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Daily Devotional - January 2, 2017 - Setting Goals for Fruitful Living

JANUARY 02ND 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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2 Samuel 7:18-22

In the 70s, I experienced a turning point in my walk with Christ. It started with 2 Samuel 7, which inspired me to follow in King David's footsteps. He spent time alone with God, offering praise and thanksgiving. He also listened as the Lord revealed truth and offered insight about the future. Because of what he learned, David was able to set goals and stay aligned with them.

Desiring that kind of solitude, I spent several days alone in a camper at Georgia's Stone Mountain Park. Most of the time I remained silent, listening intently for God's voice. I asked Him to speak to me regarding my future, and He answered. Using a journal, I recorded the goals He inspired. The things He communicated so impacted my choices and so greatly blessed me that I continued the discipline every couple of months.

Let's discuss how to establish aims in this manner. First, come before the throne of almighty God with a repentant heart, praise, and thanksgiving. Then, ask Him for direction in areas such as spiritual life, career, and family. In silence, wait patiently and attentively—as you read and meditate upon God's Word, He will speak. Most often, His guidance is experienced as a prodding or conviction in the heart. When that happens, be sure to write down what you're learning so you can review it later.

In order to stay on the path God intends for our life, we should plan times to stop, ask, and listen for guidance. The world throws confusing messages at us all day long, and we need to check our course frequently. These conversations with the Lord are vital for a thriving life of godly impact.

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Friday, December 23, 2016 Daily Devotional - Indifference to Christmas

DECEMBER 23RD 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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[Matthew 2:1-6](#)

Each year, there's a predictable variety of responses to the celebrations and traditions of the holiday season. During the next few days, we will examine three reactions to Christmas. Although 2,000 years have passed since Christ was born, His birth still elicits similar attitudes.

One common response is indifference. Even if they are filled with the holiday spirit and celebrate Christmas with gifts, dinners, decorations, and parties, some people remain totally indifferent to Jesus. He doesn't even cross their minds because they've lost sight of the reason for Christmas.

In the story of the magi's search for the newborn King of the Jews, we see a surprising indifference on the part of the religious leaders. The entourage from the East caused quite a stir in Jerusalem. It wasn't every day that impressive visitors arrived with such a shocking and exciting announcement. Yet when King Herod asked the scribes and chief priests where the Messiah was to be born, they simply told him the answer but made no attempt to go to Bethlehem themselves. Their lives were already filled with their religious duties, and they had no time or interest in anything that might disrupt their positions of prominence and authority.

Sometimes it's easy to let the activities and pressures of Christmas push Jesus out of our thoughts. After all the shopping is finished, the gifts are wrapped, and the food is prepared, we might rush off to a Christmas Eve service. But even then, we often feel distracted. Though it may take deliberate refocusing, this year let's intentionally make Jesus the priority of Christmas.

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Thursday, December 22, 2016 Daily Devotional - Free to Enjoy God

DECEMBER 22ND 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Psalm 37:3-5

The gospel writers spoke about children coming to Jesus, giving the impression that the young were very comfortable around Him ([Matt. 18:2-3](#); [Matt. 19:13-14](#)). Some probably climbed onto His lap, while others perhaps sat at His feet. We can picture them asking Him lots of questions, begging to hear more parables, and whispering secrets in His ear. It isn't surprising that they would gather around Jesus; children can usually sense when an adult loves them deeply.

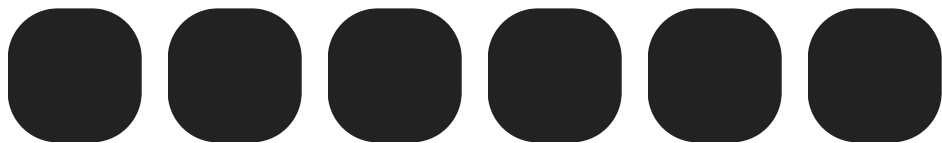
Contrast this snapshot of the Savior's welcoming, loving nature with the picture some Christians have of God—they see Him as a judgmental taskmaster who motivates by intimidation. While it's true that we are to obey the Lord's commands, we're also to delight in Him, just as we would enjoy the company of a close friend.

