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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, December 18, 2018 - Those Who Hurt

DECEMBER 18TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, December 18, 2018 - Those Who Hurt

Mark 10:46-52

In the midst of suffering, we may question whether God cares or even knows what we're going through. However, the problem isn't with the Lord—it's with our perception. We tend to judge God by our circumstances, but we should judge circumstances by the Lord's character and the power He demonstrated in Scripture.

The Bible teaches that our triune God is omniscient and knows all things perfectly and fully. No actions or persons are hidden from His sight, and the past, present, and future are all laid out before Him (Psalm 33:13-15; Heb. 4:13).

The Lord "searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts" (1 Chronicles 28:9). Therefore, He knows us intimately and understands what we really need. God's love and concern for us do not change, even if our pain is the result of our own sinful actions.

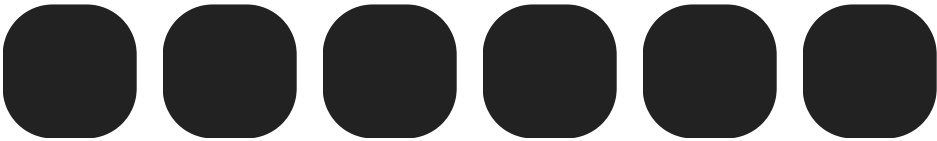
Jesus repeatedly demonstrated God's love and care for people. In fact, much of His ministry consisted of alleviating suffering along with teaching how to enter the kingdom of heaven. While traveling to Jerusalem in anticipation of the cross, Jesus encountered a blind beggar who kept crying out, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:48). Although the crowd told him to be quiet, Jesus stopped to restore his sight and affirm his faith.

And He will hear your cries for help as well because His love extends like a canopy over you. When your circumstances tempt you to doubt this, consider your limited perspective and trust in the character of your God. Accept Jesus’ invitation to bring your burdens to Him and find rest for your soul (Matt. 11:28-30).

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Daily Devotional - Friday, December 14, 2018 - The Words of Our Mouth

DECEMBER 14TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, December 14, 2018 - The Words of Our Mouth

FRIDAY

Have you ever considered what a wonderful gift speech is? When God created us, He gave us a voice and a language so we could communicate. With our tongues we can praise and glorify God, teach His Word, pray, and express encouragement and loving devotion to one another.

However, our voices also have the power to hurt. It often starts with something small, like a thoughtless comment that can snowball, causing unforeseen damage. At times we may express our opinion in a critical way, which tears the other person down. Or out of curiosity, we might ask a question or make a suggestion that sows seeds of doubt and distrust, thereby damaging another person's reputation.

Scripture calls this gossip, and God has strong words to say about those who engage in it. They separate close friends, betray confidences, and stir dissension. Most alarming of all is the fact that the Greek word for a malicious gossip is *diabolos*, which is also translated "devil." When we use our words to tear others down, we are acting like the devil rather than like Jesus Christ.

God takes our words very seriously, and so should we. Jesus said, "The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart" (Matt. 12:34). Therefore, what we need is a heart transformation, and the only one who can do that is God.

Since gossip is the opposite of love, ask the Lord to give you His love for others so you can be someone who protects reputations, covers sins, and blesses others with your words.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 13, 2018 - Remaining in the Vine

DECEMBER 13TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 13, 2018 - Remaining in the Vine

John 15:7-17

THURSDAY

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When Jesus gave the disciples His final instructions before going to the cross, He repeated a particular word. *Abide*—which occurs 10 times in John 15— isn't one we use often, but it accurately conveys the relationship between Christ and His followers.

Abide means “to remain, dwell, continue, endure, or tarry.” Can you hear the call to faithfulness in these words? Our relationship with Jesus isn't a onetime event of salvation but a long and steady walk with Him.

Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches” (John 15:5). This is a fact for everyone who has been born again. But He also tells us to abide in Him (John 15:4), signifying that we have some responsibility as branches in Christ. Therefore, it's essential that we know how to remain in Him.

Jesus says to let His words abide in us (John 15:7). Incorporating God’s Word into our minds and hearts is how we dwell with Him and learn to know Him intimately.

Obedience is another essential aspect of abiding (John 15:10). It’s like being an employee who obeys his manager’s instructions and does not take matters into his own hands. We are to rely on the Spirit’s direction instead of strategizing and making plans on our own.

Abiding in Christ also includes our relationships with fellow believers. Jesus commands us to love one another just as He has loved us (John 15:12).

God’s desire is that we bear much lasting fruit by abiding in Christ. This isn’t a sporadic endeavor done only when convenient; it’s an enduring commitment to remain in God’s Word and continue in obedience and love.

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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.

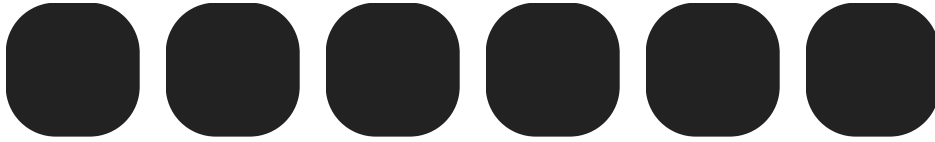
This abiding relationship is what the Bible elsewhere describes as the Spirit-filled life (Eph. 5:18). The word “abiding” emphasizes our position as branches remaining in the vine of Christ. And the apostle Paul underscores the Holy Spirit's role and authority in our life: As we live in submission and 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

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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?

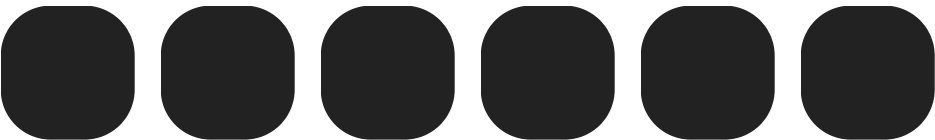
With repentance. After hearing God's Law, they were convicted of sin and repented with mourning and weeping (Neh. 8:9). God's Word is sanctifying, revealing sin and guiding us into righteousness.

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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