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Daily Devotional, Monday, August 14, 2017 - Overcoming Obstacles

AUGUST 14TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Matthew 17:14-21

Nothing is impossible for the heavenly Father. No obstacle confuses God or poses any kind of challenge for Him. Though we know He is sovereign over every situation, we have trouble maintaining this perspective, just like the disciples in today's passage. Too often when difficulties arise, we ...

Experience a shift in focus. During trials, we tend to take our eyes off the Lord and instead see only our problems. The longer we look at our circumstance, the larger it seems. As we dwell on it in thought and conversation, our mindset can become very negative. Though God still has a direction for us to take, we are no longer concentrating on His purposes.

Develop an incorrect assessment of resources. In our troubles, we start taking inventory of our own strength and abilities. When they prove insufficient, we become discouraged. The truth is that we don't have what is needed for life's trials—Jesus Himself told us that. (See John 15:5 .) But God's capabilities are unlimited, His power is never-ending, and His wisdom is complete. We need to take stock of His resources, not our own.

View obstacles as barriers. For the obedient believer, impediments represent opportunities, not problems. The Lord can demonstrate His awesome power through our difficulties. (See 2

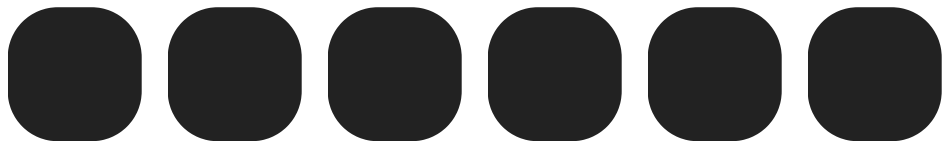
Corinthians 12:7-10.) At such times, we grow in our faith and learn more about our Father. If we view hardships simply as troubles, then we can miss demonstrations of God’s love, power, and wisdom.

Start each day committed to a Christ-centered focus, a dependence on His resources, and an “opportunity” mindset.

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Daily Devotional, Friday, August 11, 2017 - Jesus Christ, Bondservant

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Philippians 2:5-7

The disciples gathered around a table to celebrate Passover with Jesus. If one of them had been more thoughtful of the others—or possessed a spirit of servanthood—he would have done the very thing Christ did: take water and a cloth, kneel before the 12 other men, one at a time, and wash their feet. Jesus came into this world as a servant (Matt. 20:28). He was willing to do whatever was necessary to move men and women’s hearts and bring them to a saving knowledge of God.

A bonds slave was the lowest of household servants, and he had the distasteful job of washing the feet of anyone who entered the home. This is the very task Christ voluntarily performed that evening, right before His trial and sufferings would begin. His act was a foreshadowing of the service He was about to render on behalf of the whole world—by dying on the cross for humanity’s sin.

We who believe in Jesus Christ do not call Him “slave”; we identify Him as our Master. So when He says that a servant is not greater than His master, He is speaking of our relationship with Him (John 13:16). Believers bend their knees to God’s most humble servant, His Son. How are you serving the almighty Lord?

Christians are God’s workmanship, created for the purpose of good works (Eph. 2:10). In other words, we were saved to serve. Therefore, there is no valid excuse for refusal. When you surrender to the Lord, you step onto the pathway of Jesus Christ, which is the best possible way to live.

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Daily Devotional, Thursday, August 10, 2017 - The Believer's Highest Honor

AUGUST 10TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Thursday, August 10, 2017 - The Believer's Highest Honor

John 12:24-26

I'll never forget the best introduction I've ever received as an invited speaker. The presenter simply said, "It is my great pleasure to introduce to you my brother, Charles Stanley, servant of the Most High God." I couldn't move from my seat for a few moments; I was so struck by this opening that glorified the Lord and identified my proper position.

The Word of God describes believers as ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20), soldiers (2 Tim. 2:3), and saints (Eph. 2:19). But the highest honor that we can receive is to be called servants of the Most High God. From the world's perspective, those who die to self in order to follow the Lord may stand in last place—in reality, however, they are first in His kingdom. (See Matt. 20:16.)

Sadly, service to God is often equated solely with what goes on at church. The preacher serves. The choir serves. The worker in the soup kitchen serves. But the guy pushing papers and the woman cleaning up others' messes tend to be seen as simply doing their jobs. From the Father's vantage point, though, work well done brings as much glory to His name as a song lifted in praise. (See Col. 3:23-24.) So take heart—if you're doing quality work and striving to make an impact on those around you, then you are serving God.

