

SUMMER DEVOTIONS WEEK #7: July 13-19, 2015

I listened to a book on tape this past week called – Outliers, written by Malcolm Gladwell. It's a book about how the best of the best in any arena of life - sports, academics, sales, fortune 500, science, music, the arts – whatever field of endeavor or expertise – whatever the profession or calling – it takes about 10,000 hours of practice to rise to the top. 10,000 hours – that's a whole lot of practice.

Coming back to a recurring topic of mine – Your daily QT with The Lord, I began to think – what if each of us, as followers of Christ, sought to become experts in the Word. Master craftsman, if you will, of the Bible. What if we put in the 10,000 hours into the reading and studying and meditating and memorizing and most important of all – doing the word?

You just heard me preach a sermon on being able to identify False Prophets. I said that the number one way to identify them was to become a pro at knowing the truth of God's word. Then, when you hear false teaching or false preaching of the Word, you'll be able to detect it.

In this week's devotion, I want to share with you the passages of the Bible that propelled me to become a master student and teacher of the Bible. I pray that The Lord will move you to do the same. I love each of you. Stay the course. Endure. Pay the price of time and discipline. Keep on keeping on.

Pastor Mike



Monday, July 20, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #43

Hebrews 5:12-14 (NIV) - ¹²*In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!* ¹³*Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.* ¹⁴*But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

Don't you just love the picture above of my granddaughters? Brooklyn's hair is just divine and Harpers smirk on her face is priceless – it's as if she is saying – “No way can you make me do anything mama.” Grand babies are the best. But what if they never grew and developed? They wouldn't be so cute anymore. They would be unhealthy. The same is true for the follower of Christ. When you first become a Christian and you're just an infant spiritually, it's cute. It's sweet. It's nice. But if you stay an infant, if you never grow up and develop, it's unhealthy. It's tragic. The Apostle Paul says in Hebrews 5:12-14, above that we need to grow up. We need to quit drinking the milk of the scriptures and start eating solid food. He tells us we ought to be teachers of the word – all grown up on the word of God. And here's the deal – just like I said Sunday – this is how you detect false teachers and preachers...Through constant use of the Bible in our lives, we will be able to *distinguish good from evil*.

When will you start building the 10,000 hours of being in the Word into your life? Studying it. Meditating upon it. Reading it. Hearing it. Memorizing it? Doing it? When will you become a teacher of the Word? Tomorrow never comes. Start today. Lead your families today.



Tuesday, July 14, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #44

Hebrews 6:1-3 (CEV) ¹ We must try to become mature and start thinking about more than just the basic things we were taught about Christ. We shouldn't need to keep talking about why we ought to turn from deeds that bring death and why we ought to have faith in God. ² And we shouldn't need to keep teaching about baptisms or about the laying on of hands or about people being raised from death and the future judgment. ³ Let's grow up, if God is willing.

We've all heard the story – the analogy – there's an elephant in the room and no one is willing to say it. No one's willing to state the obvious. We can all see the elephant – we all know there's a problem – yet we're afraid to call it for what it is. So here it goes. Let me take a stab at one obvious truth.

We live in a culture, a generation, and a time where spiritual maturity and spiritual disciplines are not valued as they once were. This is not a new observation. This has been going on in the church for some time. We must reverse this trend. That's what the Apostle Paul is getting at in Hebrews 6:1-3. We must grow up. We must mature. We must get past the basic stories of the Bible and go deeper. We must individually put in our 10,000 hours.

This process of maturing spiritually doesn't happen overnight. But there must come a day in your life when you decide that you're going to step across the line and start putting in your 10,000 hours.

Start with some basics. Memorize the names of the disciples. Memorize the books, in order, of the Old and New Testaments. Familiarize yourself with the Word. Put in the time. Find out the prophets of the Old Testament, the kings and judges of the Old Testament. Memorize the 10 commandments. Start somewhere. Start today.

Start slow, start with some small things, but start.



Wednesday, July 15, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #45

Colossians 2:6-8 (NIV) ⁶So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. ⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

There are a lot of key thoughts in this passage. But the one that sticks out – the one that grabs my attention and I hope yours is the word ROOTED. When I read or hear the word rooted, I think of a mature, majestic and mighty oak tree whose roots go deep. It is established and it's not moving.

That's what is needed in our culture – in this generation, followers of Christ who are rooted & established in Christ and His word. Mature followers of Christ who are not taken in by false prophets – discerning believers who are not taken captive through hollow and deceptive false teachers – solid Christians who know the basic tenants and doctrines of the Word of God.

