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Daily Devotional - Thursday, January 10, 2019 - Dealing With Guilty Feelings

JANUARY 10TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, January 10, 2019 - Dealing With Guilty Feelings

Psalm 32:1-7

THURSDAY

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Guilt comes from a feeling of responsibility for some wrongdoing. Conviction can result from the Holy Spirit's efforts to turn us away from sin and guide us to our heavenly Father. But not all guilt stems from ungodly actions.

False guilt, which is not prompted by sin, can surface for a variety of reasons, such as disappointment in one's own performance, a sense of shame over past events, or criticism from others for unmet expectations. Rejection or a pattern of abuse from childhood can also trigger this emotion. False guilt is a powerful weapon the enemy uses to direct our thoughts away from the Lord.

Whether false or real, the emotion of guilt divides our mind, drains our energy, and creates a sense of insecurity. If we allow it to linger, we can start to have doubts about God's goodness and love for us. Depression and hopelessness may follow. To cope, some people develop compulsive behaviors in an attempt to replace self-reproach with something pleasurable. Excessive amounts of food, television, internet, shopping, and exercise are common ways people try to push away self-condemning thoughts.

Addressing guilt quickly is important. Acknowledge the emotion to the Lord, and identify the reason behind it. If you've violated God's law, ask His forgiveness, and take steps to change the behavior. If you discover false guilt, confess it and ask God to adjust your thinking to match His. In either case, praise Him because He doesn't want His children carrying unnecessary burdens and has promised to forgive our sins.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, January 9, 2019 - God's Plan for Our Guilt

JANUARY 09TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, January 9, 2019 - God's Plan for Our Guilt

Romans 8:1-8

Scripture teaches that one aspect of the Holy Spirit's work is to convict us of sin (John 16:8). His purpose is to turn us from our iniquity and direct us to God.

One example is Peter, who felt great remorse after denying he knew Jesus (Matt. 26:75). Another is Paul, who fell to the ground when Christ came to confront him about his behavior (Acts 9:4). Both men responded to these convicting experiences by repenting and following the Lord.

At one time we all were spiritually dead. Sin's presence was corrupting our human nature from the inside out, blinding us to spiritual truth. With our will directed towards self and against God, "we were by nature deserving of wrath" (Eph. 2:3 NIV). In other words, we were under condemnation and facing eternal death—God's required payment for our transgressions. (See Rom. 6:23.) So in our natural state, we were unconnected to the Lord and headed toward eternal separation from Him.

Although we were helpless to change our situation, God had a plan that would satisfy His justice and include us in His family. He sent His Son to be our substitute—to bear our sin and guilt and to die in our place. Not only did Jesus pay our sin debt in full, but His righteousness also becomes ours the moment we place trust in Him.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of our guilt before God, and, thankfully, we don't have to be separated from Him now or throughout eternity. Have you received Jesus as your personal Savior? If so, then recognize that your position before the Lord has been changed from guilty to righteous.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, January 8, 2019 - Hindrances in Prayer

JANUARY 08TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, January 8, 2019 - Hindrances in Prayer

James 1:6-8

If we have an inaccurate perspective of God, it could cause us to think that He isn't interested in our needs and concerns. On the contrary, the Lord invites us to pray, because He delights in providing for us—and He stands ready to do so. However, different types of hindrances can block the effectiveness of our prayers.

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Ignorance of God's will for our life and the specific circumstances we are facing is one such obstacle. His affirmative answers come when our petitions are in agreement with His purposes for us (1 John 5:14-15). Even if Scripture does not specifically address our situation, we can always ask the Lord to fill us with “the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col. 1:9).

Selfish motives are another hindrance to answered prayer (James 4:3). Sometimes we're more concerned about getting the Lord to do what we want than we are about submitting to His will in the situation.

