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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, August 29, 2018 - The Practices of Maturity

AUGUST 29TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Hebrews 5:12-14

WEDNESDAY

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Believers are on a continual growth track that ascends higher and higher. This side of heaven, none of us ever “arrive,” but we each have a responsibility to press on to maturity. Though many people think those who know a lot about the Bible are the spiritually mature ones, Hebrews 5:14 adds the element of practice to the growth equation. This word means a custom or habit. Christian growth requires the discipline of godly habits carried out daily.

The most important practice to cultivate is a personal devotional time. Since God is the source of all spiritual development, you can’t neglect Him and expect to become mature. Transformation begins with time in His Word and prayer.

Obedience is another essential element for advancement. When our desire to obey the Lord is stronger than our attraction to sin, we’ll know we are making progress in our spiritual life.

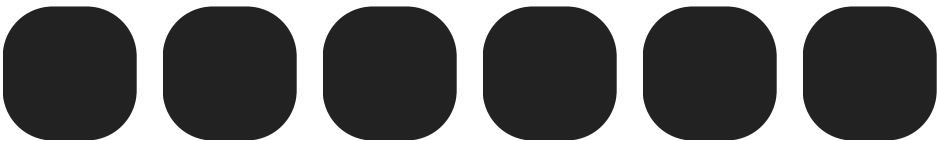
In terms of physical development, the goal is to become more independent and self-sufficient as we age. But in the spiritual realm, the opposite is true. Those who are mature in Christ recognize their own inadequacy and rely on the Holy Spirit within them. It’s His job to transform our character and empower us to accomplish everything the Lord calls us to do.

In God’s eyes, maturity isn’t the same as getting older. By digging into Scripture and developing God-pleasing habits, we can use our years to grow stronger in the Lord instead of wasting time with passivity. No one becomes mature accidentally. Spiritual growth requires a diligent pursuit of God.

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, August 28, 2018 - A Barometer for Spiritual Growth

AUGUST 28TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Since our Father wants us to mature in the faith, we should stop periodically and examine our life to see if we're making progress in this area. Physical growth is fairly easy to evaluate—all you need is a tape measure. But how can you tell if you're growing spiritually? Let's begin by considering how children develop.

Desires. Have you noticed that your childhood toys no longer interest you? The maturing process changes our desires in the spiritual realm, too. When we're growing, the world's pleasures lose their appeal, while our hunger for God and His Word increases. We are eager to be with Him and share with others how He's working in our life.

Understanding. When you were young, your perception of the world was very limited. In the same way, we lack spiritual understanding when we're new believers. But in time, we begin to see life from God's perspective. Trials and temptations become opportunities for growth, and service for the Lord becomes an honor instead of a burden.

Selflessness. The most obvious sign of a toddler's immaturity is his selfishness. He wants his way, and he wants it now! Hopefully that is no longer characteristic of you. A mature believer is submissive to the Lord, willing to wait, and more concerned about others than himself.

How are you doing in these three areas of growth? Maybe it's time to let go of a few childish ways in order to grow into a mature believer. The greatest evidence of maturity is love. When the Lord and other people have first place in our heart, it's then that we're most like Jesus.

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Daily Devotional - Monday, August 27, 2018 - Wisdom for Good Health

AUGUST 27TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Monday, August 27, 2018 - Wisdom for Good Health

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

MONDAY

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Early in my college days, I studied and worked excessively, as I wanted to offer the Lord my all. Eventually, I realized that neglecting my health could hinder my serving Him, so I therefore had a responsibility to take care of my physical body. Since then, I have tried to use wisdom with regard to health. I believe that includes having the proper motivation and a commitment to practice discipline.

When we understand our worth in the Father's sight, we will be motivated to pursue good health. Our bodies are the temple of the living God (1 Corinthians 6:19). The Holy Spirit lives in us and carries out the Lord's work through us. When we are taking care of our health, we position ourselves to be able to serve when God calls. Our heavenly Father knows many of us have infirmities, but He wants us to take care of ourselves so we do not make our condition worse.

