

SUMMER DEVOTIONS WEEK #11: August 10- August 16, 2015

I met with some of the men from COV for breakfast this past week. We talked for a bit about the condition of the world and some scary times that we have lived in. As our country moves away from the Christian faith and the Judeo-Christian values it was founded upon and towards the religion of the day – secularism, how are we as followers of Christ to live? Here's how:

We keep trusting Christ. We keep growing in our faith. We keep sharing our faith. We keep living by faith. AND, we ask the Lord to build and develop holiness into our lives.

Holiness carries with it the idea of *"being set apart"*. Set apart for God's purposes. Set apart from the world's value system. **Hebrews 12:14 (NIV) says,** *"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."*

That's a strong statement. Think about that. Absorb that. *"Without holiness no one will see the Lord."* Spend some time thinking about the implications of that verse for your life. Here is a thought I have:

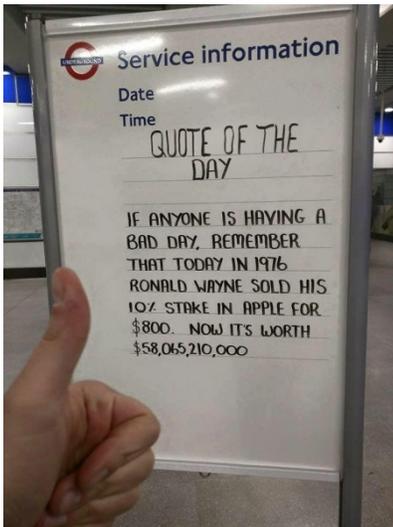
As a follower of Christ, this means we can't do everything everyone else does. We are hemmed in, willingly, by the call to holiness. The call to purity. The call to being set apart. Holiness is not superiority. Holiness is not judging others. Holiness is not haughtiness. Holiness is humility. Holiness is Godliness. And in these times that we live, where there is temptation everywhere, where there is compromise everywhere, where there is open hostility to the things of God, holiness is a not only a requirement, but a necessity. Put it on. Wear it. Live it.

In **Leviticus 11:44 (NIV)** God says, *"I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy..."*

In this week's devotions, I want to look at how we are to live the Holy life that God requires and desires in us.

I love you guys. Stay the course. Endure. Keep moving forward. Persevere. Be immovable. Stand firm.

Pastor Mike



Monday, August 10, 2015• Summer Devotions Day #71

"Then Joshua told the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow God will do amazing things among you!'"
Joshua 3:5 (NIV)

I love this portion of scripture. Israel is getting ready to cross the Jordan River and take possession of the promised land. After 40 years of wandering through the desert, the time has arrived and Joshua says, *Consecrate yourselves*. Consecrate yourself means to dedicate yourself, surrender yourself to God, and set yourself apart for God's work. In other words – be holy.

It might have been easier to understand if Joshua had said, "Sharpen your swords and check your shields!" But spiritual, not military, preparation was needed at this time because God was about to reveal Himself by performing a great miracle in Israel's midst. As a person would prepare scrupulously to meet someone of earthly fame so it was appropriate for the Israelites to prepare for a manifestation of the God of all the earth. So how do you do that? What's involved with consecrating one's self? Three things.

1) Confess your sin. Ask the Lord to show you any sin in your life. **Job 13:23 (NIV)** says, *"How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin."*

Psalms 139:23-24 (MB) says, *"Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me; Cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I'm about; See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong – then guide me on the road to eternal life."*

2) Make right any offense or wrong done to another. **Matthew 5:23-24 (NCV)** says, *"If you are offering your gift at the altar [in other words, you're at church worshipping] and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go [take the initiative] first make peace with your brother, and then come and offer your gift."*

3) Re-dedicate your life to the Lord and His purposes for your life. **Romans 12:1 (NIV)** says, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship."* Get in the habit of doing these three things daily.

Why did I include the picture above for today's devotion? I have no idea. ☺



Tuesday, August 11, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #72

“God the Father knew you long ago and chose you to live holy lives with the Spirit's help so that you would be obedient to Jesus Christ and all of His commands.” 1 Peter 1:2 (GW)

Don't you love this verse? Let's break it down and absorb each part of this verse.

“God the Father knew you long ago” How long ago did God know you? Before you were born, you were in His heart.

Jeremiah 1:5 (AMP) says, *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew [and] approved of you [as My chosen instrument], and before you were born I separated and set you apart, consecrating you; [and] I appointed you to be my representative...”*

“I chose you to live holy lives” This has been God's plan from the beginning for us to live Holy Lives.

