

SUMMER DEVOTIONS WEEK #5: June 29-July 5

Have you ever heard of the “June Swoon”? This term has been used quite a bit in referring to the San Francisco Giants of the past. June would come along and the losing streaks would begin. Long road trips, bad fielding, hot weather – the June Swoon.

We are not much different. When June hits, the summer heat begins in earnest. The kids are out of school, vacations are coming up fast... the start of the fall school year seems forever in the future. Hence, the term June Swoon. Dullsville. Apathy. Boring. The dog days of summer.

As a Pastor, I see lots of Christians go into their own personal “June Swoon”. Distracted spiritually. Going through the motions of faith, but no real passion. No real desire. No real purpose. And I’m here to tell you that you have to fight against this. And the best way to fight the June Swoon is to get revitalized by God’s Word. Of course, your desire to develop and continue your daily QT with the Lord is probably waning. You’ve got to push through that as well. Don’t live on your emotions. Don’t succumb to the tyranny of the urgent. Set aside daily time with God and defeat the June Swoon in your life.

I love you guys. I’m praying for you. Endure. Persevere. Keep on keeping on.

Pastor Mike



Monday, June 29, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #29

Hebrews 12:1 (LB) *“Since we have such a huge crowd of men of faith watching us from the grandstands, let us strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back, and especially those sins that wrap themselves so tightly around our feet and trip us up; and let us run with patience the particular race that God has set before us.”*

When you need to run fast, you need to get lean. Strip down to the bare minimum. You’ve got to outrun the bull in the field. In a far-away life, I ran the 440 yard dash. The 440 is one lap around the track. It’s now called the 400 meter race. I’m an old school kind of guy, so I still call it the 440. The 440 is a full out sprint. And what I remember about the race from hell is this – you want to run light. Lightweight shoes. No socks. Skimpy lightweight shorts and tank top. Nothing else. Stripped down to the bare essentials (literally).

(BTW, I was fast. As a sophomore in HS I ran a 52 second 440 and then as a junior I ran a 49.7. They called me white lightning. Today if I attempted that run, they would call me the great white whale.)

The same is true of the race we run of faith. Our spiritual race. Hebrews tells us to strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back in our walk with The Lord. Let me ask you, is there anything slowing you down or holding you back, spiritually, that you need to strip off? A wrong relationship? An unhealthy habit? Poor discipline?

When will you start stripping? Maybe today you ask God to show you someone to hold you accountable to run the race of faith you are called to? No half measures. No half-heartedness. Go for it. Start now. Today. Right now. Tomorrow never comes. Start. Strip. Outrun the bull.



Tuesday, June 30, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #30

Hebrews 13:7 (NIV) *“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”*

Rightly, we expect a lot from our leaders. We expect them to be people of character. We expect them to be people of their word; people of integrity; people who say what they mean and mean what they say. We expect them to be larger than life.

Hebrews 13:7 encourages us to remember our leaders and imitate their faith. It’s a daunting truth for us who lead in the church. I accept that truth and expectation. All our leaders here at COV do as well. Now, I want to up the ante. Each of you reading this devotion, look at my life and faith and family and imitate it. Imitate the good and the godly you see in me. Jettison the rest. Then make sure those looking up to you, following you - can do the same. You set the pace for them. You set the standard for them. You lead by example. As you follow Christ, they will follow.

When our kids hit the age of 10, I shared with each of them this truth: Whatever I watch, you can watch. Whatever I read, you can read. Whatever I do, you can do. Wherever I go, you can go. I dare you to do the same. Set the bar high. Lead. Lead. Lead.



Wednesday, July 1, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #31

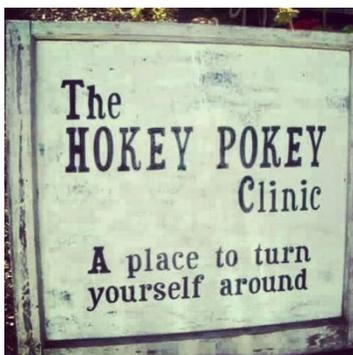
Philippians 2:1-2 (NIV) *"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose."*

The picture for today comes to us by way of the SF Giants. It's a little corny I know, but I believe in that stuff; all for one – one for all. I believe that if all the people on a team row together in the same direction that we can get pretty far in this life. That's why I love Philippians 2:1-2. We are encouraged to be like-minded. We are exhorted to have the same love. And the final bit of this urging? We are commanded to be one in spirit and purpose.

