CBC WEEKLY RESOURCES

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"A True Word"

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
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SERMON RECAP

Pastor Mike Atkins called us back to the living presence of God. From Deuteronomy 4, he reminded us that Israel heard the voice of God “out of the midst of the fire,” and that this was not merely a historical moment to admire from a distance. God revealed Himself as the living God. The Christian faith is not meant to become a cold memorial to what God once did, but a present encounter with the God who still speaks, still saves, still delivers, and still transforms.

The heart of the message was a pastoral invitation: do not settle for secondhand faith. Like Israel at Sinai, we may be tempted to stand at a distance and ask someone else to go near the fire for us. But God invites His people to come close. Come near to hear His Word, receive His Spirit, and be changed by His love. A “true word” from God does not simply entertain, inspire, or inform. It comes from heaven, not earth; from the flame of God’s presence, not the flesh of human effort; from love, not obligation.

Practically, Pastor Mike encouraged us to bring our real bondages, fears, wounds, and weaknesses to the Lord. God does not merely forgive us and leave us to try harder in our own strength. He brings His people out of bondage and into freedom, out of weakness and into His strength, out of exile and into acceptance, out of the problem and into the promise. The living God still speaks through His living Word, and when His Spirit makes that Word alive in us, cold altars become places of holy fire.

II. STUDY GUIDE

Key Points

- A true word comes from heaven, not earth.
- A true word comes from the flame, not the flesh.
- A true word flows from God's love, not mere obligation.
- A true word brings us out in order to bring us in.

Key Scripture

Primary Sermon Text:

- Deuteronomy 4:30–39 — God reminds Israel that He spoke from the fire, delivered them from Egypt, chose them in love, and revealed that He alone is God.

Verses Mentioned or Clearly Alluded to by Pastor Mike:

- Deuteronomy 4:30–39 — The main passage.
- Exodus 3:14 — "I AM WHO I AM."
- Exodus 15:26 — "I am the LORD who heals you."
- Jeremiah 23:6 — "The LORD our righteousness."
- Judges 6:24 — "The LORD is peace."
- Exodus 17:15 — "The LORD is my banner."
- Song of Solomon 2:4 — "His banner over me was love."
- Genesis 22:14 — The Lord provides.
- Hebrews 13:8 — Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- Hebrews 4:12 — The Word of God is living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword.
- Acts 2:1–4 — The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost with tongues as of fire.

- Exodus 20:18–21 — Israel stood at a distance while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

- 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11 — Israel's story is written as an example for us.

- 1 Samuel 17:38–40, 45 — David rejected Saul's armor and came against Goliath in the name of the Lord.

- Matthew 10:30 / Luke 12:7 — God knows the hairs on our head.

- Psalm 139:4 — God knows our words before we speak them.

- Philippians 4:7 — The peace of God surpasses understanding.

- 1 Peter 1:3 — We are born again to a living hope.

- 1 Peter 1:8 — Joy inexpressible and full of glory.

- Hebrews 1:3 — Christ upholds all things by the word of His power.

- Genesis 1:2 — The Spirit of God hovered over the waters.

- Jeremiah 31:33 — God writes His law on His people's hearts.

Other Relevant Verses

- John 10:27 — "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

General thematic tie: This verse reinforces the sermon's emphasis that God's people are invited to hear His voice personally and respond in obedience.

- Romans 12:2 — "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind..."

General thematic tie: Pastor Mike emphasized transformation, not mere information. God's Word and Spirit renew how we think, desire, and live.

- 2 Timothy 3:16–17 — "All Scripture is breathed out by God..."

General thematic tie: This passage supports the sermon's call to receive Scripture as God's living Word, not merely religious literature.

III. DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

Day 1: A Word from Heaven

Reflection Question

Where am I most tempted to rely on human wisdom, popular sayings, or emotional instinct instead of the living Word of God?

Reading

- Deuteronomy 4:36 — “Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might instruct you.”
- Hebrews 4:12 — “For the word of God is living and active...”

Thought

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses is preparing Israel to live faithfully in the land God promised. He reminds them that their identity was not built on human philosophy, national strength, or cultural superiority. Israel existed because God spoke, God chose, God delivered, and God revealed Himself.

