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Daily Devotional, Tuesday, April 24, 2018 - The Moments That Sustain Us

APRIL 24TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional, Tuesday, April 24, 2018 - The Moments That Sustain Us

Psalm 145:1-21

Every believer experiences moments of challenge or discomfort. The question is, How do we deal with them? King David discovered that remaining strong and fruitful during trying circumstances begins with praising the Lord. Then, once his focus shifted upward, he was ready to meditate on the glorious splendor of God's majesty and also on His wonderful works (Psalm 145:5).

Meditation involves Bible reading but goes far beyond skimming a section the way we might with any other book. Instead, we need to pray over the verses, asking God to show us by His Spirit what the passage means, what it says about Him, and how we can apply His words to our life.

What keeps us from meditating upon the Lord and His Word? We live in such a busy culture that it's often difficult for us to slow down, settle our racing thoughts, and sit quietly with God's Word before us. As we try to concentrate, our minds are bombarded with thoughts of all we need to do. Being with the Lord may not seem as urgent as our other tasks, but it's much more important.

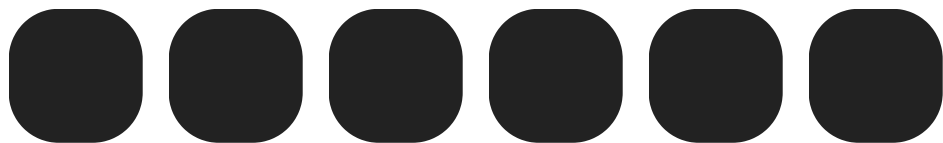
Meditating on Scripture increases our thirst for God, enlarges our perspective of Him, teaches us to think biblically, and increases our discernment. The insights we gain from His Word bring encouragement, reminding us of God's constant presence and strengthening us for whatever lies ahead.

The spiritual benefits of time alone with the Lord are worth whatever sacrifice we have to make. Through meditation, our heart begins to digest the truths we know intellectually so they can impact our everyday life.

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Daily Devotional, Monday, April 23, 2018 - The Truth About Salvation

APRIL 23RD 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Satan wants both Christians and non-Christians to be confused about salvation, but for different reasons.

When it comes to unbelievers, the devil's purpose is to have them think they're saved by doing good works—in other words, by being a “good” person. His motive is to keep the lost man or woman lost. This is an all-too-effective strategy, even among many who attend church regularly. Assuming their good deeds will outweigh their bad deeds, they consider themselves heaven-bound when in reality, they're actually on the road to horrifying, irreversible disappointment (Matt. 7:21-23).

Satan has a different purpose for creating confusion among God's followers. Though Jesus taught that salvation can never be lost (John 10:28-29), the enemy sows seeds of doubt in an effort to keep believers off-balance—wondering what the Lord will do next, fearing His judgment, and working ever more feverishly to earn His acceptance. More than a few Christians have burned themselves out in this misguided attempt to please the Lord. On top of that, they have allowed Satan to enslave them with fear and short-circuit their effectiveness for God's kingdom.

The solution is to know the Bible and trust what it teaches. Scripture is clear that we're saved by faith, not by works (Eph. 2:8-9)—and that salvation is permanent (Rom. 8:38-39). God wants His children reassured about these truths, confident, and spiritually productive. His desire is that our relationship with Him will be so exciting and joyful that we reflect Jesus to those around us.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, April 18, 2018 - A Place Called Heaven

APRIL 18TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, April 18, 2018 - A Place Called Heaven

John 14:1-6

Because mankind is earthbound until death, misconceptions about heaven are common. Some people imagine it as an ethereal world of formless spirits who float about, whereas others flatly deny its existence. A few have returned from near-death experiences to describe what they saw. Amid all the confusing and contradictory views, we would do well to remember that our only sure source of accurate information about heaven is God's Word.

Jesus had firsthand knowledge of heaven because He came from there to earth. Shortly before dying, He told His disciples that He would go to His Father's house to prepare a place for them and then would come back to take them to their new home. Several weeks later the disciples watched the resurrected Jesus ascend, as foretold, into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

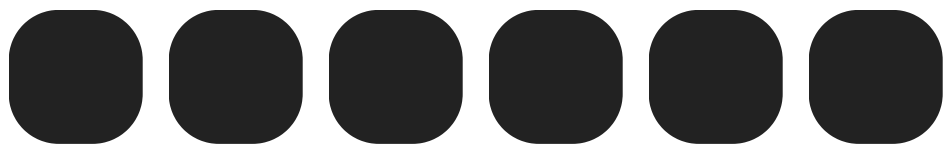
Ever since that day, believers throughout history have been waiting for the Lord's promised return. Each one will be given an immortal resurrection body similar to Christ's. It will be physical, visible, and recognizable to others. We will even be able to eat. (See Luke 24:41-43.) Heaven is a literal place for actual, tangible bodies—a place to live, serve God, and worship and enjoy Him forever.

