

7 Ways to Turn Your Spiritual Fire Into a Mighty Blaze

How is your relationship with the Lord right now? Is it stoked or is it choked? Is the fire burning strong or only smoldering? Are you ablaze or amazed at the struggle? The reality is that every fire diminishes and eventually dies if not tended. A fire must be consistently maintained, or else it becomes nothing more than smoldering ashes. And, while it can be hard work getting the fire started, intentionality is necessary to keep the fire burning.

People cool off to their jobs, grow tired of their cars, houses and clothes. Too often, people grow cold in their relationships with family and friends. And marriages that began in the white-hot passion of true love can sadly become nothing more than embers struggling to survive.

Timothy's Struggle Is Our Struggle

This potential exists for each of us in every relationship we possess, including with Jesus and our passion for His purposes. It happened to the mighty apostle Paul's No. 1 son in the faith, and it can happen to any of us as well. Paul addresses the struggle his young protege is experiencing: "Remembering the genuine faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and that I am persuaded lives in you also. Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the laying on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:5-6).

Timothy struggled with intense intimidation from the surrounding culture. Ephesus was home to one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Temple of Artemis, where pagan worship was passionate, sensual and prosperous. Witchcraft abounded in the region, and persecution

increasingly became the norm toward Christianity. The two years Paul lived there were years of glorious revival and tremendous impact, but now Paul is in prison, and Timothy is struggling.

His fire is waning, and he needs help. Paul writes from prison and says, "You've got this if you do this!" He reminds him of the genuineness of His faith, his ordination and the gift released in his life. He says, "I am reminding you to keep constantly blazing the gift of God which is in you"(2 Tim. 1:6, Wuest).

7 Keys to Keeping the Fire Burning

To keep a blazing fire requires the intentionality of adding fuel and stoking the fire. No one falls into long term success. Here are a few practical steps to take to keep the fire burning strong in us:

1. Worship God.

As you worship, you bring your life into focus. Billy Joe Daugherty wrote, "You were born to live in worship just as fish were born to live in water." True worship creates the environment in which you were created to thrive. David said, "You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand, there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11). Notice the intentionality of David in Psalm 34:1, "I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

2. Pray.

I know it sounds simple, but it works. Real prayer is both practical and powerful. It isn't vomiting out to God what we want and hoping He will do it all. It is consistent communication with the Lord. Prayer is a two-way conversation that includes listening. Jesus said that it is necessary always to pray and that this faithful praying will keep us

from losing the fire (Luke 18:1).

Key to fueling and stoking the fire in you through prayer is the practice of praying in the Spirit. Jude wrote, "But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Pray in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 1:20). Paul says, "Pray in the Spirit always with all kinds of prayer and supplication" (Eph. 6:18). Learn how to engage the help of the Holy Spirit in your prayer life and enjoy refreshing.

3. Pray for Others.

As part of prayer, it is vital to get out of our world and into the world of others. Nehemiah experienced radical change personally and became an agent of change as he prayed for others (see Neh. 1:4). Isaiah prophesied, "if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall rise in obscurity, and your darkness shall become as the noonday. (Isa. 58:10).

I remember, in my early 20s, a time when I found myself discouraged almost to the point of depression. Looking back, it was a molehill of a battle, but at the time it seemed like Mt. Everest! Someone called, and I needed to go to the hospital and pray with someone. I didn't want to go. I wanted to stay at home, eat a half gallon of ice cream and watch T.V. But responsibility trumped feelings, so I dressed, drove to the hospital, found the room and did my best to be an instrument of God's healing. I don't know how much my prayers that day helped the patient, but as I left, my fire was burning bright again. Getting out of my world and into someone else's blessed them and stoked me!

4. Meditate on God's Word.

The Bible? Yes! If we want the fire to burn bright in us consistently, the Word must become the first priority and final authority in our lives. Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing. The words that I

speak to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). In a season of deep discouragement, Jeremiah wrote, "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones" (Jer. 20:9b).

At the death of Moses, the Lord gave Joshua the key to his success. "This Book of the Law must not depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night so that you may act carefully according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way successful, and you will be wise" (Josh. 1:8). If we want to keep the fire burning, we must learn and practice the power of reading, studying, meditating, praying and speaking the Word!

5. Associate with those who are passionate for Jesus.

Show me your closest associations, and I will show you your future. Jim Rohn said, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." If you want the fire blazing in your life, you must associate with those who are blazing. If you spend the bulk of your time with the lukewarm and comprised, you too will cool off. But time spent with hungry, thirsty true disciples of Christ will stoke the fire in you.

After being imprisoned and threatened, the apostles, "went to their own people and reported what the chief priests and elders had said to them" (Acts 4:23b). Their companions joined with them in prayer, and the Bible says, "When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). Choose your friends wisely—association matters.

6. Read and listen to those who possess the fire of God.

One way to associate with those who are on fire for the Lord is by reading and listening to them. The psalmist said, "Your testimonies are my delight and my counselors" (Ps. 119:24). It is amazing how their stories can inspire and educate us. "So that you may not be lazy, but imitators of those who through

faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12).

7. Put into consistent action what you know.

Belief informs action. We all practice what we genuinely believe. So, James writes, "Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). To only read and hear but not follow through with corresponding actions is to live in deception. Jesus said, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:17).

As we put these seven principles into practice in your daily life in a consistent way—the fire from heaven that burns in us will continue to flourish. This fire will move you to the fulfillment of God's purpose in you and through you for His glory! Stay stoked! {eoa}

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