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Daily Devotional - Monday, July 2, 2018 - Put On a Heart of Compassion

JULY 02ND 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, July 2, 2018 - Put On a Heart of Compassion

Colossians 3:12-14

Have you ever noticed that some people are more naturally compassionate than others? Maybe it's their personality or upbringing. Nevertheless, in the church, every believer is told to "put on a heart of compassion" (Col. 3:12). When empathy doesn't come naturally, some Christians may wonder if something is wrong with them. So, what can we do to develop a greater sense of caring?

While emotions cannot be manufactured on demand, we can change our thoughts, which in turn affect our emotions. Compassion, like all the other qualities listed in today's passage, is possible only when we think of others before ourselves. Self-centeredness keeps us from seeing the needs and hurts of those around us and acting on their behalf. What we need is a renewed mind.

We are all born with a selfish, sinful nature, referred to as the "old self." But when a person puts his trust in Jesus, he receives a "new self" created in righteousness by God. (See Eph. 4:22-24.) As our minds are renewed with His Word and we grow in obedience, Christ's love and compassion begin to flow through us. Instead of our being oblivious to the pain and suffering around us, God will open our eyes and use us to comfort those in need.

A heart of compassion is achieved not through self-effort but through a God-focused life. As we draw near to Him through His Word and His Son, He transforms our focus, thoughts, and feelings. What a relief to know that God has provided everything we need to follow Jesus' example of caring. He always equips us to obey His every command.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, June 29, 2018 - The Believer's Security System

JUNE 29TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, June 29, 2018 - The Believer's Security System

2 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Peter 2:18-22

Spiritual dangers are all around, but God has given believers a “spiritual security system.” He’s also provided godly shepherds in the church to protect the flock from spiritual predators.

These predators are false teachers who exploit the ignorance of immature believers. They also hunt down people with unresolved guilt and use phony remedies in an attempt to soothe consciences.

Churchgoers who fail to confess and forsake sin according to Scripture are highly susceptible to such trickery. Also at risk are those who know about Jesus and religious practices but are not genuinely saved—they might even be baptized church members, but unless they have the Holy Spirit, they cannot discern truth or live holy lives.

Thankfully, God has provided a way for believers to avoid these dangerous spiritual potholes. First and foremost, we have to saturate our mind continually with God’s Word. In so doing, we will eventually develop a mental filter that reacts in alarm when something false comes our way. In this manner, we become rooted and grounded in the truth.

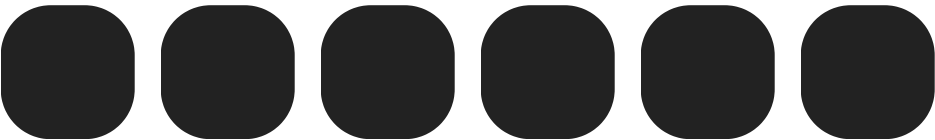
Christians also have the indwelling Holy Spirit, who gives understanding of God’s Word, directs our way, and enables us to distinguish truth from error. He educates our conscience to provide timely warnings when we start down the wrong path.

The Lord has provided everything we need to avoid deception, but our spiritual security system will protect us only if it is well tuned with the Word of God and obedient to His Spirit.

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, June 28, 2018 - Beware of Spiritual Swindlers

JUNE 28TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, June 28, 2018 - Beware of Spiritual Swindlers

Matthew 7:15-23

Physical safety is a Natural concern for people today because the world is filled with instability, global conflicts, and terrorist attacks. We should rightly be concerned about protecting our community, yet when it comes to spiritual safety, churches often neglect protection against people who undermine our faith. Jesus called them wolves in sheep's clothing and issued some stern warnings to alert us.

These wolves are false teachers and prophets who appear to be genuine spiritual guides but are actually full of schemes to advance their own agenda. They look and sound good, but inside they are consumed with lust and greed. None of this is apparent right away because they preach a fine gospel in a most compelling manner. Gradually, however, they blend inaccuracy with facts, and at this point, people seem to forget that truth mixed with error is no longer truth but has become deception. You can recognize these folks in a number of ways. Jesus said they would bear fruit that would eventually reveal their true character.