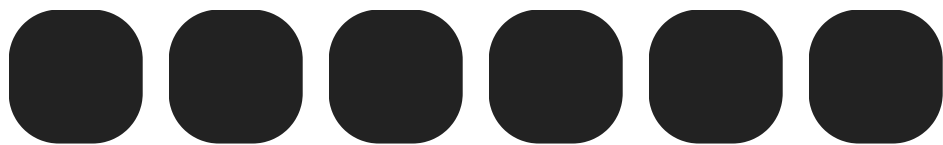
Doubts about God and His faithfulness also keep us from experiencing answered prayer. Low expectations and uncertainty are like intruders in our conversations with Him because they short-circuit faith. Doubts may originate from listening to the wrong voices, embracing false beliefs, or focusing on the difficulty instead of the power, wisdom, and faithfulness of the Lord.

Effective prayer begins with trust in God and an awareness of His ways. Otherwise, skepticism may sneak into our thinking if He delays His answer or responds in an unexpected way. But when our prayers are aligned with His will and motivated by a desire to glorify Him, doubts will vanish

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Daily Devotional - Monday, January 7, 2018 - Praying When in Need

JANUARY 07TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

James 1:1-5

MONDAY

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What do you do when you lack clarity in the midst of a trial? Oftentimes we are tempted to do something, *anything*. But the wisest approach is to pray and wait on the Lord for direction. But how do we begin?

Prayer starts with transitioning our thoughts from the situation at hand to the Lord. What we need is His perspective on the difficulty we're facing. Then we can ask Him to do what He's purposed to accomplish through the challenging circumstance—whatever that may be. When we pray God-centered prayers according to His will, we can be certain that He will give us what we have requested (1 John 5:14-15).

In addition, the prayer pattern that Jesus Christ taught His disciples in Matthew 6:11-13 reveals the type of needs our Father wants us to bring before Him. As He provides for us, we will learn to trust Him more and more. Keeping a prayer list is helpful because it becomes a record of our interactions with the Lord. When we see a direct correlation between our requests and His answers, it will become increasingly evident that God has worked in our life. Specific prayers are even better than general requests because God's faithfulness is even more undeniable.

One request God promises to answer with a "yes" is the desire for wisdom. Whenever we need understanding, particularly in trials, we are to petition our heavenly Father, and He will give it generously as we fill our minds with scriptural truths. And as our wisdom increases, joy and trust in the Lord will too.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, January 4, 2018 - Jesus: Our Intimate Friend

JANUARY 04TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, January 4, 2018 - Jesus: Our Intimate Friend

Matthew 26:47-50

I've counseled plenty of people who argue that they are not worthy of God's love. Of all the passages I could point to that describe the Lord's devotion, today's is the one I think best showcases the unqualified friendship He offers His followers—even when they become wayward.

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus was praying at Gethsemane when Judas Iscariot approached with a band of men. The betrayer stepped forward and kissed the Lord. And what was Jesus' response? According to Matthew, one of the other disciples, the Lord called the man "friend." (See Matt. 26:50.)

Judas expected Jesus to establish His kingdom on earth and drive the Romans out of Israel—surely anyone who could calm a storm at sea could easily remove an oppressive government! But Judas's interest in Jesus was more personal and political than spiritual. In fact, John reported that his fellow disciple stole from the money box (John 12:6). Today the man's name is synonymous with those who betray others for personal gain.

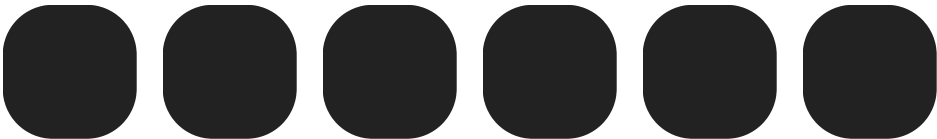
In spite of Judas’s greed, blind ambition, and betrayal, Jesus never stopped loving him—and still used the word “friend” to address the disciple. The Lord does not place conditions on His love or reject people who fail to meet certain standards. He simply cares for us as we are.

We cannot earn Jesus Christ’s love and friendship. He takes the initiative, reaches out, and draws into fellowship those who are willing. None of us are worthy, but we are privileged to live in His love anyway. In the Lord, we find a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24).

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