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Daily Devotional - Softening Your Heart

JULY 22ND 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Softening Your Heart

[Psalms 25:1-22](#)

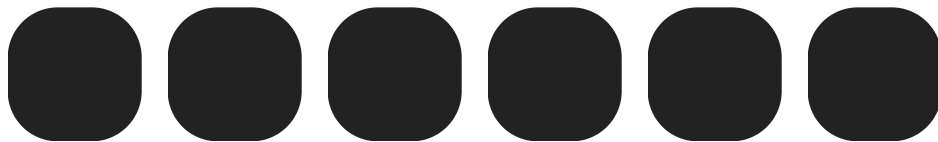
When you are continually on your face before God, seeking Him in His Word, His presence will saturate your heart, making it sensitive and teachable. Just as a marriage relationship can begin to grow cold unless proactive steps are taken daily to keep it warm, your heart can gradually harden when you aren't seeking intimacy with God. You must also obediently—and promptly—respond to whatever He tells you to do so that your heart will stay soft and receptive. Then it won't take much for the Lord to get your attention, and when He convicts you of sin, you will want to deal with the problem right away. This is why we must walk in the Spirit moment by moment.

If you believe that God might be leading you in a certain direction, take the time to earnestly seek His mind on the matter, and open your heart to listen to Him. Be careful about getting busy with a substitute for what He originally called you to do.

It would be tragic to work extra hard doing what you and others consider good, only to discover that your effort was expended in accomplishing something that was not God's intention. Resisting the Lord often amounts to putting your life on the shelf, which leaves you feeling that something is missing. There is no substitute for God's will, even when His plan might seem difficult or impossible. But when you trust Him with a cooperative heart, there is no limit to what God can do through your life. Step out in obedience today and say, "Lord, I want Your will—no matter what."

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Daily Devotional - Friendship: A Help to Holiness

JULY 21ST 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friendship: A Help to Holiness

[John 15:12-15](#)

In all of God’s creation, just one thing did not meet with His approval. He beheld Adam, who was the only being of his kind, and said, “It is not good for the man to be alone” ([Genesis 2:18](#)). The Creator designed people for emotional, mental, and physical intimacy so they’d be able to share their innermost selves with one another.

Jesus explained this to His disciples, saying they should love each other as He had loved them. In a God-honoring friendship, two people build each other up and spur one another toward Christlikeness. Many people, however, fall far short of making and maintaining relationships that sharpen their faith ([Proverbs 27:17](#)). They instead welcome the trivial talk of casual acquaintances: The weather, tough bosses, and world affairs are safe topics. Sadly, believers often shy away from the penetrating conversations about sin,

accountability, and biblical living that would serve to enrich their faith.

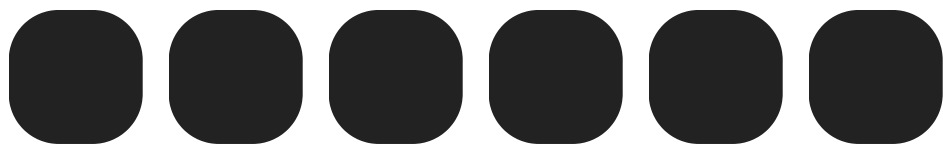
Strong relationships begin with men and women who decide to risk their pride and comfort in order to love as Jesus does. They recognize that one of the reasons we have friends is so we can motivate one another toward holiness. In a friendship of mutual trust and submission, two people will confess sin, offer gentle reproof, and share burdens.

The walls we build to keep people at a distance are often defenses against God as well: We don't want Him too close to our most personal business. But as believers learn to share openly and freely with a brother or sister in Christ, they develop the capacity to be more honest with God.

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Daily Devotional - The Need for Friendship

JULY 20TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

2 Timothy 4:9-22

Independence is a prized attribute in our culture, but biblically, it isn't a worthy aspiration. Nowhere in Scripture will you find the erroneous quote, "God helps those who help themselves." The very fact that the Lord formed the church—a community of believers—should tell us that He did not create people for self-sufficiency or isolation.