Listen to what **Psalms 1:1-3 (NIV)** says about these type of people:

¹Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. ²But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Would to God that this would be the people of COV. ROOTED. Fixed on the Word of God. Immovable. Steadfast. Not hopping from church to church every few years. Committed to the family of God – their tribe so to speak, helping and serving the next generation of believers to be rooted as well. Let's be these people. To be fully rooted and established, I think you have to put in the 10,000 hours.



Thursday, July 16, 2015 • Summer Devotions Day #46

2 Timothy 4:3-5 (NIV) ³For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

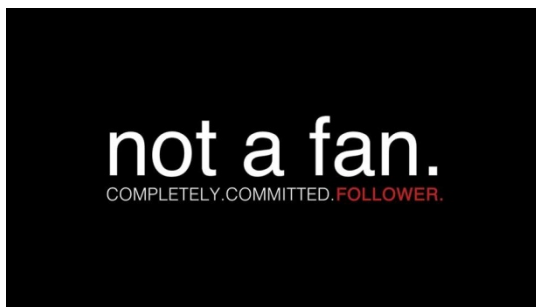
When I read the 2 Timothy 4:3-5 passage, it makes me think of a person in prison. This person though, is in a prison of their own making. Rather than walk in the freedom that Christ offers, they make up their own truths. They have become the god of their lives. They call the shots. They and they alone determine what is right. And every act of disobedience to God and His word drives them deeper into this prison of self-centeredness, narcissism, and self-absorption. Everything in their life is about them - their wants, their desires, and their pleasures.

These people will not put up with sound preaching and sound doctrine. Instead, they will seek out those who will tell them what they want to hear. They will seek those who tell them what their itching ears want to hear.

Things like - *You don't have to forgive. You don't have to be obedient to the scriptures. You don't have to tithe. Divorce? No problem. Hang on to your anger. You don't need to serve or be in ministry.*

It's with great sadness that I tell you many people have left COV over the years for this very reason - they would not put up with sound doctrine. They wanted to do their own thing. They did not want to bring their life into conformity with God's word. They wanted to be the boss.

Don't you be this person. Know the word. Obey the Word. Live the Word. Put in your 10,000 hours.



Friday, July 17, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #47

2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV) ⁷ *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

Love, love, love this verse. The Lord has not given us a spirit of fear or a spirit of hand-ringing or a spirit of defeatism. Rather, He has given us a spirit of power. The Greek word for power is *Dunamis*. It denotes great force, or energy, and is the term from which we get *dynamic* and *dynamite*. God provides us with His **power** in order for us to be effective in His service.

The Lord has also given us a spirit of love. The love we have from God is *agapē*, the volitional and selfless love that desires and works for the best interests of the one loved. It is not emotional and conditional, as *philos* (friendship love) love often is, and has nothing in common with *erōs* (romantic love) love, which is sensual and selfish. The love we have from God is constant. It does not share the ebb and flow or the unpredictability of those other loves. It is a self-denying grace that says to others, in effect, *"I will give myself away on your behalf."* Directed back to God, from whom it came, it says, *"I will give my life and everything I have to serve you."*

And God has also given us a spirit of self-discipline. The Greek word for self-discipline is *Sōphronismos*, It has the literal meaning of a secure and sound mind, but it also carries the additional idea of a self-controlled, disciplined, and properly prioritized mind. God-given **discipline** allows believers to control every element of their lives, whether positive or negative. It allows them to experience success without becoming proud and to suffer failure without becoming bitter or hopeless. The disciplined life is the divinely ordered life, in which godly wisdom is applied to every situation.

I memorized this verse on January 31, 1978. I was having a difficult time with my grades. Studying was not my strong suit. I'd much rather play. But the day I memorized this verse and allowed the power of God to flow through me, almost overnight, The Lord gave me all three of the resources above. From that point on, I never got

anything less than a B+ for a grade. There was a new found power to be bold and courageous for The Lord. And, God gave me an unconditional love for people. And God gave me the discipline to get some spiritual disciplines. He will do the same for you. Step out in faith today and memorize this verse. Today, ask The Lord to give you these three resources. Today, live out your faith as never before. This is part of the 10,000 hours you need to put in.



