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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, August 7, 2018 - Accepting Criticism

AUGUST 07TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, August 7, 2018 - Accepting Criticism

Proverbs 10:17

TUESDAY

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Nobody likes criticism. It can hurt, especially when unsolicited, and is sometimes delivered with unkind words and a harsh spirit. However, we must be careful not to reject the reproof without first considering whether it's valid.

God can use an honest, direct person to convey something we need to hear. Criticism forces us to examine ourselves. God's goal is that we grow in spiritual maturity and holiness, but we all have blind spots that keep us from seeing the areas He wants to transform. If we fail to listen to a reproof He allows to come our way, our spiritual growth could be stunted. However, this doesn't mean all critiques are valid. That's why it's important to respond well and evaluate criticism correctly.

- *Do not immediately reject the comment, blame the person, or defend yourself. Instead, consider what was said, and ask God to help you discern if it's true.*
- *Thank the person for his interest in you and explain that you'll reflect on his observation. If he was sincere, he'll be appreciative, but if his intentions were negative, this may disarm him.*

- *Evaluate the criticism and determine what exactly is under scrutiny—your beliefs, your character, God ... ?*

- *View this as an opportunity for growth, and if necessary, apologize.*

Instead of allowing criticism to lead us into anger and self-pity, we should let it do its work in our life. We can't allow hurt or anger to derail what God wants to do in us—namely, make us more Christlike. And isn't that what we all want?

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Daily Devotion - Monday, August 6, 2018 - Releasing Guilt

AUGUST 06TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

The church I grew up in could sum up much of its theology in one statement: “Thou shalt not ...” I don’t recall hearing about the Father’s love or how to live the Christian life. What I learned was that a wrathful God would punish me if I didn’t follow all the rules. And there seemed to be rules for everything—including what I could read, what I could wear, and what I could do.

As a teenage boy, I spent a lot of time begging the Lord to forgive me for one foolish thing or another. And I carried around a constant weight of guilt and worry everywhere I went. I just couldn’t seem to be good enough. In truth, the rules were a burden to me, and since I thought God made them, He was a burden too.

In my young adult years, I learned that my perception of God was wrong. He is gracious and loving. The commandments that He gave were designed to keep us safe and free from shame. But even when we do mess up, there is no condemnation for those who trust in Christ (Rom. 8:1). That means He forgives our sin and “wipes out [our] transgressions,” remembering them no more (Isa. 43:25). We may have to live with consequences but never with the weight of guilt.

God is not a burden. He is the *burden-bearer*. (See Psalm 68:19.) He placed our sins on Jesus Christ at Calvary, thereby relieving us of that heaviness. Don’t keep staggering under the load of guilt. Lay it down before a loving, gracious heavenly Father, who encourages us to come to Him and offers a yoke that is easy and light (Matt. 11:28-30)

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Daily Devotional - Friday, August 3, 2018 - A Call to Be Merciful

AUGUST 03RD 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, August 3, 2018 - A Call to Be Merciful

Luke 6:31-36

It's common today to have a simplistic view of Jesus. This can be true even of believers if they aren't sufficiently familiar with Scripture. Many Christians who passionately claim, "I just want to love like Jesus" have no idea what that entails.

One thing Christ requires of His followers is selfless love for those who mistreat them, and He gives the following reason, based on God's character: "For He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men" (Luke 6:35). In essence, Jesus is telling us to have the same mercy for others that God has for us.

Mercy is not simply feeling pity; it means acting with compassion. Instead of just sympathizing with us, God did something about our desperate condition—He sent His Son to save us from sin and its horrendous consequences. Although we can't save anybody by showing mercy, we can demonstrate God's kindness to others despite their treatment of us.

