said they would go to the library and study. Why? makes no sense - Here is the reason: when they were presented with more choices it forced them to really have to think and prioritize there time and actions. **I want you to think about the choices you are making with your time.**  
   e. Daniel 1:17 - God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom.  
   f. When people do this you hear comments like:  
      i. I get more work done in less time.  
      ii. An opportunity dropped in my lap out of nowhere.  
      iii. A deal I assumed was dead suddenly sprang back to life.  
      iv. I have more business than I can keep up with.  
      v. I feel like my wife is actually happy and excited to see me.
vi. Our family is closer than we have been in years.
vii. I feel like I know my teenager again.
viii. I feel more fulfilled in life.
ix. I am so excited about church. I love my church family.
x. My faith is growing.
g. When we remove our life from so much of the clutter and distractions and really prioritize it and allow our time to reflect those priorities incredible things happen.

Finish Grant's story - p. 116-119 - book Choosing to Cheat

Far too many people have cheated their family to be more loyal to their jobs. Their company doesn’t typically reciprocate that loyalty. Face it; like it or not, you are coming home one day from work for good, either through retirement, lay-off, fired, downsizing, etc. What is going to be at home for you?