

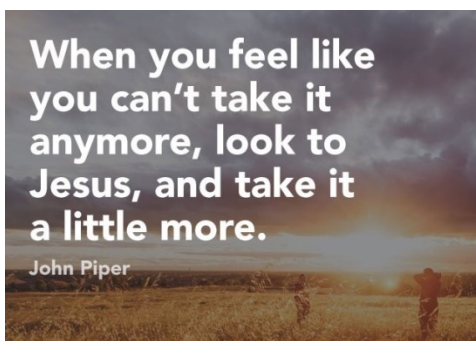
SUMMER DEVOTIONS WEEK #2: June 8-14

There are certain things in life, you discover, that are most important. Faith, family, friends, character, integrity – things like that. And then, if you're wise, you give your life to these things. God's Word – the Bible – is one of those most important "things" we must give our life to. Hear it preached. Read it. Study it. Memorize it. Meditate upon it. And, most important of all – do it.

Jeremiah 15:16 (NIV) says, "When your words (the Bible) came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty." I love that verse and I pray that you would love God's word and that it would become your heart's delight.

I pray that these devotions will be a blessing to you.

Pastor Mike



Monday, June 8, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #8

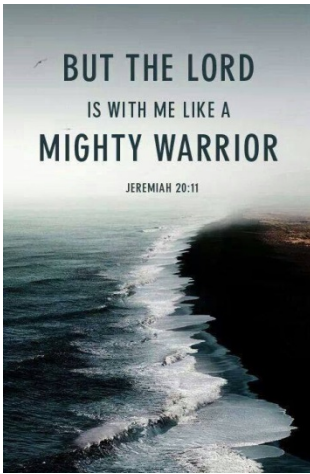
Galatians 6:9 (NIV) "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

I think and talk a lot about "Not giving up", because in my own life it seems I'm tempted to do that on a regular basis and I figure that this is true for most of us. God gave me Galatians 6:9 at a time when I was discouraged in my ministry way back in 1996. I was a youth pastor in Manteca. We had built a pretty vibrant youth ministry. I was disciplining six senior guys, five of them would wind up going into the ministry. We were on a pretty good roll. Then this super strong group of seniors graduated, and it was back to the drawing board. Re-building, re-tooling, re-shaping the new freshman class and walking with them through their senior year.

I wondered if I was up for this again. And I read Galatians 6:9 and I heard the Holy Spirit say to me – "Get up. Get moving. This is my ministry. These are my students. I have chosen you. Get after it." It was just the fresh wind of revival my soul needed. "Do not become weary in doing good – do not give up."

And now when things seem dark and hard and difficult to face, I remember how God lifted my spirit and soul almost 20 years ago and the fire gets re-kindled. When other voices shout at me to quit and give up, there is another voice that gives me strength to keep on moving forward. That still small voice of the Lord. Where do you need to keep on keeping on? Where have you been tempted to throw in the towel? Don't do it.

2 Corinthians 4:8-10 (LB) "We are pressed on every side by troubles, but not crushed and broken. We are perplexed because we don't know why things happen as they do, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going."



Tuesday, June 9, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #9

Psalms 121:1-8 (NIV) *“I lift up my eyes to the hills-- where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip-- he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you-- the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm-- he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”*

Kelsey was one year old. She had just had a febrile seizure. Her temperature shot up from 101 to 104 in 20 minutes. And there she lay on a cold metal counter top in the emergency room at Arlington Hospital. The doctor was just about to do a spinal tap – drawing out spinal fluid from her spinal cord. And I was helpless to do anything. I couldn’t fix this. Sharon and I were holding each other, crying and we reached up to the Lord in prayer and some friends of ours, Bud and Jill Harper, read the scripture above to us. The Lord was with Kelsey that night. He healed her. She has grown into a leader and life-giver and difference-maker for the Lord.

