



[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional, Tuesday, September 19, 2017 - How to Handle the Bible

SEPTEMBER 19TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Tuesday, September 19, 2017 - How to Handle the Bible

Psalm 1:1-3

The value we place on something determines how we treat it. For instance, you probably wouldn't give much thought to caring for an old shoebox. Yet if someone placed \$10,000 inside before handing you that same cardboard container, you'd likely rearrange your day to protect it against damage or theft.

Once we realize the worth of Scripture, we no longer read merely out of obligation. Instead, we hunger for its revelation and life-changing power.

Here's how you can prioritize God's Word so that it impacts your heart and behavior. First, turn to it daily with eager expectation for what the Lord will reveal. Second, meditate upon the Word by thinking about what you've read and absorbing its meaning and implications. Third, study God's truth. There are a variety of ways to do this. For example, follow a specific word through the Old and New Testaments by using a concordance or search engine. Or study an entire book by dissecting one chapter at a time. Fourth, believe what the Lord says. Fifth, obey. In other words, take what you read and apply it to your life circumstances. This often requires courage and discipline. Sixth, share what you've learned. Doing so will encourage others while strengthening you and sinking the lesson deep in your heart.

The Bible may *look* like just another book. But it is living truth that can protect and guide, pierce and encourage. It holds the story of Christ's sacrifice and our salvation, so we can eventually dwell with the Lord in heaven. The way that we look to and depend on God's Word will reflect to others the value we place on it.

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TOP

Daily Devotional, Monday, September 18, 2017 - The Book of Books

SEPTEMBER 18TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Monday, September 18, 2017 - The Book of Books

Isaiah 55:9-11

Step into almost any bookstore, and you will find volumes covering every topic imaginable. Want new direction for your life? Self-help sections are extremely popular and accessible. Are your children disobeying? Parenting literature abounds. But do all of these “expert” authors have trustworthy credentials?

There *is* a place to find guidance and information that won’t ever mislead: The Bible will bless and benefit everyone who reads and applies its wisdom. Here’s what the Author—“the God of truth” (Isa. 65:16)—says about His own Word:

1. The Bible gives direction for life (Psalm 119:105). God uses His Word to lead us, no matter what our circumstances may be. The Holy Spirit can take even simple verses, which seem general at first glance, and apply them to our specific situation.

2. Scripture strengthens us when we grieve or face difficulty (Psalm 119:28, Psalm 119:116). By spending time processing what God says, we’re reminded that He loves us, cares about our situation, and can handle whatever we’re facing. Worry and pain turn into peace, hope, and joyful confidence.

3. God’s Word helps us understand our inner motivations (Heb. 4:12). Scripture acts like a mirror that lets us see ourselves as we truly are.

The Bible is the very mind of God put into words so that man can know his Maker more fully. In deepening our understanding of the heavenly Father, we learn how to live successfully and die unafraid. To what extent do you depend upon this amazing Book as your foundation for life?

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[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional, Friday, September 15, 2017 - Abiding in the Lord

SEPTEMBER 15TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Friday, September 15, 2017 - Abiding in the Lord

John 15:1-5

Yesterday I shared with you about the time when God reminded me that I am not the vine—He is. For years I had tried to accomplish by myself what Jesus Christ wanted to achieve through me. In other words, I attempted to produce fruit by doing good works. My desire was to impress God and earn His approval. His goal, on the other hand, was for me to act like the branch that I am and just abide.

The Holy Spirit's job is to live the life of Christ through each believer. This process is known by a variety of names, including the exchanged life, the Spirit-filled life, and the abiding life. All of these monikers describe the joyful existence Paul spoke of in Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God." The apostle meant those words literally.

