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Daily Devotional - Friday, May 24, 2019 - The Christ Centered Life

MAY 24TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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2 Corinthians 5:14-15

If someone asked if your life is centered on Christ, how would you respond? Oftentimes a Christ-centered life is equated with going to church, giving, praying, reading the Bible, and talking to other people about Jesus. However, did you know that even if you do every one of these things, it's still possible to live a life that is controlled by self rather than Christ?

This is because our motives may be self-centered. Religious activities can be done for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with our love for Jesus. We could be seeking to relieve feelings of guilt or to make ourselves feel better or look more righteous. Perhaps we read the Bible to quickly find a verse that affirms us. Or prayer might be our attempt to get God to do what we want.

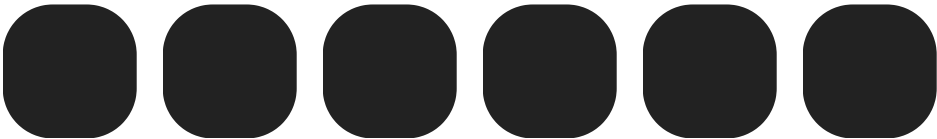
The answer is not to give up on these good activities but to shift our focus to Christ and what He desires. Our battle with self is one that will continue as long as we live in these earthly bodies. That's why Paul tells us to "lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted," and to "put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:22; Eph. 4:24).

A Christ-centered life is fueled by love for the Savior, which flows from increasing knowledge of Him. And we learn to know Jesus more intimately through reading, praying, and quietly abiding in His presence. As Christ increases in our mind and heart, we'll discover that our self-focus decreases and He becomes the delight of our lives.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, May 23, 2019 - Walk by Faith, Not by Sight

MAY 23RD 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Matthew 14:22-33

Throughout His ministry, Jesus repeatedly commended people for faith and reproved others for a lack of it. Faith is of great importance because it's required for salvation. It's also essential after we're saved, as we are to continue living by faith—that is, by the firm conviction God will do what He has promised. This requires us to stay focused on the Lord. If we take our eyes off Jesus and start looking at circumstances, our confidence in Him could begin to wobble.

A good example is Peter's experience of walking on the Sea of Galilee. He started out confident, but as soon as he looked away from Jesus and saw the wind, human reasoning took over. The apostle thought, *People can't walk on water!*—and his faith faltered. We're just like Peter when we know what God has said but try to add our logic to His commands.

Another reason we falter is that when we focus on the circumstances instead of on Christ, little problems can seem huge and start to dominate our thoughts. That's why we must consider every situation in the light of our great God, who can handle anything and everything.

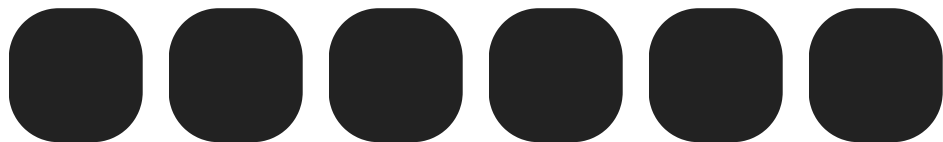
Sometimes the problem is that we can't see God in our circumstances. He's promised to take care of us, but He may provide in a way other than what we want. Or, we may think the Lord couldn't possibly be in the midst of a difficult or painful situation. But He is, and He works everything for our good if we belong to Him (Rom. 8:28).

Are you walking by faith or relying on your senses and reasoning? Walking by sight brings anxiety and fear, but faith produces peaceful confidence.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, May 22, 2019 - Why Do We Doubt?

MAY 22ND 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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James 1:1-8

How would you currently characterize your faith? Is it up one day, down the next? The short book of James contains practical advice for those whose faith fluctuates because of difficult circumstances. When we start doubting God and His Word, we're driven and tossed about like the surf of the sea.

James says a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways and should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. To be double-minded is to go back and forth in our thinking. We may begin with strong confidence in God, but as time goes by and the difficult situation continues, we may start to doubt that the Lord will do what He's promised.

Doubting and questioning are not necessarily the same thing. Questioning is seeking to gain further information in order to better understand what God has said. Doubting, on the other hand, involves believing what we think, see, or feel rather than what we know He has said.

