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Daily Devotions: In Step With God

APRIL 23RD 2013 BY BETH FARRAH

Daily Devotions: In Step With God

*Submitted by
Beth Farrah, SMT Writer*

Ephesians 4:1-7 NKJV

- (1) I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,
- (2) with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,
- (3) endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- (4) *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;
- (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism;
- (6) one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.
- (7) But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

People are saved when they trust Jesus Christ as Savior and choose to follow Him. Right then, most Christians realize that they will dwell with Him forever in heaven. But many don't understand what they can expect for the remainder of their lives on earth.

One benefit that's available immediately is a growing relationship with the Lord. The Father's oneness with Jesus (John 10:30) illustrates the intimacy God wants to have with His children. He had this type of closeness in mind at creation—a relationship with man is an avenue for Him to express His love and for us to worship and understand our Maker.

Another advantage is that Christ-followers are promised clear guidance through God's Holy Spirit. Decision making is a part of everyday life. It is impossible for a mere human

to know every variable and nuance before choosing which path to take. But the Lord knows all things—past, present, and future. With godly wisdom available, it's hard to understand why anyone would prefer to trust his own hunches.

Provision is yet another blessing guaranteed for believers. There will be hard times, but God gives Christians everything necessary for following Him (Phil. 4:19). And His grace will always prove more than sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9).

How abundantly God gives to His children! One word of caution, though: these gifts are effective only when believers walk obediently with Him. Sin can stifle them.

The heavenly Father desires that all of His sons and daughters have these blessings; if you're living in obedience before Him, they are available to you. Is anything getting in the way of your total submission to Him?

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Daily Devotions: Acquiring Great Faith

APRIL 19TH 2013 BY BETH FARRAH

Daily Devotions: Acquiring Great Faith

Submitted by

Beth Farrah, SMT Writer

Hebrews 11:17-19 NKJV

(17) By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

(18) of whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR SEED SHALL BE CALLED,"

(19) concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

I've had people tell me, "I wish that I had great faith." While most of us would like God to just drop that kind of confidence in to our laps, it's not the way He operates. Faith increases as a result of our obedience in little things. We all marvel at Abraham's willingness to offer up Isaac at the Lord's command. But have you ever stopped to consider all of his smaller steps of submission that prepared the way for this enormous test?

Throughout his lifetime, Abraham obeyed God. At the Lord's command, he left his country (Gen 12:1-4), was circumcised (17:10, 26), conceived Isaac in his old age (21:1-3), and sent his son Ishmael away (21:9-14). By the time he was asked to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, he already knew that his God would always be faithful to His promises. His previous experiences had taught Him to trust the Lord.

In the same way, each small step of obedience solidifies our confidence in God. Then, when He challenges us with a more difficult assignment, a firm foundation of assurance enables us to trust and obey Him. Great acts of faith flow from our past interactions with the Lord. By neglecting His simple commands, we miss priceless opportunities to witness His faithfulness.

Having trouble trusting God for something big?

Maybe it's because you've ignored those "small" and "insignificant" promptings of the Holy Spirit. The Lord considers each of His commands important and promises to reward

every act of obedience, regardless of size. Great faith begins with little steps.

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Daily Devotions: Fear Less

APRIL 18TH 2013 BY BETH FARRAH

Daily Devotions: Fear Less

Submitted by

Beth Farrah, SMT Writer

The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe. —Proverbs 29:25 (NKJV)

When you scan through the scriptures, you see example after example of people falling prey to the fear of man. And once they fall, it always leads to devastating consequences.

Abraham is known as the forefather of the faith. But keep in mind he compromised his convictions by lying about his wife being his sister because he was afraid of man...and he did this twice! Elijah was perhaps the most powerful prophet in Israel's illustrious history. But he ran and hid in a cave for fear of Ahab and Jezebel. Saul was a king who was head and shoulders over every other Israelite. But he was paralyzed with fear at the sight of Goliath's stature.

The list goes on and on, and each example ends in the same sad state. The fear of man is never a good thing, which is why God goes so far as to warn us against it. He actually describes the fear of man as bringing a snare.

Think of what a snare is and what it does. It lies there and seems so innocent. But once a victim steps onto it, it completely grips and immobilizes them. It prevents them from being free or from going where they want or need to go. That's exactly what happens when we fear man.

God doesn't want that for us. He wants us to be free from the paralyzing effect of fearing man. So He warns us and says, "Focus on me instead." By setting our sights on the Lord and trusting in Him, we sidestep the pitfall of fearing man. It's then and there, when we're preoccupied with the greatness of God, that we recognize we're accountable to someone infinitely greater than any man or woman. We rest secure, knowing nothing can happen to us that He doesn't allow.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)

Every time you read some of God's word you should take this approach:

THINK ABOUT IT...

