

## SUMMER DEVOTIONS WEEK #1: June 1 –7

I've shared with you before that my friend, Les Hughey, who's a Senior Pastor in Scottsdale, Arizona – has said he thinks Jesus is coming back in the summer. I asked him why he thought that, and he said “*because people get spiritually lazy in the summer, they get apathetic.*”

I don't know when Jesus is coming back, but I agree with Les in this regard - summer is a tough time for our church. People check out. Graduations, vacations, weekend getaways – you name it, people disconnect over the summer. It's my prayer and hope that this summer will be different for you and your family.

That's why I'm writing these devotionals. Each day this summer, I'll be sharing with you a passage of scripture that has been meaningful to me. Life-changing for me. I'll be sharing a passage that has spurred spiritual growth in me. WHY? So you stay engaged this summer. So you stay connected to the Lord this summer. So you stay rooted in fellowship here at COV this summer. I love you all. I'm praying for you. I'm rooting for you. I'm pulling for you. We're better together. Let's serve the Lord and love the Lord this summer of 2015.

Pastor Mike



### **Monday, June 1, 2015: Summer Devotions Day #1**

**1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV)** “*Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*”

I was 16 years old and having my quiet time in the parking lot of my high school (Davis High School in Modesto, CA). Later on in that day I would be giving a speech in front of the student body about why they should vote for me as their student body president. God used this verse, on that day 37 years ago, to spur me on to go through with that speech. You see, I was planning to give my testimony about how Jesus Christ change my life and How Christ gave me a new purpose. And I was getting cold feet. But when I read this verse, the Holy Spirit inspired me and moved me and filled me with courage. And I gave that speech. And I shared my testimony. And I won that election.

And today, all these years later, I'm sharing with you – stay the course. Keep on keeping on. Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Endure. Persevere. I know life can beat you up. I know what discouragement looks like. I know what it is to face set-backs and rejection and betrayal. Folks, God is bigger than those things. God is grander and more majestic than those things. Push forward. Move ahead. We have God in our bod. We win in the end. All the temporary suffering and set-backs and pain – God is using them to grow us and mature us and make us more like Jesus. Whatever you're thinking about quitting – don't do it. Stand firm. Let nothing move you.

**Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

The destiny of your  
own soul is in your  
own hands by the  
*choice* you make.

—Billy Graham

## **Tuesday, June 2, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #2**

**Joshua 24:14-15 (NIV)** *“Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”*

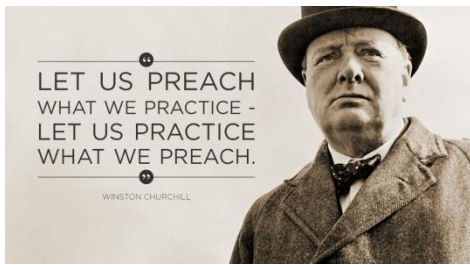
Every one of us makes hundreds of decisions every day. Most of the things we are deciding seem small and fairly unimportant. Which route do we take to the grocery store? What clothes we'll wear on any given day. Make the bed? Fold the clothes? But there are other choices we make – important choices – that will shape our future and destiny. Character choices. Spiritual discipline choices.

I received Christ when I was 16. January 1, 1978. I remember so vividly the joy of receiving Christ. The forgiveness. The slate wiped clean. New purpose. New life. And this is what I remember the most. The next day – January 2, God put it on my heart to read the Bible. I didn't own a bible. I had never read it. Never even opened one. But God put it on my heart to read it. I went out and bought one and started reading in Genesis. I kept reading all the way through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

I was mesmerized. I was inspired. I was moved. Then I came to Joshua. Read through the whole book and came to Joshua 24:14-15. And God grabbed a hold of my soul. The Holy Spirit spoke to my soul and said *“Pellowe – serve me. Serve me above all else in your life. Serve me and love me above everyone in your life.”*

And right there in my bedroom at 1413 Madrone Avenue in Modesto I made a commitment to the Lord that I would serve the Lord, as best I could, for the rest of my life. In fact, it became the habit of my life then and even now to pray every day, *“Lord, it doesn't matter to me what anyone else does – but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* Starting today, maybe you make the choice of your daily prayer life – a prayer of dedication of your life and family to the Lord.

