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Daily Devotional - Friday, January 4, 2018 - Jesus: Our Intimate Friend

JANUARY 04TH 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, January 4, 2018 - Jesus: Our Intimate Friend

Matthew 26:47-50

I've counseled plenty of people who argue that they are not worthy of God's love. Of all the passages I could point to that describe the Lord's devotion, today's is the one I think best showcases the unqualified friendship He offers His followers—even when they become wayward.

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus was praying at Gethsemane when Judas Iscariot approached with a band of men. The betrayer stepped forward and kissed the Lord. And what was Jesus' response? According to Matthew, one of the other disciples, the Lord called the man "friend." (See Matt. 26:50.)

Judas expected Jesus to establish His kingdom on earth and drive the Romans out of Israel—surely anyone who could calm a storm at sea could easily remove an oppressive government! But Judas's interest in Jesus was more personal and political than spiritual. In fact, John reported that his fellow disciple stole from the money box (John 12:6). Today the man's name is synonymous with those who betray others for personal gain.

In spite of Judas's greed, blind ambition, and betrayal, Jesus never stopped loving him—and still used the word "friend" to address the disciple. The Lord does not place conditions on His

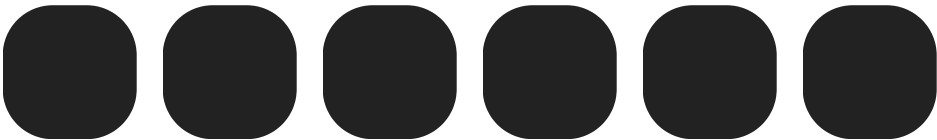
love or reject people who fail to meet certain standards. He simply cares for us as we are.

We cannot earn Jesus Christ’s love and friendship. He takes the initiative, reaches out, and draws into fellowship those who are willing. None of us are worthy, but we are privileged to live in His love anyway. In the Lord, we find a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24).

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Daily Devotional - Thursday, January 3, 2019 - Called to Edify One Another

JANUARY 03RD 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, January 3, 2019 - Called to Edify One Another

Your spiritual growth isn't just about you—it affects your entire church. Consider this: What would your church be like if everyone in it was as hungry for God's Word as you are? I'm not saying we must all be spiritual giants, but we should all be growing and increasing in our knowledge and love for Christ, as well as in our love for each other.

One of our responsibilities as members of Christ's body is to edify each other in the faith. Sometimes we think this is just the role of those in ministry and assume the rest of us can sit back and take it easy. But today's passage clearly says to "let the word of Christ richly dwell" in us so we can teach and admonish one another with wisdom (Col. 3:16).

Opinions and advice are often casually dished out without much thought, but as believers, we're called to give wise counsel based on God's Word. There is no other source that's as sound, because Scripture alone is absolute truth. Building others up could simply be a matter of pointing out a passage that speaks to an issue they are facing, or it could involve admonishing or warning against an action or attitude the Bible condemns.

To some people, this kind of care for one another may seem unwanted or intrusive, but it's actually an act of obedience to the Lord. It demonstrates our love for others and our desire to see them become the people that the Lord designed them to be—believers who accomplish what He's called them to do. And if we are on the receiving end of such care, it helps us develop a humble, teachable attitude.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, January 2, 2019 - Spectator or Participant?

JANUARY 02ND 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, January 2, 2019 - Spectator or Participant?

Romans 12:9-13

There's something in human nature that resists having to lean on others for support. In fact, since its very beginnings, our country has been known for an independent spirit and self-sufficiency. But what may be considered beneficial in a national culture is not what Christ advocates for His church. Although we are each saved individually, the Lord doesn't intend for us to live as if we're on an island—set apart to ourselves. We are called the body of Christ, and as such, our lives are meant to touch, intersect, and connect with other believers in a local church.

The various ways we support one another are summarized in today's passage, and they cover a large range of experiences, from rejoicing to suffering. No matter where we find ourselves on this spectrum, God calls us to be devoted to one another through service, prayer, and hospitality. Paul also specifies the attitudes we should have as we care for each other: sincere love, unselfishness, honor, diligence, and eagerness.

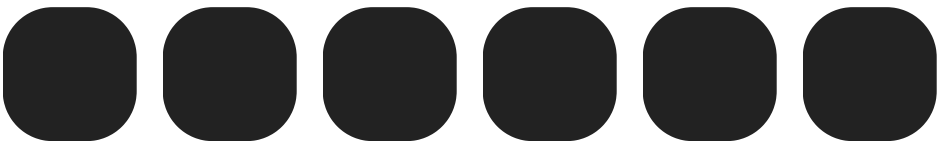
As you can see, the church is a place for participants, not spectators. Yet many Christians today think this kind of involvement in others' lives is too costly. So they come on Sunday, stand to sing, sit to listen, and walk out to get back to their own lives. The term "spectator Christian" doesn't apply only to those who deliberately avoid going to church. In fact, many churches are filled with observant attendees who sit in the pews each week but never touch a fellow believer's life. What about you? Are you a spectator seeking what you can get or a participant

looking for ways to give to someone else?

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, January 1, 2019 - One Body, One Lord

JANUARY 01ST 2019 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, January 1, 2019 - One Body, One Lord

Ephesians 4:1-7

If you're a Christian, you know the importance of being part of a church, because that's where we grow and worship together as the body of Christ. However, it's also

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a place where conflicts, disagreements, and annoyances occur. Although we are saved and destined for heaven, we still live in a fallen world and struggle with our own sins and weaknesses. What’s more, we come from diverse backgrounds and have different personalities and levels of spiritual maturity.

That’s why it’s essential that we learn to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling” of Christ (Eph. 4:1). How would a physical body function if the various parts ignored the brain’s direction and did their own thing? That’s what happens when a church won’t listen to its head, Jesus Christ. The inevitable result is conflict as individual members push their own agendas.

The only way we can walk worthy of our calling in a local church is to have the qualities mentioned in verse 2: humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, and love. When these Christlike attributes characterize a group of believers, being together will be like a small taste of heaven on earth. Although there may still be disagreements, the manner in which they’re handled will change. Instead of angry outbursts, silent resentment, and bitterness, there will be greater concern for the other person than for oneself.

Our involvement in a local church is one of the ways God works to conform us to His Son’s image. The close connections developed within the community of faith will both encourage us and sand off the rough areas in our life. In that way, we end up looking more like Christ.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, December 28, 2018 - The Real Heaven

DECEMBER 28TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, December 28, 2018 - The Real Heaven

Matthew 25:14-30

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Trying to picture life in eternity, many people imagine lying around on clouds, strumming harps. I'm not sure how this misconception about heaven got started, but I can assure you that is unlikely. We have been gifted, equipped, and enabled to fulfill God's purpose in this life. And He will still have a purpose for us in the life to come.

In today's passage, Jesus described the kingdom of heaven in the context of a man giving his servants money to invest. The men who served their master faithfully were heartily congratulated and given greater responsibility. When we reach Christ's judgment seat, our foremost reward will be to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:23 NIV). I can't imagine words that could please me more than a commendation from the Savior I love above all.

We will also receive our new assignment in God's heavenly kingdom. This is the part of the reward that corresponds to the words, "You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things" (v. 23). There will be no lazing about for us! We will have a renewed heaven and earth to live in and enjoy (2 Peter 3:13). In our perfected bodies, with hearts and souls attuned to the Lord, we will serve Him and each other.

God has a plan for every believer to pursue, and He has gifted each of His children specifically for that purpose. That plan requires our passion and motivation—on earth or in heaven. This world is our training ground for the greater life to come, so let's prepare like good and faithful servants.

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