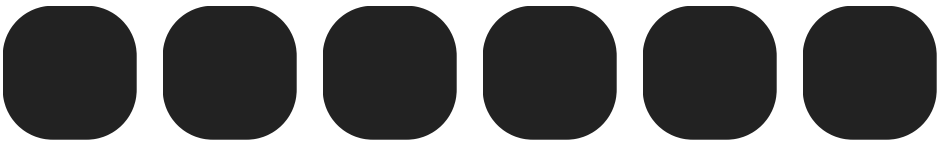
- They subtly question the Bible's authority and relevance for today.
- Little is said about living a holy life or obeying the whole counsel of God.
- Obedience to the Lord is equated with living the way you desire.
- The welfare of the sheep concerns them less than having followers.

This is a wake-up call for anyone snoozing in the pews. We can't afford to believe everything we hear. Follow the example of the Bereans, who were commended for using Scripture to evaluate whatever was taught (Acts 17:11).

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, June 27, 2018 - Grounded in the Faith

JUNE 27TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, June 27, 2018 - Grounded in the Faith

Colossians 2:1-8

Do you remember what it was like when you got saved? You probably didn't know much about the Bible, but you knew your life had changed forever. Your guilt was gone, and heaven was now your eternal destiny. The newness of salvation prompted you to want to tell whoever would listen to what had happened to you.

In time, however, we tend to settle down in our Christian life, get involved in church, and maybe even start to take our salvation for granted. Although we love and serve Jesus faithfully, we may be more interested in what the Bible says about how we're to live than we are about the beliefs that form the foundation of our faith.

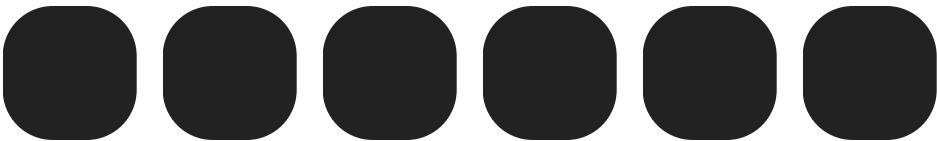
In Colossians, Paul emphasizes the importance of stability in our faith—stability that results from “the rich experience of knowing Christ with real certainty and clear understanding” (Col. 2:2 TLB). Knowing what Scripture says about the essentials of our faith guards us from deception. When we're firmly rooted, built up, and established in biblical teachings, we'll recognize when false teachers offer messages that don't align with God's Word. However, unless we know what we believe and why we hold these beliefs, we could become prime targets for cults that specialize in adding just enough truth to error to make their message seem believable.

Can you defend your faith? Do you know what the Bible teaches about Jesus, salvation, and the essentials of Christianity? Knowing the truth about these things protects you from deception and also allows you to knowledgeably share the message of salvation with others.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, June 26, 2018 - Taking Risks of Faith

JUNE 26TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, June 26, 2018 - Taking Risks of Faith

Matthew 14:22-33

Have you ever taken a risk in your obedience to God? Perhaps He's given you an assignment that strikes you as beyond your abilities. Demonstrating faith in God may appear to be risky business, but it's actually the safest thing to do. Furthermore, it's the way the Lord expects His followers to live.

Can you imagine what the other disciples thought when Peter stepped out of the boat? It seemed like a crazy thing to do, yet Peter trusted that Jesus would keep him from sinking into the raging water.

And Peter did a pretty good job of walking on the water until he took his eyes off Jesus. As long as his total focus was on Christ, he was fine. Yet when he allowed himself to be distracted by human fears, he fell deep into trouble—literally!

This demonstrates an important principle: When doubts prevent us from obeying God, we are doomed to failure. But when we step out in faith, God always assumes full responsibility for the consequences of our obedience.

The story of Peter's walk on the sea teaches us three things.

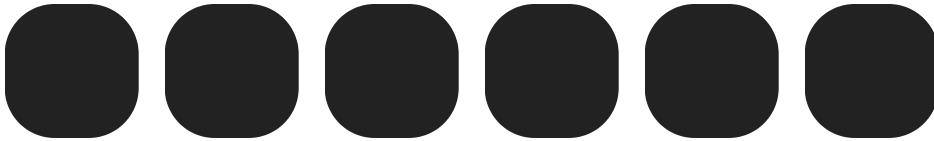
- God will lead us into challenging situations that call us to walk by faith.
- Christ stands ready to rescue us when we cry out to Him.
- The Spirit of God will never let us fall beyond His reach.

Are you facing a situation that requires full trust in the Lord as you step out in obedience to Him? The real risk lies in your temptation not to obey Him. Keep your eyes on the heavenly Father, and He'll see you safely to the other side.

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