What is the common goal for the Giants? Win. Win the division. Get into the playoffs. Get to the World Series. Win the championship. As a church family, if we would be one in spirit and purpose, united, locked arm in arm – working and walking together towards the goal of building bridges (Evangelism) and making disciples (discipleship), how far could we go as a church? What could we accomplish? What could the Lord do in our lifetime?

Imagine a church where there were no divisions, but rather we were one in spirit and purpose? Listen to **1 Corinthians 1:10 (NIV)** *"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought."*

Perfectly united in mind and thought. Imagine a church like that. No selfishness. No "Me first" mentality. No "my way or I'm leaving" attitude. No complaining. No arguing. No nitpicking. No grouching. Just an attitude that said – "I'm here to win". Let's win. Let's be one in spirit and purpose.



Thursday, July 2, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #32

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."*

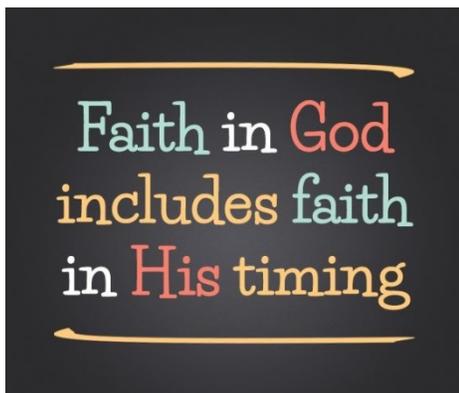
Almost every day of my life these past 35 years, I have thought of this verse. It is a powerful verse – a life-changing verse. This verse is saying that everyone who receives Christ – everyone – is made new. New heart. New mind. New purpose. New purity. New everything. This is big. This is important.

I've shared with you before how much God has changed me and remade me. Everyday being made more and more like His Son, Jesus Christ. But this idea is that the OLD is gone. The old has been thrown out. The old is forgotten. For me, that is freeing. I am a new creation when I receive Christ because the old stuff, the sin, the rebellion, the junk is gone. God made it to be gone.

What this means for us is this – we quit replaying the old tapes in our mind of our screw-ups, our failures – the grossness of our sins. We remember we are made new. Born again. You are now free to pursue your God-given purpose. Quit being mired in mediocrity. Quit being paralyzed by your past mistakes. Move forward by faith.

The Apostle Paul said it like this in **Philippians 3:13-14 (NIV)** *“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

The key phrases in these verses? Forgetting what is behind, straining toward what is ahead and press on. Do that today. That's how winning is done in this life of faith. Day after day, press on.



Friday, July 3, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #33

Habakkuk 2:3 (LB) *“But these things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, do not despair, for these things will surely come to pass. Just be patient! They will not be overdue a single day.”*

By nature I am not a patient person. I want everything yesterday. God has done a major work in my life in the area of patience and it started the day I read this verse and trusted in the Lord to do what He promised. It was 1986. Sharon and I had been married for five years. We had been trying to have kids for three. No success.

We both love kids. We were made to work with kids. And our hearts cry was “Lord, why no kids?” That's when we ran into Habakkuk 2:3. The Lord had a timing that was different than ours. He is God after all and sovereign and He gets to call the shots. That's when Sharon and I decided to act by faith in this area of life and trust the Lord.

Imagine that. Quit worrying and start trusting. God has a plan. That's a novel idea. Four months later, Sharon got pregnant and nine months after that, God gave us Kelsey. In what area of your life do you need to start trusting in God's timing for your life? Claim this verse. Memorize this verse. God has a plan.



Saturday, July 4, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #34

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT) *“If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land.”*

Happy birthday, America. America has been wounded over the last two decades by a dozen or so *isms*. Materialism. Hedonism. Secularism. Racism. Factionalism. Terrorism. Extremism. Consumerism. Narcissism. Cynicism. Our nation has been wounded by crime, by corruption, by scandal; by many, many different things.

