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Daily Devotional - Friday, November 30, 2018 - Listening to God

NOVEMBER 30TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Psalm 81:8-14

Does the heavenly Father still speak to His children? It's a question that may be on your mind right now. We all have this need to know the Lord is still communicating with us. We crave the certainty that He hears us—and answers.

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In today's reading, we get a clear picture of God's heart: He yearns for Israel to listen to Him. Think about that. Here's the almighty Creator of the universe, pleading with His chosen people to hear His voice. It doesn't make sense, does it? Why on earth would the Israelites turn a deaf ear to their sustaining, omnipotent heavenly Father?

However, God's message is sent to inattentive ears. He says, "O Israel, if you would listen to Me! ... But My people did not listen to My voice, and Israel did not obey Me" (Psalm 81:8, Psalm 81:11).

Thousands of years later, I'm certain that same question still rings through heaven. We can practically hear the Lord saying, "Oh, church, if only you would listen to Me. But My church did not listen to My voice. Oh, that My church would listen to Me!"

Have you ever sensed God saying the same thing to you personally? We all can fall out of touch with Him at times. That happens when we put ourselves in one corner and restrict the Lord to someplace “over there” and out of the way. Then we seem to lose track of His voice in our life. And yet, though we may not hear Him, He is still talking.

Quiet your spirit today. Open God’s Word and invite Him to speak to you anew. And then *listen*

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, November 29, 2018 - When God Looks on Us with Favor

NOVEMBER 29TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Believers are always under the canopy of God's grace and love. Nothing we do can change that. At the same time, our behavior and the condition of our heart do determine whether we receive the fullness of His blessings. So let's see what Scripture teaches about how to experience the Father's favor.

First, God desires that we have a contrite heart and humble spirit (Psalm 51:17). For that to be the case, all aspects of our life must be surrendered to Jesus. Yet some dreams, desires, and people are difficult to release into His hands. Anything we do not give over to His authority is evidence of pride, which is the exact opposite of what our Father wants in His children. Remember that "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). Lack of submission proves that we think our way is better than His plan.

Second, God tells us to tremble at His Word (Isa. 66:2). Scripture—the unfolding revelation of Jesus Christ—is living and powerful to teach and transform us. Consider how we treat this treasure. Do we devote time each day to know what the Bible says and how to apply its principles? Do we hunger for more of the Word in our life so we can know its Creator better? One measure of our reverence is obedience: To honor the Lord, we must obey Him.

We all desire God's favor. Are you living in a manner that positions you to receive the fullness of His blessing? Prayerfully consider whether you have submitted all areas of your life to Jesus Christ—from finances and health to relationships and work habits. Recognize His authority in all things, and revere His Word.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, November 28, 2018 - A Person of Godly Influence

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, November 28, 2018 - A Person of Godly Influence

Daniel 1:1-21

WEDNESDAY

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When Daniel was taken to Babylon, he had no idea God would give him an ever-widening sphere of influence. So what made him different from the other captives from Israel? His godly influence flowed from his strong beliefs based in Scripture.

Commitment. Daniel did not simply know God's law; he was convinced there was no other way to live. When tested, he remained unswervingly faithful to God and His Word, because he considered obedience non-negotiable.

Following God doesn't mean living out biblical principles only when it's convenient or easy. Obedience is to be our consistent lifestyle no matter what the circumstances are. Without a firm commitment to our beliefs, we'll waver back and forth, be a poor witness, and eventually give in to temptation.

Courage. As a captive, Daniel had no authority. Therefore, approaching the king's chief official for special dietary consideration required courage. Although he had no way to know the outcome, Daniel didn't let fear dominate his emotions. He simply trusted the Lord and spoke out.

