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Daily Devotional - Friday, August 16, 2019 - Grace in Sorrow

AUGUST 16TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, August 16, 2019 - Grace in Sorrow

John 20:11-19

The famous hymn “How Firm a Foundation” describes God’s purpose for our trials: “For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless, and sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.” The pain and hardship we endure is meant not to crush us but to refine and shape us into Christ’s image. God alone knows how to replace ashes with a crown, and mourning with the oil of gladness (Isa. 61:3).

This is what Mary Magdalene discovered on the morning of the Christ’s resurrection. She went to the garden tomb, overwhelmed by sorrow and loss. The darkness of despair was swallowing her when she turned around and saw Jesus. After He spoke her name, she immediately recognized the Lord and clung to Him, fearing that even now He might be taken away from her.

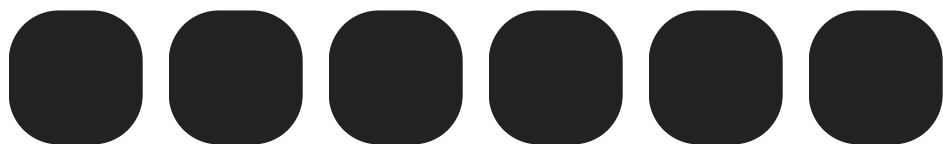
But Jesus assured her that He had not yet ascended to His Father. Although there would come a day when He would physically depart from her and all His followers, in reality nothing could separate them from Him. Because He had paid the penalty of their sins with His death, His Spirit would soon indwell them. And one day Jesus would come to take them back to His Father’s house to be with Him forever (John 14:3).

We can all relate to feelings of despair. Dashed hopes—even small ones—can lead to suffering. But when expectations are high or personal loss hangs in the balance, our hope can be crushed if disaster strikes. Then it's important to remember that when we have Christ, weeping may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning ([Ps. 30:5](#)).

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, August 13, 2019 - Dealing with Discouragement

AUGUST 13TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Psalms 42:1-8

How can we conquer discouragement? Let me suggest nine specific tips:

- 1. Look within.** Examine yourself for the underlying cause.
- 2. Admit that you are discouraged.** This is something that's easy to avoid, ignore, or lie about, but denial doesn't help you grow.
- 3. Identify precisely what you are discouraged about.** Name it—then face it.
- 4. Recall the nature of discouragement.** Disappointments will come and go, but discouragement is a response, and we can respond in other ways.
- 5. Begin meditating frequently on Scripture.** God's truth can help you accurately evaluate what you feel.
- 6. Take your area of discouragement to God in prayer.** Ask Him to reveal what He wants to teach you in this area of your life.
- 7. Focus on the Lord, not your situation.** Ask Him to help you see this disappointment and its lessons from His perspective.
- 8. View the cause as coming from the Lord.** If we understand that He allows disappointments, we can find meaning in trouble.
- 9. Confess three things:** *The Father is with me in the pain; He's in control of my life and has allowed this for a reason; He is a good God, who will not let this disappointment be in vain.* Try speaking these truths out loud.

Discouragement may sound harmless enough, but don't underestimate its power. By keeping watch, you can avoid its deadly trap. So write down these nine steps on an index card, and then review the list whenever disappointments start to consume your thinking.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, August 12, 2019 - The Nature of Discouragement

AUGUST 12TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, August 12, 2019 - The Nature of Discouragement

Psalm 16:7-11

Discouragement is a powerful, destructive force. Before we can understand how to rid our life of this common temptation, we must recognize its harmful nature.

Understand that discouragement...

Is something we choose. While it's a natural response to difficult circumstances, we have the power to choose a different response. No one else is responsible for our discouragement.

Is universal. At times, everybody will face periods of disappointment and discouragement because we live in a flawed world filled with flawed people.

Can recur. Sometimes we think we’ve settled an issue, which later resurfaces when we least expect it. Or we may have old emotional wounds triggered by something a person says or does.

Can be temporary or lifelong. Refusing to face discouragement head-on can open the door for it to influence our decisions, actions, and relationships as long as we live.

