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Daily Devotional - Thursday, March 22, 2018 - The Fullness of God in You

MARCH 22ND 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Ephesians 3:14-21

Have you ever wondered if you are a “whole person”? We all have struggles in life that could make us feel incomplete, but the apostle Paul says we can be “filled up to all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19). What does that look like?

A whole person is generally satisfied with life. He feels loved and is able to love others in return. Difficulties and hardships don't devastate him, because he is able to go through them with confidence in God. He isn't a complainer or someone who's quick to blame others. A positive attitude guards his mind since he knows that the Lord will work everything out for good (Rom. 8:28).

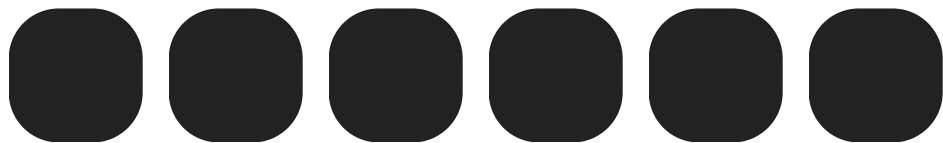
Being a Christian doesn't automatically make us feel complete. Fullness comes only when we experience God's love. For many years, I knew theologically that the Lord loved me. I even preached about it, but I didn't really feel it. Only after I took a deep look at my life and started dealing with events that had fractured my soul in childhood did I begin to experience His love in a personal way. Once I felt the security of His love for me, I discovered great joy from walking in obedience to His will. The reason was that I knew I could trust Him to meet all my needs in His time and way.

Do you feel the Lord's love, or do you see it as just a biblical fact? If you long for wholeness, the key is to genuinely experience a one-on-one relationship with Jesus Christ. This is possible only when you are willing to open up and let the Lord search your heart. He will reveal what's holding you back from accepting His love.

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Daily Devotional, Monday, March 19, 2018 - The Process of Temptation

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1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Many people act as if there's no defense against temptation. With the first hint of desire, they immediately throw their hands up and give in to every little enticement. Can you relate to this? What we must realize is that temptation is a gradual process, and it can be short-circuited at any stage.

Temptation usually begins in the mind, where we live out imagined scenarios. The human mind has an amazing capacity to create entire exchanges and experiences out of nothing. Through fantasy, we can enjoy something without ever bringing it into the real world. Therefore, since it's not real, we think it's perfectly harmless.

But a fantasy world leads to a downward spiral of enslavement. Ultimately, our thoughts become so wrapped around the one temptation that it seems impossible to think of anything else. At this point, our minds are held captive by the desire. No matter where we go or what we do, we can't outrun our own thoughts! And when our life becomes focused on anything other than God, we are trapped.

But the Lord is faithful and will provide the way of escape. Since temptation begins in the mind, that's where the battle should be waged. The only way to disrupt the process is by filling our minds with the Word of God. As we continually feed on a hearty diet of Scripture, the Word will work in us—uprooting sin, transforming our thoughts, and overcoming the tempting fantasy. The Bible is powerful! We can trust it to set us free from the burden of temptation.

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Daily Devotional, Friday, March 16, 2018 - The Promise of Humility

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1 Peter 5:5-7

Jesus' life exemplified humility. While on earth, He did not assert His rights, but cloaking himself with humanity, He chose to live in full obedience as a servant to His Father (Phil. 2:5-7). He laid aside His rightful glory and authority and humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross.

Our Savior's example was and is countercultural. This world does not value humility; rather, our culture applauds high achievement, outward beauty, elevated positions, or exceptional skills. But Christ calls His disciples to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him (Luke 9:23).

Which way will we choose? Peter clearly outlines our options in today's passage. If we choose God's way of humility, we are promised that spiritual blessings will follow. But if we forsake His path, He'll oppose us because, in essence, we're working against Him in our arrogant self-sufficiency. However, when we humble ourselves by yielding to His authority and obeying Him, He becomes our source of confidence and strength.

Although our society places a high value on instant gratification and recognition for achievement, God honors us according to His own perfect ways and timing. He assures us that if we choose meekness—living in submission to Jesus as Master of our life—He will reward us,

both here on earth and in the life to come (Matt. 5:5 NIV).

The decision is yours to make: Will you humble yourself and live for God's glory rather than your own, or will you plot your own course and invite His opposition?

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

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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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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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