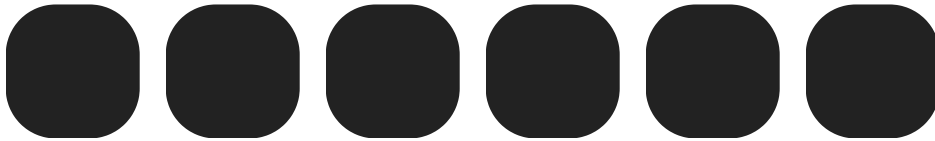
It's natural for us to question when we're suddenly overwhelmed by a distressing turn of events. God understands our struggle and wants us to come to Him with our pain and confusion. Sometimes He has to sift our thinking by reminding us of His truth or His past faithfulness to us in a similar situation.

Even though we may not understand all that God is doing through our trials, we can rely on what He's revealed: The testing of our faith produces endurance and spiritual maturity, and it supplies something we lack. Knowing this, we can trust the Lord to accomplish His good and perfect will through the situation—and rejoice in how He will transform us.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, May 20, 2019 - The Justice of Divine Judgment

MAY 20TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, May 20, 2019 - The Justice of Divine Judgment

Revelation 20:11-15

Every person will face God on judgment day. Whenever that topic comes up, I am usually asked something like, “What about people who live in remote areas, who will never hear about Jesus?” The concerned questioner is really wondering, *How could a loving Lord send an ignorant person to hell?* In other words, how can it be fair to condemn those who have never heard the gospel?

To understand how God judges, we should recognize two truths about Him. First, He is not limited. While whole people groups still have no Scripture in their language, God always reaches individuals whose hearts are open to knowing Him. Men like Abraham and Moses had no Scriptures, and yet the Lord spoke to them.

Second, God reveals Himself to all people, whether or not they have access to the Bible. As we saw yesterday, He not only demonstrates His power and attributes through creation; He also programs our conscience to understand the basic distinctions between right and wrong. For those who are blessed to hear the gospel at some point, Jesus Christ is the greatest revelation of God in their life.

When people stand before the Father, He will judge them on three criteria: the amount of truth to which each has been exposed; how many opportunities there were to accept the truth and share it with others; and what was done with those opportunities. The believer’s responsibility, then, is to reach as many as possible with the gospel so that no one need ask, “What about those who have never heard of Jesus?”

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Daily Devotional - Friday, May 17, 2019 - Building on Christ

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1 Corinthians 3:9-15

Have you ever seen an elaborate, masterfully crafted sandcastle? That's one of the most delightful experiences of a trip to the beach. The best builders are painstaking in every detail as they craft these beautiful works of art. The towers are straight, the windows are even, and sometimes the outline of individual bricks can be seen on each wall. The end result is often stunning, rivaling the elegance of homes in the wealthiest neighborhoods of the world.

But for all a sandcastle's splendor, its hours are numbered. From the moment the first grain of sand is set in place, the miniature building is on its way to oblivion. Within hours the details are destroyed by wind, rain, and the incoming tide. There is simply no future for a house of sand.

Sometimes believers' lives are like sandcastles. Even though everything looks perfect on the outside, their life's pursuits and activities will be revealed as worthless in the fire of God's judgment. Although their eternal destiny is secure, they will suffer the loss of heavenly rewards because they used inferior building materials.

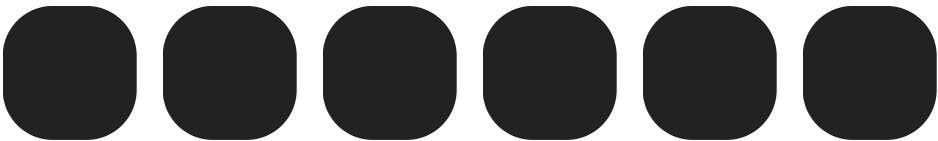
The most important thing in life is to make sure we have the right foundation. Church attendance, ministry work, discipleship programs, or community service are no substitute for the rock-solid foundation of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We also need to build our life with faithful, obedient service to the Lord. The goal is not to have the most impressive-

looking life in this world but to build one that demonstrates our devotion to the Savior who died to rescue us.

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