When Moses says God spoke “out of heaven,” he is highlighting the divine origin of God’s Word. This was not advice from earth. It was not the collected wisdom of ancient civilization. It was revelation from the Creator. Israel’s calling depended on receiving God’s voice as ultimate reality.

Pastor Mike warned that Christians can slowly begin living by “pithy sayings” instead of Scripture. Phrases may sound wise, comforting, or empowering, but if they do not come under the authority of God’s Word, they cannot lead us into life. “Follow your heart” sounds inspiring, but Scripture tells us our hearts need shepherding, cleansing, and renewal.

Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that God’s Word is not dead ink on a page. It is living and active because the living God speaks through it by His Spirit. A true word from God does not merely decorate our thoughts; it cuts, discerns, heals, exposes, and transforms.

Challenge

Before reaching for your phone, news, social media, or a podcast today, open Scripture first. Ask: “Lord, what word from heaven do You want to form in me today?”

Day 2: The Fire of His Presence

Reflection Question

Do I approach God's presence as something to admire from a distance or as the place where I am invited to be changed?

Reading

- Deuteronomy 4:33 — "Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire...?"

- Acts 2:3–4 — "Divided tongues as of fire appeared to them... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit..."

Thought

Fire appears throughout Scripture as a sign of God's holy presence. At Sinai, the mountain trembled, smoke rose, and God spoke from the fire. This was not meant to make God seem distant and cruel, but holy and real. Israel was learning that the God who rescued them was not an idol made by human hands. He was alive.

In Acts 2, fire appears again; not on a mountain, but over the followers of Jesus. The Spirit comes upon the church, and the people of God become living witnesses. The fire that once marked Sinai now marks Spirit-filled believers.

Pastor Mike pressed this point pastorally: Christianity is not meant to be a cold altar of memories. We do not gather merely to remember that God once moved, once healed, once delivered, or once spoke. We gather because the same God is present now.

But fire also changes what it touches. That is why we sometimes prefer distance. If we come near the presence of God, He may reorder our priorities, expose our idols, heal wounds we have protected, and call us into obedience we cannot control.

The fire of God is not safe in the sense of being manageable. But He is good. His holiness is not against His children; it is for our freedom.

Challenge

Spend several minutes in quiet prayer today. Do not begin with requests. Begin by inviting the Holy Spirit to make you aware of God's presence and to reveal anything He wants to transform.

Day 3: Loved Before Delivered

Reflection Question

Where do I need to receive the truth that God's work in my life begins with His love, not my performance?

Reading

- Deuteronomy 4:37 — "Because he loved your fathers... he brought you out of Egypt with his own presence..."

- 1 Peter 1:3 — "According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope..."

Thought

Deuteronomy 4 gives a powerful reason for Israel's deliverance: "Because he loved..." God did not rescue Israel because they were impressive, numerous, or morally superior. In fact, Deuteronomy repeatedly reminds Israel that God's covenant love came first.

This matters deeply. Many believers unconsciously relate to God as though His nearness must be earned. We imagine He moves toward us only when we have prayed enough, obeyed enough, or cleaned ourselves up enough. But the Exodus story tells a different story. God heard the cries of enslaved people and came down to deliver them.

Pastor Mike emphasized that God calls us to the flame because He loves us. The invitation into God's presence is not a religious obligation; it is the summons of a Father who knows what bondage has done to us and knows what His presence can restore in us.

First Peter says we are born again "according to his great mercy." That means our hope is not generated by willpower. It is given by resurrection. The Christian life begins, continues, and ends in grace.

If God's correction comes, it comes through love. If His Word pierces, it pierces to heal. If His fire burns, it burns away what keeps us in bondage.

Challenge

Write down one area where you feel unworthy to come near to God. Then write beside it: "Because He loves me, He invites me near."

Day 4: Out of Bondage, Into Freedom

Reflection Question

What bondage have I learned to tolerate that God may be calling me to bring into His presence?

Reading

- Deuteronomy 4:34 — “Did God ever try to go and take for himself a nation from the midst of another nation...?”