Ever since that night, I have seen the Lord as my mighty warrior. He has been ever faithful in my life and to my family. He has fought for us and protected us. I owe Him everything. And I’m here as a witness to each of you that The Lord will do the same for you. Whatever you’re going through, whatever it is that you are facing, lift your eyes up too Him. Remember your help comes from the Lord. He’s got you. He’s watching over you. He will protect you. He will provide for you. Trust Him. Put your faith squarely in Him. Mediate upon this truth today.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV) *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

**Common
sense is a
flower that
doesn't grow
in everyone's
garden.**

Wednesday, June 10, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #10

James 1:5-8 (NIV) *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”*

Wisdom or common sense is a gift from the Lord. If we need wisdom, all we have to do is ask for it, in faith and by faith. All of us need more wisdom than we have right now. **Proverbs 1:7 (KJV)** tells us this about wisdom - *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

We were on a mission’s trip in Mexico. One of our staff leaders was driving one of our rental cars and was hit by a local, driving a produce truck. Not a good situation. Even though the accident was not her fault, we were in a foreign country. It was going to be her fault. I needed wisdom. I asked the local missionary representative to pray with me and I quoted James 1:5 above. I then prayed - *“Lord, I need your wisdom. I need you to show me how to handle this situation in a way that will bring you glory and protect our kids.”*

Immediately, the Holy Spirit showed me a blue-print for what to do. I had my staff guys pack up all of our kids and drive them back across the border, along with the staff person driving our rental. I stayed back to talk with the police, go through the judicial process and pay for all fines and damages. It was an 18 hour ordeal and all along the way, the Lord was guiding me, giving me insight and wisdom.

I remember standing in front of the judge of this local village and him asking me why I should not spend the next month in jail. The Lord whispered to my heart - tell him this: *“because I have work that the Lord Jesus Christ has given me to do and I need to do His work.”* Crazy - huh? The Lord knew that the judge was a Deacon in his church and that by answering in the way I did, He would let me go. And the Judge did just that. Wisdom from on high.

So I say to you - do you need wisdom in your life today? Which career path to follow? Where to go to college? Who to date? How to lead your family? How to dig out from under the mountain of debt you have accumulated? How to move forward after your divorce? How to raise your kids? Ask the Lord, by faith, to give you wisdom and discernment and direction. He will give it to you.

Titus 2:11 (PH) *“For the grace of God, which can save every man, has now become known, and it teaches us to have no more to do with godlessness or the desires of this world but to live, here and now, responsible, honorable and God-fearing lives. And while we live this life of faith and hope, we must ask for wisdom from on high, that he might rescue us from all our evil ways and make for himself a people of his own, clean and pure, with our hearts set upon living a life that is good.”*



Thursday, June 11, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #11

Proverbs 10:9 (NLT) *“People with integrity walk safely, but those who follow crooked paths will slip and fall.”*

There’s a popular phrase going around today: *“What I do in my private life is my business and it has no effect on my public actions.”* And I want to tell you that’s a bunch of bull.

In 1912, when the Titanic sailed, everybody called it unsinkable. That was because the Titanic was using a new technology. The new technology was take the hull of the ship and divide it into compartments, rather than it being just one unified, integrated hull, it was divided into compartments with the idea that a few of the compartments could be damaged, even flooded, and still the ship would continue to float. But as we all know by now, the Titanic sank and 1,522 people lost their lives in that tragedy. When the integrity of the hull was damaged, the ship was doomed.

Today most people make a titanic mistake with their lives. What is the titanic mistake? It's when we try to compartmentalize our lives into various segments and think that we're safe by doing so. We take our lives and divide it into little bite-size pieces. This is my Work Life, and Home Life, and Social Life, Church Life, Sex Life – as if all these things are totally unrelated to each other. Even well meaning Christians often divide their lives; compartmentalize their lives -- The Titanic mistake.

They have the spiritual compartment which is where I pray and thank God and go to church and do some kind of ministry. And then my secular life where I go to work and live in the real world and make real money and do real things. Often these compartments never interact with each other. There's no integration in life.

This is tragedy. The reason we do this is we want to hold conflicting values in our minds. We want to do something and believe something in one place and then do something and believe something else in another place that contradicts what we do over on the other side. We think that by putting them into compartments (like the Titanic's hull) will make it ok. If one gets flooded, if one has a little sin in it, if one is kind of a questionable activity, it's not going to sink the whole ship because I've compartmentalized my life. It's a big mistake.

