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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, December 12, 2018 - The Abiding Life

DECEMBER 12TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, December 12, 2018 - The Abiding Life

John 15:1-6

WEDNESDAY

12

Who doesn't love a beautiful bouquet of flowers? They are a delight to the eyes and fill the room with fragrance. But truthfully, they're dead because they've been disconnected from the plant. Although they may look alive for a while, in time they wither away.

This was the point Jesus was making when He used a grapevine and its branches as an illustration of a believer's life in Christ. Once we're saved, we become branches of Christ—then fruit is produced as His life flows through us, in fulfillment of what Jesus prayed for us in John 17:21.

This abiding relationship is what the Bible elsewhere describes as the Spirit-filled life (Eph. 5:18). The word "abiding" emphasizes our position as branches remaining in the vine of Christ. And the apostle Paul underscores the Holy Spirit's role and authority in our life: As we live in submission and obedience to God's Spirit, He produces His fruit in us (Gal. 5:22-23).

The problem arises when we try to live apart from the vine and direct our own life. The end result is often frustrating or disappointing since we have relied on human ideas and energy instead of being Spirit-led. There is no way to live a spiritually fruitful life without obedience to

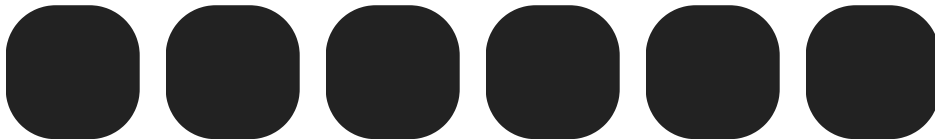
the Holy Spirit.

Our heavenly Father has graciously given us this abiding relationship, but sometimes we act as if we're the vine and Christ exists to do our bidding. In which areas of your life are you reluctant to relinquish control? We were designed to be the branches, and the only way we'll be fruitful is by submissively abiding in the source of our life.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, December 11, 2018 - How to Listen to God's Words

DECEMBER 11TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, December 11, 2018 - How to Listen to God's Words

Nehemiah 8:1-9

In our culture, Bibles are so plentiful that we often take them for granted. This was not the case in Ezra's day. After being exiled from Israel for many years, the Jews had finally returned to their land, and today's passage describes their reaction to hearing the Scriptures. We may have easy access to Bibles today, but we'd do well to learn to approach God's Word in the same manner as these Israelites did.

With eager attentiveness. The people listened attentively as Ezra read Scripture "from daybreak till noon" (Neh. 8:3 NIV). How eager are you each day to open God's Word and devote time to reading and study?

With reverence and worship. When Ezra opened the scroll, all the people stood up in reverence and then bowed down to worship the Lord (Neh. 8:5-6). Scripture reveals who God is and increases our awe of Him and respect for His Word.

With understanding. There were people who helped others understand what they heard, similar to the way pastors and teachers do today (Neh. 8:7-8). Do you skim over passages you don't understand, or do you rely on the many sound teaching resources available?

With repentance. After hearing God's Law, they were convicted of sin and repented with mourning and weeping (Neh. 8:9). God's Word is sanctifying, revealing sin and guiding us into righteousness.

It's easy to take for granted what is commonly available, but we should never lose sight of the most valuable possession God has given us—His inspired, inerrant Word.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, December 7, 2018 - Good Discipline

DECEMBER 07TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, December 7, 2018 - Good Discipline

Hebrews 12:4-11

FRIDAY

07

To gain a deeper understanding of the loving nature of God's discipline, try to remember your own childhood. Maybe you heard these familiar words from a parent or guardian: "This hurts me more than it hurts you." Back then, you probably did not appreciate or even believe that sentiment. Nor did you comprehend the true meaning until you became an adult. Discipline is painful for both the recipient and the administrator, but the benefits outweigh the suffering.

Good parents love their children enough to look beyond their immediate comfort and work toward a more beneficial long-term goal—the transformation of foolish, self-centered juveniles into wise, loving adults. The heavenly Father is working in the same way to mature His children. Divine discipline is a necessary part of the process and an expression of His goodness and love.

Although God knows the most effective means of disciplining us, the outcome is influenced by our attitudes and responses. We can choose to submit and be trained by it, or we can rebel and waste the opportunity to grow in Christlikeness. God is always working for our good, but by

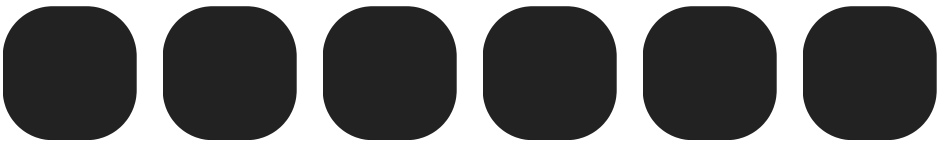
choosing our own way, we reject His best and grieve His heart.

If you don't align your thinking with the truth of Scripture, the pain and suffering of divine discipline may produce the sour fruit of a bitter attitude, an angry heart, and a distorted view of God. Instead, trust in His perfect will and choose to be teachable. He will produce the fruit of righteousness in your life.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 6, 2018 - A Revolutionary Announcement

DECEMBER 06TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 6, 2018 - A Revolutionary Announcement

THURSDAY

Familiarity sometimes robs us of awe and wonder, and this is true of both simple and profound events in life. As Christians, we are familiar with the idea of Jesus' resurrection, but can you imagine the impact it had on those who first heard about it?

When Peter gave his first sermon, he boldly declared, "You ... put Him to death. But God raised Him up again" (Acts 2:23-24). Imagine what a revolutionary statement that was. The assembled crowd knew of Jesus and the miracles He'd performed, and some may even have joined in shouting, "Crucify Him!" (Matt. 27:22). Yet here was one of Jesus' own followers claiming that the Christ couldn't be held by death's power.

Some may have considered the disciples' early accounts of the resurrection to be idle tales, but Pentecost changed all that when God visited mankind in a way He never had before. The crowd witnessed something historic as each person heard the gospel in his or her own language (Acts 2:8-11).

Faith took root in 3,000 repentant hearts when the message of the Lord's death and resurrection was preached. Those new believers were baptized as a public statement of their trust in Jesus as the Messiah and Savior, who died to pay the penalty for their sins.

The revolution sparked by the Holy Spirit that day spread across the world and into the modern era, transforming individuals and the cultures in which they lived. Today the task of proclaiming the death and resurrection of Jesus falls to us. As with the first church, we can trust the Lord to add to our number those who are being saved.

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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.

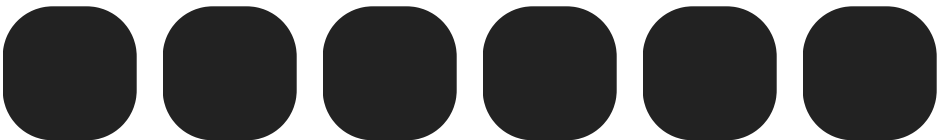
Be teachable. In helping others grow toward spiritual maturity, we too must be willing to make changes in our own life, because we can't pass wisdom on to others unless we're pursuing it ourselves.

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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