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Daily Devotional - Saturday, August 11, 2018 - The Priority of Obedience

AUGUST 11TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Saturday, August 11, 2018 - The Priority of Obedience

Luke 6:46-49

The Creator gave Adam and Eve two commands—first, to fill the earth and rule over it, and second, not to eat from a certain tree in the Garden (Gen. 1:28; Gen. 2:17). Because they chose to disobey, their relationship with God was broken, and they had to leave Eden.

Not only did the first couple's rebellion impact their own lives but it also had far broader implications: All future generations would suffer. In Romans 5:12-19, the apostle Paul explains why. Through the trespass of one man, Adam, sin made its entrance into the world, and death resulted for all mankind. Because Adam was the head of the human race, his disobedience affected everyone born after him. Every person starts out with a bent away from the Lord and a desire for self-rule.

By contrast, Jesus Christ made conformity to the Lord's will the priority of His life. He obeyed God in both word and deed. (See John 8:28-29.) Having lived a perfect life—one entirely without sin—He qualified to be our Savior (2 Corinthians 5:21). Through the death of one man, Christ Jesus, payment was made for the transgressions of all mankind. God's acceptance of the Son's sacrifice brought us forgiveness and freedom from sin's power.

Adam's disobedience brought judgment and death, whereas Jesus' obedience resulted in new life for all who believe in Him (Rom. 6:4). Our Savior calls us to deny selfish desires, live sacrificially, and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). A believer's godly life will bring Jesus honor and point others to Him.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, August 10, 2018 - Expressing Gratitude to God

AUGUST 10TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, August 10, 2018 - Expressing Gratitude to God

FRIDAY

If you're a Christian, you probably know that thanking the Lord for His blessings is an important aspect of your relationship with Him. But have you ever considered the different ways this can be done? Gratitude isn't limited to verbal expressions or prayers but can actually be demonstrated in a variety of ways.

In the Psalms, one of the most frequently mentioned methods of conveying thanks is by singing. Songs can often say what our heart feels but has trouble articulating. As the words from our favorite hymns or praise songs flow from our lips, we are reminded of who God is and the magnitude of His salvation and love for us. And singing isn't reserved just for church. When we're filled with gratitude, we may find ourselves humming or singing songs that magnify the Lord wherever we are.

Another way to express gratefulness is by serving God—whether through acts of kindness, teaching Sunday school or Bible study, organizing a ministry, reaching out to marginalized people, sharing the gospel with the lost, helping someone in need, or giving financially. Every one of these can be offered to God with an attitude of thanksgiving for all He's done for us.

Ultimately, we show the Lord our gratitude through obedience. A holy life flows from a heart filled with thankfulness for God's grace, mercy, love, and salvation. Instead of living for ourselves and our own pleasures, we'll want to exalt Christ in all that we do, say, and think. And as we allow God's Spirit to control us, He will faithfully enable us to live in a manner that is pleasing and honoring to the Lord.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, August 8, 2018 - Handling Praise

AUGUST 08TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, August 8, 2018 - Handling Praise

Proverbs 27:2

WEDNESDAY

08

How do you respond when someone gives you a compliment? For some people, praise is nearly as difficult to handle as criticism. This can be especially true for believers since God's Word instructs us to be humble (Col. 3:12). Yet we've all experienced how encouraging a word of praise can be. Most of us can remember a time when a parent, teacher, employer, or friend voiced approval that motivated us to even greater heights.

God knows that we all need encouragement, and one way He supplies this need is through the words of others. That's why it's important to address our confusion regarding the best way to give and receive compliments.

Acknowledge the comment by simply thanking the person. Don't belittle their words in any way or explain reasons why you do not deserve them.

Identify the character quality that led the other person to offer praise. For example, does he have a discerning spirit, compassion, or strong love for others?

Share what the encouragement means to you. If someone tells you how he enjoyed your teaching, you might say, "That really motivates me to study harder so God can use me as He desires."

When appropriate, include others in the praise. For instance, if you are complimented on something that was a group effort, be sure to acknowledge the contributions of the others. This not only encourages them but also protects you from pride.

Praise can help each of us become the person God intends us to be, or it can lead to the sin of pride. Our attitude and response are the determining factors.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, August 7, 2018 - Accepting Criticism

AUGUST 07TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, August 7, 2018 - Accepting Criticism

TUESDAY

Nobody likes criticism. It can hurt, especially when unsolicited, and is sometimes delivered with unkind words and a harsh spirit. However, we must be careful not to reject the reproof without first considering whether it's valid.

God can use an honest, direct person to convey something we need to hear. Criticism forces us to examine ourselves. God's goal is that we grow in spiritual maturity and holiness, but we all have blind spots that keep us from seeing the areas He wants to transform. If we fail to listen to a reproof He allows to come our way, our spiritual growth could be stunted. However, this doesn't mean all critiques are valid. That's why it's important to respond well and evaluate criticism correctly.

- *Do not immediately reject the comment, blame the person, or defend yourself. Instead, consider what was said, and ask God to help you discern if it's true.*
- *Thank the person for his interest in you and explain that you'll reflect on his observation. If he was sincere, he'll be appreciative, but if his intentions were negative, this may disarm him.*
- *Evaluate the criticism and determine what exactly is under scrutiny—your beliefs, your character, God ... ?*
- *View this as an opportunity for growth, and if necessary, apologize.*

Instead of allowing criticism to lead us into anger and self-pity, we should let it do its work in our life. We can't allow hurt or anger to derail what God wants to do in us—namely, make us more Christlike. And isn't that what we all want?

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Daily Devotion - Monday, August 6, 2018 - Releasing Guilt

AUGUST 06TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotion - Monday, August 6, 2018 - Releasing Guilt

Isaiah 55:7-8

MONDAY

06

The church I grew up in could sum up much of its theology in one statement: “Thou shalt not ...” I don’t recall hearing about the Father’s love or how to live the Christian life. What I learned was that a wrathful God would punish me if I didn’t follow all the rules. And there seemed to be rules for everything—including what I could read, what I could wear, and what I could do.

As a teenage boy, I spent a lot of time begging the Lord to forgive me for one foolish thing or another. And I carried around a constant weight of guilt and worry everywhere I went. I just couldn’t seem to be good enough. In truth, the rules were a burden to me, and since I thought God made them, He was a burden too.

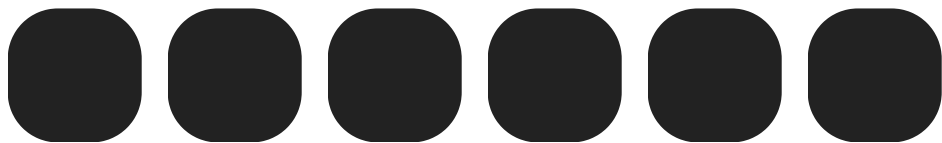
In my young adult years, I learned that my perception of God was wrong. He is gracious and loving. The commandments that He gave were designed to keep us safe and free from shame. But even when we do mess up, there is no condemnation for those who trust in Christ (Rom. 8:1). That means He forgives our sin and “wipes out [our] transgressions,” remembering them no more (Isa. 43:25). We may have to live with consequences but never with the weight of guilt.

God is not a burden. He is the burden-*bearer*. (See Psalm 68:19.) He placed our sins on Jesus Christ at Calvary, thereby relieving us of that heaviness. Don't keep staggering under the load of guilt. Lay it down before a loving, gracious heavenly Father, who encourages us to come to Him and offers a yoke that is easy and light (Matt. 11:28-30)

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