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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, April 2, 2019 - The Source of Our Strength

APRIL 02ND 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, April 2, 2019 - The Source of Our Strength

Acts 1:1-8

How many churches sense God's power at work in their midst? One danger every congregation faces is the temptation to rely on human effort and strategies. However, "unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1). Therefore, we must determine whether ministry and outreach are empowered by the Lord or by something else.

God is the only true source of power in the church, and He works through three specific means:

His Spirit (Acts 1:8). The church of Jesus Christ began the day the Holy Spirit came down and indwelt those who believed in Him. The Spirit's work in and through the church is the only reason we can obey Christ's command to make disciples. That's why Acts 2:47 attributes all church growth to God: "The Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

His Word (Rom. 1:16). The gospel is the power of God for salvation—without it, no one would be saved. But the Lord also uses His Word to sanctify believers, just as Jesus prayed in John 17:17. Scripture is our source for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

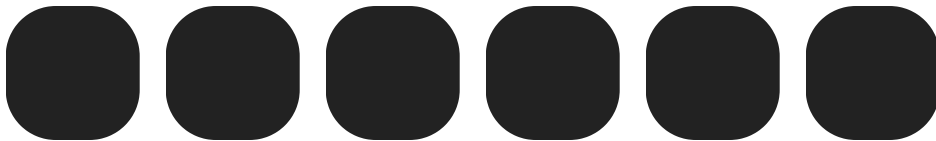
His grace (1 Corinthians 15:10). God's unmerited favor is not only the means of our salvation; it is also the power in our ministry. His grace even teaches us to deny ungodliness and live righteously (Titus 2:11-12).

In your church, do you sense God's power at work in these three areas? How about in your personal life—are God's Spirit, Word, and grace the source of your strength and spiritual growth?

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Daily Devotional - Monday, April 1, 2019 - What Makes a Church Powerful?

APRIL 01ST 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

What factors determine whether a church is powerful or weak? Oftentimes people make such evaluations based on appearances and human reasoning rather than on God's Word.

For instance, large congregations with dynamic worship services and programs for every age and interest group look impressive. Or a church could be viewed as powerful because of its prominent location, a big budget, or the pastor with a magnetic personality. In contrast, small churches—especially those with few members, a rural setting, and little money—are often considered lesser.

The point is that we can't judge a church's strength or weakness based on outward factors like size, location, prosperity, or prominence. Paul's letter to the Corinthians points out that a strong church is one that is founded on the message of the cross and grounded in God's wisdom rather than the world's.

God's power is given to the church for His purposes, not for human agendas. And it isn't a persuasive sermon but the gospel of Christ that can save souls. Some pastors may be able to manipulate people, but only God's Spirit brings the genuine conviction of sin that leads to repentance and salvation.

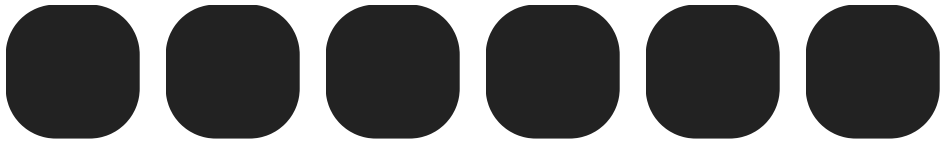
For divine power to flow into and through a local body, that church must hold firmly to Scripture. What's more, it cannot use techniques derived from worldly thinking but must rely on God's direction.

A faith community cannot be powerful unless the people within it are individually submitted to Christ and empowered by Him. This means our commitment to Jesus affects our churches for better or for worse.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, March 29, 2019 - Life's Number One Priority

MARCH 29TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, March 29, 2019 - Life's Number One Priority

Luke 10:38-42

Churches are filled with believers who have a go-go-go attitude. *Serve in this way! Go on that mission! Teach a class! Lead worship!* These are good things, but the activity of *doing* can overshadow the power of *being* and get us off track.

Today's passage offers a perfect picture of this "doing versus being" dichotomy, as it reveals Martha and Mary's unique responses to Jesus' visit. We immediately see that Martha is the doer. She runs around, cleaning, making the meal, and operating in a whirlwind of activity. Mary, however, is more concerned with simply being—she wants to be near Jesus and absorb every moment of His presence.