*“Sow a thought and reap an act. Sow an act and reap a habit. Sow a habit and reap a character. Sow a character and reap a destiny.”*



### **Wednesday, June 3, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #3**

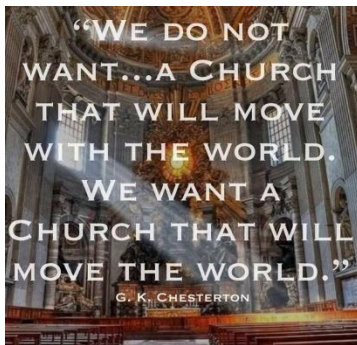
**Matthew 16:5-6 (NIV)** *“Be careful, Jesus said to them (His disciples). Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”*

I remember it like it was yesterday. (I say that a lot these days now that I’m 53) I was having my quiet time at a summer camp in Hilton Head, South Carolina. I was the Youth Pastor running this camp. 400+ kids. I was reading through the gospel of Matthew. I read this verse and the Lord cut my heart to the quick. I knew what instantly what Jesus was talking about when He said, *Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*”

*The yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees* was hypocrisy. And on that day back in 1997, on beautiful Hilton Head Island, I had lost some of my fire for the Lord. I was going through the motions. Not faking it spiritually, but close. My time in God’s word was dry. My prayer life was dry. There was no power for the Lord. I wasn’t practicing what I was preaching.

And just like it takes a little bit of yeast to work its way through a batch of dough to make it rise, it only takes a little bit of compromise, a little bit of sin, a little bit of hypocrisy to work its way through a Christians life to the point it makes us useless for God’s purposes. What did I do? I confessed my spiritual laziness to the Lord. I prayed it out with God. Then, I went in front of our students and staff and confessed to them the same.

Here’s what was crazy. My confession started a revival of sorts among our students. Hundreds of them began to confess their sins and get right with God. It was a wild night on Hilton Head Island. Is there anything you need to confess to God and make right? Who do you need to share this with? **Psalms 139:23-24 (NIV)** *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”* Make this verse a regular part of your prayer life.



### **Thursday, June 4, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #4**

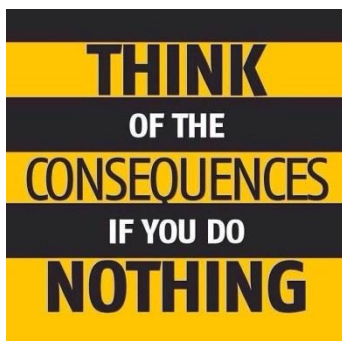
**Romans 12:2 (NIV)** *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Jesus loves the Church. What is the Church? It’s us. His people, who are called by His name – Christians. And I am convinced that His church must not conform to the pattern of this world. We must go against the flow of culture and popular opinion when necessary. We must stand, even if standing means we go it alone, on the Word of God. We must build a church of people who embrace this truth.

I was having my quiet time through the Book of Romans when I became the senior Pastor here at COV. The day before I read this passage in Romans 12, I had just met with a group of other Senior Pastors in the valley. Some of the guys, who are no longer in the ministry told me – “Don’t make waves, don’t preach hard things – don’t be too controversial – and you might make it past your first year.”

To be honest, that ticked me off. Then I read Romans 12 again. Don’t conform. Be transformed. The Holy Spirit whispered to my heart that day and many days since – preach it. Challenge the people of COV to be different. To go a different road than the crowd. Follow the Lord. Obey the scriptures. Love the Lord wholeheartedly. Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead. I say that to you today – do the same.

**Mark 8:34-37 (NIV)** “Then Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”



#### **Friday, June 5, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #5**

**James 2:17 & 26 (NIV)** “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead... As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”

Sharon and the kids and I were in London. December 1996. We were walking out to our rental car from the Tower of London. There was a street preacher getting after it. Preaching the Gospel and the need to receive Jesus. Great stuff. A group of three men were ahead of us and one of them said – “Don’t you know that Jesus guy is dead?”

Moment of truth. Do I stay silent? Now way. How could I? I shared back with those three men, as loudly as they had declared Jesus to be dead – “Excuse me, Jesus is certainly not dead. He is alive. Alive in my heart and my families heart and everyone who receives Him, He is alive in their heart.”

We all have moments in our life – divine opportunities if you will – when it’s time to stand up and speak up for the Lord and our faith. Think of the consequences if we do nothing. If we say nothing. Think of the consequences if we remain silent. If our faith is not accompanied by action it is dead. Faith without deeds is dead.

Where is God calling you to take stand? Who is God calling you to share your faith with? What’s holding you back? Today, right now, ask God to give you the courage to act.

