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Daily Devotional Wednesday, August 30, 2017 - The Process of Belief

AUGUST 30TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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James 2:14-17

We express faith every single day, in all kinds of situations. We *believe* we'll get to work safely, or we'd never get in the car. We *believe* our love will last for a lifetime, or we'd never get married. We *believe* our favorite chair will support our weight, or we'd never sit on it. Faith flows out of us all the time, even when it has nothing to do with God.

There is a process that shapes our beliefs—a progression that turns the hint of faith into measurable action. First, it begins in the mind. We think about the issue, nurse that thought, and visualize not only the need but also the solution.

Second, we begin to discuss the issue with other people and, hopefully, with the Lord. Talking through the matter with someone we trust is a way to better understand what is happening, collect fresh insights, and process the information.

Then, after discussing the matter, we come away with a better sense of what's involved. This leads us to the third step, in which we take action. We must *do* something. If belief doesn't produce a measurable result, then something has gone wrong, and we need to seek God's help. Faith that never gets beyond the mind or conversation accomplishes nothing. But when the faith-building process results in action—no matter how simple—then we truly begin to see the

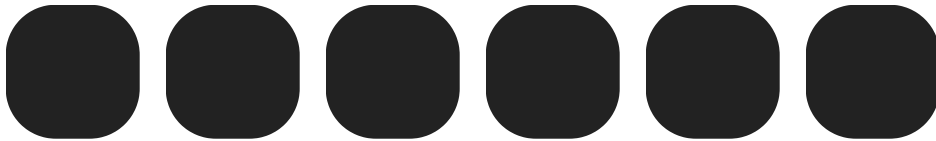
power of the Lord displayed.

Are you struggling with a faith issue today? Prayerfully ask God to show you if you've gotten stuck somewhere in the process.

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Daily Devotional, Tuesday, August 29, 2017 - Evidence of a Growing Believer

AUGUST 29TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Tuesday, August 29, 2017 - Evidence of a Growing Believer

James 4:8

I have a friend who was, at one point, a self-confessed shopping addict. Recently, his family realized that this activity had stopped, though he hadn't intentionally curtailed it. Why did his longing to acquire more goods dissolve?

The reason was that my friend had become more satisfied with the Lord. He no longer needed fulfillment from what the world had to offer. What a terrific illustration of growth in Christ.

In addition to finding fulfillment in God, there are many other growth indicators that are noticeable to the believer. For instance, offering forgiveness becomes easier over time. Consider our Savior, who asked God to forgive even those who crucified Him on the cross (Luke 23:34).

Also, as we mature, our faith will increase. God loves us, and He gracefully and gently builds our confidence in Him. Then, as our trust grows, we realize how faithful He truly is—which makes our assurance even greater.

Finally, as our relationship with the Lord deepens, we will increasingly desire to obey Him. We will be able to confidently proclaim, “O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97). The desire is born not out of fear but out of love for our heavenly Father. Similarly, when we do sin, our heart will become saddened and repentant.

Are you satisfied spiritually? Or do you have a growing, insatiable hunger for more of Jesus? Friend, if you think that you've come far enough in your journey with Christ, you have made a terrible mistake. You are missing great fulfillment and excitement that come from getting close to Him.

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Daily Devotional, Monday, August 28, 2017 - Measuring Our Spiritual Growth

AUGUST 28TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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2 Peter 3:17-18

All around the world, people go to church, bow their heads to pray, and hear sermons, but many are not growing spiritually.

It is all too common for believers to assume that these actions fulfill Christian obligations. They may complete a checklist but have an idle relationship with Jesus. Do you see evidence in your own life that you're maturing in your walk with the Lord?

To blossom spiritually, we must be saved. This happens the moment God makes us new, cleansing us of unrighteousness and adopting us as His own children. Then, we can begin to grow. However, even with this new life, we can be stagnant.