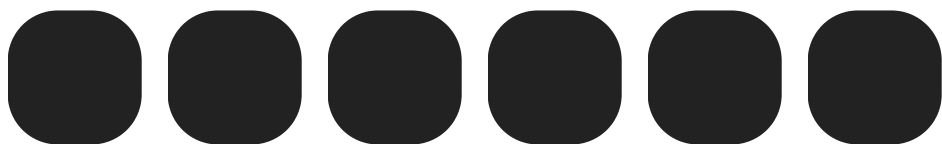
Being merciful to those who don't deserve it is contrary to our natural inclinations and is possible only through the power of God's Spirit within us. What we naturally want is justice. To extend mercy seems to say the offense against us wasn't very bad—but this is a misunderstanding of the word's meaning, because where no wrong has been committed, there's no need for mercy.

When you are merciful, you are giving to others what God has given to you. And aren't you glad that He doesn't immediately deal out retribution for every sin you commit? So remember, God wants you to trust Him with all your hurts. And He also wants you to treat others (even your enemies) as you want to be treated—with mercy

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, August 2, 2018 - Our God of Mercy

AUGUST 02ND 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, August 2, 2018 - Our God of Mercy

Psalm 145:8-21

God isn't stingy with mercy. The sunshine you enjoy on a beautiful day also warms everyone else in your area. Good health, jobs, education, families, and friends are all the result of God's mercy over His creation. Even those who don't recognize or thank Him for His goodness are recipients of it. However, His universal mercy is only temporal and cannot save anyone eternally.

There's a limit to God's mercy because it cannot contradict His other attributes—like holiness, righteousness, and justice. Sin must be punished in order for God to remain just. And without justice, mercy and forgiveness would be meaningless. This dilemma was the reason Jesus Christ came to earth to die: He satisfied God's justice by bearing the penalty for our sins.

Although God offers the mercy of salvation to all through the gospel of Jesus Christ, only those who accept Him by faith receive it. Yet so many think lightly of divine kindness, tolerance, and patience; they fail to realize that these blessings should draw them to repentance (Rom. 2:4). These people trample underfoot His mercy and continue on their merry way, oblivious to the fact that justice, not mercy, awaits them in eternity.

Even believers can abuse God's plentiful mercy by engaging in deliberate sin while telling themselves, "He'll forgive me." But as the ones who are redeemed and given eternal life, we should be overwhelmed with love and gratitude for what Christ did. Giving up the heavenly rights, authority, and comforts due the sinless Son of God, Jesus came and suffered divine justice for our sins so we could receive His Father's mercy.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, August 1, 2018 - Spiritual Gifts Work Together

AUGUST 01ST 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, August 1, 2018 - Spiritual Gifts Work Together

Romans 12:3-8

Have you ever noticed that people in the church don't all think the same way? When we become frustrated in our attempts to communicate with a fellow believer, we may begin to wonder whether something is wrong in our spiritual life. After all, aren't we supposed to be a united body of Christ?

It turns out that the problem could be the result of spiritual gifting. The Holy Spirit gives gifts to every believer for the common good of the church (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). But unless we realize this, we may fail to appreciate the gifts of other believers. Then it's easy to start harboring the opinion that everyone else should be like us.

For instance, someone with the gift of mercy might judge a believer with exhortation skills to be heartless—the exhorter may appear to value explaining the spiritual benefits of adversity over sympathizing with the hurting person. Yet both gifts are beneficial; used properly, they work together to help a sufferer see there's hope in the hardship and comfort for endurance.

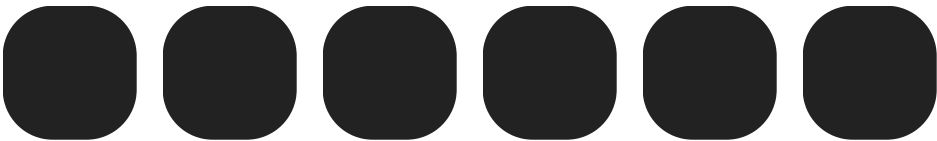
The root of division over spiritual gifts is self-focus, which can be displayed in two ways. If we think too lowly of our spiritual gift, we may become resentful or feel unimportant. If, on the other hand, we think too highly of our gift, we may believe it's the most important one.

If you feel at odds with a fellow believer because of your differing approaches to issues in the church, stop and thank the Lord for that person and his gifting. Then pray that he will be used for the good of the fellowship and for God’s own glory.

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