Do you think of God as a stern overlord who weighs good actions against bad? If so, you'll have trouble considering Him a friend. Christians who envision a harsh God devote much time and energy to proving their salvation is deserved. How much better to have a biblically accurate view—namely, that God, while sovereign over the universe, balances authority with love. He wants us to relax and enjoy spending time with Him.

Taking pleasure in the Lord requires that we understand His attitude toward us: Our Father loves us passionately. He sees past our faults and mistakes to the precious child He created. In fact, He loves us so much that He sent Jesus Christ to save us and enable us to be with Him in heaven eternally. We have no greater friend!

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Wednesday, December 21, 2016 Daily Devotional - Our True Identity

DECEMBER 21ST 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Wednesday, December 21, 2016 Daily Devotional - Our True Identity

[Ephesians 1:3-8](#)

When I hear a believer say, “I’m just a sinner,” I feel like responding, “That’s what you used to be.” A lot of folks cling to a view of themselves as a patched-up, slightly-better-than-before version of their old self. The Word of God contradicts that opinion: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:17). In fact, according to Scripture, we’re dramatically different once we are complete in the Lord.

The question is, Will Christians trust in what they feel, or will they believe what God says about them? His Word calls us saints ([Rom. 1:7](#)), disciples ([John 13:34-35](#)), and fellow heirs with Christ ([Rom. 8:17](#)). If your opinion is that you are “just a sinner,” then you cannot fully experience and enjoy your identity as a follower of God.

Believing what the Lord says about our new self is a choice. Satan certainly schemes to convince believers that Scripture doesn’t apply to them. He knows that people held captive by spiritual poverty back away from opportunities to share the gospel and serve God’s kingdom. It’s much easier to spiritually bankrupt someone who already thinks of himself as “just a sinner” than it is to conquer a disciple who knows he is a child of the loving heavenly Father.

Our true identity is defined not by our past actions but by the Savior’s. Jesus purchased our lives with His blood and brought us into relationship with the Father, who adopted us as His beloved children. We have every reason to hold our heads high, stand firm, and courageously proclaim the gospel.

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Tuesday, December 20, 2016 Daily Devotional - Who We Are in Christ

DECEMBER 20TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

Tuesday, December 20, 2016 Daily Devotional - Who We Are in Christ

1 Peter 1:1-7

Peter wrote the first of his two epistles to encourage people who were undergoing persecution. And the disciple decided to begin the letter by reminding believers of who they are in the Lord.

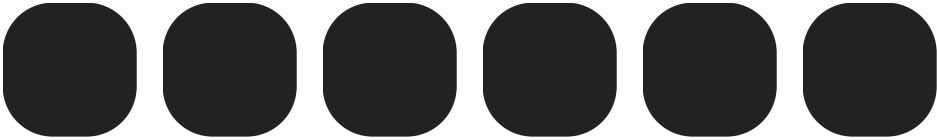
Believers are chosen in Christ. It's not that the Lord selects some people to enter heaven and others to go to hell. Rather, the good news of Jesus Christ is offered to all humanity ([John 3:16](#); [Rom. 1:20](#))—salvation is for everyone who receives the Savior through an act of free will. The bottom line is that God wants you (2 Pet. 3:9).

Believers are recipients of mercy. No one can claim that his or her righteous works earned a place in heaven. We are saved through the mercy of Christ alone ([Titus 3:5](#)). God loved us so much that He made a way for us to be in relationship with Him now and forever.

Believers are protected. [Psalm 34:7](#) says, “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him.” We are so well guarded that the only way our life can be touched by hardship is if God allows it. That doesn't mean we won't experience loss or upheaval. Sometimes the Father permits His children to walk through dark valleys, but always the protective shepherd, He remains by their side ([Psalm 23:4](#)).

The message of Peter's letter is simple: Do not be afraid when you go through trying times. Focus on who you are in Jesus Christ. You have reason to be bold, assured, and triumphant, because you are a chosen, beloved, and well-protected child of God.

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