



[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Our Source of Hope

JANUARY 04TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Our Source of Hope

Titus 2:11-14

People have different opinions about who goes to heaven. Some believe ethical behavior and moral character bring automatic acceptance from God. Others, while acknowledging they have bad habits and behaviors, claim a self-improvement plan gains them admission. Still others assume they'll be disqualified from heaven because of deep hurts they caused.

None of this lines up with the truth of the Bible. Scripture tells us that character and deeds do not determine our eternal state (Eph. 2:8-9). Rather, the barrier between us and a holy God is our sinful nature. Romans 5:12 teaches that Adam and Eve's sin caused all mankind to begin physical life dead to spiritual things and under a sentence of judgment. No amount of good works or moral behavior can change our unholy nature. Nor do bad choices make our nature worse.

Without direct help from the heavenly Father, we'd be a people without hope—we would find the entrance to heaven closed and face everlasting separation from God. But our loving Father had a plan to deal with our corrupt nature so we could live with Him for eternity. He sent His Son Jesus Christ as our willing substitute: Jesus took our sins on Himself and received the punishment we deserved. What we were helpless to do, He accomplished for us. Through faith in Him, we have assurance that we will live in the presence of God forever.

Knowing we're heaven bound gives hope and meaning to our lives. Let's tell others about Jesus, the source of our hope.

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Daily Devotional - Created to Praise

JANUARY 03RD 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Created to Praise

Psalms 103

Do you ever wonder why you exist? Day-to-day activities and worries pull us in so many directions that most of us seldom think about the goal of life. But our Creator made us with a purpose: to glorify Him (Isa. 43:7).

In His Word, God is emphatic that we are to testify to His faithfulness and His mighty works. Jesus Christ considered this important as well—when teaching His disciples how to communicate with God, He began His well-known prayer with adoration of His Father (Matt. 6:9).

Why, then, do we tend to give so much attention to our petitions but so little to praising God? Perhaps some believers consider themselves too time-constrained to spend “extra” prayer time praising the Lord. Others may feel awkward expressing their gratitude to Him. Yet no excuses are acceptable. Psalm 103:2 tells us to remember God’s benefits so we will humbly glorify Him. This psalm also explains how to lift the Father up with our words—specifically, we should praise God for His character and for His work in the past, present, and future (Ps. 103:2-8, Ps. 103:19).

The Old Testament’s primary words for “praise” refer to spoken words, music, and gestures like raising hands and dancing. But we can also glorify Him in other ways, such as through actions, thoughts, and creativity.

Praise may be something foreign to you. But it’s the very purpose for which you were created. Observe how the Father is exalted in the Psalms and throughout the Bible. Then worship Him with praise as you spend time basking in His presence today.

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[Go to post](#)



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Daily Devotional - A Man After God's Heart

JANUARY 02ND 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - A Man After God's Heart

Acts 13:13-22

Have you ever visited a cemetery and seen a gravestone with a poignant epitaph of the person buried there? It's not uncommon to see descriptions like "Devoted Mother" or "Beloved Friend" on these markers. In the distant future, what would you want someone to read etched on your tombstone? What epitaph would summarize the best part of your life?

In the book of Acts, we discover how history remembered mighty King David. In a sermon to a primarily Jewish group, the apostle Paul referred to David, who was well known to the audience. Remembering all of the king's great accomplishments during his reign, how did Paul choose to describe him? He declared that David was the one person whom God called "a man after His own heart." (See Acts 13:22; 1 Samuel 13:14.)

What does it mean to be a person after God's own heart? For David, it required an intimate relationship with his Father (Ps. 63:1, Ps. 6-8). This entails much more than simply a regular routine of rote prayers and church attendance. Rather, such intimacy is founded upon an intense yearning to grow as close to the loving Father as possible (Ps. 42:1).

What would it take for you to be described as a man or woman after God's own heart? What activities, thoughts, or behaviors would need to be removed from your life? What would need to be added? Ask God for His help in making these adjustments—and for the commitment to make this epitaph the goal of your life.

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Daily Devotional - The Greater Purpose of Blessings

JANUARY 01ST 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - The Greater Purpose of Blessings

Psalms 67

It is God's nature to bless. However, we need to understand that His purpose is greater than we may realize. His ultimate goal encompasses far more than simply making us happy, peaceful, protected, and prosperous. In fact, it's never the Lord's intention for His blessings to end with us. Rather, He wants them to flow out to others as part of His plan for the whole earth.

As we see in today's psalm, the Lord blesses us so that His salvation, His ways, and His justice may be known by every nation and people group around the globe (Ps. 67:3-4, Ps. 67:7). He's always acting with this larger picture in mind—even while working personally in each believer's life.

Knowing this should fill us with an awesome yet humbling sense of significance. Every Christian has a part in helping others know and understand the one true God. Each blessing that benefits us personally is also intended to help further His plans for the kingdom. On the other hand, we sometimes may not receive things we want because they don't contribute to God's higher purpose. But if we fit our requests into the Lord's greater plans, we position ourselves to be used mightily by Him.

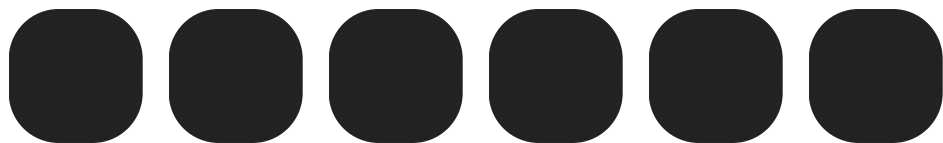
When your Father blesses you, He's not only doing something *for* you; He's also doing something *in* and *through* you to affect the lives of others. Don't let the pleasures and comforts of His blessings blind you to their intended purpose. Ask the Lord how to use His kindnesses as a way to point people to Him.

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[Go to post](#)



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Daily Devotional - the Key to Financial Blessing

DECEMBER 29TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - the Key to Financial Blessing

Malachi 3:7-12

All of us struggle when there's a discrepancy between what our minds know to be true and what we feel in our emotions. One area that believers typically find difficult is finances.

Understanding what the Bible says about money, do we choose truth or do we allow our ever-changing feelings to dictate our actions? Believers find it easy to give God one penny out of a dime or one dollar out of 10, but when the numbers grow bigger—100 out of a 1,000 or a 1,000 from 10,000—we often balk. However, we can't expect the Lord to bless us financially if we're not supporting His work.

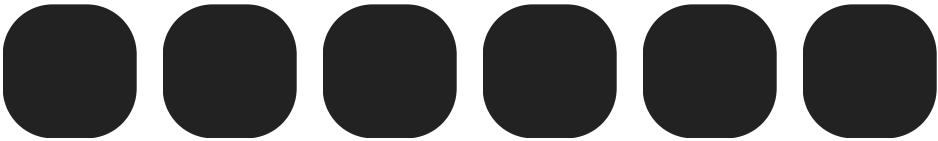
Scripture speaks about giving a whole tithe—one-tenth of our earnings or 10 percent of whatever we produce, according to Deuteronomy 14:22. We should also note that we're to give God the first portion of our income, not what's left over at the end of the month.

God's tithe goes into His storehouse—the church. From there, what's offered can be channeled into the Lord's work throughout the world. Imagine how many great ministries and outreaches would close if money dried up. Sharing the gospel is both a spiritual and financial responsibility.

When we refuse to give our portion, we block the flow of God's blessing in our own lives. Often we decide to offer less than a tithe because we don't trust His provision. Our Father has promised us protection and plenty if we follow His mandates. Give the Lord His due and see what great blessings He provides.

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