Discipline is the other component of a health-conscious attitude. Many of us approach exercise and weight loss in a "fits and starts" manner. While that may offer some value at the time, a more lasting method is of greater benefit. We need to develop new routines, within the structure

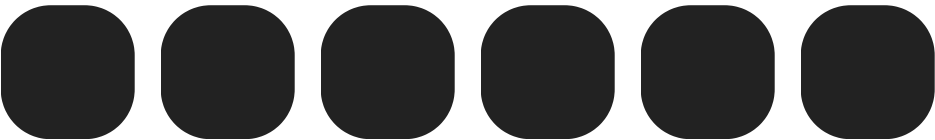
of our family and work, for our bodies to thrive. Consistency over the long term is necessary if we are to stay in good condition.

A desire to eat right and exercise regularly does not guarantee we'll avoid disease or live a long life. But it does mean we will have done our part to keep God's temple in good shape for Him. Our calling as God's children is best fulfilled when we seek physical as well as spiritual vitality.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, August 24, 2018 - Failing to Listen to God

AUGUST 24TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Listening to God is not a one-time event. We must continually keep His Word before us, or we'll begin to listen to the wrong voices.

In Genesis 2:16-17, the Lord gave a command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Eve began to listen to another voice and did not hold firmly to her Creator's words. All that Satan had to do was plant a seed of doubt about God's integrity and offer Eve one appealing advantage of doing things her own way—and she fell for it. He mentioned wisdom, but using her own reasoning, Eve added two more benefits to the temptation: the fruit is good for food and a delight to the eyes.

The schemes of the enemy have not changed. He still whispers lies and twists truth to convince us that God can't be trusted and His ways are not the best. In every temptation, there is a deception about the character and motive of God, plus an attractive promise of a better way.

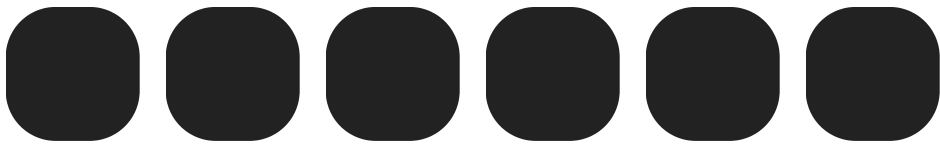
The world is filled with voices that vie for our attention and influence our thoughts and actions. Throughout the day, consider the messages that are sent your way through the media and people. Consciously begin to compare them to what Scripture says about God and His ways.

Remembering what the Lord says in His Word is our safeguard against deception and temptation. Devotions read during our quiet time won't protect us if they're quickly forgotten during the day. Follow Jesus Christ's example: Be ready with truth in your mind and on your tongue whenever temptation strikes. (See Matt. 4:1-11.)

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, August 23, 2018 - Our Father's Unconditional Love

AUGUST 23RD 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, August 23, 2018 - Our Father's Unconditional Love

Romans 5:8

THURSDAY

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Many of us have heard since childhood that the Lord loves us. Yet it isn't until we begin to understand the true nature of His never-ending love that our lives start to change dramatically—anxiety is exchanged for peace, depression for joy, and fear for confidence.

Today's Bible verse tells us that while we were still living in rebellion against God, His love sent Jesus to the cross to pay the ultimate price for our redemption. In other words, He didn't wait for our apologies or even our recognition of Him. No, the Almighty loved us so completely that He sent His Son to die for us while we were steeped in sin.

This doesn't mesh with our human understanding of love. Much of our concern for others is conditional, hopefully with the exception of care for our children and families. We oftentimes project this imperfect image onto the Lord. It is hard for us to imagine that there actually exists a greater love than what we ourselves can give.

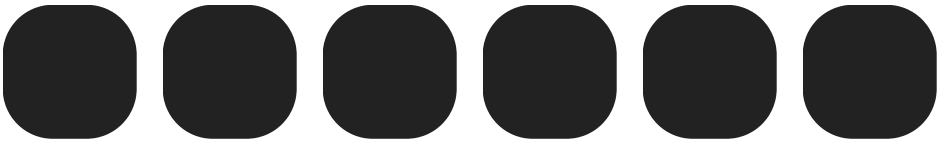
Thankfully, God is not restricted by our view of Him. So great is His care, in fact, that when we trust in Him, He calls us His children and adopts us! And our Father promises that nothing can separate us from Him (Rom. 8:38-39).

As you read Scripture, focus on verses about the heavenly Father’s love. Ask Him to help you start to grasp how great His love is. Document what you learn so that it is available to review when guilt or doubt creeps into your mind. What peace there is for Christians in the Almighty’s unfailing, unconditional care!

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