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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, December 5, 2018 - Giving and Receiving Exhortation

DECEMBER 05TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, December 5, 2018 - Giving and Receiving Exhortation

1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

WEDNESDAY

05

Most of us are much more willing to receive instruction from our pastors than from fellow members of the congregation. Yet today's passage gives us some surprising advice regarding how a church is to operate.

First of all, we are told to appreciate and esteem our leaders who have charge over us in the Lord. They are our shepherds, who feed us with the Word of God and care for our spiritual health and growth.

However, this passage also describes the responsibilities we have to admonish, encourage, and help one another in the church. We are not just spectators but are told to be actively involved in helping each other grow in the faith. Therefore, let's consider some ways we can do this:

See God's presence in difficulties. When we come alongside fellow believers, we can help them lift their focus from their circumstances and begin to view their trials as opportunities for spiritual pruning, growth, and discovery.

Become personally involved. Exhortation is best received through face-to-face meetings because the other person sees our care and concern. Furthermore, when we observe his or her response, the insight we gain helps us to understand the heart issues and perceive which biblical principles to apply.

Be teachable. In helping others grow toward spiritual maturity, we too must be willing to make changes in our own life, because we can't pass wisdom on to others unless we're pursuing it ourselves.

We've been entrusted with these responsibilities. Therefore, we must ground ourselves in scriptural truth so we can give wise guidance to others.

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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

Romans 6:15-23

MONDAY

03

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.

30

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

Isaiah 66:1-2

THURSDAY

29

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.

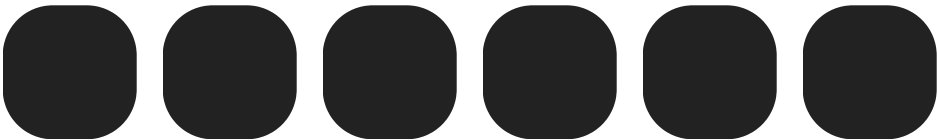
Second, God tells us to tremble at His Word (Isa. 66:2). Scripture—the unfolding revelation of Jesus Christ—is living and powerful to teach and transform us. Consider how we treat this treasure. Do we devote time each day to know what the Bible says and how to apply its principles? Do we hunger for more 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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