

9 Ways to Raise Your Spiritual Temperature

I'm not a cold-weather guy. I live in central Florida, a land of flip-flops, shorts and water parks that stay open 365 days a year. Our average temperature in Orlando in January is 71 degrees. In the summer, a humid 95 is fine with me.

But I have friends in Minneapolis, Rochester, Philadelphia and Baltimore who endured the "polar vortex" of 2014. We haven't seen temperatures like that in more than two decades. It was minus 40 in Minnesota in early January. The mercury hit minus 13 in Milwaukee. It was so cold in Chicago (minus 16) that the polar bear at the Lincoln Park Zoo was moved indoors!

When this record-breaking deep freeze hit, I was reading the book of Romans—and Romans 12:11 jumped off the page. The apostle Paul 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 "on fire" 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, you will say, like the disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was ... explaining the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32). 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? You need to sing and shout! 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, play a recording by one of your favorite Christian artists and sing along.

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 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. I sometimes ask these firebrands to lay hands on me and pray. 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, in my opinion, than leading a person to faith in Christ. Yet statistics show that 95 percent of Christians have never led one soul to salvation. I guarantee if you step out of your timidity and 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 take your flame out from under a basket and let it blaze before men. This cold, dark world needs fervent Christians who have reached the boiling point of spiritual passion.

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