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Daily Devotional, Thursday, November 16, 2017 - The Rewards of Patience

NOVEMBER 16TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Luke 11:9-10

Photography has taught me a great deal about patience. My team and I once spent four days waiting to photograph the Matterhorn in Switzerland—inclement weather kept the peak totally hidden. On the last night of my stay, I went to sleep praying. Very early the next morning, I opened my eyes to see that huge white mountain glistening against the pitch-black sky. I was amazed to discover the modest hotel we'd selected had a view of the mountain!

Rather than wait until we reach heaven, the Lord sends many blessings to us now. However, we must not get ahead of Him if we hope to receive His gifts. Several things happen when we choose to be patient.

1. We see God at work. His way is the best way, and we become more aware of this when we observe Him working out His plan in our life.

2. We can achieve our objectives. The Lord knows the right moment to provide what we want or need. If we give up too soon or try to manipulate circumstances, we miss out on the fullness of what He wants to bestow.

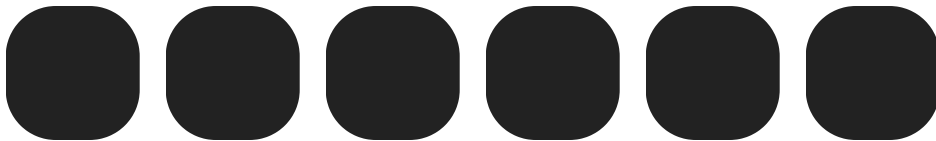
3. We have God's favor. When we are patiently waiting for His will, then He can freely bless us. The heavenly Father certainly wants to pour out His love on our life.

We are blessed when we abide patiently in God's will. Unfortunately, we will all face circumstances in which we are tempted to be impatient. What determines whether or not we express patience is the value we place on whoever else is involved—another believer, a friend, a coworker, or God. Do you value the Lord enough to be patient with His timing?

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Daily Devotional, Wednesday, November 15, 2017 - Using Time Well

NOVEMBER 15TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Matthew 25:14-28

The Lord gives us resources and abilities, and He desires that we use them well. One such gift is time.

In order to manage our coming days effectively, we should continually review the one we've just lived: *What activities did we choose? How much time did each take? What were the results?* This discipline will reveal what is most important to us.

In looking closely at our assessments, we can determine what drives our decisions about how to use time. Some people merely respond to circumstances for a majority of their day. They jump from one thing to the next, handling whatever appears in their world at the moment—whether personal, family, or business matters. But this style of living misses the mark.

Other people spend their time according to desires. They want to relax, so they get home and watch television for the evening. Or they love to hunt, so they use their time to research equipment and locate wildlife in the forest. Desires are not bad, but they should not drive the bulk of our actions.

Thankfully, there are also people who live according to what they deem important. Loving God and serving others, for instance, are two biblical values that should, ideally, determine what we do with our time.

If you itemize your activities and their time consumption over the course of a week, you might be surprised at which are the predominant events. Each moment is a gift, so set aside a few minutes each evening to plan the next day. Then revisit how you spent the last 24 hours. This will help you to live purposefully.

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Daily Devotional, Tuesday, November 14, 2017 - Time for Success

NOVEMBER 14TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Ephesians 5:15-17

Every night before falling asleep, I write down my goals for the following day. Upon waking, I read through the list in order to focus my energy on what is most important. If this were not part of my routine, the limited hours available would not be utilized effectively.

The Bible clearly teaches us to use our days wisely. Time is a gift. Almighty God has given each person a span of days to live on earth. But our life is fleeting and uncertain—James compares it to a vapor that “appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:14). Time is also irrevocable—we cannot simply go back and start over.

Considering this, it is foolish to waste such a precious resource. Yet all too often we do. Let’s be alert so we can avoid the following hindrances to living fully and purposefully:

Misplaced priorities result in wasted opportunities. Our values will determine the emphasis we place on each activity and the amount of time we allot to it.

Procrastination and perfectionism soak up valuable time. Avoiding both will help us make the most of our contributions to the kingdom of God.

Lack of concentration drains time of its potential. For example, we have to train ourselves to focus on reading God's Word and not to get sidetracked.

What values determine how you utilize your time? Is there something that keeps you from living each moment in a way that pleases the Lord? Since it's not possible to redo days you wish had turned out differently, ask God's guidance and live more intentionally.

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Daily Devotional, Monday, November 13, 2017 - God's Answers to Prayer

NOVEMBER 13TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Matthew 7:7-11

Too often, believers view God as a great cosmic Santa Claus: We think of our prayers not as petitions but as demands. Then, if God does not grant our request, we're thrown into a faith crisis, believing He no longer answers us. The real problem, however, is that we misunderstand the Lord's three answers to prayer:

1. Yes. We love this response! There is nothing more exhilarating or faith-inspiring than to watch the Lord move mountains to provide what we once considered impossible.

2. No. Here is where the problems begin for us. But we must accept the fact that God says no to some of our requests. This is certainly not because He's greedy or uncaring—on the contrary, He is generous, loving, and concerned about His children.

Matthew 7:11 does not say God will give “everything to those who ask Him,” does it? No, it says that the heavenly Father will give what is good to those who ask. Quite often, giving “what is good” means that He doesn't agree to things He knows are wrong for us.

3. Wait. This answer can be even harder than a flat-out *no*. Yet some things that are good and godly may still be wrong for us today. Remember, God is eternal; He sees all time at the same time. If He regards tomorrow's blessing as a curse today, He'll withhold it for a season until we're ready to receive it.

Friend, do not be misled if God's response isn't what you expected—or wanted—to hear. Instead, praise the Lord for answering our requests the way He knows they should be answered!

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Daily Devotional, Friday, November 10, 2017 - Three Ways to Think Right

NOVEMBER 10TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Philippians 4:4-9

We all want to experience joy and peace in difficult times—to have a sense of security and the confidence that the heavenly Father loves us. Yet we are oftentimes held back by worries and other pressures.

There are three ways we can govern our thoughts:

1. Screen them. Imagine there's a grid protecting your mind, and whatever you think about must first pass through it. If you have built your filter upon the Word of God, any unscriptural ideas that try to get through will set off a warning alarm. You can check each thought by asking yourself a series of questions: *What's the source? Where will it lead me? Is this scripturally sound? Is this going to build me up or tear me down? Can I share this with someone else? Does it make me feel guilty? Does it fit who I am as a follower of Jesus Christ?*

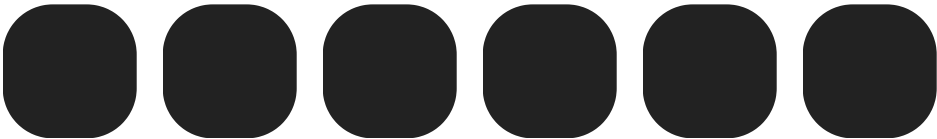
2. Select them. God has given you the right and the power to decide whether or not you will accept a thought. Every time an opinion or teaching hits your screen, you can choose to either let it through or discard it. Since the idea itself may not be wrong or right, those same screening questions can help you know what to do next.

3. Cultivate them. Accepting godly thoughts (and rejecting evil ones) is not enough. You need to dwell on the ideas that align with God's Word and then start practicing them.

Allow God to pour Himself into your life and to reign in your mind. In doing so, you will see awesome changes take place.

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