Neither sister was necessarily wrong in her response. Martha is often looked down upon in this scene, but the truth is, her heart was in the right place in wanting to meet the needs of her

Master. She was going about the ministry, while Mary was engaged in worship.

In His rebuke of Martha in Luke 10:41-42, Jesus never said Martha was wrong for what she was doing; He said only that her busyness wasn't the best thing at the moment. This interaction is a message for the church, as the Lord calls us first to honor Him. Only then—once we are fueled by His Spirit and an intimate encounter with God—are we best prepared to go about the activity of ministry.

The church needs both Marthas and Marys. Thinking about whom you identify with more, ask, *Do I keep an intimate relationship with God in the midst of my activity? Do I allow private worship to fuel my ministry fire?*

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, March 28, 2019 - Do

You Know God's Voice

MARCH 28TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, March 28, 2019 - Do You Know God's Voice

John 10:1-5

Our perceptions of the Lord have a huge impact on how we hear His voice speak to us in His Word and through His Spirit. There are many voices calling for our attention—we need to be able to distinguish Christ's words from all the others because He alone always speaks truth. If we listen to other voices, we'll be led astray, and this includes our own internal voice when it perceives God inaccurately.

This is why it's so important to make sure our image of God fits the one given in Scripture. The Bible teaches us that ...

He is righteous. The Lord would never lead us to do anything sinful because doing so would contradict His nature and His Word.

He is gracious. We don't have to worry that God is waiting to condemn or punish us. Having been saved by Christ, we live continually in His grace and kindness.

He is faithful. He always does what He says and will never abandon those who belong to Him.

He is our heavenly Father. He loves and cares for us, both by providing for our needs and by disciplining us so that we grow in godliness.

He is our Judge. All who are in Christ, however, have passed out of judgment into eternal life and need never fear condemnation (Rom. 8:1).

If our conception of the Lord is inaccurate, we may think He's harsh, stingy, or angry with us. But there is an even greater danger if we think that God wants to satisfy all our selfish and worldly desires—that is the voice of a stranger; we should reject it and flee to our Good Shepherd.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, March 26, 2019 - Be Careful How You Walk

MARCH 26TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, March 26, 2019 - Be Careful How You Walk

Matthew 18:1-7

We might think our sins affect no one but ourselves, yet that's not true. What we do impacts others whether we know it or not. And Jesus used strong terms to warn us: He said causing another person to sin would leave us worse off than if we were "drowned in the depth of the sea" with a millstone around our neck (Matt. 18:6).

People observe what we do, and who of us is without sin? We may try to excuse ourselves by claiming that most of our sin is trivial—hardly a blip on the screen—so such small indiscretions

will not be noticed by others, let alone be damaging to them. But let's consider how some of our common sins can lead others down the wrong path.

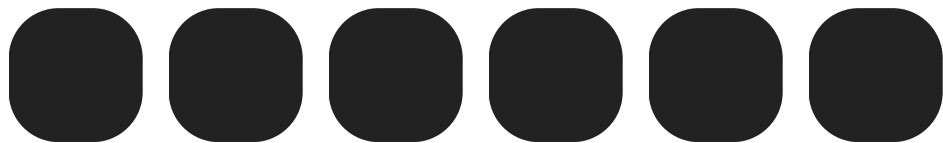
- *Our lack of forgiveness towards someone could cause a close friend or family member to take up our cause and feel resentful too.*
- *Anger that flares up in us at regular intervals may be copied by our children, who then think they, too, have the right to express their tempers whenever they want.*
- *Lies we tell to get out of tight situations send a message—especially to children—that truth is optional, depending on the circumstances.*
- *Conversations rife with gossip can severely damage the reputations of other people and cause listeners to sin by spreading the rumors.*

The Lord's warning should be taken seriously. We should consider the consequences of our actions and attitudes and then turn toward Jesus in confession and repentance. When we ask, He will give us the grace and strength to walk in His ways and influence others toward righteousness.

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