



[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Thursday, May 17, 2018 - When Our Faith Wavers

MAY 17TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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James 1:2-8

We all experience variation in the strength of our faith. If all is well, we feel confident that the Lord is trustworthy, because we see His blessings all around us. But when troubles increase, so do our doubts about God's faithfulness. We start to wonder whether He will ever answer our prayers for deliverance. As hard as we try, we can't see Him working in the situation. And as our trials drag on, we begin to lose hope in God and may start looking for more reasonable ways to resolve the matter ourselves.

James points us to a different perspective. Instead of thinking that the Lord has forgotten about us, he reminds us of God's divine purposes for our hardships. They test our faith in order to produce endurance and maturity. Our Father isn't trying to break us; rather, He wants to grow us and provide what is lacking in our spiritual life.

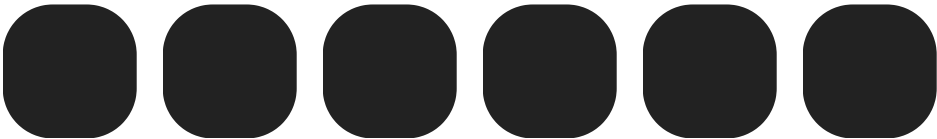
What we really need in our trials is wisdom, and that is exactly what James 1:5 tells us to request from Him. Instead of focusing on the circumstances and letting feelings overcome our faith, we must shift our thoughts to the Lord and confidently believe He'll give us the wisdom we need, both to handle the situation and to grow from it.

Giving in to doubts is dangerous, as it could develop into a lifestyle of spiritual uncertainty in which we’re “driven and tossed by the wind” (James 1:6). When we handle our misgivings in this way, we’ll often make wrong decisions that are costly. How much better it would be to anchor ourselves to the Lord and His Word and ride out the storm in peaceful assurance.

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[Go to post](#)



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TOP

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, MMay 16, 2018 - God's Ultimate Purpose for Our Trials

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Romans 8:29-30

Difficult situations are easier to bear if we know that something good is going to result from them. The problem is that our idea of good may not be the same as God's. Since His ways and thoughts are much higher than ours, we must trust Him to know what is best, even if it causes us pain, frustration, or hardship (Isa. 55:9). The ultimate good the Lord is working to accomplish is our conformation to the image of His Son, and trials are one of the tools He uses in the process.

However, we should never think that God sends affliction into our lives and then sits back to see what will happen. Our loving heavenly Father oversees every aspect of the situation.

The Lord designs our trials. God considers every adversity necessary to achieve a specific purpose in our life (1 Peter 1:6-7). He knows each of us intimately and sees where we need correction or spiritual growth to become more Christlike.

God determines the length of our trials. From our perspective, any suffering lasts too long. But when we depend on the Lord, He gives us grace and strength to endure until His purpose is accomplished (Phil. 4:13).

The Lord limits the intensity of our trials. He knows what we can handle and will not give us more than we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Nothing in our life is random or meaningless. Even when we don't understand what the Lord is doing, we can trust that He will use our trials to make us more like His Son in character, conduct, and conversation.

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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, May 15, 2018 - God Works Through Our Trials

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2 Corinthians 12:7-10

The troubles and suffering we experience in life are not random events without purpose. God works through them for our good (Rom. 8:28). We may not like or understand exactly what He's doing, but knowing some of His general goals helps us trust Him and cooperate so we can reap the benefits of a season of affliction.

Protection. After Paul fervently prayed that his thorn in the flesh be removed, God revealed to him that it was a protection from pride. We all have areas of weakness that could lead us into sin, and God in His wisdom knows how to safeguard us. Sometimes pain accomplishes what nothing else can.

Reliance. Paul's thorn, which made him weak, also taught him to endure by relying on Christ's grace and strength. In the same way, the troubles in our life often bring us to the end of our rope so we'll reach out to the Lord in humble dependence. Then we are positioned to receive the divine strength He promises to provide.

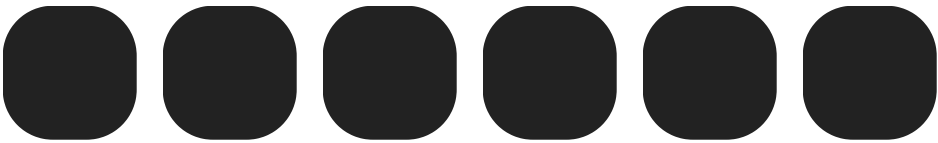
Divine Perspective. When Paul finally realized what the Lord was trying to accomplish in his life, he viewed his suffering in a totally different way. He stopped focusing on it as a pain and hindrance and instead became content: Paul could actually rejoice because he recognized that Christ's power in him was more important than freedom from pain.

