

**Devotions – May 15-21, 2016**  
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**Sunday, May 15, 2016**

I Trust...

**Text: Romans 8:38**

*“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

These times are hard... harder than many of us have ever known. Interviews in the news with celebrities and our next door neighbors all seem to echo the same story. People have lost homes, jobs and retirement savings...we live in fear of terrorists and we still see the hungry and the homeless...and are often quick to say: “Without this, I have nothing.”

We have three golden retrievers now and have had six in our lifetime. You can learn a lot about the important things in life from dogs. Our dogs are loyal and they trust in us. They lean on us and depend on us. They have faith in our kindness and trust that we will give them a good life. Our dogs don't depend on the “things” of life, they trust “us”.

We have no control over the stock market, or the price of gas, but we do control where we place our trust. For too long, too many of us have believed that we have earned all of our “things” and we deserve them. All that we have are gifts from our God. Only He can know what we truly need. Feelings of fear, worry, doubt and greed only show us that we are not fully seeking and trusting God. Believe that nothing can separate us from God and His great love for us and you need nothing else.

Let us pray: *Dear God, I am yours and you are mine. I lean on you. You hold me. You give me hope...you give me faith...I trust. Amen.*



**Monday, May 16, 2016**

I Commit...

**Text: John 13:37-38**

*“Peter asked, “Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Then Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!”*

On a day to day basis, we promise to do many things. We have many commitments as husband and wife, as an employee, as a friend. We made a commitment when we agreed that we would write devotions for this week. Opportunities to commit pop up all the time and we have to be choosy, set priorities...or we will become overextended.

If you have ever had a dog, you have seen real commitment. A dog will lie at your feet, on your bed, near your chair...always at your side. A dog will lie on the grave of its owner until it is led away. When a dog has chosen you, he will be there for you and be fulfilled in loving you.

God made a commitment to us by sending His only Son. Can we make a commitment? Can we lay down our lives for our God? Can we seek prayer and study of scripture? Can we attend worship? Can we share our gifts...time, talents and money? Can we be disciples? So many of us will only commit what is left over... after other commitments are met. Thankfully, our God commits to us and doesn't give us what is left over.

Let us pray: *Dear God, You made a commitment to love me before I even came to be. You have shown your commitment throughout my life and promised me love beyond this life. You give me abundance...you give me fulfillment...I commit. Amen.*



**Tuesday, May 17, 2016**

I Wait...

**Text: 2 Peter 3:8-9**

*“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

Although we are all very busy, multitasking, running here, and hurrying there...we often find ourselves waiting. We wait in lines for our groceries, our medicines and our questions at the Social Security office. We wait for our phone calls to be answered by a real person. We wait at stoplights. We wait for our computers to catch up to what we write. We wait in line for our food at pot lucks. When it comes right down to it, we spend a lot of time simply waiting.

Have you ever thought of how much time a dog spends...waiting? Our dogs wait for us to get up in the morning and are ready to jump into bed and greet us with a lick. They wait for us to come home from work...they wait while we are out with friends. Dogs will wait: sometimes whimpering, sometimes howling, and sometimes barking. They wait through long night watches. They wait willingly...patiently!

God has given us a promise...Jesus will return. So we wait. We wait as days dawn and nights grow dark. We wait as seasons and years pass. We wait sometimes with patience and

sometimes not. We wait quietly...we wait loudly... we wait willingly...but always we are in His presence and always we must prepare for His presence.

Let us pray: *Dear God, You have given me the gift of waiting and time to prepare for your presence. You teach me patience and the joy of surprise. With body, mind and soul...I wait. Amen.*



**Wednesday, May 18, 2016**

I Give...

**Text: 2 Corinthians 8:7-8**

*“But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.”*

When you love someone, there is nothing that you will not give them. When you love, there is nothing that you hold back. You want to give your attention, your time...you want to provide for their every need. Refusal to give brings into question the sincerity of your love.

Dogs give! When you come home, they give you their full attention. When you need comfort, they lick your hand, lie near you and are still. When you are happy, they are happy. They will walk for miles if you will walk with them. They will walk for miles to be with you. They will give their lives to protect you. Dogs give!

