



TRANSFORMED

DEVOTIONS CONNECTING TEENS TO CHRIST

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Galatians 5:16-18

Smeagol versus Gollum

Fifteen years ago, four planes were hijacked, and everything changed. Fifteen years ago, the twin towers collapsed into a pile of debris, and everything changed. We're in a war whether or not we see the enemy. More security measures have been put in place to help protect us from an enemy who might be hiding in plain sight. Everything changed fifteen years ago. There is a war on terror that is more and more visible every day.

And yet at the same time, nothing has changed. There is a war in my heart. There is a war, a conflict, in the heart of every Christian. This is a war between the flesh and the Spirit. There is a war between the Christian-me and the sinner-me. There is a war between Gollum and Smeagol. Let me explain.

In *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Gollum is a gangly, pale looking creature who is addicted to and bound to serve the ring. But he wasn't always this way. He began as a pure, wholesome Hobbit named Smeagol. As you get to know this character we see the struggle between Smeagol and Gollum. Smeagol wants to serve and help Frodo on his journey, to do the right thing. Smeagol is joyfully free, eagerly bounding off to get some breakfast for Frodo. Gollum, however, is a wicked little creature who only hates and wants to kill. He is constantly plotting and scheming, trying to find a way to get what he wants. He serves with a grumble and does only enough to get what he wants. At times this creature has a split personality as Smeagol and Gollum face off in his mind.

This is the same war that we find in each of us. The Smeagol (saint) in us wants to serve Jesus and follow God with a joyful and free heart—bounding off to serve him. The Gollum (sinner) in us hates to follow him and lives in self-service!

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo woos the good in Smeagol by calling him by name and leading him with cords of kindness, mercy, and grace. God does the same for us by his Spirit. He woos us to himself by naming us his child at our baptism. He continues to lead us with cords of kindness, mercy, and grace. In this changing world, full of uncertainty and terror, we need our Savior more than ever before. Follow him, won't you? There is no better, no freer way to live.

PRAYER: Father, you call me your child! You have set me free from sin, from condemnation, from hell itself. Help me in the battle against my sinful desires. Help me to overcome. Continue to lead me by your Spirit that I might serve you freely, joyfully, gladly. Amen.