Unless we realize that God always prioritizes the eternal over the temporal, we won't see the value of pain. According to 2 Corinthians 4:17, "Momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison." Therefore, we don't lose heart.

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[Go to post](#)



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TOP

Daily Devotional - Monday, May 14, 2018 - Passing Down a Legacy of Faith

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Daily Devotional - Monday, May 14, 2018 - Passing Down a Legacy of Faith

2 Timothy 1:1-9

What do you want to pass down to your children? We'd probably all like to provide a large inheritance, but there's something even more valuable—a spiritual legacy.

Paul admired the faith heritage that was passed down to Timothy by his mother and grandmother. Although Eunice and Lois could not bestow salvation on Timothy, they modeled their faith in God and His Word. Timothy's greatest inheritance was spiritual instruction and godly examples from these influential women. Mothers and fathers who desire to pass along a faith legacy will make the following values part of their life:

Principles. Know and practice biblical principles. Parents can't pass down what they don't possess, but those who love and obey God's Word will eagerly share what they've learned.

Pattern. Apply scriptural principles to your life and live them out in front of your children. A consistent pattern of obedience to God inspires children to seek Him, whereas saying one thing but doing another sets a poor example.

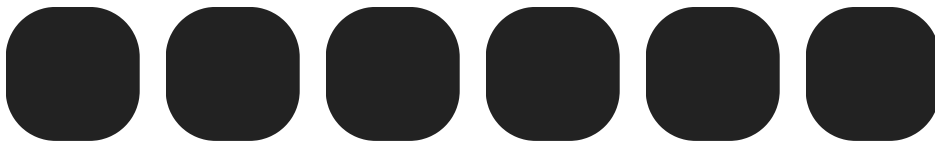
Persistence. Never give up in your attempts to impart spiritual knowledge. I learned this wise habit from my mother, who set out to instill in me the values needed to become a godly adult. To teach a particular lesson, she'd keep telling and showing me until she was satisfied I'd gotten the message.

It's never too late to begin crafting a faith heritage. Like Timothy's mother and grandmother, let's not settle for merely raising our children to adulthood. Instead, our goal should be to become godly examples who inspire and teach them to love and follow Jesus.

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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Thursday, May 10, 2018 - Discipline Determines Destiny

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1 Corinthians 9:23-27

THURSDAY

10

The apostle Paul compares our life to a race and points out that self-discipline—or the lack of it—determines the outcome. What he’s speaking about is not simply our place in heaven, which is secured by our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. He also has in mind our obedience and service for the Lord here on earth.

In order to fulfill the Father’s purposes for our life, we need to “exercise self-control in all things” (1 Corinthians 9:25). Though we long to obey the Lord, we have flesh tendencies, which are bent toward sin. Therefore, we need to control our sinful thoughts, impulses, and actions by making our body our slave instead of letting fleshly desires rule us (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Paul says to live with a goal in mind rather than float aimlessly through life (1 Corinthians 9:26). God has prepared good works for us to accomplish during our lifetime (Eph. 2:10). As we live in obedience to the Lord, He guides our path and empowers us through the Holy Spirit to accomplish His will.

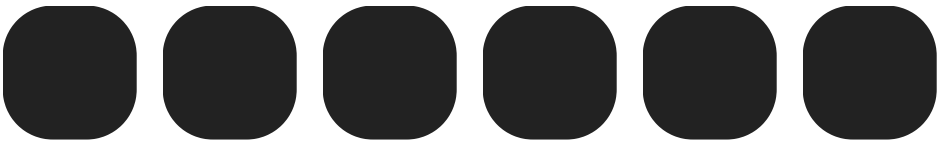
Next, we must work toward God’s goal for us. Wishing and hoping never accomplish anything if there is no action. And effort that’s not directed at the right goal is like “beating the air” (1 Cor. 9:26). We may be working hard for our own purposes, but if they’re not God’s goals, it’s all wasted effort.

Paul tells us to run to win (1 Corinthians 9:24), but what is the prize? As we fulfill God’s purpose, He does His sanctifying work in us and accomplishes His will through us. Then one day, when we finish our course and stand before Christ in heaven, we’ll receive eternal rewards that never perish.

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