- 1 Corinthians 10:11 — “These things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction...”

Thought

The Exodus was a historical act of deliverance. Israel was truly enslaved in Egypt. Their oppression was physical, political, social, and spiritual. God’s rescue involved plagues, signs, wonders, judgment, Passover, the sea, and wilderness provision.

But the New Testament teaches us that Israel’s story also instructs the church. Paul says these events were written as examples for us. We are meant to see in Israel’s deliverance a picture of God’s power to free His people from sin, fear, idolatry, shame, and spiritual bondage.

Pastor Mike spoke personally and pastorally about bondage. His encouragement was not “try harder.” His message was that a true word from God, made alive by the Spirit, begins to break chains that human strength cannot break.

Some bondages are obvious. Others become familiar. We may learn to manage anxiety, bitterness, lust, resentment, insecurity, or despair rather than bring them into the light of God’s presence. But God did not deliver His people halfway. He brought them out with His presence and power.

Freedom is not pretending the bondage was never real. Freedom is discovering that God is more real, more powerful, and more present than what once held us.

Challenge

Name one bondage honestly before God today. Share it with a trusted believer, pastor, mentor, or small group leader if appropriate. Ask for prayer, accountability, and Spirit-led support.

Day 5: From the Problem to the Promise

Reflection Question

Am I only asking God to remove discomfort, or am I asking Him to lead me into the fullness of His promise?

Reading

- Deuteronomy 4:38 — “Driving out before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in...”
- Philippians 4:7 — “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Thought

God brought Israel out of Egypt, but Egypt was not the final goal. The wilderness was not the destination either. God brought His people out to bring them into covenant life.

Pastor Mike highlighted this beautifully: sometimes we only want God to get us out of the problem. We want relief from pain, pressure, fear, or conflict. God cares about those things, but His purpose is even deeper. He wants to bring us into promise.

In Deuteronomy 4, Israel is reminded that the nations ahead are “greater and mightier.” This is important. God does not deny that His people face enemies bigger than themselves. He simply reveals that no enemy is bigger than Him.

The Christian life is not merely survival. In Christ, God gives peace that surpasses understanding, joy inexpressible, and living hope. These are not shallow slogans. They are promises rooted in the presence of God.

God may remove a problem quickly, or He may walk us through a wilderness over time. But His purpose is not just to get us away from pain. His purpose is to bring us into deeper dependence, fuller freedom, and more visible witness.

Challenge

Ask God to show you the “promise” beyond the “problem.” What does faithfulness, healing, maturity, peace, or obedience look like on the other side?

IV. SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

Opening

Welcome everyone and briefly remind the group that Pastor Mike's message invited us to move from a cold, memorialized faith into a living encounter with God's presence through His Word and Spirit.

Begin with prayer by inviting the group to focus on these themes:

- Openness to God's living Word
- Humility before His holy presence
- Courage to bring real burdens and bondages into the light
- Faith to believe God still transforms lives today

Thematic Recap

Pastor Mike taught that a true word from God comes from heaven, not earth, and from the flame of God's presence, not merely human flesh or effort. He reminded us that God speaks because He loves His people and desires to bring them out of bondage and into freedom. The sermon called us to stop treating faith as a memorial to what God once did and to come near to the living God who still speaks and transforms today.

Sermon Highlights

- God revealed Himself to Israel by speaking from the fire.
- A true word from God is rooted in Scripture and made alive by the Holy Spirit.
- God's presence is holy, powerful, and transformative.
- We often prefer secondhand faith because God's presence cannot be controlled.
- God delivers us out of bondage in order to bring us into promise.
- The Christian life is not merely survival; it is life in the presence and power of God.

Icebreaker

Question:

When have you experienced something powerful in nature that made you feel awe? How might that sense of awe help us think rightly about the presence of God?

Scripture Exploration

Passage 1: Deuteronomy 4:30–39

Context:

Moses reminds Israel that no other nation had experienced what they experienced: God spoke to them, delivered them, chose them, and revealed Himself as the only true God.

