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Daily Devotional - The Price of Loyalty

SEPTEMBER 16TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - The Price of Loyalty

Ruth 1

The Christian life isn't free of obligations. The many "one anothers" in the Bible are God's instructions about how to treat people in our circles and give of ourselves to enrich those relationships. Yet many people today prefer not to invest in deep friendships, opting instead for casual acquaintances that demand little. The devoted loyalty of Ruth—a pagan from Moab—stands in sharp contrast to such superficiality.

Casual friends can talk about politics, movies, and sports but avoid discussing deep concerns. Then they won't have to bear anyone else's burdens or heartbreak. But neither will they learn the deep joy of expressing loyalty to a person in need. The human heart was created to crave intimate fellowship—the kind of connectedness that can share feelings without fear of judgment. Because of loyalty based on mutual trust and love, close companions can point out blind spots and challenge each other to greater faith.

Ruth is an example of this kind of selfless dedication. When her mother-in-law Naomi went through a bitter period of hopelessness and loss, the young widow Ruth chose to follow the older woman. Though this meant sacrificing the comforts of home and any prospect of marriage to a countryman, she demonstrated absolute allegiance.

Loyalty demands a high price that too few are willing to pay. Some hold acquaintances at arm's length to avoid obligation. But believers are saved to stand together in love and encourage one another ([John 13:34](#); [1 Thess. 5:11](#)). Doing so brings blessing, even when there's a cost.

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Daily Devotional - Responding to Conflict

SEPTEMBER 15TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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[Matthew 18:21-35](#)

Conflict is part of life. It may originate from misunderstandings, a difference of opinion, or deep convictions. But oftentimes, discord stems from envy, pride, or hunger for power.

No one can control another person's response to conflict; we're accountable only for how we handle it. Sadly, many people have unhealthy reactions to disagreement. Some ignore the issue or pretend it doesn't exist. Others place blame while defending themselves.

These negative responses often indicate one of three underlying scenarios. First, past hurts can leave a person emotionally insecure and unable to handle criticism. Second, a perfectionist sets such high benchmarks that he can never live up to his own

standards—then it’s hard to acknowledge mistakes. Finally, pride makes it hard for some to admit when they’re wrong or to ask forgiveness.

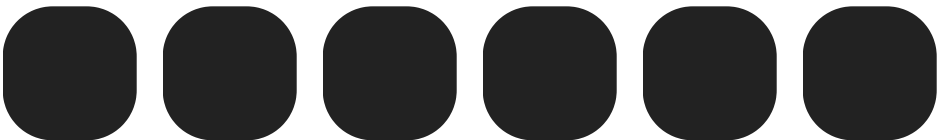
Unless we respond correctly to conflict, we limit our potential to grow, because we aren’t learning what the Lord is teaching. Also, we can develop an unforgiving spirit, which leads to bitterness and resentment. Eventually, such an attitude can destroy relationships.

There is also a positive way to handle conflict. [Luke 23:34](#) reveals how our Savior responded when He was wrongly accused, unfairly judged, and killed for something He didn’t do. Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

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Daily Devotional - Confronting Conflict

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Daily Devotional - Confronting Conflict

Galatians 2:11-16

The Scriptures record many instances of conflict between nations, among friends, and in families. Today we see the same types of problems. While fighting, people can say harsh and even unfair words. Their accusations create turmoil and emotional pain. What we believe will determine the way we respond to such difficulties.

God's Word proclaims His sovereignty over nature ([Ps. 135:6](#)), government ([Job 12:23](#)), and mankind ([Acts 17:25](#)). Nothing in heaven or on earth is hidden from Him or outside of His control. So, how does this help us in a conflict? First, our Father knows when people verbally attack us, and He has promised to protect us. Nothing can touch His children apart from His permissive will. Second, He has the power to work the painful times we endure into something beneficial ([Rom. 8:28](#)). We can have hope because His will cannot be thwarted, even in bad circumstances. Finally, we are His beloved children. He is a loving Father who understands what we are going through and always remains by our side. As His sons and daughters, we are not on our own.

When we believe in the Lord's sovereign rule, our perspective on hard times changes. Instead of responding with fear, anger, or resentment, we will turn to Him in prayer and ask for guidance.

Conflict is inevitable. When we, or something we have done, is the source of the turmoil, we are to apologize. If others are at fault, we may have to confront them the way Paul did with Peter. But we are also called to forgive without exception. As Christ's ambassadors, the way we respond really matters.

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Daily Devotional - The Purpose of Our Trials

SEPTEMBER 10TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - The Purpose of Our Trials

1 Peter 4:12

Some believers like to portray their lives as ideal and carefree. But in reality, being a Christian isn't always easy. In fact, sometimes we'll experience trials that truly test our faith and ability to trust in God.

In today's passage, Peter refers to times of testing as "fiery ordeals." He says we shouldn't be surprised when adversity comes our way. It's important to remember that God has a purpose for our trials and will see us through each step of the way. But what purpose does God have for the hardships we face?

First, the heavenly Father will sometimes use painful experiences to cleanse and purify His children's lives. Trials drive us to the Lord. Then, as we begin to focus on Him, we're increasingly able to see things from His perspective and often become more aware of our sin.

Second, the Lord at times allows difficulty in our lives as a way of testing us—He might be trying our faith, endurance, or devotion to Him. He uses such experiences to reveal something about our spiritual development and to strengthen our faith.

Third, God uses suffering to demonstrate His power to sustain us. When He brings us through difficult times, He glorifies Himself. In turn, this encourages others when they experience trials, because they have witnessed God's sustaining power in our lives.

Ultimately, hardships strengthen our testimony. In the midst of our struggles, we might feel overwhelmed. But once the storm has passed, we can often look back and see the

Lord's providential hand carrying us through.

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Daily Devotional - Salvation: The Work of Our Sovereign God

SEPTEMBER 09TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Salvation: The Work of Our Sovereign God

Ephesians 2:1-10

Salvation refers to the freedom gained when God rescues someone from slavery to sin and makes that person part of His family. This deliverance is accomplished only through His Son Jesus, who died in our place so we might be reconciled to the Father ([Col. 1:22](#)). This statement often evokes questions:

What if I try to live morally right, working hard at my job and being good to my family—won't God accept me? Such questions assume that the Lord saves us on the basis of the way we live. But [Romans 3:10](#) says, “There is none righteous, not even one.” In God's sight, even our virtuous acts are like dirty rags ([Isa. 64:6](#)). Holy God will not have dealings with unrighteous people except through the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Won't the Lord accept us because of His goodness? God is loving and good, but He is also just. He won't overlook sin, no matter how small we think it is. Pride makes us reject the idea that we need forgiveness or cleansing from sin.

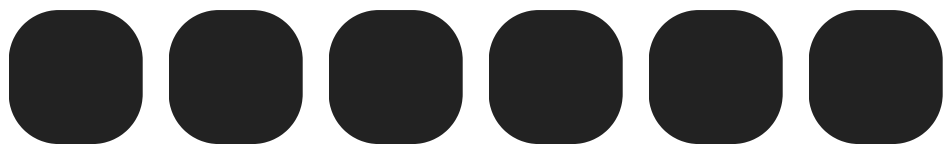
If we serve in our church or help the poor in God's name, aren't we part of His family? Good works do not solve our sin problem or reconcile us to God. Only Jesus does ([Rom. 5:1](#)). Good works are an important *result* of salvation, as opposed to a basis for it.

Salvation is a work of God's grace, not the product of man's effort. When we respond to the Spirit's prompting, believe in Jesus, and are born again as God's children ([John 3:3](#)), we can be assured of our place in heaven. How sure are you?

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