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Daily Devotional, Wednesday, January 10, 2018 - God's Blessings

JANUARY 10TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Psalm 81:1-16

Our heavenly Father delights in meeting His children's needs and fulfilling their desires. Yet many Christians walk through life with less than God's best. How can we avoid missing out on His blessings?

Psalm 81 provides insight. The writer refers to a time when the Israelites missed the opportunity to receive God's best. As we know from the book of Exodus, the nation gratefully praised Him for their release from bondage. But then they quickly forgot and worshipped other gods, complaining about their circumstances in the wilderness. This unhealthy pattern continued all throughout the Old Testament, as the people would turn to Jehovah in time of need and then drift away.

Psalm 81:8-10 reveals God's perspective: "O Israel, if you would listen to Me! Let there be no strange god among you ... I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide and I will fill it."

We, too, might have needs and desires that are unmet because of disobedience. Today, most people don't worship statues, as the wayward Israelites did. Our idols are less obvious—they might include a relationship, job, hobby, or anything else we put ahead of the Lord. Even

making decisions based upon what others think can be idolatry; our choices should be made on the basis of biblical principle and the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Ask the Lord to reveal anything that hinders your receiving His best. Listen carefully, and let Him help with the areas He brings to your attention. He is ready to guide and bless you.

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Daily Devotional, Tuesday, January 9, 2018 - Becoming a Prodigel

JANUARY 09TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Tuesday, January 9, 2018 - Becoming a Prodigel

Luke 15:11-19

The Prodigal Son's journey away from home began with a desire. Perhaps he wanted to leave behind some of the restrictions that come with living under a parent's roof. Or maybe he wanted more money to pursue life's pleasures with friends. Whatever the case, his desire gave birth to self-deceptive reasoning, which assumes, *There's no harm in what I am doing. I deserve this.*

That thinking led to a decision—to prematurely ask for his inheritance—and to his departure, both from home and from what he had been taught.

A Christian who has turned away from God follows a path similar to the prodigal's. It begins in our mind with a craving for something other than what we have. The longer we allow the idea to linger, the stronger our desire becomes. When we cling to a yearning that is outside of God's protective will, then we likewise deceive ourselves and find ways to justify what we want. We will base decisions on our faulty reasoning and move away from the Lord to fulfill our self-centered dreams. Like the wayward son, we may enjoy the pleasures of the world for a time, but ultimately, we will find ourselves without the essentials common to all mankind—unconditional love, security, and a meaningful purpose for living.

We have an enemy who seeks to divert us from the heavenly Father's will, to a mindset that places desires above God and "flesh" tendencies that prefer pleasure over obedience. To avoid self-deception, make Scripture your basis for living—and adjust your thought life and choices accordingly. (See Rom. 12:2.)

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Daily Devotional, Monday, January 8, 2018 - Always Be Careful

JANUARY 08TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Monday, January 8, 2018 - Always Be Careful

Ephesians 4:1-7, Ephesians 4:14-16

Do you know for sure that what you believe has a rock-solid foundation? Far too many people of various faiths have been swayed by a leader with a charismatic personality—someone who is eloquent, persuasive, and smooth. Be careful! The Christian's beliefs are to be grounded in what God teaches, so make certain yours are based on more than simply the ideas of an impressive communicator.

Paul warned his protégé Timothy to beware false doctrine and those who teach only what their listeners want to hear (2 Tim. 4:3). But how can we hope to recognize error unless we know the truth of God's Word and can use it as a measuring stick?

Knowing the teachings of Scripture not only helps guard against being deceived by false doctrine but also protects you from intimidation by those who might attack your faith. Therefore, examine what you believe and why. Doing so will ...

- 1. Prevent you from being misled.*
- 2. Protect you from fear and intimidation.*
- 3. Prepare you to answer questions from those honestly seeking truth.*
- 4. Enable you to be persuasive in presenting what you believe.*
- 5. Deepen your personal relationship with God.*

By regularly spending time in God's Word, you develop a biblical filter through which all new information passes. That filter in your mind enables you to distinguish between what's false and what's true. If that is firmly established in your mind and heart, you'll be able to identify God's truth.

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Daily Devotional, Friday, January 5, 2018 - A Fruitful Life

JANUARY 05TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Friday, January 5, 2018 - A Fruitful Life

Proverbs 3:5-12

God has created us with a longing to know that our presence in this world counts. He has also designed us to find the fulfillment of that desire through His Son Jesus Christ.

Dependence on the Lord is central to an abundant life. Trusting Him with all of our heart means giving Him control over our families, finances, jobs, and everything else in our life. Today's passage emphasizes how essential trust is to a fruitful life: We are cautioned against being wise in our own eyes and warned not to lean on our own understanding. When faced with decisions,

it is tempting to gather information and choose the answer *we* think is right. However, we can't know all the facts or predict with certainty how others will respond. Our heavenly Father, on the other hand, is omniscient. He "reads" the heart and perceives our every thought (1 Chronicles 28:9). No aspect of life escapes His notice (Heb. 4:13), and He cares about everyone. That's why He alone is certain which decision will be best for the circumstances we face in our life.

The abundant life also involves acknowledging the Lord in all we do. Speaking about Him is just part of what it means to give Him recognition. As His children, we are to have a marked resemblance to our heavenly Father—in thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Our priorities are to reflect His, and our plans should fit with His purposes.

Life becomes fruitful as we surrender ourselves to God and carry out His will. By allowing His Spirit to live through us (Gal. 2:20), we will find our life characterized by significance and satisfaction.

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Daily Devotion, Thursday, January 4, 2018 - God's Guide to Fruitful Life

JANUARY 04TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotion, Thursday, January 4, 2018 - God's Guide to Fruitful Life

Proverbs 3:1-4

Jesus Christ told His disciples, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit” (John 15:5). As we carry out the Lord’s plans through the power of His Spirit, our lives will have significance, and two practices will characterize us.

1. Treasuring God’s Word in our hearts. When we value something, we think about it often, study it regularly, and learn all we can about it. By studying the Bible, we learn many important things about our God, including His character, plan, and promises. Regular Scripture meditation develops our ability to think biblically and deepens our relationship with the Lord. One of the indications that we treasure His Word is a change in behavior: Decisions will increasingly be guided by His principles, and actions will reflect the fruit of the Spirit. (See Gal. 5:22-23.)

2. Adorning ourselves with kindness and truth. These two virtues are to be our constant companions on the Christian walk. God’s truth has the power to expose ungodly attitudes and behaviors. When this happens, the presence of kindness helps to protect relationships from damage; it can also prevent discord and division in churches. The Lord wants us to speak the truth to one another—but to temper it with loving compassion.

The Christian life is a journey filled with temptations, obstacles, and difficulties that are common to man (1 Peter 4:12). At the same time, it is to be characterized by the fruitfulness that comes from following Jesus Christ, our guide.

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