Discussion Prompts

1. What phrases in this passage reveal God's power? Which reveal His mercy and love?

2. Why do you think Moses wanted Israel to remember that God spoke "out of the midst of the fire"?

3. Pastor Mike said a true word comes from heaven, not earth. How does this passage support that idea?

4. What does it mean that God brought Israel out of Egypt "with his presence and his mighty power"?

Passage 2: Hebrews 4:12–13

Context:

Hebrews presents God's Word as living, active, piercing, and discerning. Scripture does not merely give information; it exposes the heart before God.

Discussion Prompts

1. What does it mean that the Word of God is "living and active"?

2. Have you ever experienced Scripture exposing something in your heart? What was that like?

3. How can we approach the Bible as a place of encounter rather than merely information?

4. Why is it both uncomfortable and gracious that God's Word discerns "the thoughts and intentions of the heart"?

Passage 3: Acts 2:1–4

Context:

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fills the disciples, and tongues as of fire rest on them. God's presence empowers His people to become witnesses.

Discussion Prompts

1. What connections do you see between Sinai's fire and Pentecost's fire?

2. Why is it significant that the fire rested on each believer?

3. Pastor Mike said God does not want cold altars but living vessels. How does Acts 2 help us understand that?

4. How does the Holy Spirit empower believers today to live with courage, holiness, and witness?

Grand Synthesis Prompt

Looking at Deuteronomy 4, Hebrews 4, and Acts 2 together, how do we see God speaking, God exposing, and God empowering His people? What would it look like for our group to welcome all three?

Application: Growing in Personal and Communal Prayer

Personal Prayer Practices

- Begin with Scripture.

  Before presenting requests, read a short passage and ask, "Lord, what are You revealing about Yourself?"

- Invite the Holy Spirit's searchlight.

  Ask God to reveal motives, fears, wounds, or sins that need His healing and truth.

- Name bondage honestly.

  Bring specific struggles before God rather than praying only general prayers.

- Move from relief to promise.

  Ask not only, "God, get me out of this," but also, "God, what are You bringing me into?"

- Practice stillness.

  Make space to listen. God's voice will never contradict Scripture, but His Spirit often applies Scripture personally and specifically.

Communal Prayer Practices

- Pray Scripture together.

  Let the Bible shape the language and priorities of group prayer.

- Create space for honest needs.

  Encourage people to share real burdens without fear of shame.

- Pray for freedom, not just circumstances.

  Pray for healing, repentance, courage, deliverance, reconciliation, and renewed faith.

- Avoid fixing one another too quickly.

  Listen well. Pray faithfully. Let God do the deep work.

- Celebrate testimonies.

  Make room for people to share how God is speaking, healing, and transforming.

Closing

Prayer Needs

Take time to ask:

- Where do you need a true word from God?
- Where do you feel stuck in bondage, weakness, fear, or grief?
- Where do you need God to bring you out of a problem and into His promise?
- Who in your life needs to encounter the living presence of God?

Closing Prayer Prompt

Invite someone to close by praying around these themes:

- Thanking God that He is the living “I AM”
- Asking the Holy Spirit to make God’s Word alive in the group
- Bringing specific burdens and bondages before the Lord
- Asking God to move the group from cold memorial faith into fresh surrender and obedience
- Praying for CBC to be a people marked by Scripture, Spirit, freedom, and love

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Leader Notes

- Set a safe tone early.

  Remind the group that honest sharing is welcomed, but no one should feel pressured to disclose more than they are ready to share.

- Keep Scripture central.

  The sermon emphasized a true word from heaven. Let the Bible guide the conversation more than opinions or personal advice.

- Watch for “fixing” tendencies.

If someone shares a burden, help the group respond with compassion, prayer, and appropriate support rather than quick solutions.

- Encourage participation from quieter members.

Ask open-ended questions and allow silence. Sometimes people need time to gather their thoughts.

- Be pastorally aware.

If someone shares about addiction, abuse, self-harm, severe depression, or crisis, follow up with care and connect them with pastoral or professional help as appropriate.

- End with hope.

The goal is not to leave people exposed, but to bring them to the God who speaks from the fire, loves His people, and leads them into freedom.