



[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Monday, August 26, 2019 - Principle or Preference?

AUGUST 26TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Daniel 1

Imagine driving down a gravel road on a dark, rainy night. Even the light from your headlights seems to be swallowed by the blackness as you struggle to avoid veering off the road. Now consider what a difference it would make if there were yellow lines down the middle and white ones along the sides. You'd know exactly where on the road you're supposed to be.

These two scenarios represent the difference between a life based on preferences and one guided by scriptural principles. Preferences fluctuate with the circumstances. When this is the basis for our decision making, the result is confusion, stress, and possibly danger as we wander through life. In contrast, principles are God's unchanging truths, which keep us on the path of His will and protect us from spiritual danger and deception.

Daniel is an example of a young man who lived by principles. When he realized there was a line he couldn't cross without disobeying the Lord, he stood fast and trusted God instead of conforming to the pagan world around him. Daniel chose not to eat food that had been sacrificed to Babylonian idols, and he left the consequences of his obedience to the Lord.

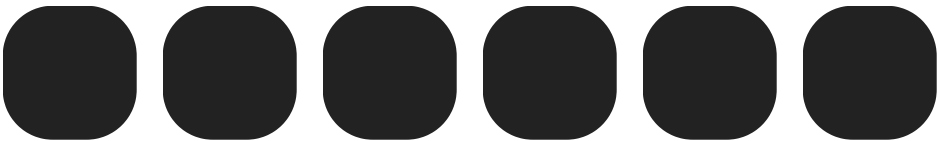
There are two main reasons we sometimes rely on preference-based decision making: Either we want to fit in, or we want to avoid the negative consequences that could come as a result of

obeying the Lord. Yet to go this route will leave us in darkness, swerving dangerously through life. Safety and security can be found only in obedience to God’s principles, which are like bright white lines on the road keeping us in the center of His will.

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Go to post



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TOP

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, August 21, 2019 - Our Trustworthy Guide

AUGUST 21ST 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Psalm 32:8-9

Many years ago, while I was on a photography trip, the heavenly Father taught me a valuable lesson about leading and following. My party had been hiking on a trail for three or four hours when I felt a slight sensation of dread. I had a sneaking suspicion that we were traveling the wrong way. When I asked our guide about it, he calmly reassured me that we were, in fact, heading in the right direction.

Well, that quieted me for a few minutes, but this persistent sense of being off track simply would not go away. So I pulled out my compass and discovered that, sure enough, we were heading the wrong way. When I pointed this out to our guide a second time, he finally stopped to think about it. After examining the compass, map, and trail markers, he realized that we really were off course. We lost about three hours—and some beautiful photo opportunities—because our guide wasn’t leading us correctly.

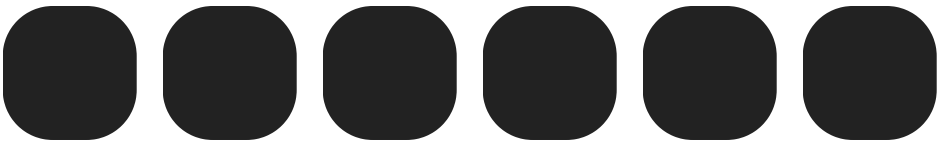
That experience taught me how vitally important it is to trust in the person who is guiding us. Beyond the hiking trail, this holds true in business, church, families, or any other relationship. If our guide isn’t trustworthy—if we cannot put our complete faith in him or her—we’ll end up lost.

So let me ask you: Who is your guide? Are you following celebrities or news reporters? Are you trusting in politicians or business leaders? If you’ve placed your absolute faith in anyone or anything other than your heavenly Father, you’re already off course. He is our one trustworthy Guide. Seek Him and get back on track today.

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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, August 20, 2019 - Relying on the Spirit in Our Work

AUGUST 20TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, August 20, 2019 - Relying on the Spirit in Our Work

Ezra 4:1-5

Israel's enemies were clever in their efforts to block the temple's reconstruction. First, they offered to help. What better way to cause things to go wrong than to get involved in the work? When their aid was rejected, they set out to discourage the workers and make them afraid. The opponents even hired counselors to thwart the Israelites and were successful in hindering the project.

God, however, wanted His people to reject self-reliance and instead carry out His work in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. He offered them encouragement and protected their building project despite the mountain of opposition facing them. Sometimes this means He will remove the problem; at other times He walks us through it. In either case, we are to rely steadily on God's Holy Spirit. Doing so will allow us to:

- Patiently love our spouse when there is turmoil in the home.*
- Wisely guide our children toward godliness in our self-centered culture.*
- Follow scriptural principles about giving, saving, and spending in a society that urges us to get what we want now.*

•*Experience contentment and God's peace in our current circumstances—single or married, employed or out of a job, healthy or sick.*

•*Do God's work His way.*

Being led by the Spirit characterizes how we work. While that mindset is countercultural and not pleasing to the flesh (Gal. 5:16), it's the only way to live as a child of God. Seek out believers who are trying to practice dependence on the Spirit, and encourage one another not to give up

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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Monday, August 19, 2019 - Abusing God's Patience

AUGUST 19TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Romans 2:4-5

Have you ever ignored a nagging sense of conviction in your heart? Maybe you rationalized wrongdoing with the thought that if God were really upset, He'd put a stop to things by disciplining you. Psalm 50:21 reminds us that the silence of heaven does not mean approval. Remaining in sin is an abuse of the Lord's patience.

When God seems slow to react, we might hope He's overlooking our transgressions—we'd like to continue in sin because the momentary pleasure is more appealing than obedience. But thankfully, the Father knows our weaknesses, our innate carnality, and the state of our spiritual growth, and He therefore measures His response. Motivated by love and a desire to gently restore His children to righteousness, God refrains from instantly doling out punishment. Instead, He waits for the Holy Spirit's proddings to impact the believer's heart. The weight of conviction is actually an invitation to turn from wrongdoing and return to godliness.

However, we're a stubborn people. There are times when we persist in sin because the sentence against an evil deed isn't executed quickly (Eccl. 8:11). In this dangerous situation, it's possible to immerse ourselves in sin and harden our heart against the Lord. Then the Holy Spirit's call to repentance falls on spiritual ears rapidly going deaf.

As we learn and understand more about God and His ways, we are increasingly responsible to live righteously. Our heavenly Father is not slow; He's patient. But don't abuse that patience with callous disregard for His statutes. Repent and be holy in the sight of the Lord.

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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

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

AUGUST 16TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

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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.

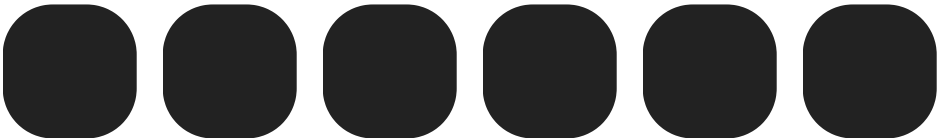
But Jesus assured her that He had not yet ascended to His Father. Although there would come a day when He would physically depart from her and all His followers, in reality nothing could separate them from Him. Because He had paid the penalty of their sins with His death, His Spirit would soon indwell 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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