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Daily Devotional, Monday, November 20, 2017 - Strengthen Yourself in the Lord

NOVEMBER 20TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Monday, November 20, 2017 - Strengthen Yourself in the Lord

1 Samuel 30:1-8

After an exhausting three-day journey, David and his men finally arrived home to find a scene of devastation. Their homes were burned to the ground, and their families were missing. Utter despair engulfed them. David's distress soon increased when his men's grief turned into bitter anger and they spoke of stoning him.

Most of us won't experience this extreme a situation, but we can identify with David's discouragement. Sometimes despair follows a personal tragedy or loss, but it can also result from the weariness of ongoing daily pressures. Family problems, financial difficulties, and health issues may make discouragement a constant companion. The same can happen with emotional struggles over feelings of unworthiness, failure to overcome an addictive habit, the pain of criticism, or fear of inadequacy.

Despair can afflict anyone unexpectedly, but the Lord doesn't want us to linger in a fog of depression. We often can't avoid the situations that lead us into discouragement, but we do have a choice whether to stay in that condition. Instead of caving in to misery, David chose to strengthen himself in the Lord. He recognized that God was the only one who could give him the proper perspective on the problem and provide the guidance he needed.

When you're discouraged, where do you turn? Perhaps the last thing you want to do is read Scripture and pray—initially, the passages may seem like meaningless words, and your prayers might feel empty. But if you persist in crying out to God, you'll eventually experience His comforting strength.

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Daily Devotional, Friday, November 17, 2017 - When Facing Life's Mountains

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Zechariah 4:1-10

Today’s passage describes a vision God gave to Zechariah. In it, the mountain is an illustration of a barrier or hindrance. We might wonder what these strange dreams can teach us today, but though the imagery is foreign, the principles are repeated throughout the Bible and are still relevant for our lives.

Zerubbabel, leader of Judah, and a group of 50,000 people had been released by their Babylonian captors to return to Jerusalem. There, God’s people began to rebuild the walls of the temple, but they were attacked by those living nearby. Consequently, the people became discouraged and were ready to give up.

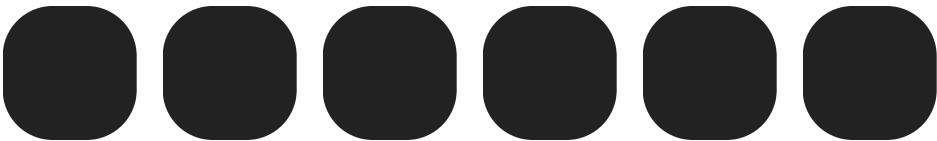
In verse 6, God reminded Zerubbabel through Zechariah that progress is made “not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit.” In other words, when God calls us to a task, He Himself assumes responsibility for removing hindrances. God went on to ask, “What are you, O great mountain?” (v. 7). Nothing but flatland would remain once He worked through Zerubbabel.

We are not to face seemingly insurmountable tasks in our own strength. Instead, we’re to rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit within us. We are like the lampstand that was to be kept continually burning in the temple. In Zechariah’s dream, the olive trees on each side of the lampstand were pouring oil directly into its bowl, with no help from the priests. The Holy Spirit was acting as the olive trees—He was God’s promise of continual help to the weary people. We, too, can trust the Lord to pour His Spirit into our life for help when we face a mountain of an obstacle.

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

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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

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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.

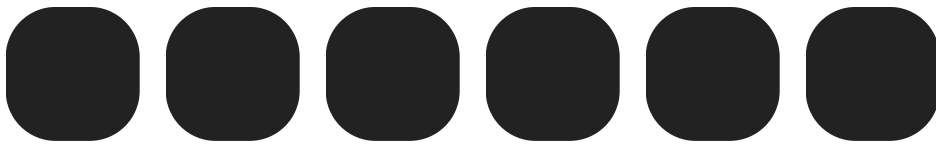
Thankfully, there are also people who live according to what they deem important. Loving God and serving others, for instance, are two biblical values that should, ideally, determine what we do with our time.

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

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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.

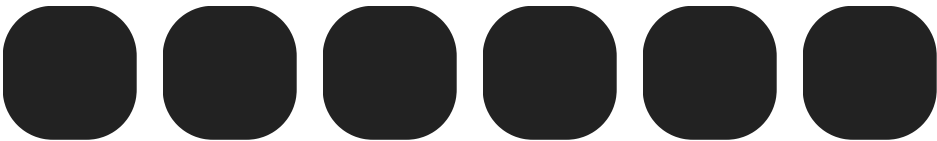
Lack of concentration drains time of its potential. For example, we have to train ourselves to focus on reading God’s Word and not to get sidetracked.

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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