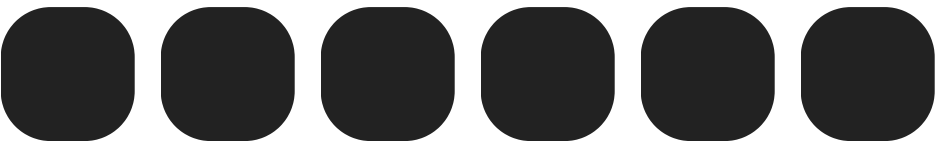
Is conquerable. With the Father’s help, we can get through seasons of discouragement. He wants His children to have a rich and fulfilled life. If we trust in His promises and His character, our feelings of discouragement will slowly be replaced by hope.

Are you stuck in the throes of discouragement? If so, the Lord wants to lift your spirits. Let Him help you out of that lowly state: Start by believing that the Father wants to encourage you and get your life back on track with Him.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, August 8, 2019 - Praying in a Crisis

AUGUST 08TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, August 8, 2019 - Praying in a Crisis

Psalm 86:1-13

When life is moving along smoothly, it's easy to say, "God answers prayer." But a crisis can bring doubt, especially if the Lord is not responding as quickly as we might like. That's when we may be tempted to bargain with God as if He could be manipulated into acting on our behalf. However, the goal of prayer is not to get God to do what we want but to bring our concerns to Him, trusting that He will answer in His own way and time.

Waiting on the Lord is fairly easy when we're not facing anything urgent. But difficulties and suffering tend to make us impatient. We may even begin to find fault with God, thinking that if He truly loved us, He would intervene and bring relief.

As we seek the Lord for help, David's prayers in the Psalms provide wonderful patterns for us to follow. He faced many dire situations and continued to turn to God. Today's passage from Psalm 86 starts with an urgent cry for help, followed by a reminder to the heavenly Father that David belongs to Him. Then he recounts God's character—gracious, good, ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call on Him (vv. 3-5). These characteristics are the basis for trust.

Knowing who God is enables us to trust Him through the crises of life. Because He is faithful, we know that He will keep His promises. His holiness causes us to examine our life and repent of any sins that are hindering our prayers. And His mercy, grace, and love give us the comfort we need to endure hardship.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, August 7, 2019 - Can God Use You?

AUGUST 07TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, August 7, 2019 - Can God Use You?

Exodus 3:1-12

Do you want to be used by the Lord? I hope so because that's His will for every believer. As we saw last week, Ephesians 2:10 says God created us in Christ to do good works that He planned for us beforehand. If we are going to become useful to Him, there are three questions we must consider.

Who is God? In Exodus 3, the Lord used a burning bush to get Moses' attention (v. 2), and then He introduced Himself as the God of Moses' forefathers (v. 6). The future liberator of the Hebrew slaves needed to know the identity of the One calling him into service. In the same way, we, too, must be sure that we're serving the only true God. Otherwise, all our efforts and sacrifices will be in vain.

Who am I? Once Moses knew who God was, he was overwhelmed with his own inadequacy and asked, "Who am I?" (v. 11). The Lord uses humble people who reverence Him. Although Moses knew he was insufficient for the task, the Lord assured him by saying, "Certainly I will be with you" (v. 12).

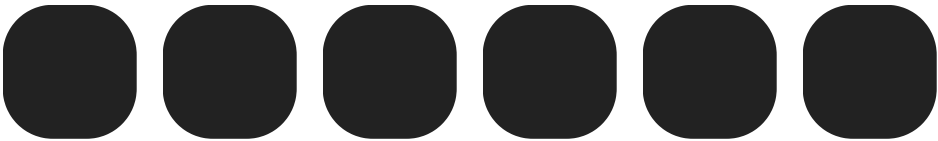
Why am I here? God told Moses his obedience to the assignment would culminate in worship (v. 12). Romans 12:1 says we worship God when we offer ourselves as living sacrifices. In other words, we surrender totally to Him so that He can use us for His glory. We exist to glorify Him by the way we live, speak, and love.

Serving the Lord isn't something that we design and plan. It has nothing to do with our will but instead requires that we know and submit to the Father, humbly relying on *His* strength to do *His* will for *His* glory

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