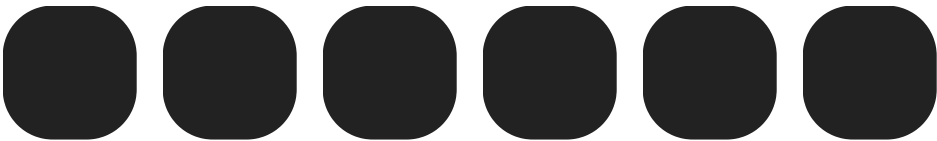
God rewarded Daniel’s faithfulness with superior knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of all kinds, which resulted in his gaining greater influence in the Babylonian and Persian empires. Because of Daniel’s commitment to God and his courage in standing firm, his godly impact extended for many years.

The Lord doesn’t raise all believers to high positions of influence. But He wants to use each of us to impact others for Christ in whatever sphere of influence He’s given us. Therefore, we too need commitment to God’s Word, the courage to obey, and the confidence to trust the Lord with the outcome.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, November 27, 2018 - The Influence of Our Convictions

NOVEMBER 27TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

2 Timothy 1:8-14

We usually think of influential people as those who have authority, position, or power in the world, but in reality, we all have influence to one degree or another. The term describes the capacity to have an effect on someone else's character, development, or behavior.

This is exactly what Christ has called believers to do by proclaiming the gospel and encouraging one another in the faith. However, in order to have a godly impact on others, we must first be convinced that the Bible is true. Then as we grow in knowledge of the truth, we can help others know Jesus, understand scriptural principles, and live obediently by them.

Paul advised Timothy to “retain the standard of sound words” in the faith (2 Timothy 1:13), and these same truths have been delivered to us.

1. The Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God. There are no mistakes in it, and it is wholly true (2 Timothy 3:16; John 17:17).

2. There is one God, and He exists in three persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all members of the triune Godhead (Matt. 28:19).

3. Eternal life is received only through faith in Jesus. Salvation cannot be earned by good works (John 14:6; Eph. 2:8-9).

4. Jesus will one day return for those who believe in Him, and He'll take them to heaven (John 14:2-3). But unbelievers will remain under divine wrath.

As the culture around us becomes more resistant to Christian influence, holding to these convictions will require solid commitment and steady courage. So determine not to let compromise steal your godly influence.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, November 26, 2018 - Handling Difficult Circumstances

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Daily Devotional - Monday, November 26, 2018 - Handling Difficult Circumstances

Philippians 1:12-18

MONDAY

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Paul wrote his letter to the church at Philippi while he was a prisoner in Rome. Though confined and under watch while awaiting trial, he wrote to encourage the Philippians, assuring them that his situation was being used by God. He told them, “I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am” (Phil. 4:11).

Notice that this verse does not say that Paul was always happy. Happiness depends upon circumstances, but for believers, contentment is possible in any situation because it’s anchored in God. Although Paul’s imprisonment was difficult and uncomfortable, He scarcely mentioned the conditions. This letter is not filled with complaints but with rejoicing because his focus never wavered from Christ (Phil. 1:20-21; Phil. 3:10).

Paul did not see himself as a victim. He believed that he was under the sovereign hand of the living God. This was the place ordained for him at that time, in accordance with the Lord’s divine purpose.

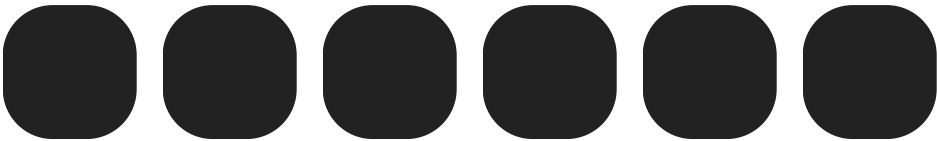
What’s more, the apostle saw good results of his time in prison. The entire imperial guard heard about Jesus through the apostle’s consistent witness. His confinement was also having the opposite effect of what his enemies had planned. Instead of driving Christians into hiding, Paul’s example of contentment in the face of hardship made them bolder (Phil. 1:14).

Like Paul, we can choose how we’ll respond to pain and hardship. If we opt to be resentful and bitter, our suffering will be wasted. But if we see each situation as a wonderful opportunity for spiritual growth, we’ll be able to learn contentment and rejoice in the Lord through it all.

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