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Daily Devotional - Thursday, June 14, 2018 - Secure Hope

JUNE 14TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Psalm 42:1-11

God wants His children to have desires and expectations that are motivating as well as enriching. However, some disappointment is inevitable in this fallen world. So how can we determine where to place our hope—and the way to respond if it is not fulfilled?

Hope is secure when it is aligned with the Lord's desires, which are revealed in Scripture. However, many of our expectations are based on wishes or feelings. We long for job promotions, good health, or quick solutions to our problems. Though these are things we want, we have no absolute promise from the Lord that they're part of His will for us.

Disappointment with God can occur whenever our expectations do not coincide with His plan. Even when hope is based on a scriptural promise, the Lord may not fulfill it in the way or the time that we expect. We should remember that though God may appear inactive, He is moving beneath the surface, preparing us for the future.

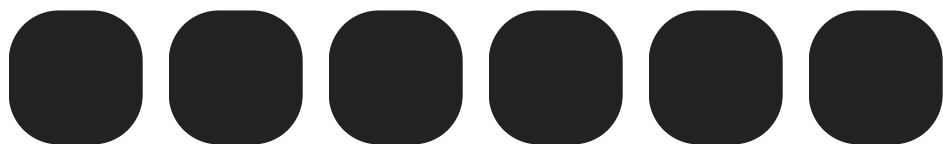
The key to contentment and joy lies in placing all our personal hopes under the umbrella of our ultimate hope in the Lord. God is sovereign and good. He always wants what is best for us and never makes a mistake. His ways are higher than ours and, in many ways, beyond human understanding.

From a limited and fallen perspective, we may be like a 5-year-old who wants candy at every meal. Sometimes God has to dash our hopes in order to give us what He knows is best. Ask Him to clarify and direct your desires to coincide with His way. Then rest in His goodness and keep your hope in Him.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, June 13, 2018 - Ignoring the Conscience

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, June 13, 2018 - Ignoring the Conscience

1 Timothy 1:18-19; 1 Timothy 4:1-2

Are you making certain choices today that your conscience would not have allowed in the past? If so, you may have become desensitized. That is a dangerous place to be.

As we discussed yesterday, God gave us an internal sense of right and wrong to use along with the Holy Spirit's guidance when making daily choices. The conscience serves as an "alarm system," intervening when a Christian is about to take part in ungodly behavior. In that way, it offers protection. But sin can throw off the system's sensitivity.

The insidious process begins if we choose to disobey and then refuse to deal with our rebellion. The conscience warns us repeatedly, but it will eventually become silenced and ineffective if we persist in ignoring the distress signal. When that happens, there are no longer any signals from the heart to point us back toward godliness—in other words, the conscience has become seared.

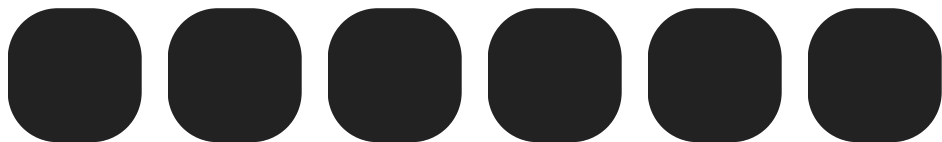
This situation is akin to removing all traffic lights from a busy intersection: it is a recipe for disaster. If you are at this place, get on your knees and repent, immersing yourself in God's Word and bathing your life in prayer. Pursue accountability and fellowship with other believers. A healthy conscience is worth the effort.

Are your internal signals in good working order, or have they been stifled? Don't delay. Scripture warns us that we have a real enemy who desires to lure us away from godliness and into destruction. God uses a clear conscience to guide, protect, and lead us into His light and peace.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, June 12, 2018 - A Clear Conscience

JUNE 12TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, June 12, 2018 - A Clear Conscience

Acts 24:10-16

When facing hard decisions, do you pay attention to your conscience? And is it necessarily wise to trust this inner voice?

God gave everyone an internal sense of right and wrong. In fact, reflecting His truth inwardly is one way that He reveals Himself to mankind. The conscience is a divine alarm system that warns us of oncoming danger or consequences. Its primary purpose is protection and guidance.

