

I Burn For You

How God—that all-consuming, living flame of love—shows His unrelenting desire for people

God's love is an intimidating topic to grasp because it is the very subject of God Himself. He is love, and everything He is and does is love. He is a vast, shoreless ocean of love, and we have only heard the mere whisper of His passion. As a student of His love I feel too small to even begin to try and describe Him. But on one aspect, I'll try.

As I began to study God's love I found one of the characteristics that motivates me the most is His unrelenting love. His pursuit of my heart and His burning desire for me has changed my life entirely. I remember when I first began to see the God of burning desire—it was revolutionary. I was in a Bible school class in Kansas City in which Mike Bickle taught on the Song of Solomon. I'd never heard God described as one who had burning desire or a ravished heart for people. I had never heard love defined like that.

I was 19 and would soon after be diagnosed with cancer, and it was the revelation I learned in that class about the God of unrelenting desire and passion that sustained me through the trial of cancer. I was so caught up in the divine pursuit of my heart that small things got smaller and the big things—the things that are eternal—grew bigger. I began to see Jesus as a bridegroom; meaning, He is abandoned and wholehearted in His love and desire for me and wants me to love Him in mutual, wholehearted abandonment.

In our culture today we often define love as a passive toleration or a momentary bliss. Occasionally we define love as blind devotion. But to peer into the mystery of God's love we must define love on His terms, not our own. How God defines love is how He defines Himself. In the unfolding of God we see

ourselves in the center of a love story so vast, so incomprehensible that it motivates us and propels us to respond to Him in the same extravagant way. We love because we are first loved (1 John 4:19).

In Song of Solomon 8:6, God is talking to His bride. He says to us: "Set Me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame" (NKJV). This one verse captures the core of who He is and what He wants from us. Moses saw God as an all-consuming fire (see Deut. 4:24) and His name as Jealous (see Ex. 34:13-15). There's nothing passive about these words. He is very involved and in pursuit of His people. He is merciful and gracious, yet He is ravished and jealous (see Song 4:9). He wants to be loved in the same way that He loves. That is the purpose of creation (see Deut. 6:4-5; Matt. 22:37-40). The first commandment is what He is after because it is how He is. Jesus wants an equally yoked bride, and the Father wants a family in the fellowship of His burning heart.

Solomon further describes love in chapter 8, verse 7: "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised" (NKJV). Jesus left His Father's house and became forever a human in order to win a people to Himself (see Eph 5:31-32).

There is no greater picture of that all-consuming fire than the image of Jesus on the cross. He was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world," which means He was selfless sacrificial love, burning with desire, poured out from eternity past; and this is who He will always be. He is love so unrelenting that it gives all for the object of His affection.

This is the way Jesus defined love—to lay down your life (see John 15:13)—and He is the same voice that was speaking in Song

of Solomon 8:6-7 and the same voice that spoke to Moses. Jesus embodies that all-consuming fire, and He demonstrated what lengths love would go to. He wants this same kind of response from us and He, Himself, searches our hearts to find it (see Rev. 2:23).

Not only did He die on the cross as the greatest expression of His burning desire for people, He will forever be a Man in union with those people. His Father has sent the Spirit as a guarantee of the wedding to come.

The Spirit is one of the greatest evidences of God's unrelenting pursuit of our hearts. No one can be as intimately involved in your life as the Holy Spirit is. He is living in that internal reservoir within you, and His goal is to pour love into your heart as Jesus described in John 14-17.

Every heart is a furnace and the purpose of this life is to become consumed with God in the same way He burns with love for us. Whenever there is something that hinders this love from consuming us entirely, in His great mercy, He convicts us until we volunteer to remove those things that get in the way. His Spirit of conviction is sure evidence that God is in unrelenting pursuit of our "all."

Life comes down to this: God wants us, pursues us, will not relent until He has all of us and will remove everything that gets in the way of love until we are one with that flame. This is what causes our lives to make sense in the midst of our trials and momentary, light afflictions. They are working in us this eternal weight of glory—the fire of God, which is His love.

Words are not sufficient to describe God, and it takes a lifetime of discovery to even scratch the surface; but one thing is certain: He is more eager to be known than we are to know, and He is aggressively pursuing us more than we pursue Him. He is in pursuit of our heart, soul, mind and strength,

and nothing will stop Him from possessing those who say yes to His Holy fire. For all of eternity we will be lost in that vast, shoreless ocean of love, and though we are only at the beginning, there is no greater exhilaration than the experience of this love. Words are not sufficient, but I pray that the “living flame of love” Himself would encounter us today with His unrelenting pursuit of our hearts.

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