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Daily Devotional, Thursday, March 15, 2018 - Finishing Well

MARCH 15TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Hebrews 12:1

In a race, what's most important isn't how one begins but how one finishes. Prizes are awarded only for crossing the finish line, not for great starts. And this is also true for the Christian life. **Hebrews 12:1** encourages us to "run with endurance the race that is set before us." In 2 Timothy 4:9-11, we see a contrast between two runners: Mark (also known as John Mark) and Demas.

When Paul and Barnabas left for their first missionary trip, Mark went with them. But early in the journey, he left to return home (Acts 13:5; Acts 13:13). From Paul's perspective, this seemed like a desertion, so a couple of years after that, he refused to let Mark come on a second missionary trip (Acts 15:36-40).

Although Mark had not begun well, Scripture shows us that the situation changed. On nearing death two decades later, Paul requested Mark's company because the younger man was "useful to [him] for service" (2 Tim. 4:11). Mark had proven himself faithful by persevering in obedience and service to the Lord, and eventually he wrote the gospel bearing his name.

Demas, on the other hand, though also called a "fellow worker" of Paul's (Philem. 1:24), deserted the apostle several years later because of love for worldly things (2 Tim. 4:10). It's so easy to get caught up in the pleasures and pursuits of earthly life and forget that as Christians,

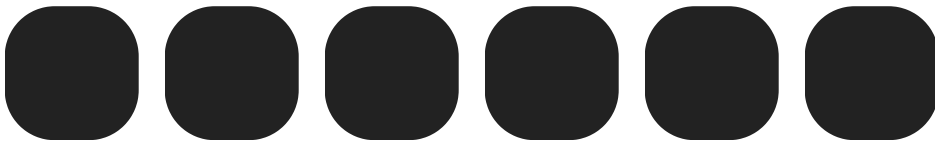
we have a higher priority.

That's why Scripture reminds us to lay aside every encumbrance hindering our race (Hebrews 12:1-2). Once we cross the finish line and see Christ face-to-face, all worldly pleasures will fade in comparison to the joy of hearing Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21 NIV).

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, March 14, 2018 - Maintaining a Quiet Spirit

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[Daily Devotional - Wednesday, March 14, 2018 - Maintaining a Quiet Spirit](#)

Proverbs 26:4

When conflict arises, we oftentimes want to rush in and defend our position. Perhaps we even feel justified in blaming others. However, James 1:19 gives different advice for dealing with tension and disputes: “Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.” In other words, more can be accomplished through a calm approach to the situation. Scripture also suggests that we ...

Pray. First, we should ask the Lord to guard our mouth and give us the right words to say (Luke 12:12). Also, we ought to request discernment with regard to the root issue and insight as to whether we might be at fault.

See with divine perspective. Our sovereign Lord works every situation for the believer’s benefit (Rom. 8:28). Not only does God use difficulties to teach us, but He also allows us to demonstrate the life of Christ by the way we respond.

Forgive. Even if someone has hurt us by causing the conflict, we should forgive. Jesus died to pardon all of our sin, and we, in turn, should forgive others. In fact, if we don’t, our lives will become burdened by resentment and broken relationships.

Respond. If we have done something wrong, we must apologize and ask forgiveness. We should express appreciation that the other person took time to share his concern. Then we ought to acknowledge his feelings and carefully consider his comments.

How do you respond to conflict? Pray for the strength to stay calm and do what is right—even during difficult, emotional situations.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, March 12, 2018 - Devotion to Prayer

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Colossians 4:2-4

Are you devoted to prayer? That's a convicting question, isn't it? Almost all of us recognize that our prayer life could use some improvement. Part of the problem is that we're inundated with pressures and activities in this fast-paced world. As a result, prayer often becomes a quick sentence or two before rushing out the door, or it's combined with some other activity in an effort to multitask.