The problem, however, is that sin warps perception and can lead us astray. So it's important to understand the difference between following your heart and allowing a clear conscience to help with decisions. To make a determination, ask, *What is the greatest influence on my morality?* If the world's system of what is acceptable has infiltrated your heart, then your conscience cannot be trusted. But if you have allowed God's Word to permeate and transform your thinking (Rom. 12:2), that inner voice is likely trustworthy.

The Holy Spirit, along with a divinely informed conscience, guides believers. In order to keep that internal guidance system healthy, we should continually meditate on Scripture. The Ten Commandments are a solid basis for morality, and we are wise to internalize them—especially the two Jesus highlighted: to love God above all else and to love others (Matt. 22:36-40).

What would you say has the greatest impact on your belief system? Is it the truth of Scripture? Or do the world's standards of right and wrong infect your heart? Almighty God knows what is best for you, His child—and He provided a conscience to guide you toward wise decisions.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, June 11, 2018 - No Long I, But Christ

JUNE 11TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Galatians 2:20

Hudson Taylor was a missionary in China during the mid-1800s. At one point, he felt overwhelmed with financial concerns, the responsibilities of running a mission, and the

ever-increasing pile of mail awaiting his attention. All the letters he wrote to friends and family were filled with defeat and discouragement.

Seeing his need, a missionary friend wrote back to him, asking, “Hudson, when you think about Jesus, does He have a furrowed brow? Is He worried and anxious because He doesn’t know what’s going to happen next or if there will be enough money?” Then he added, “When your life becomes Jesus’ life, there’s no need to worry, because it will no longer be Hudson who bears the burdens but Jesus, and He’ll never be swamped by problems.”

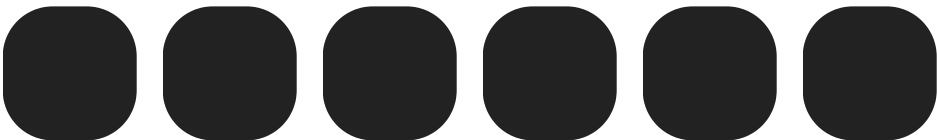
God changed Hudson Taylor in that moment. His circumstances were the same; in fact, the problems became greater, but there was a difference in Taylor’s response. Whereas before he was fretting and wrestling, now he was resting in the Lord and trusting with a calm, quiet, and peaceful spirit. Those who knew him could discern the dramatic change.

Sometimes we think that being crucified with Christ is all about what we give up—practicing self-denial and saying no to sin, temptations, and worldly pleasures. But it also includes living in the power of His resurrected life. Jesus Christ makes His abode in us, empowering us to overcome sin and live righteously. But He also carries our burdens and encourages our spirits to trust Him. Just as we are saved by faith, so also we live by faith, trusting the Lord day by day with all our needs and concerns.

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Daily Devotional - Sunday, June 10, 2018 - Responding to Disappointment

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Matthew 1:18-25

To find examples of wise, godly reactions to disappointment, you're more likely to turn to Psalms than to Matthew. But the very first chapter in the New Testament tells the story of an upright man's reaction to painful and disheartening news.

Joseph—Jesus' earthly father—was a righteous person. A godly man wants a wife who shares his desire to honor and obey the Lord, and Scripture indicates that Mary was exactly that sort of woman (Luke 1:45-55). So imagine how stunned Joseph must have been when Mary returned from a long visit with her relative Elizabeth and told him that she was pregnant. Moreover, she was claiming no man had touched her.

No matter how Joseph looked at the situation, it appeared grim. And yet Matthew 1:20 says that he "considered"—in other words, he sought a wise, righteous response. God entered Joseph's life in a dramatic way to confirm Mary's story and put a stop to his plans for a quiet annulment.

The Lord turned Joseph's mourning into great purpose. Mary had told the truth—strange and startling though it was. The couple would bear the intense public censure of a too-soon pregnancy, but Joseph stopped thinking about what others would say. God had sacred work for him: to raise the Messiah, alongside a faithful woman.

Followers of Christ should seek a godly response to disappointments they face. Since the Lord always has a plan, the wisest reaction is to anticipate the good He can do and await His timing. God certainly blessed Joseph for his willingness to seek God's kingdom first (Matt. 6:33).

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