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Daily Devotional - Thursday, May 30, 2019 - Following Our Convictions

MAY 30TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Acts 4:1-20

Most of us have been blessed to live relatively free from persecution. We may have experienced some mocking, ridicule, or ostracism because of our beliefs, but we don't have to fear punishment or death. However, that's not the case elsewhere in the world. There are Christians in other countries for whom today's passage is all too familiar.

Acts 4 tells us that Peter and John faced great opposition for their faith. After being thrown into jail for healing a sick man, they were warned not to speak or teach in Jesus Christ's name. But they held firmly to their convictions and replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20 NLT).

Our goal as believers is to become unshakeable in our faith. Peter and John didn't flinch from their responsibility to proclaim salvation in Jesus' name, even in the face of imprisonment and threats. Yet in reading this account, we may wonder how we could ever endure persecution.

The truth is that in ourselves, we can't do it. But we are never alone. When we stand for our convictions, God's Spirit is always present in us. He gives us the physical, spiritual, mental, and moral strength to stand firm when we are tested and tried (Luke 12:11-12).

God wants His children to trust Him with the future; He doesn't want us becoming panicky about what may lie ahead. But if He ever calls us to suffer for Him, in that moment He'll provide the grace we need in order to remain faithful.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, May 28, 2019 - Small Steps to a Great Destiny

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Luke 5:1-11

God’s simple requests of us are oftentimes stepping-stones to His greatest blessings. Although we may view these lesser events as unimportant, the Lord sees them as a big deal. The apostle Peter is a wonderful example of a man who took small steps that led to a great destiny.

When Jesus asked to be taken out in Peter’s boat, the fisherman could have said no. After all, he’d put in a full night’s work and was probably exhausted. But by taking this small step, Peter received a front-row seat to hear the greatest teacher on earth, and he began a life-changing adventure.

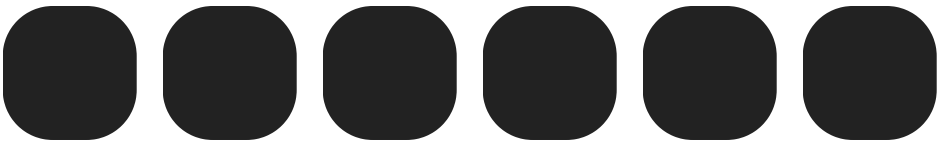
Although Jesus’ first request was fairly ordinary, His next suggestion would challenge everything Peter knew to be logical. Heading into deep water at midday for the purpose of catching fish was ludicrous to this fishing expert. Sometimes the Lord asks us to do what seems unreasonable. We should remember that the Lord is not obligated to work within the realm of what’s normal or logical. If Peter had refused this unusual request, he would have missed the biggest catch of his life—and I don’t mean just the fish. This miracle opened Peter’s eyes to catch sight of his Messiah. When he got out of that boat, the fish meant nothing to him because Jesus became his everything.

The Lord isn’t waiting for us to do some big, impressive task for Him; He’s simply calling us to obey Him one small step at a time. Don’t miss the great adventure God has for you. Even when His ways seem unreasonable, follow Him faithfully, and your destiny will unfold before your eyes.

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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

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

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

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

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.

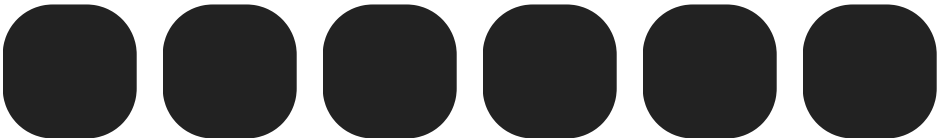
It's natural for us to question when we're suddenly overwhelmed by a distressing turn of events. God understands our struggle and wants us to come to Him with our pain and confusion. Sometimes He has to sift our thinking by reminding us of His truth or His past faithfulness to us in a similar situation.

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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