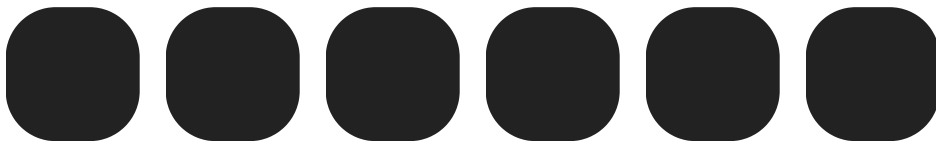
Service to the Lord is not about *what* we do, but rather *how well* we do all that the Lord has given us to accomplish (1 Peter 4:10). A good servant shares both Jesus Christ's attitude of

humility and His motivation to reach people with the love of God.

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Daily Devotional, Wednesday, August 9, 2017 - Prayer on Behalf of the Church

AUGUST 09TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Wednesday, August 9, 2017 - Prayer on Behalf of the Church

Colossians 1:1-12

Today we meet Epaphras, a man who had a heart for the local church. He was most likely converted to Christ under Paul's teaching when the gospel was rapidly spreading throughout

Asia Minor. Epaphras evangelized his hometown of Colossae and founded a church there—and possibly the churches in Hierapolis and Laodicea as well.

Although very little is written about Epaphras in the New Testament, the letter to the Colossians emphasizes his great love and deep concern for Christ’s church (Col. 4:12-13). At the close of the letter, Paul points out that Epaphras is “always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God” (v. 12).

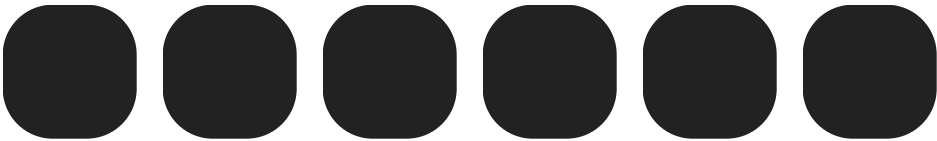
What he was asking for wasn’t greater numbers or bigger offerings but spiritual maturity and the true knowledge of God’s will. At that point in time, Epaphras was in prison with Paul (Philem. 1:23), and he couldn’t refute the false teachers who’d infiltrated the church at Colossae. But being apart from his congregation didn’t mean he was helpless. Intercession is a powerful ministry. It can alter circumstances, change thinking, and bring God’s truth to light. Epaphras went to his knees to plead for the church, and Paul joined him, which we see in his prayer in Colossians 1:9-14. (See also Col. 1:7)

Is anything weighing on your heart? Do you feel helpless to remedy the situation? If so, follow Epaphras and Paul’s example: Go to the One who knows exactly what to do and has the power to accomplish it. Then rest in Him and let His peace guard your heart and mind.

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Daily Devotional, Monday, August 7, 2017 - Getting Your Life Back on Course

AUGUST 07TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Monday, August 7, 2017 - Getting Your Life Back on Course

Hebrews 12:1-3

How do you view your life? Is it an exciting challenge filled with contentment and joy? Or does it feel more like a ditch that has you trapped and struggling?

Our Creator gives each person the specific gifts, abilities, and circumstances necessary to live according to His purpose (Heb. 13:21). Sadly, many people drift through life without taking hold of God's terrific plan for them. Instead, they try to manufacture their own pleasure, not realizing that the Almighty's best is where true fulfillment is found.

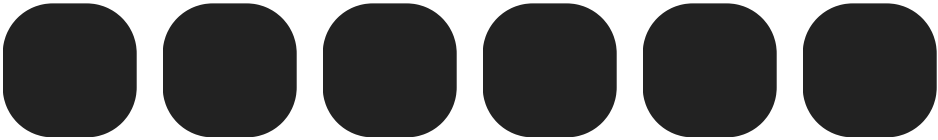
Unfortunately, there are also many saved individuals who walk with the heavenly Father for a time but then get off track. This happens for a variety of reasons. Some become fainthearted and lose the desire to persevere through challenging circumstances. For others, worldly ideas and goals become distractions—or perhaps certain people influence them to lose focus. Sports, hobbies, or simply busyness can also cause a believer's heart to stray from Christ.

No matter what the cause, any life separated from the only true anchor—Jesus—is in danger. God offers believers a full life in Him. But the Bible teaches that Christians will not thrive if they live apart from God's Word, His principles, and an ever-deepening relationship with Him (John 10:10; John 14:6).

Are you walking closely with Jesus? Or have the cares of life entangled you? Pray for wisdom as you consider these questions. And if anything besides God holds first place in your heart, ask Him to help you surrender it to Him. Then commit to pray, read the Word, and obey.

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