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Daily Devotional, Thursday, December 21, 2017 - The Gift of Teaching

DECEMBER 21ST 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Romans 12:6-8

God has given each believer at least one spiritual gift to build up the body of Christ and to minister in this hurting world. If our gift is prophecy, we'll proclaim God's view of right and wrong. If it is service, we will desire to meet others' needs. The gift of teaching has these characteristics:

Organized. Whether in conversation or in a more formal setting, we will seek to communicate information clearly so the listener can follow. God has wired us to analyze material and present it logically.

Thorough. We want others to understand not simply the conclusion but the steps leading up to it. We also desire to help them think matters through.

Accurate. Our priority is to know the truth, so we ask questions in an attempt to validate the accuracy of what we learn. We will also inquire about the trustworthiness of our source of information.

Studious. We derive great delight from studying and researching and are strongly motivated to share what we learn. Truth is presented not simply to share knowledge but with the goal that God will transform the hearer's life.

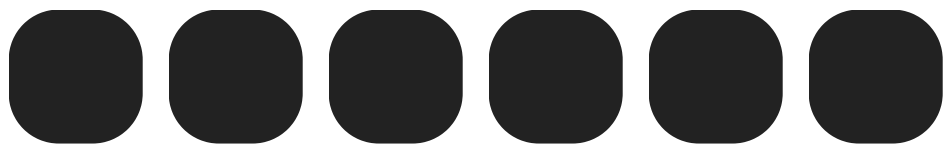
Bible-oriented. With this gift comes a strong desire to know what the Lord has to say. While we may recognize the value of others' experiences, we are less motivated by personal illustrations than by the actual words of Scripture.

All of the spiritual gifts can be used in the workplace, in our communities, and in our homes. If your gift is teaching, allow the Spirit to direct your ability for God's glory and others' gain.

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Daily Devotional, Wednesday, December 20, 2017 - Unjust Suffering

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1 Peter 2:18-25

One of the hardest situations to bear is unjust suffering. We can expect to reap pain and trouble if we sow sin, but what if we haven't done anything wrong? Even trials that seem to come for no reason are easier to bear than those resulting from someone's mistreatment of us.

This is what Peter had in mind when he wrote today's passage. Slaves in the Roman Empire had few rights if any, and abuse wasn't uncommon. Becoming a Christian didn't change the circumstances, but it did require a different response. Peter told them to respectfully submit to their masters and endure mistreatment because such a response finds favor with God.

Whoever has been saved by Christ is also called to follow in His footsteps. Although the Lord committed no sin, He suffered death on a cross for us. Jesus not only paid the penalty for our sins, but He also made it possible for us to respond to mistreatment as He did.

Christ's responses are noteworthy, first because Jesus didn't revile or threaten those who hurt Him. His silence was fueled by forgiveness rather than anger or thoughts of revenge. Even as He was being nailed to the cross, He prayed, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). Second, Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father, who judges righteously. The Lord had no need to fight for His rights, because He was doing exactly what God had called Him to do.

Our job is to make sure we're following Christ and living in God's will. Then if others mistreat us, we can simply hand the situation over to our Father, knowing that He will judge it rightly in His time.

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Daily Devotional, Tuesday, December 19, 2017 - Ministry Friendships

DECEMBER 19TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Acts 18:1-19

A significant facet of the Christian life is the development of friendships that help both parties fulfill God's will for their lives. This is the kind of friendship Paul had with Aquila and Priscilla. The relationship, which began from their common Jewish heritage and occupation, soon became a partnership in ministry.

Paul met Aquila and Priscilla when he first arrived in Corinth during his second missionary trip. After teaching and mentoring them for about 18 months, he brought them along on his return trip, leaving them to minister in Ephesus until he returned to help them on his third missionary trip.

Although they all eventually went their own ways in ministry, their friendship—which was founded upon their mutual love for Christ—never ended. A few years later when Paul wrote to the church in Rome, he expressed his gratitude for this couple because they risked their own lives for his and were faithfully serving the church, which met in their home (Rom. 16:3-5). While Paul was sitting in a Roman prison during his last days on earth, he wrote to Timothy in Ephesus, telling him to send his greetings to Priscilla and Aquila (2 Tim. 4:19).

God never intends that Christians live like “lone rangers,” who simply attend church without growing close to one another. Our common bond in Christ draws us together, forming a closeness not found in other associations. Ministry friendships are among the deepest relationships we will ever have. These friends are the ones who always point us back to the Scriptures, challenge us to walk in obedience to Christ, and encourage us to persevere.

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Daily Devotional, Monday, Dec 18, 2017 - A Saving Faith

DECEMBER 18TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Matthew 7:13-29

The greatest tragedy that can befall someone is to think he's saved, only to discover after death that he isn't. We'd all like to believe the claims of those who say they're Christians, but Jesus gives a harsh warning because He knows many will be deceived. They will sit in churches week after week, professing that Jesus is the Son of God, but won't ever really enter into a personal relationship with Him.

Intellectual faith isn't the same as saving faith. It's not enough to know facts about Jesus or to believe He died and rose again. Even demons believe that (James 2:19). Salvation involves more than mere knowing. It requires trusting that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for your sin, receiving His forgiveness, turning away from old sinful ways, and entering into a relationship with Him. What matters is not what we say with our mouth, but what we believe in our heart.

Although you probably won't understand all that happens at the moment of salvation, when Christ becomes your Savior, He also becomes your Lord. As the Master of your life, He then has a right to govern what you do. His Holy Spirit takes up residence within you when you are saved, and that means you will change—God's Spirit continually works to remove sinful attitudes and behaviors, replacing them with His spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22-23).

We recognize a person's salvation not by his profession but by fruit. If you are truly saved, your character will become more Christlike over time, and your desire will be to obey the Lord. This does not mean you'll never sin or stumble, but overall, your life will be characterized by obedience.

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Daily Devotional, Friday, December 15, 2017 - Receiving Answers to Our Prayers

DECEMBER 15TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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1 John 5:13-15

In response to our prayers, the Lord uses His power to penetrate closed minds and hard hearts. In that way, He brings people to salvation and transforms unrighteous lives.

We all want our petitions fulfilled, so it is important to understand God's conditions for answered prayer. Besides having a relationship with Him (John 3:3) and confessing all known sin, we must have faith that His Word is true and His promises reliable. The Bible, which was divinely written by God through man, is without error. In this amazing book, the Lord reveals His nature—holy, sovereign, and perfect—and presents His plan of salvation (Rom. 10:9). Because God's promises are based on His perfect character, we can be certain He will do what He says; otherwise He would not be God. And Jesus' promises can be trusted because He always spoke the Father's words (John 12:49).

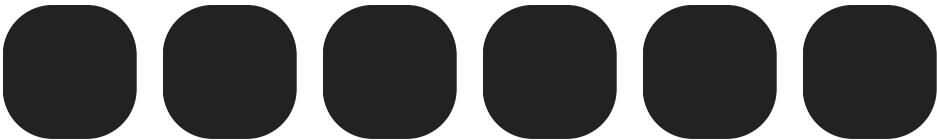
Another condition is that we ask according to the Lord's purposes. We're to pray for things that are in keeping with His divine plan and character. God wants us to discern His will, to pray for it to be carried out, and to do whatever our part might be in its fulfillment (Matt. 6:9-10). The Holy Spirit will help us know what to pray. And as we consider which petitions to make, we should ask ourselves, *Is my request based on God's Word? How will an answer to this prayer bring me or someone else closer to Him?*

It takes an investment of time to meet God’s requirements for prayer. But in response, He will provide answers beyond anything we could ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

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