“With the Spirit's help” We can't do it on our own. We need God's Holy Spirit to empower and equip us to keep moving forward along the Lord's path for our lives. Remember **Ephesians 3:20 (NCV)** *“With God's power working in us, God can do much, much more than anything we can ask or imagine.”*

“So that you would be obedient to Jesus Christ and all of His commands.” The bottom line to holy living is that we become obedient to Jesus. **Romans 14:12 (NIV)** says, *“So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.”* God desires us to obey his commands. Jesus said in **John 14:15 (NIV)** *“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”*

In your own words, write down how you will live a holy life:



Wednesday, August 12, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #73

“Dear friends, we have these promises from God, so we should make ourselves pure—free from anything that makes our body or soul unclean. We should try to become holy in the way we live, because we respect God.”

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NCV)

The idea here in this verse is keeping our lives free from sexual sin. **1 Corinthians 6:20 (NIV)** says, *“You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”* No doubt that every sin impacts us, every sin does damage to us. But, sexual sin has a particularly devastating impact.

Think about the devastation that David’s adultery had on his family and the nation of Israel. Neither were ever the same again after. That’s why Paul implores us to flee from all sexual temptation.

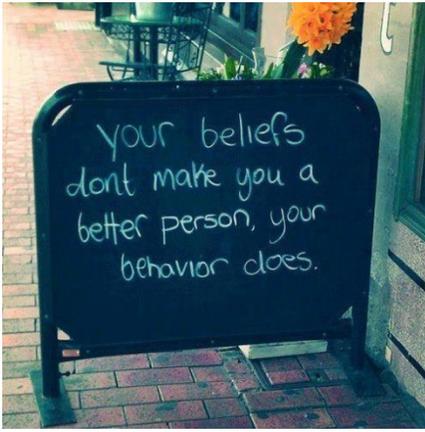
1 Corinthians 6:18 (NIV) *“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.”*

In our attempt to become holy, we must win the battle in the arena of sexual temptation. Read these next two passages and see if you can pinpoint the path to victory. Write down your thoughts in the space provided.

1 Peter 5:8-9 (NIV) *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”*

1 John 2:15-17 (NIV) *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”*

What role does **James 4:7 (NIV)** play in winning this battle to be pure and holy? *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*



Thursday, August 13, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #74

Philippians 4:8 (NIV) *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.”*

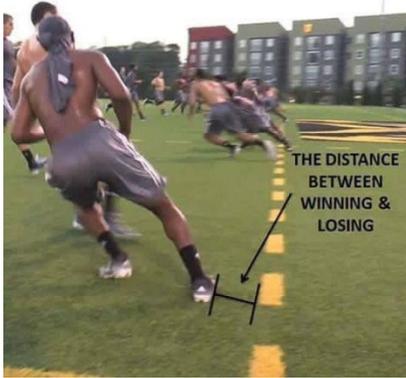
Dwell on this verse for a bit. Absorb it into your heart, mind, and soul. What stands out to you? What does God say to you through his verse? Write it down.

In our battle to be holy, we must win the battle in our mind. G.I.G.O. = Garbage In Garbage Out. The key to winning the battle with temptation is pretty simple; stop fighting the temptation. I know that is contrary to what seems to be the action to take. Fight. Fight. Fight some more. No. The key to winning this battle is refocus. ***Simply refocus your thoughts.*** Refocus your attention. Turn your attention on to something else. Shift your thoughts. Change your mind. Refocus. Instead of looking at what you're being tempted by, just look somewhere else. Refocus. Change your gaze.

That's why Philippians 4:8 is so important. It tells us to focus our mind on the goodness of God. Turn your attention to the creator. Get refocused. Get your eyes off the negative. Get your eyes on the goodness of God. Are you a chronic worrier? It's because you doubt the goodness of God. Whatever gets your attention gets you. Whatever you resist persists. Stop fighting it just refocus. Turn your back on it.

How do you get out of depression? Not by looking at what you are and telling yourself what you are. That never changes you. Focus on what you want, *"This is the day the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad."* It's a choice. *"I will bless the Lord at all times ... His praise will continually be in my mouth ... I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* Get God's word in your mind and refocus. Quit fighting the feeling. What you resist persists. You can't fight a feeling. But if you ignore it, you weaken it.

