

SUMMER DEVOTIONS WEEK #3: June 15-21

One of the books I read early on in my walk with the Lord was *“The Making of a Man of God”* by Alan Redpath. The book chronicles the life of David. The first chapter deals with David’s call and the reason God chose David to be the King that would replace Saul.

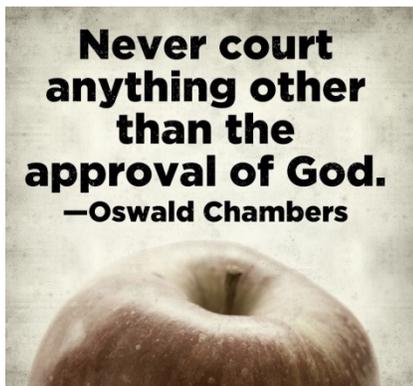
1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV) says this – *“The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”* There lies the insight into the choice of God when it comes to the men and women He uses – their heart. David was 13 years old when God chose him. Why? Because God owned David’s heart. David loved the Lord with all his heart, mind, soul and strength.

God is looking for those same types of people today. Men and women who are sold out to the Lord. In fact, **2 Chronicles 16:9 (NIV)** tells us this – *“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.”* The Lord is on the hunt for men and women whose hearts are fully committed to Him. So, it is imperative you learn how to guard your heart for the Lord.

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) says, *“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”* In this week of summer devotions, I want to share with you the passages, in the Bible, that God has used to instruct me on how to guard my heart for the Lord. I pray that The Lord will use them in your life.

I’m praying for you. Keep on keeping on. Move forward in your faith. Press on. Endure. Persevere.

Pastor Mike



Monday, June 15, 2015• Summer Devotions Day #15

John 12:43 (NIV) *“For they loved praise from men more than praise from God.”*

In John chapter 12, we read about some of the Jews who had converted to Christianity. We see that they were ostracized by their families and in jeopardy of being excommunicated from their synagogues. The result? They walked away from their new found faith. **John 12:42 (NIV)** says, *“because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue.”*

When I first read this passage many years ago, it had a profound impact upon me. You see, I tend to be a people pleaser. I want everyone to be happy. I want everyone to like me. I like the praise of men. But the day I read this passage from John 12, I made a vow to the Lord to do my best to love His praise more than any praise I could or would receive from man.

And the result? It has freed me up to pursue God’s plan and purpose for me without the fear of what others may think about me or whisper about me behind my back. It has produced in me a security that 100% believes that

‘If God is for me, who can be against me?’ My encouragement to you today? Make what God thinks about you the most important thing in your life. Seek His praise. Seek to please Him in all you do and say. Put the Lord first in all things.

Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Matthew 6:33-34 (NIV)

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.



Tuesday, June 16, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #16

2 Corinthians 6:14-16 (NIV)

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

Here is the unvarnished truth. When a person has a heart for the Lord, our arch enemy doesn’t take that lying down. He’s going to come after you. **1 Peter 5:8-9 (NIV)** says this - *“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.”*

I share this with you, because one of the ways that Satan will attempt to derail you spiritually is through your close/intimate relationships. Oh how many times have I seen a guy or a gal who has a heart for the Lord – they love the Lord and are living for Him and then BOOM - they get enamored with a guy or a gal who doesn’t love the Lord and before long, their heart for all things God is gone.

The commandment in 2 Corinthians 6:14 to not be yoked together with an unbeliever speaks right to this issue. When the Apostle Paul asks - *“What fellowship can light have with darkness?”* - he exposes the heart of the issue. If I love God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength and get close (yoked) to someone who doesn’t share that same love for God, what do we have in common? There is a strong likelihood that they are going to ultimately influence me away from the Lord.

Guard your heart. Keep your head on a swivel. Be alert. Obey this commandment. A good friend of mine, years ago, just one day out of the blue, violated this command. He told me he had just gone into business with an unbeliever. I asked him why he didn’t talk to me before he had signed on the dotted line - he said - “I knew you would tell me it was a bad idea.” He was right - it was a bad idea. It went against this biblical truth.

After about a year, the business went belly up. This guy my friend went into business with had an entirely different set of values and life principles he lived by. Their business partnership was incompatible. Here's the take-away: It's not the will of God if it goes against the Word of God.