There are several indicators that reveal the quality of our Christian journey. Today, let's explore a few of them. First, growing believers should sense a deepening hunger for Christ. As we experience more of Jesus, who is the bread of life (John 6:35), our desire for Him will increase. Second, believers dwelling closely with the Savior will notice that their discernment of sin

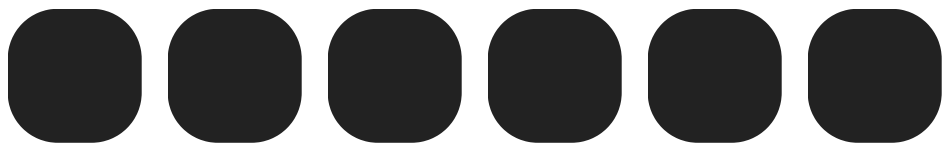
sharpens. Faulty teaching and thinking become more obvious as we accumulate truth within our spirit. Third, our sphere of love should continuously expand. In time, the Holy Spirit enables us to care for people who previously were either unnoticed or difficult to accept.

Do you have a hunger for God and an increasing awareness of sin? Is your love available only for those who match your personal standard of performance—or do you find yourself caring about even difficult people? These are important questions to ask when evaluating your spiritual growth.

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Daily Devotional, Friday, Aug 25, 2017 - Building Intimacy with God

AUGUST 25TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Genesis 16:1-16; Genesis 17:1-8

Intimacy with God doesn't just happen. It requires determination and a significant investment of time and effort. As we seek closeness with Him, we must learn ...

Conflict Resolution. In human disputes, there is usually error on both sides. But if we find ourselves in conflict with God, then we know we are in the wrong—He is always right. When Abraham fathered a child by Hagar, there was great strife in his home. God kept His promise to make Abraham a father of many nations but did not lift the multi-generational discord that resulted from his actions. No matter the circumstances, tension with God can be resolved by yielding our desires and seeking His viewpoint.

Trust. Intimacy grows only in an atmosphere of trust. As we understand God's character better, our confidence grows, and we are drawn closer to Him. Our part is to show ourselves trustworthy.

Risk Taking. The more we reveal who we are in Christ to those around us, the more we risk facing arguments, experiencing rejection, or being misunderstood. But God understands us fully and promises that we belong to Him forever (John 10:27-29).

Agreement. For us to maintain a close affinity with God, our schedule and plans must reflect that He is a priority. We are to be available for His use and open to His direction.

God designed us for intimacy with Him. All that He requires is our presence and cooperation. What priority have you placed on building a deeper relationship with Him?

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Daily Devotional, Thursday, August 24, 2017 - Jesus Is Stronger Than Our Fears

AUGUST 24TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Mark 4:39

The Sea of Galilee is about eight miles wide and 13 miles long. If you'd been sitting on its shore the evening Jesus calmed the fierce gale, you might have seen ominous clouds and lightning out over the water. Experiencing a thunderstorm while watching at a distance or from the safety of your home is easy and even thrilling. But it's another thing altogether when your boat starts rocking wildly on the waves and the rain is pelting your face. Then, what is fascinating from a distance can set off panic in your heart—panic that's not entirely unreasonable if you're at risk of capsizing in the middle of the sea.

In this fallen world, everyone will face storms of some sort, whether they involve physical, relational, financial, or other issues. These adversities are hard and they hurt. But they're not the whole story of our lives, especially if we are followers of the One who calms the storm.

When troubles hit, we might find ourselves wondering, *God, where are You?* But He is where He's always been; the problem is that we forget to look in the right direction.

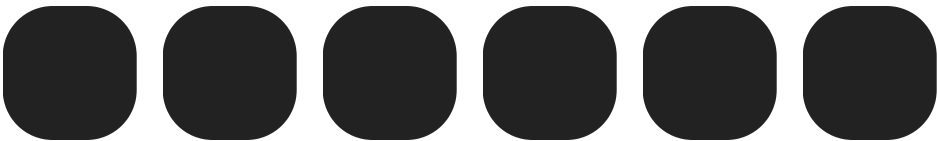
So remember, it is Jesus whose voice commands nature, and He is also sovereign over every other type of tempest we face (1 John 4:4). Knowing that we are frail in storms, He stands with us, sheltering us from the full brunt of the pounding rain and speaking peace into our heart (Psalm 103:13-14).

A storm-tossed sea was no match for Jesus. With three words from Him, it calmed instantly. He'll do the same for you and me every time if we just turn to Him and trust.

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