When you refocus, it may mean physically removing yourself from the situation. If you don't want to get stung, get away from the bees. Maybe you need to change the channel on the TV. Maybe you need to walk out of that movie. Maybe you need to change jobs. Maybe you need to change a car pool. Joseph was in a tempting situation and he left his coat and ran. If you have to leave your coat, leave your coat. Walk out. Refocus. Win. This is how you build holiness into your life.



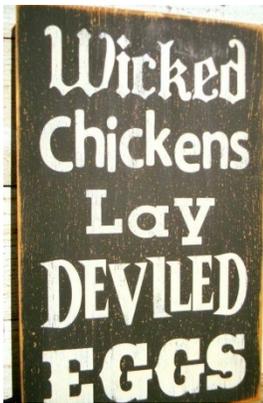
Friday, August 14, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #75

1 Peter 2:12 (LB) *“Live such good and holy lives among unbelievers that, though they accuse you of doing wrong doing, they may see your righteous deeds and glorify God.”*

What is it that unbelievers watch? They watch to see if your walk matches your talk. They watch to see if what you say you believe matches what you do. They watch to see if you have integrity. Peter says that the hallmark of holy living is integrity. Integrity is doing the right thing when nobody is watching. Integrity doesn't cut corners. You must know this. You must get this. Your integrity will be tested. Your integrity will be tested by how you respond to suffering. Read the story below. What does it have to do with integrity and suffering and holiness?

For 20 years Dr. Helen Rosenver was a medical missionary to the Congo. In 1964 when the Simba rebellion occurred she was attacked and captured by rebel forces. She was beaten repeatedly and she was raped repeatedly. A few years later she had this to say in an interview about that experience, "The rebels had decided to execute several of us. Only too quickly the moment came when we were actually standing in front of the firing line. If someone had asked me earlier if I could be a martyr I would have answered 'No, I'm not built that way.' But as we were facing those guns, certain to be killed at any second, we were actually singing the praises of God. We suddenly experienced God's presence and joyfully anticipated our reunion with Him in heaven. God simply swept our fears away. Miraculously, at the last moment, the rebels decided not to execute us. In fact, I can remember one other late night experience, when this overwhelming consciousness of God's presence came to me, that He was there and He was in charge and that He knew what was happening. It was almost as if He said to me, 'They're not beating you, or raping you. These are not your sufferings. These are My sufferings. All I'm asking is the loan of your body.'" Later on she wrote, "In 1981 I had breast cancer. I was 36 years old. My mother had died 32 years earlier at the age of 36 with cancer. In 1983 I had a second mastectomy and learned that my husband was having a mid-life crisis affair. In 1986 our bright, beautiful 18 year old son took his life. No warning, no sign that he'd been unhappy. My husband and I were at home when he quietly hung himself in the basement. In 1988 after 21 years of what I thought was a good marriage, my husband moved in with his Friday night rendezvous. Because of all the hell we'd been through I was certain nothing could break us apart. When he left me the pain was gut wrenching. But I got through it. How have I overcome all this grief in my life? It was due to the help I received and loving support of my church family, my family and friends. But above all it was my belief in the presence of God in my life."

The acid test of your faith and integrity and holiness is how you react when you're mistreated. I'm not talking about those stupid things we bring upon ourselves; we cause a lot of our own problems. I'm talking about when you're mistreated unjustly. The Bible says that people are watching you to see how you respond to suffering. Jesus says it like this: *"You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world...Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father who is in heaven."* Integrity in the face of suffering = holiness.



Saturday, August 15, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #76

"Give yourselves completely to God, every part and fiber of you. You want to be tools in the hands of God to be used for His good and holy purposes." **Romans 6:13 (LB)**

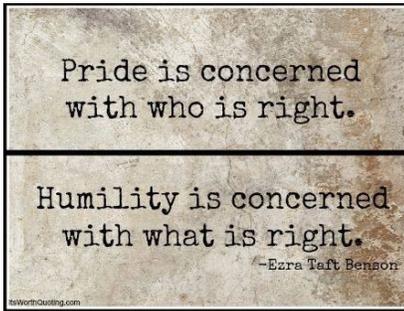
In thinking through holiness, there is still another facet to consider. This would be the issue of sacrifice. You cannot attain any real measure of holiness without living a life of sacrifice. Sacrifice is the willful surrender of your will and life to the Lord's purposes for your life.