So here I am today saying to you. Don't make this Titanic mistake. Live a life of character and integrity. Don't compartmentalize your life. **James 4:17 (NIV)** says, "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."



Friday, June 12, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #12

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 (NIV) *“These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, promised you. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”*

Emily graduates from high school today. In two months, Sharon and I will be empty-nesters. How did this happen so crazy fast? Read through the passage above and circle all of the actions we are to take as parents. Write them down in the lines below.

Now, if there are any commandments you're not presently practicing, when will you start? I'm here to testify to you today that your kids graduate tomorrow. Get on with it. Win them for Christ. Love them for Christ. Build God's Word into them for Christ.



Saturday, June 13, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #13

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

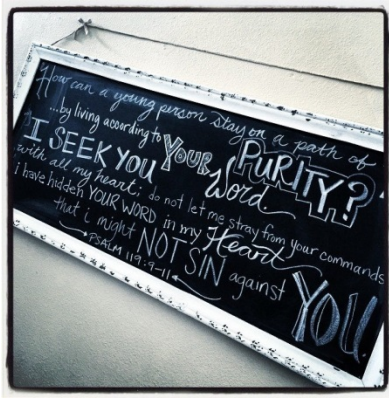
For Sharon and I, our first date was when we skated together at a youth group activity. To commemorate that night, Sharon sewed and knitted together a stuffed skate. That skate sits in my office today and every time I see it I am brought back to that first date.

As we skated, I peppered Sharon with about a hundred questions. *“Are you called to full time ministry? Are you ready to live a life of sacrifice? Tell me about your walk with God...”* I'm sure from Sharon's perspective, it felt like the inquisition. I was an idiot. 😊

At 18, I didn't have a clue as to what the Lord had in store for me or for Sharon or for us together, but I knew who held our future. And I knew that if we would follow the Lord by faith, He would guide us, protect us, make a way for us and provide for us. And man, has he ever. It has been a wild ride to say the least, and all along the way, God has been faithful.

And today, as we celebrate our 34 year wedding anniversary, I can tell you that the plans of the Lord are good. We have served the Lord together, raised four kids together & we have seen the world together. I am so blessed that God gave me Sharon Pedlowe to be my bride, my life partner and my best friend. And I say to you today – do the same. Follow the plans of the Lord. Not your plans, His plans. Walk by faith, not by sight.

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV) *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”*



Sunday, June 14, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #14

Psalms 119:9-11 (NIV) *How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

Jen Croghan sent me the picture above this last week. I believe she did the chalkboard work and took a picture of it. I think of her boys walking past that chalk board every day and I smile – big. Way to go Jen! Psalm 119:9-11 is the memory verse for our church for June. It's such a powerful passage. If we're going to make it spiritually, we must live according to God's Word and hide God's Word in our hearts. If we lived out these two truths, how powerful would our lives be? Our marriages? Our families?

I first ran into this verse 34+ years ago. I was disciplining some high school guys who were struggling with pornography. I remember making these guys a promise – that if they would memorize a verse a week, for 12 weeks in a row, that God would help them gain victory in their thought life. This was the first verse we memorized together.

It was incredible to see how God worked in the lives of the guys who implemented the spiritual discipline of memorizing God's word. God changed them. God delivered them. Some years ago, I got an email from one of those guys. He was writing to thank me for working with him and pushing him to memorize God's word. He talked about how scripture memory saved him from a life of torment. Praise the Lord. God is able.

God's word is powerful, and when we hide it in our hearts (memorize it) God purifies us. He filters out the old junk. But, you have to do the work of hiding God's Word in your hearts. You have to put in the effort. You have to put in the time and work. Memorization can be hard, especially for those of us over the 50 year barrier.

My word of encouragement to you today? Suck it up. Do the hard work. No excuses. Hide God's word in your heart. You will benefit. Your marriage will benefit. Your kids will benefit. Our church will benefit. There's no downside to memorizing God's word. Do it. ☺