We need healing. We need healing in our economy. We need a healing in our businesses. We need healing in our schools. Our nation needs a healing in our cities; in our marriages; in our families. We need healing in our hearts. What is it going to take to turn things around? What is it going to take to heal our hearts and our families and our country? Almost three thousand years ago – about 980 BC – God made a promise to a king named Solomon. That promise is not only to Solomon, it is a promise to all of God’s people.

2 Chronicles 7:14. What will heal not only America, but your life, your relationships, your marriage, your career, the things that need healing in your life. God says *“If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their lands.”* That’s what would heal America. Seek God.

Folks, This is not some kind of casual pastime. Seeking God is not something you do in your spare moments. Seeking God is not a low priority – nothing else is on television, so now I think I’ll go seek God. No. Seeking God is a serious pursuit. It’s a primary focus. And, we must seek God with intensity.

Notice what God says about this. Hebrews 11:6 *“God rewards those who earnestly seek him.”* That means it’s a serious pursuit. Are you going to make God serious pursuit in your life?

Do you know what God wants from you more than anything else this year? He wants you to say, “God, more than anything else I want to know you.” Will you be that person? The truth is very few of us are seeking God intently. Seek Him with all your life. It’s very rare. Most people want just enough of God to bless them but not to bug them. They want God to be a little piece of the pie, a little slice. I’ve got all these other things in my life... it’s time for a little God. As if he’s a little piece!

How do you do that? How do we seek God intently? Two things - I make him first priority, and I make him my daily passion. Deuteronomy 4 says this - *“If you seek the Lord your God you will find him if [here’s the condition] you look for him with all your heart, and all your soul. If you seek him with all your heart and all your soul you will find him.”*

Then he says *“When you are in distress [anybody in that condition right now? Anybody stressed out? Most of America is stressed out right now.] When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you [What things? The recession, mortgage crisis, wall street greed, job loss, relationship loss] when you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, you will return to the Lord your God and you’ll obey him. For he is a merciful God and he will not abandon or destroy you.”* Seek Him.



Sunday, July 5, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #35

Deuteronomy 30:2-3 (NLT) *“If you return to the Lord your God, and you and your children begin wholeheartedly to obey all the commands I have given you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes.”*

Building off of yesterday’s devotions, I don’t know how it happened. There are many different causes but somehow America has gotten disconnected from God and we have been drifting now for some time. Revival and renewal and reawakening always start when we reconnect with God – when we return to the Lord.

How do we do that? God says in **Isaiah 30:15**, *“The Sovereign Lord, the holy one of Israel says, ‘Only in returning to me and waiting on me will you be saved.’”* Returning to the Lord – reconnecting with the Lord, it’s the only way your marriage is going to be saved. It’s the only way your finances are going to be saved. It’s the only way your health is going to be saved. It’s the only way your life is going to be saved. It’s the only way the economy is going to be saved. Only in returning to me, God says.

He’s waiting on you. A lot of times we think, “I’ve done all these bad things and God wouldn’t be interested in me.” If I came back to him he’d just scold me. No. God isn’t mad at you. He’s mad about you. He wants to have a relationship with you. No matter what you’ve done or how long you’ve done it, or who you’ve done it with, God say “I still want you back”.

Joel 2:13 says, *“Return to the Lord your God for he is compassionate and merciful and he is always ready to forgive and to change his plans about disaster.”*

So let me ask you: Are you connected to God right now? How connected are you to God? A little bit? A lot? Maybe somewhere in between? Or not at all? Let me tell you how you know if you’re connected to God. What has first place in your life? That will tell me if you’re connected to God or not.

You say, “I don’t know what’s in first place in my life.” I do. It’s whatever you think about most. Whatever you think about most is what you’re connected to. If you think about your job the most, that’s what’s number one in your life. If you think about money the most, that’s what’s number one in your life. If you think about getting married or having a baby or if you think about sex the most, that’s what’s number one in your life. God is saying we must reconnect with him if we expect to be saved out of the situation that we’re in. Return to the Lord now. Put Him first in your life.