Wednesday, June 17, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #17

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV) *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”*

When it comes to protecting your heart for the Lord, you have to deal with the issue of sexual purity. I made a vow to the Lord, after I received Christ, to not date for a year. I knew I need to have my spiritual life in order if I was ever going to lead a woman the way I needed to in a relationship. Part of what God taught me in that year of celibacy was that I had to develop boundaries in the physical and sexual side of the relationship.

Of course, that meant no sex before marriage. I was bought a price – and that price was the life and blood of Jesus. I thought then, as I do now – I must and I will honor God with my body. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that this is not where our culture is. And you know what I say to that? Who cares? God expects His followers to go counter-culture. We must teach our kids this. We must model this. So, here is one suggestion if we're to keep this commandment found in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

1) Remember the principle of diminishing returns. When you first hold hand with the person you're dating, it is the greatest thing ever – right? You're hearts pounding, you're hormones are bouncing off the moon – holding hands is awesome. But, after a while holding hands doesn't give you the same return it had at first. I mean holding hands is nice. It's wonderful. It's beautiful. But the law of diminish returns has set in. To get that same ZING, you have to do something else, something different than just hold hands. Kiss, longer embraces, experiment sexually. You know the routine. And before long, you've broken this command.

What's the answer? Set boundaries. Have someone hold you accountable. Don't follow the culture. You are not your own. You belong to the Lord.

LORD, EMPTY ME
OF ME,
SO I CAN BE FILLED
WITH YOU.

Thursday, June 18, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #18

Luke 9:23 (NIV) *“Then Jesus said to them all: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

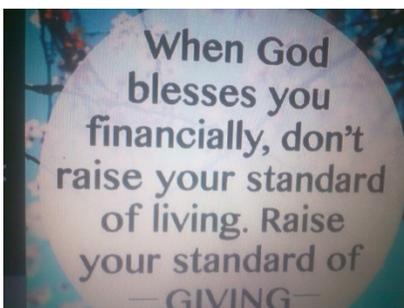
If you're going to protect your heart for the Lord, you must apply this truth to your life: If you're going to live for the Lord, you must die to yourself. That's what Jesus is saying in Luke 9:23. Denying yourself is dying to yourself. It's the John 3:30 principle – “he must become greater and I must become less.”

But how do you do that? How do you empty yourself of you? All our lives we are taught by the culture that life is “ME FIRST”. And Jesus comes along and says the complete opposite. Warren Wiersbe, a bible commentator says *“the Christian life is simple. It's not thinking less of yourself, it's not thinking of yourself at all.”* I like that. I think that's what it means to die to yourself. Quit thinking about yourself.

That's the truth of **Philippians 2:3-5 (NIV)** *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”*

What was the attitude on display in the life of Jesus? Die to yourself. In a narcissistic world that is consumed with self – Jesus makes it simple. You defeat the world's value system by adopting and owning our Lord's value system. Put others before yourself. Serve. Give generously of your time, talents and treasure. Sacrifice. Be humble.

This one value alone will go a long ways to helping you protect your heart for the Lord. **Matthew 10:39 (CEV)** *“If you try to save your life, you will lose it. But if you give it up for me, you will surely find it.”*



Friday, June 19, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #19

Matthew 6:19-21 (CEV) *“Don't store up treasures on earth! Moths and rust can destroy them, and thieves can break in and steal them. Instead, store up your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy them, and thieves cannot break in and steal them. Your heart will always be where your treasure is.”*

When it comes to protecting your heart, eventually you have to deal with the issue of money and materialism. And Jesus goes right to this issue in Matthew 6:19-21. When Jesus says, *“Your heart will always be where your treasure is”*, He tells us how important it is how we handle the treasure He has entrusted us with is.

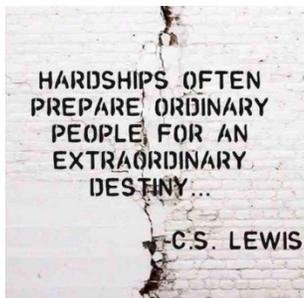
When I first fell in love with my Sharon, I could not keep money in my pocket. I was spending it on her all the time. I'd find something I just had to get for her. I'd see ads and I had to buy her everything. I never had money in my pocket. Even today after being married so 34 years I still love to buy my wife things. We have a good agreement. I like to buy her things, she likes me to buy her things. It works really well. What's my point? You cannot love without giving.