In order to be used by God, in order to fulfill His purpose there are some things you're going to have to give up. Sacrifice. You can't do it all. Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to lay aside your personal ambitions, your goals, your plans for your own life, your family, your career, your personal motivations, your drives, your desires?... Are you willing to set those aside and say, "Instead of living for those things, I think I'm going to live for God's purpose on this earth. I'm going to live the life that God intended for me to have."? What are you willing to sacrifice to be used by God?

What good is holiness if it does not impact the way I live and behave? Sacrificial living is the proof of my holiness. When Sharon and I came to COV, we discussed the kind of sacrifices we would need to make. We made a list of those sacrifices and then we committed to God we would pay the price to see God's will done in our church, our lives, and the lives of our people. Let me tell you, the price has been high. The sacrifice has been great.

But nothing in comparison to the sacrifice that The Lord made for us. By sacrificing His Son, The Lord has shown us the way He expects for us to go. The road He expects us to take. **Micah 6:8 (NLT)** says, “*He has shown you what is good and holy. And what does the Lord require of you in light of this? To do justly, and to love kindness and mercy, and to humble yourself and walk humbly with your God?*”

Let me ask again - What are you willing to sacrifice to be used by God?



Sunday, August 16, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #76

Psalm 97:10 (NIV) “*Let those who love the Lord hate evil.*”

There’s one more part or facet of holiness I’d like to address. The issue of evil. Holiness is not passive. Holiness takes a stand against evil. Followers of Christ are called to take a stand against evil.

I think about the evil of young children being sold, trafficked, in the sex slave industry and I’m appalled. What must the Lord think? Sheer, unadulterated evil. I think about abortion and how 55 million babies have been killed in the USA since 1973. Sheer, unadulterated evil. And now the recent revelation with Planned Parenthood and the selling of baby body parts. We are the Hitler’s of our time. Do a little homework and find out the politicians in Washington DC, at the state and local levels who support this practice – who have voted for this practice. As your pastor, I implore you - never vote for them again. Vote your faith, not a political party.

Let me bottom line it for you - the Bible teaches that the Christian life is warfare. Warfare between good and evil. In fact, the most used analogy in the Bible for the Christian is that of a soldier. The words that are used to describe the Christian life in the Bible are war terms – fight, conquer, strive, battle, overcome, victory. You say, if we’re in a war pastor, who is our enemy?

Ephesians 6:12 (NIV) says this - “*For our struggle (war) is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*”

That verse is saying that our battle, our war is not **against people made of flesh and blood**. Instead, we battle the satanic forces of evil. These forces are invisible to us, operating in an unseen world. Behind the scenes these satanic forces corrupt and control rulers and authorities. Believers in Christ are called to engage in the struggle against these spiritual forces of evil. Holiness doesn’t allow for just standing back and doing nothing.

Sir Edmund Burke said this - "*All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.*"

John 3:19-21 (NIV) says, "*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.*"

This of course means you have to move. You have to get off the couch of your life and move.

1 Corinthians 4:20 (NIV) says, "*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.*" The Christian life, the holy life that God desires for us, is one of action and power. Where do you need to take your stand?

There was an elderly German man who stood up in our church over in Virginia. He shared his life's journey with the church. The church was riveted as this man talked about growing up in Nazi Germany. This man said that he was a member of a Christian church — a little structure. He said that this structure was positioned right next to a railroad track. He said that every Sunday morning a train would come through town and stop. He said the entire congregation would hear the steam engine, the whistle, and the train along the track.

He said they would also hear the screams of hundreds and hundreds of Jews being forced into boxcars because these Jews knew that at the end of the track they faced death. This man said, "Sunday after Sunday, we heard the sounds of the train. We heard the whistle. We heard the steam. We heard the screams. Do you know what we did? The organist played louder. Do you know what we did? We sang our hymns at a higher volume. We didn't do a thing. We had no character."

In our country, the train is running down the track. The whistle is blowing. The steam is coming off the engine and many people are screaming and being forced into boxcars. Yet, a lot of us are just standing there. We are doing absolutely nothing because we have a lack of character. Holiness is active.

I ask you, "What if Jesus would have been passive?" A lot of people think that Jesus was some pale, frail, milk-toast man. Those people are not reading the Gospels. Jesus was a man's man. He was a risk taker. He was a lion. He was a warrior. What was the whole thing with the cross? That was one on one with the evil one; good against evil; holiness against depravity. Jesus, though, lived a perfect life. He was perfect in every character quality, perfect in every way, and he died on the cross for our sins. He spilled his blood. He won the war so we could know him. Jesus was a warrior. He was a man who backed up everything he said. Holiness is more about walk than talk.