However, lack of time isn't an excuse for not sitting down quietly with the Lord to read His Word and talk with Him. The real problem is our priorities. We're consumed with the urgent and have lost sight of what's truly important. By neglecting prayer, we forfeit greater love for Christ, a deeper relationship with Him, and His power in our weakness.

But our lack of prayer also affects other people. When Paul told the Colossians to devote themselves to prayer, he requested that they include him and his ministry. As Christians, we have been given the responsibility and privilege of interceding for each other. This is one of the ways we contribute to God's work in the world and display our love for fellow believers.

Knowing what's at stake is a great motivation for faithful prayer. To make this a priority in your life, begin by setting aside a time and place to meet with the Lord each day. Then find scriptural passages about people praying, and model your requests, praises, and thanksgiving after these examples. Try keeping a written record of your requests and God's answers, and you will see your faith strengthen, your love for Christ deepen, and your devotion to prayer increase.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, March 8, 2018 - Ending the Blame Game

MARCH 08TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Daily Devotional - Thursday, March 8, 2018 - Ending the Blame Game](#)

Galatians 5:19-25

There's something within our human nature that resists being controlled by others. Although we may outwardly submit to authority, submissiveness may not reach into our hearts. Inwardly, we could very well be acting like a child who is being disciplined by a parent: outwardly obeying by sitting for time out, but thinking, *I'm standing up on the inside!*

This is the attitude that leads to the deeds of the flesh described by Paul in today's passage. Although we have no power to control what others do or say, we have the Holy Spirit, who can govern how we respond. Too often we try to blame our responses on the behavior of someone else. We justify our actions by saying, "But he made me so mad!" In reality, we chose to be angry—justifiably or not.

Whenever someone hurts or frustrates us, we can decide whether to react in a godly or worldly fashion. No matter how much blame we attempt to offload onto others, the Lord is not misled by our maneuvering. He looks at the heart. Each of us is accountable to Him for both our attitudes and responses.

We may think the blame game makes us look better, but God is not fooled. Followers of Christ are called to sow peace and bear the spiritual fruit of love, joy, and kindness (Gal. 5:22-23). If we are clinging to blame, all that is growing are the emotional "weeds" separating us from God. The responses He desires are forgiveness when we are hurt and repentance when we have sinned against another person.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, March 6, 2018 - The Blame Game

MARCH 07TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, March 6, 2018 - The Blame Game

Genesis 3:8-13

As children, we all played “the blame game.” If caught doing something wrong, we accused a sibling or friend in hopes of escaping discipline. This tactic seldom worked, because the one we accused was quick to give a different account. No one wins by shifting blame and refusing to take responsibility. Sadly, though, many people continue to play the blame game, even as adults.

Shifting responsibility isn't new. It began in the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned. When God held them accountable for rebelling against Him, Adam claimed he ate the fruit because Eve gave it to him. She, in turn, accused the serpent, who had deceived her. Yet they both incriminated themselves with these words: “I ate” (Gen. 3:12-13). Blaming someone else didn't alter the facts—they were each responsible for their choice and course of action.

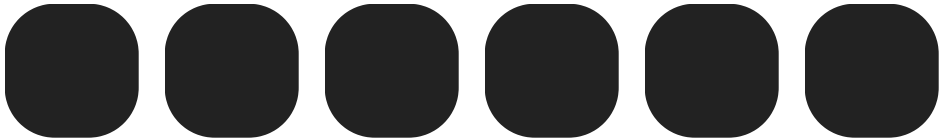
So, if we know the futility of the blame game, why do we still play it? Do we think we can avoid the undesirable consequences? Is it an attempt to cause others to regard us more favorably? Sometimes it's not even other people we blame but circumstances—the way we were raised or the way we were treated. Regardless of the cause, sin is never justifiable, and God always holds us accountable.

While it's difficult to swallow our pride and admit that we are wrong, it's always best to take full responsibility for our attitudes, responses, and behavior. That is the only way to walk humbly with the Lord, which pleases and honors Him.

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