So, Let me ask you – where's your heart? It's wherever your treasure is -- wherever you put your money. If your money is in an investment portfolio, that's where your heart is. If your money is in your house, that's where your heart is.

If your money is in a boat, a career, a hobby, or anything else, that's where your heart is. The Bible says that money is like a magnet. Wherever we put it, it tends to pull our hearts in that direction. When I give money to God, it's like a magnet. It pulls me closer to God.

God doesn't need your money. He can buy all the french fries He wants. What He wants is what it represents. It represents your heart. The Bible says wherever your treasure is, that's where your heart is going to be. That means every time I give it draws me closer to God. That's how you protect your heart for the Lord. You give.

Jesus said in **Matthew 6:24** *“You cannot serve both God and money.”* In other words, I'm going to have to choose what's number one in my life. And the proof of what's number one in my life is where my money is. (The work God has done in my life) **REMEMBER, YOU CAN'T BE A GREAT GIVER WITHOUT SACRIFICING SOMETHING**



Saturday, June 20, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #20

Romans 5:1-5 (NIV) *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”*

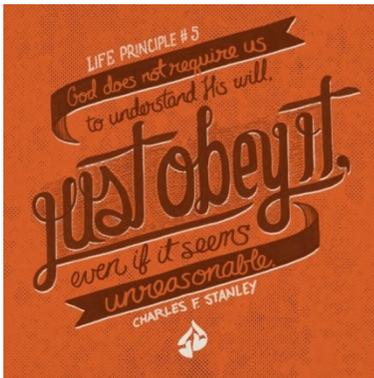
Did you read that? Did you absorb that? We rejoice in our sufferings (Hardships) because WE KNOW that suffering produces perseverance and perseverance produces character and character produces hope.

Over the last 30+ years of ministry, I have seen so many people who were walking with the Lord get blown off by the water spiritually by a tragedy; a heartbreaking moment in time; the death of a child, the death of a spouse. Sickness. Cancer. Financial ruin. Job loss. House foreclosure. Infidelity. A parent's death. Real hardship. Real pain. Real suffering. Yet God has a plan. He always has a plan. And God's plan is to use the hardship we face in life to build our faith and character and perseverance.

How do you protect your heart for the Lord during these very difficult times of life? You must KNOW that God is at work. I've shared from the pulpit of how Sharon and I reacted when we got the news I had cancer. After the shock of the news, we trusted that God knew what He was doing. We also prayed. We prayed a lot. And in those times of prayer, God whispered to us that He was going to use the cancer to strengthen our kid's faith. We heard God whisper that He was going to use the cancer to open up doors of ministry. And He did. And He has.

When the inevitable hardships of life come your way you must KNOW the same. God is at work. He hasn't fallen asleep at the switch. He knows what He is doing. Trust Him. He's growing you. He's increasing your opportunity for ministry. Do not allow the seed of bitterness to get planted in your heart.

Psalms 19:14 (NIV) *"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."*



Sunday, June 21, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #21

Revelation 1:8 (NIV) *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'"*

I need to be reminded of this sometimes. God is God and I'm not. God is sovereign. He calls the shots. Life is about His story. His majesty. His awesomeness. His plans. His purposes. **1 Timothy 1:17 (NIV)** says, *"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen"*.

Would to God this would be us. That our love for the King would produce unbridled passion for the Lord and unbounding obedience to His word. The word sovereign means chief, highest or supreme. When we say God is sovereign we are saying that the Lord is number one. Number one in our lives. Number one in our family. Number one in our church. Number one in the universe.

When Drew was about to be born, we discovered that the umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck. We were scared, fearful and broken. Immediately we began to pray. Sharon is giving birth and I'm praying for Drew. One of the things I prayed was this - "Lord, we commit to you our son. Oh great and sovereign Lord, he is yours. Preserve his life and we will raise him for your use and your work."

How awesome it has been to see the Lord work in Drew's life, to see the Lord use him in the lives of hundreds and even thousands of people. When you're tempted to think that life is about you, remember it is not about you. It's about the Lord. It's always about Him and His plan for our lives. Embrace this and absorb this.

When you're tempted to think you're the king of your life – that you call the shots. Watch out. Wise up. Wake up. You protect your heart for the Lord by embracing this truth about God and remembering your place in His story.