When we place faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit indwells us so we can have a fulfilling relationship with the Lord and satisfying friendships with one another. In God's design, a close, committed biblical friendship between two believers serves to build both toward Christlikeness. Over and over in Scripture, we find evidence of God's followers relying upon a close friend or confidante for support. Paul, in particular, spoke freely and often of his dependence upon dear companions and encouraged others to form intimate partnerships as well (2 Timothy 2:22).

It's interesting to me that our modern culture seems to be headed in the opposite direction. The farther we drift from God, the more pervasive our self-sufficient attitude becomes. Neighbors treat each other with suspicion instead of congeniality, and that mindset has even invaded the church. We're hesitant to give to others, which in turn makes us reluctant to receive.

Scripture tells us to love one another, bear our brothers' burdens, and confess our sins to fellow believers (John 13:34; Galatians 6:2; James 5:16). In other words, we're to give ourselves away to others and receive from them in return. That's how church members can encourage one another to Christlikeness.

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Daily Devotional - The Grace of God

JULY 19TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - The Grace of God

[Romans 5:1-2](#)

Grace is far more than a mealtime prayer. The word communicates the idea of blessing. As children of God, we are the recipients of grace, which is poured out on us by our heavenly Father. Let's look at how we experience this amazing benefit of His love.

God's favor is seen in our salvation, as [Ephesians 2:8](#) tells us: "For by grace you have been saved." The blessing is undeserved and unearned—nothing about us prompted God to save us. He acted purely out of His goodness, sacrificing His precious Son Jesus Christ in our place. In that way, we could be reconciled to the Father and adopted into His family.

Grace is also the sphere in which we live the Christian life. At salvation, we were transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light ([Colossians 1:12-13](#)). Here, we live out our new identity as God's children and carry out His purpose of glorifying Him—both of which result in manifold blessings.

The beauty of grace becomes especially clear when we consider who we once were—a people hostile to the Lord and alienated from Him. We were spiritually dead, living according to our own selfish interests ([Ephesians 2:1](#)). But now, through faith in Jesus as our Savior, God has justified us and given us new life. He has declared that we have right standing before Him ([Romans 8:1](#)). All of our sins were placed upon Jesus, and His righteousness has been credited to our account permanently.

Picture yourself living in the favor of God. Internalize this truth, and then give Him thanks.

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Daily Devotional - Developing Faith Through Adversity

JULY 17TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Daily Devotional - Developing Faith Through Adversity](#)

[2 Corinthians 11:23-30](#)

It doesn't seem fair, does it? Paul spent the second half of his life serving Christ, and yet he experienced continual suffering. Why would God let one of His most faithful servants go through so much pain? This isn't a question just about Paul; it's an issue we face today. In our minds, the Lord should protect His loyal followers from hardships, but He doesn't necessarily do so.

Maybe our reasoning is backwards. We think faithful Christians don't deserve to suffer, but from God's perspective, suffering is what produces faithful Christians. If we all had

lives of ease without opposition, trials, or pain, we'd never really know God, because we'd never need Him. Like it or not, adversity teaches us more about the Lord than simply reading the Bible ever will.

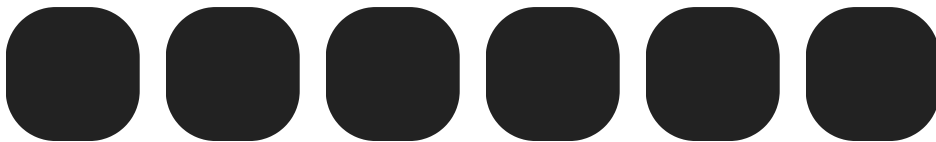
I'm not saying we don't need to know Scripture; that's our foundation for faith. But if what we believe is never tested by adversity, it remains head knowledge. How will we ever know that God can be trusted in the midst of trouble if we've never been challenged by hardship? The Lord gives us opportunities to apply scriptural truths to the difficulties facing us, and in the process, we find Him faithful. For example, how would Paul ever have known the strength of Christ if he had never been weakened by persecution, pain, and adversity?

Depending on your response, trials can be God's greatest means of building faith or an avenue to discouragement and self-pity. If you'll believe what Scripture says and apply its principles to your situation, your trust in God will grow, and your faith will be strengthened through adversity.

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