

What's the Thermostat Reading of Your Heart?

Just before the prophet Elisha died, he put the king of Israel to a test. Elisha told Joash to take a bow and arrows. Then he put his hands on Joash's hands and asked him to shoot an arrow out the window as a prophetic sign of God's coming victory over the enemy. "You will defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed them," Elisha promised (see 2 Kings 13:17).

But then Elisha tested Joash further. He told him to take some of the arrows and strike the ground. Following those orders, Joash half-heartedly tapped the ground three times and stopped, and Elisha got angry. "You should have struck it five or six times. Then you would have stricken Aram until you had finished them," Elisha said in verse 19. "Now you will strike Aram just three times."

Remember, Elisha is the prophet who wore the mantle of Elijah. He had watched the older prophet being carried into heaven in a fiery chariot. Elisha carried a double portion of the Holy Spirit. During his ministry he performed twice as many miracles as his powerful mentor. Elisha was full of spiritual zeal.

Elisha got angry with King Joash because he was apathetic. Joash lacked passion for the fight. He went through the religious motions that Elisha required of him, true, but he had no real fire in his heart. Perhaps ministry had just become a cold act of professional duty instead of a burning desire. And because he was lukewarm, Elisha said Joash wouldn't see a complete victory on the battlefield.

The moral of 2 Kings 13 is simple: Half-heartedness will deny you of success. The temperature of your heart will determine your outcome!

This story convicts me to the core every time I read it, because I know the Lord measures the temperature of my heart. He is looking for the blazing fire of the Spirit, but there are times when I allow fear, compromise, discouragement or weariness to quench my passion. What about you?

Paul told the Romans that Christians should be “fervent in spirit” (Rom. 12:11). The word for “fervent” in the Greek, *zeo*, can mean “to be white hot, or to boil.” The same word is used to describe Elijah’s “fervent” prayer life in James 5:17. God doesn’t want us to be lukewarm and spiritually passive. He wants us to be so enthusiastic and excited about His kingdom that we set spiritual fires wherever we go.

I’m not talking about hype or fleshly excitement. We have plenty of that today. True spiritual zeal isn’t measured by the volume of a preacher’s voice, or by how high you jump in church. Many Christians have learned how to put on a show of fake zeal.

But let’s also remember that the word “enthusiasm” comes from the root words “possessed by God.” When someone is really filled with the Holy Spirit, the passion inside them will manifest in words and actions. They will become louder, bolder, more intent on fulfilling God’s mission, more sincere in their love for others and more aggressive about sharing the gospel.

Holy zeal moved Jesus to throw the merchants out of the temple. Today zeal moves us to pray, preach, give to the poor, fund missionary work and love the lost people around us. Yet when we lose our zeal we become inactive pew-sitters. When our fire cools off we lose interest in God’s Word, neglect prayer, compromise with sin and seek out preachers who are just as cool as we are—because we don’t want our lukewarm hearts to be confronted.

Would you allow the Lord to check your internal thermostat

today? How hot is your zeal?

–Have you lost your desire to spend time with God daily? If your Bible has been collecting dust and your prayer life has grown cold, you’ve lost your zeal.

–Has it been a long time since you shared your faith with someone else? If the Holy Spirit is not flowing out of you to touch others, your zeal has grown cold.

–Have you allowed compromising sins to regularly distract you? Have you become addicted to worldly habits that are sapping your spiritual strength? The devil wants to replace your passion for God with sinful desires. Beware of his traps!

–Have you allowed resentment to turn down the temperature of your love? Nothing will freeze your heart faster than bitterness.

–Have you been overcome by discouragement, worry or spiritual weariness? Sometimes our zeal wanes because we need a fresh encounter with God’s presence. Give Him your fears, your frustrations and your anxieties and ask the Holy Spirit to blow on the coals of your heart. Enlist others to pray for you. He will renew your strength and your zeal!

Don’t let your hot zeal cool off. Be fervent. Stoke the fires of your spiritual passion with God’s Word and prayer. Don’t just go through the motions. Take your arrows and smash them forcefully on the ground six times. Be filled with the Holy Ghost so you can be a serious threat to spiritual darkness.
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