Faith Matters

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Daily Devotional - Monday, February 25, 2019 - Our Circle of Influence

FEBRUARY 25TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

We hear much today about being a person of influence. Although some of us may be connected to many people, there are others whose lives may seem small in comparison. However, the important issue is not numbers but faithfulness. The Lord has determined the personality and abilities of every believer, as well as our individual spheres of influence.

No matter how vast or limited our connections are, we can each be used effectively by God to influence others as we follow His instructions.

Stand firm in the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:15). We must make sure that our life is grounded in biblical truth. Otherwise, we could lead others astray.

Continue in every good work and word (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17). People watch us, and what we say and do affects them more than we may imagine. That's why it is so important to make sure our attitude, speech, and conduct reflect Jesus Christ.

Develop a lifestyle of prayer (2 Thessalonians 3:1). Praying for others and for opportunities to share the gospel is essential for effective ministry. It prepares their hearts to hear and our minds

to know what to say. The simplest words can have amazing results when the Lord is directing our efforts.

Keep obeying the Lord (2 Thessalonians 3:4). Godly influence will only be achieved if we ourselves are godly. When we are living obediently before the Lord, He will be faithful to open doors of influence according to His will (Revelation 3:8).

If you will make it your ambition to become faithful in all these ways, you can be confident that the Lord will use your life to influence others for good and for His glory.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, February 22, 2019 - Our Testimony

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Colossians 4:1-6

Think about the last argument you had with someone. Generally, disagreements arise when two people see things differently. Part of the problem is that most issues can be seen from diverse perspectives. Therefore, it's easy for people to take opposing sides on a subject since they make different assumptions based on the same facts.

This can present a problem when we witness to people. Our goal isn't to start a debate but to share the gospel. If someone objects to what we say, we could become sidetracked with arguments. However, we each have one thing that no one else can refute: our personal testimony. This isn't an issue for debate but an opportunity to explain our own experience and the results of our decision to follow Christ.

Realize that every believer has a powerful weapon in his spiritual arsenal. When you share what Christ has done in your life, no one else can say, "That's not right," or "That didn't really happen." Our testimony of faith is our own credible, first-hand, eyewitness narrative of the power of God.

That's why it's important that we be prepared to share our story. Opportunities often come unexpectedly, and we don't want to let the moment pass simply because we're not sure what to say.

This week set aside a few moments to think about your history with Christ and sketch an outline of your faith story. Then ask Him to open a door for you to share the message of Jesus Christ. Then when an opportunity comes, you'll be ready to share what Christ has done in your own life.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, February 21, 2019 - Who Owns It All?

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1 Chronicles 29:10-14

A serious error has made its way into the church. Some Christians think that their beliefs and their wallet belong in separate spheres. The truth is, obedience to God includes how we handle our finances. He owns everything (Hag. 2:8; Psalm 24:1). Cash, possessions, and ways to earn more are gifts from the Lord; we are simply stewards.

A steward oversees the use and care of someone else's riches. A wise steward bases financial decisions upon the owner's rules for using and multiplying material goods. In our case, God has woven financial principles into the fabric of Scripture. Since money touches nearly every aspect of life, it is mentioned hundreds of times in different contexts. For example, God urged the Israelites to stay faithful to His teachings and to avoid the trap of self-reliance. He reminded them that the power to make wealth resides with Him rather than in their own hands (Deut. 8:17-18).

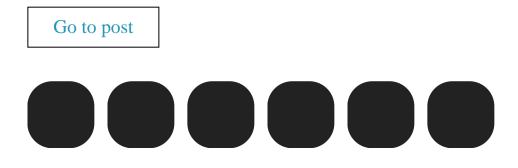
The minute a steward presumes that he owns the money he manages, trouble is at hand. He stops consulting the Owner and spends as he sees fit. Even in trying to do good, the wayward steward is ruled by his shortsighted perspective rather than by God's omniscient view and

gentle guidance. He will suffer the consequences of choosing his own way over the Lord's.

Faith and finances are intertwined. The bottom line is that we cannot keep our money out of God's hand, because He holds it all—we simply manage it. And we are to do so in the way He directs us. A maturing believer trusts the Lord's principles for using and growing wealth.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, February 19, 2019 -When Fear Comes Calling

FEBRUARY 19TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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2 Timothy 1:3-7

Fear is an emotion that can be helpful or harmful. For instance, it's helpful to have the fear—or reverence—of the Lord, which keeps us from sin. And it's also beneficial to have a healthy fear that warns of dangers. But oftentimes we are plagued by a different kind of fear, which keeps us from obeying God; this kind is usually rooted in self-focus rather than faith. As Paul wrote to Timothy, we may have "a spirit of timidity," which originates in faulty thinking (2 Timothy 1:7).

Adequate vs. Inadequate. When adverse circumstances arise, we may become anxious because we are convinced we're inadequate for the situation. However, it's not the situation but an error in our thinking that is causing the fear. Our adequacy is never in ourselves but in God, who makes us adequate for whatever He brings into our life (2 Corinthians 3:4-5).

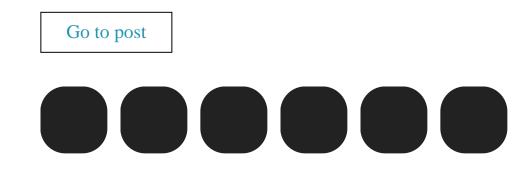
God's Standards vs. Our Standards. Many of us set goals for ourselves that are unrealistic. Such standards impose undue pressure and generate anxiety when we fail. Although we may believe these goals are what God expects, they could be our own expectations. We must let the Lord direct our steps so *His* plans are accomplished, not ours (Prov. 16:9).

Grace vs. Guilt. Some of us are afraid of making a mistake, because we live with guilt over something we've done in the past and assume God is still displeased about it. However, Scripture assures us that in Christ, all our sins are forgiven and our guilt has been removed (Rom. 8:1).

The next time fear comes calling, take your eyes off yourself, answer it with the truth of God's Word, and let faith take its place.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, February 18, 2019 - The Right Perspective

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Philippians 1:19-26

The way we perceive our situation often has a greater impact on our life than the situation itself. You've probably seen this for yourself in those who profess to know Christ. One Christian goes through debilitating medical treatments with such trust in God that contentment and joy overshadow the suffering, whereas another believer becomes anxious and resentful.

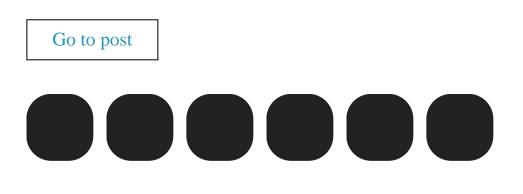
The setting for today's passage is Paul's house arrest. Although the apostle had committed no crime, he found himself unjustly locked up. But despite such dire and seemingly hopeless conditions, he knew he had nothing to lose. If Caesar decided to have him executed, he'd immediately be with Christ, and that was a much better option in Paul's eyes. If, on the other hand, God allowed him to live, then he could continue a fruitful ministry for the kingdom. His conclusion was, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

When we are saved by the blood of Christ, Paul's statement is true for us as well. Our life is intricately bound up with our Savior, and we can never be separated from Him by any circumstance—not even death.

The word *circumstance* comes from two Latin roots meaning "around" and "to stand." Therefore, our circumstances are those things that stand around us, but Christ is the person who dwells within us. Everything we face, He faces. Our difficult and painful situations are an invitation to let Christ shine though us. When He is our life, then no matter what happens, we have nothing to lose and everything to gain. So let's fix our eyes on Jesus as He leads us through whatever lies ahead.

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