

Don't Let This Cold World Put Out Your Spiritual Fire

I'm not a cold-weather guy so I didn't enjoy the snow we got this past Sunday in Georgia. Everyone here looks forward to the one-in-a-decade snowfall, but I dread it. I don't like ice on the roads, power outages, flight cancellations or the kind of highway pile-ups that were reported during winter storm Izzy.

I have friends in Minnesota, New England, the Dakotas and Canada who think nothing about annual snowstorms and freezing conditions. In fact, the low temperature this week in Minneapolis will be minus 13 degrees. For them, it's just a chance to put on more layers of clothing and enjoy skating or snowboarding. If I lived in those conditions, I'd seriously consider moving to Puerto Rico.

Whenever cold weather hits hard, I think about a passage in Paul's letter to the Romans. He told his followers that in order to please God, they needed to be "fervent in spirit" (NASB). The Greek word for "fervent," *zeo*, means "to boil with heat." We have a responsibility to stay hot for God no matter how cold our spiritual environment is.

But how do you stay hot for the Lord? How can you raise your spiritual temperature at a time when many people's faith has gone from lukewarm to freezing? Here are some steps you can take to reach the boiling point:

1. **Get back in the Word.** Spiritual zeal is kindled in your heart when you hear God speak through the pages of the Bible. I'm not talking about remotely reading daily devotionals with your eyes halfway open. When you desperately dig in the Scriptures to find truth, the Word will set your heart ablaze.

2. **Stoke the furnace of private prayer.** Fires don't last long if you don't regularly pile wood on the flames. You should guard your quiet time with God as if your life depended on it. You cannot survive spiritually without regular communion with the Lord. Oswald Chambers put it bluntly: "Prayer is the vital breath of the Christian; not the thing that makes him alive, but the evidence that he is alive."
3. **Praise God with abandon.** Sometimes discouragement, fear and anxiety can form icicles in our souls. The only way to melt them is to rejoice in the Lord. Are you going through an extended period of heaviness or disappointment? When you praise God with exuberance, new strength will arise. Make a decision that you will praise God in a more vocal, uninhibited way this year than ever before. If you need help praising God, put on your favorite praise music and turn up the volume.
4. **Break free from bad habits.** Paul told the Thessalonians, "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). Are you doing anything that is extinguishing the Spirit's flames in your life? Many Christians remain perpetually immature, unable to grow spiritually because they won't let go of lustful habits or harmful addictions. If you choose to live in bondage, you will never be hot for God.
5. **Get rid of your resentments.** Jesus said in the last days "most people's love will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12). Don't be a part of that cooling trend. Nothing puts out the flame of God's love faster than bitterness. Don't allow unforgiveness to freeze your soul. Guard your heart and deal with offenses quickly.
6. **Get in close fellowship.** Fires go out when the embers are far apart. But when you pull the coals close together, the flames return. This is why we should never

live the Christian life in seclusion. God called us to be in community. But make sure you are in a church that is on fire for God—because a dead church could put out what is left of your fire. If your church compromises God’s Word or ignores the Great Commission, you should find a new church home.

7. **Start using your spiritual gifts.** Real, spiritual passion is ignited when you serve others. Every Christian has a spiritual gift—and you are no exception. You must face your fears and stretch your faith as you begin to step out, but soon you will find there is no greater joy than being an instrument of the Holy Spirit to bless people. And when the oil of His anointing flows through you, your spiritual temperature will go up.
8. **Find a mentor.** I love to hang around zealous, passionate Christians because their heat directly affects mine. Sometimes I make appointments with them so I can glean from their wisdom and experience. You can be sure that when Elisha saw Elijah go to heaven in a fiery chariot, he was affected by the heat. Get as close as possible to those who are burning for God and you will be ignited.
9. **Share your faith.** There is nothing more exciting than leading a person to faith in Christ. Yet statistics show that 95% of Christians have never led one soul to salvation. I guarantee if you share the gospel with a neighbor, a co-worker, a server at a restaurant or a stranger on the subway, your spiritual temperature will instantly rise 30 degrees—and you will want to share with someone else.

In this new year, I encourage you to stoke your flame and let it blaze before men. This cold, dark world needs fervent Christians who have reached the boiling point of spiritual passion. {eoa}

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