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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, March 19, 2019 - Keep Praying

MARCH 19TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Matthew 7:7-11

The most powerful thing a Christian can do is pray. Yet how often are we guilty of making prayer our last resort or giving up on it if the answer isn't immediately forthcoming? Perhaps it's this human tendency that prompted Jesus to remind us to persevere in speaking with our Father.

The verb tenses of today's passage in the original Greek could be translated as "keep asking, keep seeking, and keep knocking." To persevere means to continue firmly on a particular course despite the obstacles or difficulties. It's not a passive approach of asking once and sitting back to wait for the Lord's intervention. The words *seek* and *knock* imply action and effort in discerning God's will and moving in that direction.

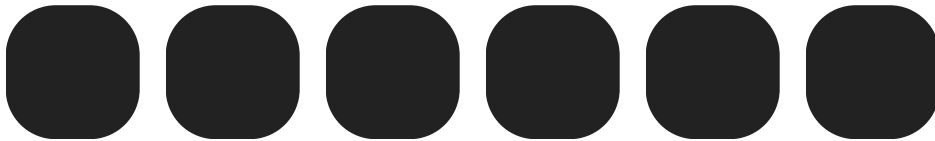
In fact, discovering God's will is the very purpose of perseverance—not to override it or get Him to change His mind and do things our way. Through steadfastness in prayer, we learn to focus on the Lord's faithfulness instead of our circumstances, which may show no signs of changing. Praying tenaciously builds our trust and at the same time teaches us to depend on God instead of rushing ahead to get what we want.

God promises that in time we will be given an answer, find what we seek, and walk through an open door. That's when we discover our heavenly Father always gives us what is good, even if it doesn't look exactly the way we expect or fit our timetable. Through His answers, we gain greater faith in Him and insight into what He deems good. Then we'll know how to pray more wisely according to His will the next time we have a need.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, March 18, 2019 - The Betrayal of a Friend

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Psalm 41:1-13

Betrayal is one of the most painful experiences in life. Although strangers may reject, mock, or ridicule us, only those we love or trust can betray us, and that's what makes it so painful. This is exactly what David felt when he wrote Psalm 41. His enemies spoke evil and falsehood against him, but worse still, a friend turned on him (Psalm 41:9).

When friends gossip about us, make insinuations of wrongdoing, or tell outright lies, what can we do? A good reputation is very hard to recover after it has been ruined. And it's devastating if one friend after another believes the gossip and turns away.

Something we must keep in the forefront of our mind is that our friends and family are imperfect and sinful and are therefore prone to making mistakes, believing lies, and hurting one another. And if we're honest with ourselves, we have to admit the same is true of us. However, this doesn't negate the pain we feel or the wrong done to us.

So how can we handle rejection and betrayal in a godly fashion? First of all, we should not deny the pain, nor should we let it dominate and ruin our life with anxiety, bitterness, anger, or a desire for revenge. Second, we can take it to God and ask Him to protect, sustain, and heal us (Psalm 41:2-4).

Although we may not know exactly why the Lord allowed betrayal, going through it teaches us to seek God's approval rather than man's. Vindication may not come in this life, but it will be revealed in eternity, when each one's praise will come from God.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, March 15, 2019 - Dealing with Debt

MARCH 15TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Romans 13:1-8

Citizens have the responsibility to submit to governmental authority. Obeying the laws of the land that do not contradict scriptural commands is an essential part of honoring the Lord. Verse 7 of today's passage says, "Render to all what is due them." Just as we are obligated to pay our taxes, we're also to repay all of our debts (Rom. 13:8).

The Lord expects anyone who borrows money to be respectful of his neighbor and diligently repay him. By withholding what is rightfully due, we are guilty of stealing from the lender, which can influence our testimony for Christ. Since defaulting on a loan is serious and can ruin relationships, we need to responsibly get out of debt and stay out.

Perhaps this is hitting close to home. As daunting as the task of debt reduction may seem, you are not alone. God wants you to be financially free, and He will show you the way. However, it's usually not a fast fix but a slow and steady approach that will prepare you to avoid future debt. Confess that you haven't been a good steward of your resources, commit to making some sacrificial changes, and consistently work toward your goal. But above all else, rely on the Lord, and He will be faithful.