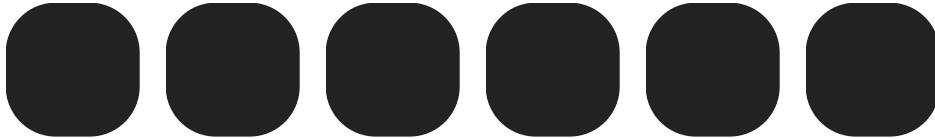
What does this passage reveal to me about God?

What does this passage reveal to me about myself?

Based on this, what changes do I need to make?

What is my prayer for today?

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Daily Devotions: What Lurks Behind Your Anger?

APRIL 11TH 2013 BY BETH FARRAH

Daily Devotions: What Lurks Behind Your Anger?

Submitted by

Beth Farrah, SMT Writer

In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.
—Psalm 4:4

From time-to-time, we all get angry. Some of us are really good at hiding expressions of anger. Others aren't so good at it. Whether we admit it to ourselves or not, anger lurks.

There are no easy answers to anger, but there is an easy question to ask.

The default question most people ask is "What?" What triggered my anger? But, that's not a good question. It's too easy! It's too general! It's not all that helpful.

What triggered my anger? Music, a dirty room, traffic, rudeness, not flushing the toilet, deleted a recorded TV show, etc. Who cares?

Instead of asking “What?” I would encourage you to ask “Why?”

The why question forces you to peel back a layer from the surface and look inside your heart. Instead of asking what triggered my anger (that’s too easy)... ask, why did that trigger my anger?

When you ask what, you’ll continue to blame the triggers and that won’t help you stop the pain.

When you ask why, chances are you’ll discover one of two primary emotions hiding beneath the surface. You might imagine these two emotions hiding in the corner of your soul...one in the fetal position, and one in the attack position.

All curled up in the fetal position will be fear. Every time I try to learn from my anger, I meet fear. I encounter fearful Jim. Fearful Jim who expressed his anger because he was afraid he wouldn’t be a good dad or husband, afraid of failure or rejection, afraid that he can’t control others to compliance, and so on.

The second emotion is hurt. Hurt hides right next to fear, but like a wounded animal, hurt is very dangerous because all it knows how to do is attack others. If I hurt you with my anger, I don’t have to focus on the hurt I feel or reopen the hurtful wounds I’ve never dealt with.

If we don’t learn where anger is coming from, it keeps coming back out, over and over. Perhaps this is why in today’s Scripture, we’re told to “search our hearts.”

If you want to slay the dragon of anger, search your heart. Ask the right question. Learn from your emotions. Change your behavior. Improve your relationships. Easy? No. Doable? Yes.

GOING DEEPER:

1. When you experience anger, are you more likely to ask “Why?” or “What?”
2. When you are angry, how can you benefit from asking “What?” rather than “Why?”

Ephesians 4:30-31 NKJV

(30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

(31) Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

James 1:19-20 NKJV

(19) So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

(20) for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

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Daily Devotions: No Resurrection, No Savior

APRIL 08TH 2013 BY BETH FARRAH

“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.... ye are yet in your sins.” - 1 Corinthians 15: 14, 17

It's an unthinkable question: what if there had been no Easter?

Suppose Jesus had not risen from the dead? Our faith would be futile, death would have dominion, sin would be sovereign and the future would be fearful. His death without His resurrection cannot save anybody. Our faith is worthless if He is still in the grave.

How do we know that Jesus Christ was not just a religious fanatic, someone with a martyr complex who happened to get crucified?

How do we know He is the Son of God, God incarnate?

Romans 1:4 says He is “shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.”

How do we know that God accepted the sacrifice of Calvary? By the resurrection.

The Bible says He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. No resurrection, no Savior. No Savior, no forgiveness. But Jesus went into the tomb and three days later walked out like a butterfly bursting from a cocoon. He is a risen Savior.

He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs.

-Acts 1:3

Albert L. Roper was a prominent Virginia attorney, a graduate of the University of Virginia and its law school, who eventually became mayor of the city of Norfolk. He once began a thorough legal investigation into the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, asking himself the question: Can any intelligent person accept the resurrection story? After examining the evidence at length, he came away asking a different question: Can any intelligent person deny the weight of this evidence?

Even those who traveled for three years with Jesus experienced disbelief over His resurrection, but Jesus showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs. We don't base our faith on legends, myths, or fairy tales. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is well-documented, and many critics have been silenced (and even converted) when they've

carefully investigated the evidence.

We have a risen Savior! He offers Himself to us today with many infallible proofs.

Many people say the Bible is a myth, but they're myth-taken, myth-guided, and myth-erable.
-Vance Havner

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