Knowing all the specifics of our eternal destination is impossible, but we can be sure that Jesus will fulfill His promise to come back for us. Stepping into our custom-designed dwelling places, we will each realize that we're finally home—and throughout eternity can never be separated from our heavenly Father.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, April 17, 2018 - Building Lasting Friendships

APRIL 17TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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1 Samuel 18:1-4

Genuine friends are rare treasures. In a very limited way, they are shadows of the perfect fellowship experienced within the Trinity. We are made in God's image (Gen. 1:27); one aspect of this truth is that the Lord created us for meaningful relationships. In fact, it's difficult to flourish if we live in isolation. By God's design, we are made to share life with others, as well as to give and receive love.

Friendships come in various degrees—from surface relationships to intimate fellowship. Although you may have many acquaintances, you might remain lonely unless you have at least one or two close friends. If God has blessed you with an intimate friendship, be diligent to devote time and effort to develop and cultivate it.

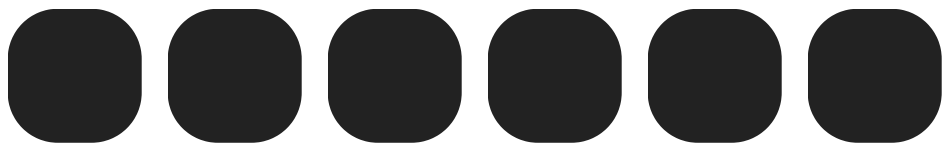
Jonathan and David exemplified this type of closeness. One was a prince and the other was a shepherd, so they seemed like improbable companions. However, status didn't matter to them. Besides demonstrating humility, they also showed great respect for each other's faith and love for Israel. They both felt as committed as brothers and gave generously of themselves. For example, the robe Jonathan gave David—a prized possession of the king's son—was evidence of his loyalty and love (1 Samuel 18:4). He even risked his life and reputation in order to save David (1 Samuel 20:30-34).

Do you have a person like this in your life—someone with whom to share your joys and sorrows, strengths and weaknesses, fears and pain? Thankfully, Jesus is the best friend we can have, but we also need close relationships with others. What can you do today to build this type of friendship?

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Daily Devotional - Monday, April 16, 2018 - Voiding God's Grace

APRIL 16TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, April 16, 2018 - Voiding God's Grace

Galatians 3:1-5

In verse 3 of today's passage, the apostle Paul raises a probing question for all who have believed in Jesus Christ for salvation. He says, "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" The subtle shift from confidence in Jesus to confidence in the flesh (or self) can all too easily go unnoticed.

When we receive salvation through faith in Jesus and first experience God's glorious grace and freedom from sin, we know we could never have produced these ourselves. We're filled with gratitude and awe that He would give us the gift of salvation.

However, as we grow in grace and submit to the disciplines of obedience and service, we begin to accumulate a record of good deeds and Christlike conduct. If we're not careful, we may begin to put confidence in our own righteousness and obedience instead of the Holy Spirit's work in our life.

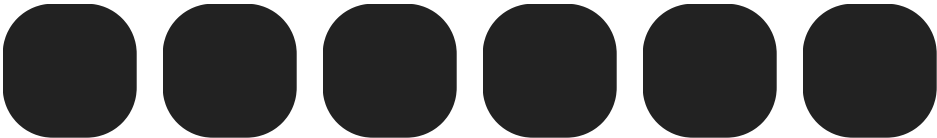
There's something within our fallen humanity that longs to take credit for the good we do. We'll readily acknowledge that we are saved by grace, but then we assume that living the Christian life is now up to us—that God did His part by saving us, and now we must do ours. Such thinking elevates us and denies the power of the Spirit in us.

Only when we have a large view of God and a small view of ourselves will we be able to see that we add nothing to our salvation. Nor can we claim credit for the work the Holy Spirit does in and through us as He sanctifies and matures us in Christ.

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