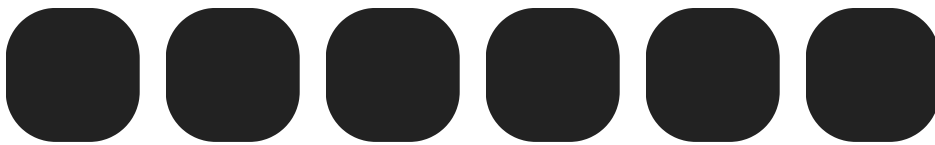
Does your mountain of debt seem bigger to you than your almighty heavenly Father? If so, your focus is on your own inabilities instead of the Lord's faithfulness. For those who turn to God in

genuine repentance and surrender, He will supply the needed resources as well as the persistence to repay what is owed.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, March 14, 2019 - Our Source of Hope in Trials

MARCH 14TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, March 14, 2019 - Our Source of Hope in Trials

1 Peter 1:3-9

Are you presently going through any difficulties? Maybe you're experiencing a trial so intense that you wonder whether it's possible to survive. Or perhaps you're troubled by a particular

hardship that drags on with no end in sight. And sometimes it's the small, daily problems and stresses that wear us down and cause us to become discouraged.

Whatever the source of our adversity may be, Peter offers insight to help us recover hope and joy. He reminds us:

- *God has reserved an inheritance for us in heaven, which is imperishable, pure, and eternal (1 Peter 1:3-5). We must lift our eyes upward instead of focusing on our troubles. If we've placed all our hopes in this life, trials will continue to lead us to despair. But as children of God, we have an inheritance that will far outweigh any temporal suffering.*
- *God is in control of our trials. Nothing comes our way randomly. Our loving Father ensures that our tribulations accomplish His unique purpose for each one of His children. He is sovereign over every adversity, including its duration, which is "for a little while" when compared to eternity (1 Peter 1:6).*
- *God uses trials to strengthen our faith. Jesus said those who don't truly believe fall away when afflictions arise (Matt. 13:20-21). To go through suffering and remain true to Christ testifies to others about our salvation. And each test makes our faith stronger.*

So, how should we respond in trials? Peter says we are to rejoice in our eternal hope, endure hardships, love Jesus, and keep trusting Him.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, March 13, 2019 - Acquiring Wisdom

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Proverbs 4:20-27

The most obvious source of godly wisdom is the Bible. There we find the Lord's principles for right character, conduct, and conversation, which apply to the situations and decisions that confront every human being.

We're all able to recall times when we didn't respond wisely. Those incidents can be traced back to one of two possibilities—either we didn't know a certain biblical principle or we knew the principle that applied but chose to ignore it. To ensure that we're familiar with God's standards and the importance of following them, we have to spend time reading and understanding His Word.

For example, suppose that you walk into the office and a coworker verbally assaults you with undeserved blame for a costly mistake. Your flesh and the world would have you respond in kind with anger and malice. But Luke 6:27-29 offers a different approach, that might go something like this, spoken gently: "Is there anything else? Thank you for telling me how you feel about this."

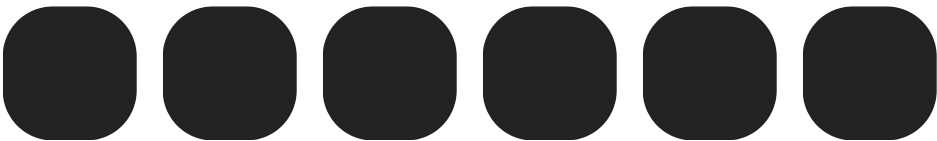
Knowledge comes from learning biblical principles; wisdom has to do with applying them. The Lord cautions us to keep His Word in our heart and in our head so we will heed His instructions (Josh. 1:8; Prov. 8:33).

In pursuing the Christian life, we acquire wisdom by absorbing Scripture, doing what it says, and observing the result, which is for our good even when consequences appear less than favorable. Special classes aren't required; God simply wants an obedient heart and willing spirit.

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