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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, January 22, 2019 - Biblical Fasting

JANUARY 22ND 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, January 22, 2019 - Biblical Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18

TUESDAY

22

God's Word contains commands about many things, from expressions of worship and relationships with other people to frequency of prayer (Deut. 6:5; John 13:34; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Surprisingly, though, there is no place in the Scriptures where the believer is specifically instructed to fast.

Yet the words "*whenever* you fast" (Matt. 6:16, emphasis added) show Jesus' expectation that His followers would practice this discipline. And there are examples in the Bible of people who abstained from certain activities in order to draw close to God.

Before we go further, it is important to dispel a popular misunderstanding. Fasting doesn't serve to change God's mind, speed up His answer, or manipulate His will. Instead, fasting helps us focus our attention on God alone, so that we listen and worship wholeheartedly.

Denying ourselves in this way makes us better able to fix our eyes on Christ and hear Him clearly. His Spirit often starts by bringing to mind sin that needs to be confessed. In so doing, He sanctifies our thoughts—then He can use this precious time to intensify our desire for God, reveal His will, and grant understanding and peace. In essence, fasting binds us to Him in a oneness that is otherwise difficult to cultivate in our busy world.

Do you want to see God move in awesome ways? By removing anything that hinders your focus, you can fix attention solely on the Creator and cry out to Him regarding your needs. As you gain understanding about your Father and yourself, you will grow closer to Him.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, January 21, 2019 - Overcoming Life's Ups and Downs

JANUARY 21ST 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, January 21, 2019 - Overcoming Life's Ups and Downs

Philippians 4:10-13

MONDAY

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Have you ever heard a testimony from someone who has been through a horrible tragedy and seen firsthand the faithfulness of God in that situation? We pay close attention to these accounts because they inspire us to trust the Lord. And of all the witnesses to God's grace in times of trouble, none is more compelling than the apostle Paul.

Paul was no stranger to hardship. Throughout his ministry, he was dragged, beaten, stoned, arrested, shipwrecked, and accused of heresy by both the Jewish leaders and the Roman government (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). This was certainly a contrast to his early life, when he enjoyed opportunities that his Roman citizenship and Jewish education provided.

In the midst of these amazing ups and downs in his life, Paul discovered a valuable lesson. In Philippians 4:11, he writes, "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." His attitude didn't change with his circumstances—it remained constant whether he had plenty or was in need (Phil. 4:12).

Paul referred to this contentment as a "secret" but then revealed the source of this attitude in the very next verse: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). He is speaking, of course, about Jesus.

In ourselves, there is no way we can muster contentment in every situation. But once we understand that God works through our trials to make us more like His Son and that our union with Christ strengthens us to endure and even rejoice, we have a strong foundation for contentment no matter what is going on around us.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, January 17, 2019 - Knowing God's Ways

JANUARY 17TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, January 17, 2019 - Knowing God's Ways

Psalm 25:4-11

THURSDAY

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Having facts about someone is not the same as truly knowing the person. For instance, if a friend you know relatively well were to come and live with you for several months, you would discover his or her ways—that is, habits, preferences, attitudes, and priorities.

When Scripture speaks of God's ways, it's referring to much more than His actions or facts about His nature. His ways include His manner, motivations, desires, thoughts, and purposes. One of the reasons believers often become discouraged is that they don't understand what God is doing in their life. That's why it's essential to learn how the Lord operates. As long as we remain ignorant of His ways as revealed in His Word, we won't trust or know Him intimately.

The Bible is such a big book that some believers may be tempted to give up, thinking it will take too long to learn how God works. But it's important to remember that we all have the same starting point. When we're born again, God doesn't automatically download everything we need to know about Him into our brains. Learning to understand the Lord and how He does things is a process; He teaches us as we continue to read, obey what we know of Scripture, and spend time with Him.

Do you find yourself longing to grow in intimacy with the Lord? If so, you must live closely with Him by listening as He speaks through His Word—and by humbling yourself to learn, accept, and delight in His ways above your own.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, January 16, 2019 - Developing a Vibrant Faith

JANUARY 16TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, January 16, 2019 - Developing a Vibrant Faith

WEDNESDAY

The apostle Paul had a strong commitment to know and serve Jesus Christ. His passion and love for the Lord was obvious—Jesus was always central in his thinking, whether he was working as a tentmaker, preaching to the crowd, or even sitting in prison. What fueled his love for the Savior?

Paul’s conversion experience on the road to Damascus was a motivating force in his life. Grateful for the gift of grace he had received at salvation, the apostle told many people about his encounter with the resurrected Christ and its impact on him. We, too, have a story to tell of God’s mercy, both in saving us and in giving us new life in Him.

Paul’s zeal also came from his firm conviction that the gospel message was true and available to everyone (John 3:16). On the cross, Jesus took all our sins—past, present, and future—upon Himself (1 Pet. 2:24). He suffered our punishment so that we might receive forgiveness and be brought into a right relationship with God. Through faith in Christ, we’ve been born again, and the indwelling Holy Spirit helps us every day (John 14:26). The more we understand what Jesus has accomplished on our behalf, the greater will be our passion to share the gospel.

Developing a vibrant faith requires time and energy plus a commitment to obey the Lord. Regularly studying the Bible will strengthen your beliefs and give you courage to speak. Caring about the spiritual welfare of others will move you into action. Do you have a passion to serve Jesus wherever He leads?

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Daily Devotional - Monday, January 14, 2019 - Assurance for Trials

JANUARY 14TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, January 14, 2019 - Assurance for Trials

Psalm 121:1-6

Trials will surface in our life. Thankfully, though, we can rely on our Father to help in times of need, as today's passage from Psalm 121 assures us.

“I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (vv. 1-2). When frightened about dangers and difficulties that might befall him, the psalmist knew where to turn for help. Similarly, when we encounter uncertainty, fears, or trials, our sovereign Lord will sustain us (Psalm 103:19)—even when others let us down or our own strength fails.

“He who keeps you will not slumber” (Psalm 121:3). With billions of people in the world, it is difficult to comprehend how the Lord could possibly know every detail of our lives—or why He would care enough to number all the hairs on our heads. But this passage confirms that God is alert to every aspect of each life and attentive to our every need.

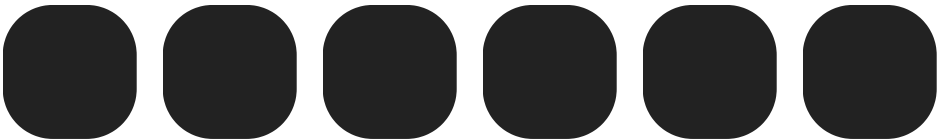
“The Lord is your keeper” (v. 5). In Hebrew, the word for “keep” comes from the same root as “guard” and “protect.” We use this term when parents ask a trusted person to keep their child while they are away temporarily. The childcare provider is expected to protect and provide for needs. God promises to keep His children, which means that He will defend us, give us what we need, grow us into His likeness, and guard us from evil.

Without these promises, the world could seem dangerous and lonely. But we can face unknowns and difficult times with confidence, knowing that the Lord will keep us and help us.

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