Saturday, July 18, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #48

1 Timothy 4:15-16 (NIV) ¹⁵ *Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.* ¹⁶ *Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

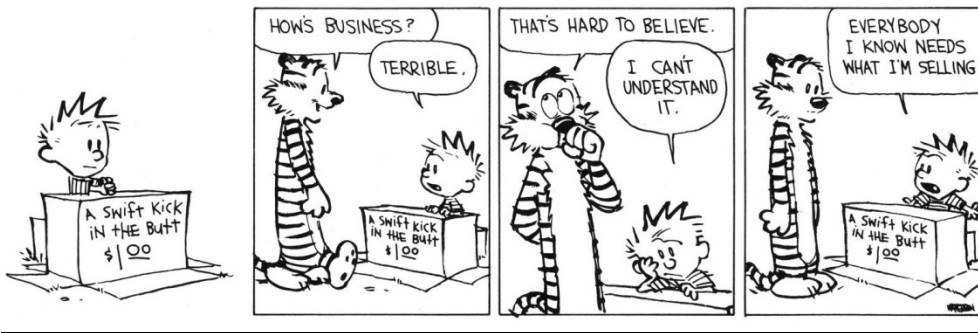
To know what matters we are to be diligent in, you have to read 1 Timothy 4:1-14. So, why don't you do that right now? What are the matters we are to be diligent in? Write them down and then ask yourself, "Am I giving myself wholly to them? In other words am I wholehearted in these matters?" Just find five "matters".

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

If not, why not? And here's the deal – when you become diligent about incorporating these matters from 1 Timothy 4 into your life, you grow spiritually. Paul says to Timothy "give yourself wholly to them (the matters of 1 Timothy 4:1-14), so that everyone may see your progress." So that everyone may see your progress – that's spiritual growth. And when you're growing spiritually, that rubs off in our church and in your family.

Spiritual growth is contagious. Listen, you can't be diligent about doing what God's Words says without committing the time. 10,000 hours. I know I keep pounding it. Absorb this. Schedule your day to make an hour a day available for the study of the God's word. And then slowly increase the time you invest in the Bible.

10,000 hours is 1,000 hours a year for 10 years. 1,000 hours a year is 2.74 hours a day. Are you getting the drift? Pay the price. Make the investment.



Sunday, July 19, 2015 · Summer Devotions Day #49

Proverbs 27:5-6 (ASV) ⁵ Better is open rebuke Than love that is hidden. ⁶ Faithful are the wounds of a friend; But the kisses of an enemy are profuse.

You might be asking yourself – “Why is Pastor Mike including this passage in our Summer Devotions?” Good question. We all need someone in our lives that will walk with us in this journey of faith, and we need those people to be straight shooters with us. No blowing “sweet nothings” our way. No telling us what we want to hear, but only what we need to hear.

God says, it’s better to have a friend who openly rebukes us than one who keeps the truth about us hidden. And the phrase – “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” – that doesn’t sound very pleasant – does it. What’s God saying? We need a select few people in our lives that are willing to wound us with the truth. And let me tell you, many times the truth wounds.

If we’re going to develop the faith of a mighty oak tree, we must have a friend who will speak truth in our lives. If we’re going to put in the 10,000 hours required to master God’s Word, we need some one in our life who will love us enough to push us and be direct with us. Read the story below.

Chris Adsit, Olympic runner tells this story: *Del Hessel was the new track coach at Colorado State University. I was a sophomore hurdler--and not a very good one. During our first one-to-one meeting he asked what my athletic goals were.*

I'd never thought about it before. My concept of college track was (1) show up for practice, (2) run some races, (3) if nobody's faster than you, you win! But I knew Coach Hessel wanted to hear more than that. So before I realized what I was saying, I told him, "I want to compete in the Olympics in the 400-meter hurdles."

From the moment I uttered those words, my relationship with Del Hessel went downhill. The theme of our association became: Kill Adsit. He began staying up late at night devising cruel ways to torture me.

He forced me to run in the mountains, lift heavy weights, sprint stadium stairs and do repeat quarter-miles. He made me go to sleep early and eat bad- tasting food. He demanded I jump thousands of hurdles. Through all this, he remained deaf to my pleas for mercy.

What prompted this onslaught? I'd simply shared a pleasant idea about the Olympics, and rather than applauding and saying nice things like, "Good luck, Chris--I'll pray for you!" He undertook a diabolical scheme of pain and torment.

Which was exactly what I needed and wanted. Del Hessel knew something about human nature: We all tend to search out the path of least resistance. On my own, I never would have worked hard enough to become a great athlete--or even an average one. But through his coaching, I became an All-American by my senior year. Not quite an Olympian, but close. And I hold Del Hessel in high esteem, because he was one of the few men in my life willing to take the initiative with me, hold me accountable, and push me toward my goals.

Who will be your Del Hessel? Who will be the life-long friend that will wound you with the truth?