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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, December 4, 2018 - The Gift of Exhortation

DECEMBER 04TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, December 4, 2018 - The Gift of Exhortation

Romans 12:3-8

TUESDAY

04

The church is filled with people who have different passions and interests. Christ designed His body to function this way by supplying various spiritual gifts by which His work is accomplished. Yet sometimes these differences can lead to misunderstandings because we each see through the lens of our own gift.

Exhortation is one of those spiritual gifts that can be misconstrued. People with this gifting may use strong words to urge fellow believers toward spiritual maturity. Sometimes this involves identifying foundational problems like pride, selfishness, or a desire for control and prescribing corrective steps based on biblical principles. Other times, exhortation may include an explanation of the blessings of obeying the Lord as well as warnings about the consequences of disobedience.

You may have noticed this gift is often given to pastors who regularly exhort God's people from the pulpit, but there are also individuals in the congregation who may have this spiritual gift. As Christians, we need to hear the truth about ourselves and how we are living, yet sometimes we may be resistant. Perhaps we think the exhorter has oversimplified our situation or is trying to "help" God out. Or maybe the way in which the advice is given strikes us as overconfident. At other times, we may question how Scripture is applied or doubt the genuineness of the one who

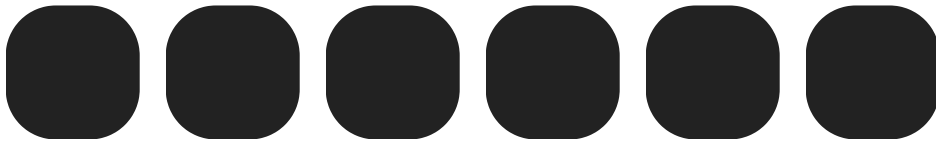
exhorts us.

Although we should always compare what we hear with God's Word, we must not reject correction simply because we don't want to hear it. Wisdom comes with careful consideration of counsel as we hold firmly to the Word.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, December 3, 2018 - Become Slaves of Righteousness

DECEMBER 03RD 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, December 3, 2018 - Become Slaves of Righteousness

MONDAY

What comes to mind when you hear the word *freedom*? It's usually associated with the right to live as we please and to pursue ambitions and dreams. But in reality, living for self is never freedom. When Paul said, "You are slaves of the one whom you obey" (Rom. 6:16), he was pointing out we have a choice of either sin or righteousness. So if we aren't living for Christ, we'll find ourselves enslaved to sinful desires, habits, attitudes, and thoughts.

God wants to free us from every form of bondage that prevents us from becoming the person He created us to be. This kind of freedom is not achieved by war but by the knowledge of truth and submission to Christ.

If you're having trouble overcoming a particular sin despite repeated confession and repentance, there may be an underlying root fueling that sin. It doesn't matter how many times you cut off the sinful fruit; if the root remains, it'll produce a new poisonous outgrowth. And at times those roots spring from harmful emotions like anger, jealousy, bitterness, unforgiveness, or worry.

Instead of allowing such emotions to control us, we must let God's truths fill our mind and influence our behavior. When we were saved, Christ freed us from the dominion of sin and gave us His Spirit to empower us to live righteously. On top of that, God has given us a new nature created in Christ's likeness (Eph. 4:24). Therefore, we're to consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to Christ (Rom. 6:11) and should present ourselves to God for obedience (Rom. 6:13). Remember, God has given us everything we need to live righteously for Him, so believers are never helpless victims of sin.

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

NOVEMBER 30TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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

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

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

THURSDAY

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

NOVEMBER 28TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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.

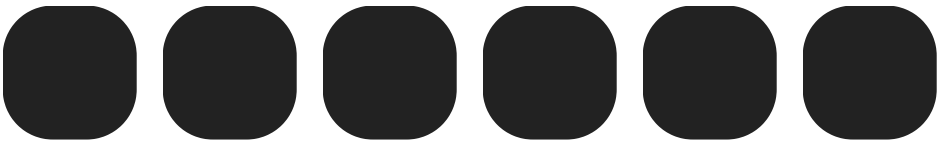
God rewarded Daniel’s faithfulness with superior knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of all kinds, which resulted in his gaining greater influence in the Babylonian and Persian empires. Because of Daniel’s commitment to God and his courage in standing firm, his godly impact extended for many years.

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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