And let me say this - you can only change the world if you are a changed person. Changed people change the world. You can’t change the world by imitating it. You can’t change the world by blending in. You never change the world by going along with the flow and swimming downstream. If I want to make a difference, I must be willing to be different. I must be willing to have people say things about me, be criticized, be questioned, be joked about. To make a difference, I must be different.

**2 Chronicles 16:9 (NIV)** “For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”

**SURROUND YOURSELF WITH**



**THOSE ON THE SAME  
MISSION AS YOU**

**Saturday, June 6, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #6**

**Matthew 28:16-20 (NIV)** *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*”

I have read this passage of scripture at least one hundred times. It’s called the great commission. Jesus commissions the disciples to go after the great mission of the church and our lives – evangelism and discipleship. At COV, we say Build Bridges (Evangelism) and make disciples (Discipleship). This is a powerful portion of scripture. It is life-changing – if you do it.

I read this passage for the first time about a month after I received Christ – February 1978. I asked my youth pastor what it meant. He told me about the mission that Christ has for each of us to win people to Christ and then disciple them for Christ. I said, *“I want to be discipled.”* For the next nine months, we met at 6am, every Tuesday morning for a year, and he invested in my life, the teachings of Christ. He poured his life into mine. He discipled me. And over the last 37 years, I have had the privilege of discipling 100+ men.

My question to you – have you been discipled? If not, why not? What are you waiting for? And, if you have been discipled, who are you now discipling? Who are you investing in? Who are you pouring your life into? Below is a list of qualities I look for in a potential disciple. Is this you?

- **FAITHFUL**- visibly committed to God, to the church.
- **AVAILABLE**- willing to make the time to be developed & to reproduce.
- **INFLUENCER**- do people listen to them? Follow them? Are they influencers or the influencee's?
- **TEACHABLE**- do they have a hungry heart? Are they humble? Are they applying the word? James 1:21-23
- **HONEST**- willing to be open, authentic & transparent!

I love what Acts 17:6 says about the early disciples. –*“These men that have turned the world upside down are come here as well.”* Would to God that we turn the world upside down for Christ. Quit playing it safe. Quit settling for the status quo. Don’t make it your goal to live the comfortable life.

Get your fire back. It's not over until God says it's over. Start believing again. Start dreaming again. Start pursuing what God put in your heart.

**Sunday, June 7, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #7**

**Ephesians 5:14 (CEV)** *“Just as the Scriptures say, ‘Wake up from your sleep and rise from your slumber.’”*

I was 23. It was 1984. I was getting ready to speak to a small group of high school students at a winter camp in Bethesda, Maryland. I had done a ton of speaking, but this was my first camp. Six speaking shots over the weekend. The first thing I did was ask their youth pastor about the spiritual condition of the group. I'll never forget his response. I so appreciated his honesty. He said – *“Our kids are apathetic. They are in a rut spiritually. Their fire for the Lord is gone. They need a wake-up call.”*

I wonder how many of us can relate to that? Apathetic. In a rut spiritually. Your fire for the Lord is gone. You need a wake-up call.

Here's the deal. God showed up big time at that winter camp. Every kid their made a decision for Christ. Every kids got inspired by the Holy Spirit. Every one of those kids – all nine of them – went on to go into full time ministry. Everyone of those kids heard from the Lord and responded to the Lord.

How about you? Have you been asleep spiritually? Do you need to wake up from a spiritual slumber? Read **Hebrews 3:7-8 (NIV)** *“So, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...’”*

Today make it your objective to do whatever God tells you to. Listen to His voice.. Respond to the call He puts on your heart.

**Acts 13:36 (NIV)** *“For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed.”*

Don't go on another day without saying, “Jesus Christ, own me completely and make me what You made me to be in the first place. I'm willing to give up whatever it takes to give up to be the person I was designed to be by you.”. Be the person who serves God's purpose in our generation.

Pray this prayer, *“Jesus Christ, I desire to do Your will. More than anything else that's what I want in my life. I desire to do Your will. Lord, today I am deciding to pay the cost. Whatever it takes, whatever it costs, whatever You ask me to give up I am not satisfied with second best. I want to be what You designed me to be. I want to be used by You. I want to feel Your presence in my life. Lord, I dare to trust Your promises. What seems impossible to me is not impossible with You. Help me to become a person of faith and trust You more each day and to expect You to work in my life. Amen.”*