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be. Giving is a response to Christ and directly reflects your devotion to Him. We are thankful for God’s gift of giving. We are grateful for knowing the feeling of sharing with others. We are not ordered or forced to give, but have found that the more that you can part with, the more you see God’s abundance.

Let us pray: *Dear God, You have filled me with your loving kindness. You have made me in your loving image. I respond with my time...my possessions...myself...I give. Amen.*



**Thursday, May 19, 2016**

I Hope...

**Text: Philippians 3:13-14**

*“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.”*

Life can be filled with regrets. Financial decisions, relationship choices, chances taken...things that haven't turned out as we planned. When we place our hope in the things of this world, we can be disappointed and discouraged. We become hopeless. When we place our hope in Christ, we realize that we are children of God. We are growing and maturing spiritually. As God perfects us, we do good deeds for Him.

When we think about our dogs, the old saying comes to mind: "Hope springs eternal." It is not that they always are deserving of a treat, or a hug, or a pat, or attention, but they always expect it. Our love and devotion to them...what they receive from us over and over again...leads them to be always expectant...always hopeful.

By placing our hope in Christ we can move beyond our regrets. We can forget what was behind us and move forward. We cannot perfect ourselves, but God is working in and through us. God has built the gift of hope into our world. There are new paths to follow and doors and windows that open to what is coming. We can expect and pray and hope!

Let us pray: *Dear God, You give to me again and again. It is not that I am deserving of your gifts, but you make me feel worthy. You spoil me...I know that there is more and more...I hope. Amen.*



**Friday, May 20, 2016**

I Forgive...

**Text: Romans 12:14-16a, 17-18**

*"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."*

Forgiveness is at the very heart of Christian living. When we love as Christ loves us, we find ourselves willing to forgive. When we experience the grace of God, we will find the need to pass that grace on to others. The key to grace and forgiveness is that it is not deserved. When you forgive, you do not condone or excuse the misdeeds of another, but you love the person in spite of his actions.

Dogs are always quick to forgive. They do not bargain. They don't make a deal. They forgive even if you harm, raise your voice, neglect or ignore. They always come back with a warm nuzzle of your hand and a wag of the tail. We are most often not deserving of such complete forgiveness, but dogs forgive.

In today's world of lawsuits and constant demands for legal rights, it sometimes seems impossible to forgive. However, carrying anger leaves no room for peace. There is strength in

forgiveness. Forgiveness brings relaxation to the mind. Forgiveness brings growth, truth and kindness. Right actions lead to right feelings.

Let us pray: *Dear God, tomorrow brings a new day. I will not let the sun go down with anger in my heart. I will not lay my head on the pillow as I hold onto a grudge. I am yours...you are mine...I forgive. Amen.*

**Saturday, May 21, 2016**



I Stray...

**Text: Luke 15:3-6**

*“Then Jesus told them this parable: ‘Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.”’*

The messages the world sends are often so tempting, so enticing. Wouldn't it be more fun to do what feels good at the moment...skip worship on Sunday morning and sleep in, keep our offering and spend it on ourselves, watch a movie instead of going to Bible study, spread that juicy gossip... It is so hard to walk the path of a Christian; to be a disciple.

Part of owning a dog is the work of keeping them safe. Dogs can so easily follow their noses on the trail of something so tempting and enticing that they fail to notice that they don't know where they are. They wander from the path that is familiar. And if they don't find their way back, we worry, we hunt, we call, and we post signs. We anguish until they are found. Yet when they are found, we know that they may stray again.

God has given us free will. He knows that we will stray. When we do, He will hunt for us. He knows every turn that we make and that we are lost. He knows that sometimes it takes us awhile and that we cannot always find our own way home. But he calls out to us. We hear His voice. And when we do come home, there is joy. What was lost is found!

Let us pray: *Dear God, I cannot always understand why I wander away. I can so easily become lost. I am sorry that I wander, but I know that I will wander again. I listen for your voice...I wait to be found...even though I want to be with You...I stray. Amen.*