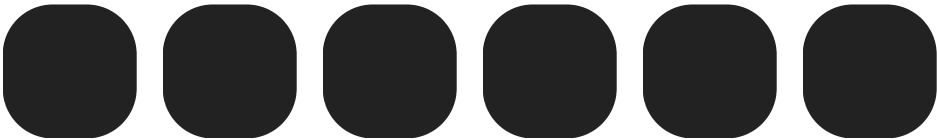
Seen from the outside, a branch does not appear to be doing anything. But don't get the idea that the abiding life is passive. Jesus was the perfect example of a Spirit-filled life, and He certainly didn't sit around! He worked hard out of a reservoir of divine energy (John 14:10). All of Christ's wisdom, knowledge, and courage were drawn from God through the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit does not pop out of believers through effort; Christians bear fruit through surrender. We “take root” in the heavenly Father by meditating on His Word, praying, and serving. We reserve nothing for ourselves to control but fully rely upon Him. That’s not passive living; it’s an abiding life.

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[Go to post](#)



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TOP

Daily Devotional, Thursday, September 14, 2017 - the Blessings of a Spirit-Filled Life

SEPTEMBER 14TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Thursday, September 14, 2017 - the Blessings of a Spirit-Filled Life

1 John 2:3-6

There was a time when I was so disheartened that I wondered whether I should remain in the ministry. How could I tell people that Jesus would give them peace and joy while I felt discouraged by my own failure to be godly? I understood what “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-23) meant but was never sure which of those qualities, if any, would be apparent in me from day to day.

God let me stew in my anxiety until I was fully committed to finding out if His Word was true or not. I encountered my answer in a biography of Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Missions. For a long time he, too, felt that his efforts fell short of the Lord’s expectations. But Taylor came to realize that God wanted believers to trust Him fully and rest on His promises. So when Jesus Christ said to abide in Him, He meant that His followers were to stop striving and struggling. Instead they were to trust Him to subdue their flesh.

As a child, I’d been taught that a person got saved and then went to work for God. You did the best you could to act in a godly manner, think right, and speak wisely. When your best wasn’t good enough, well, you tried harder. Such an impossible expectation was wearing me out, and now the idea of letting Jesus Christ work through me sounded both biblical and liberating.

A branch doesn’t bear grapes because of its determined efforts to get sunshine; rather, it simply abides in the vine, and fruit appears. The vine does all the work. In the same way, believers are to abide in the Savior so that spiritual fruit can grow in their life.

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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional, Wednesday, September 13, 2017 - Satan's Strategy

SEPTEMBER 13TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Luke 22:31-34, Luke 22:54-62

Every one of us makes tracks through the valley of failure. The question is, How are you going to respond? Plenty of people give up and exchange a vibrant kingdom-serving life for a defeated existence. But failure need not be the end of the story. It's a chance for a new beginning, living in Christ's strength.

Peter had a life-altering failure. Jesus warned that Satan had asked permission to "sift" the disciple like wheat (Luke 22:31), referring to the vigorous shaking required to separate wheat kernels from debris. The enemy wanted to shake Peter's faith hard in hopes that he'd fall away from Jesus like chaff.

Peter believed the promise he'd made to Jesus: "Even though all may fall away, yet I will not" (Mark 14:29). But Satan knows a few things about the power of failure. He realized that the disciple would be wounded by his own disloyalty. A man with tattered pride can't help but question his usefulness.

When Satan sifts believers, his goal is to damage our faith so much that we're useless to the Lord. He wants us shelved far from the action of God's kingdom. Therefore, he goes for our strengths—the areas where we believe ourselves to be invincible, or at least very well protected. And when the devil succeeds, we are disappointed and demoralized. But we don't have to stay

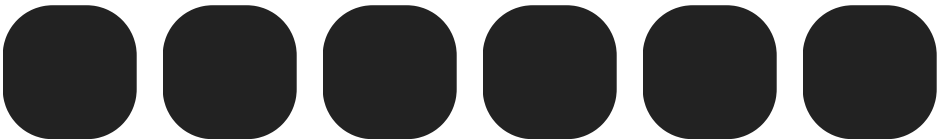
that way.

If we are willing, God can use our failure to do spiritual housecleaning. Peter laid down his pride and instead put on the Holy Spirit’s courage. Thereafter, he risked humiliation, persecution, and death to proclaim the gospel. Failure was the catalyst that led to greater faith and true servanthood.

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