



## **Becoming a Fire Starter**

### **Learning how to get on fire, stay on fire, and spread the fire of the Lord!**

#### **Acknowledgments**

First, I would like to thank all the people who prayed for the success of this book. Thanks to Pastor Tim Stege for helping me edit. Finally, thanks and God bless to all who support Soldiers for God Ministry so this book could be produced.

#### **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for giving me the wisdom and knowledge to write what He has shown me through my walk with Him. Thank you, Jesus, for saving me and setting me on fire with the baptism of Your Holy Spirit.

#### **Introduction**

What is a fire starter? A fire starter is a person who is on fire for God and helps others catch on fire for God as well.

What does it mean to be on fire for God? It means to be totally consumed by God's presence in your life—where it's all about Him and nothing else matters except pleasing God through your words and deeds and helping others do the same.

Are you hungering for the fire of God in your life? Are you striving to be zealous for and obedient to His Word? If so, get ready to be set on fire by the Holy Spirit and to stay on fire by reading and applying the truth in this book. Because there is one thing you don't want to happen: getting on fire for God and then letting the fire die down.

Many say someone is on fire for God only to find out later that person fell back into old ways—even worse than before. Others claim to be on fire, but when trials or temptations come, they fall back into a sinful lifestyle and are left with only a memory of when they used to be on fire for God. Why is this happening in the church today?

This book will answer that and show you how to get on fire for God, stay on fire for God, and spread the fire to others for the glory of God.

**The Author's Testimony** For fifteen years I attended church off and on. I went through the motions and even sang in the choir; but outside of church I was a different person. I physically abused my wife, cheated on her, treated my kids horribly, ran five crooked businesses, and was filled with pride and anger. I was violent, fighting anyone who gave me attitude—once I pushed my own father through a wall. I was a scammer, liar, thief, and adulterer who partied several times a week, getting drunk out of my mind. My wife was a fortune teller and I often conspired with her to con customers.

The worst part is I thought I was a Christian because I went to church and put a little money in the offering. I looked at people in church and said, "Man, I want what they have." I didn't understand. I went to church. I believed in Jesus. So why wasn't I excited like they were? Why couldn't I enter into worship like they did? Why didn't I have their zeal? Why wasn't I on fire for God like them?

One day, in October 2004, I began to realize why. My mother-in-law came to town and said, "Anthony, you can go to church, pray, fast, and sing in the choir, but if you are not in the Word of God, it is all meaningless."

She gave me a Bible bookstore address and told me to buy a Bible. I listened because she preached Christianity with her mouth shut—she lived it. I treated her daughter horribly, but she never argued with me or spoke negatively to me; she prayed for me. That day I bought my first Bible, a New Living Translation—an easy-to-understand, read-the-Bible-in-a-year edition.

I started reading in the Gospel of John, and within days I realized I wasn't a Christian. If I had died, I would have gone to hell (Galatians 5:19). I also realized God's grace and love for me and for the world (John 3:16), and why I wasn't like those passionately on fire for God: my sinful lifestyle and my unwillingness to obey His Word.

I read the Bible every day and finished the whole Bible in one year. In that year God delivered me from pride, anger, bitterness, adultery, lust, drinking, smoking, slander, gossip, lying, scamming, witchcraft, and cheating. I shut down all the crooked businesses.

That year I started hosting Bible studies in my basement. In 2004 we began with about 15 people. We were set on fire—it was like the day of Pentecost! Since then, through 2011, it has grown into a full-blown ministry with the Church of God. The denomination gave us a building—the church I grew up in. I am now the pastor of the church I grew up in. Only God can do that.

My point is this: God can change anyone who is willing to be changed. Jesus said, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). If God can change me, He can change anyone. If you allow the Holy Spirit to move in your life through the Word of God in this book, you will be set on fire by God and your life will never be the same.

John the Baptist said, "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11).

I am going to teach you from the Word of God how to be baptized by fire so you can become a fire starter in your family, among your friends, and in your ministry.

## **Chapter 1: When God Answers with Fire**

When you look at the story of Cain and Abel, you see the first offerings to the Lord. There were two offerings, but only one was acceptable to God.

Genesis 4:3–8 "After some time, Cain brought some of his harvest and gave it as an offering to the Lord. Then Abel brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep, killed it, and gave the best parts of it as an offering. The Lord was pleased with Abel and his offering, but he rejected Cain and his offering. Cain became furious, and he scowled in anger.

"Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling; but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it.'

"Then Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out in the fields.' When they were out in the fields, Cain turned on his brother and killed him."

The Difference Between Cain and Abel Cain brought some of his harvest; Abel brought the best he had. One was a farmer, the other a shepherd—each brought from his labor, but one gave the best while the other gave merely some. Why didn't God accept Cain's? One reason may be that God had cursed the ground because Adam disobeyed God's Word.

Genesis 3:17 "And he said to the man, 'You listened to your wife and ate the fruit

which I told you not to eat. Because of what you have done, the ground will be under a curse. You will have to work hard all your life to make it produce enough food for you."

This is like us today. We try to give God some of our lives but not all—and not the best. Incomplete obedience is total disobedience. Then we, like Cain, get upset at God and others because we aren't receiving blessings or being used, and we say, "I don't understand why God is doing this to me," or, "Why is that person getting blessed and I'm not?"

Could it be you're not giving your all to the Lord? Cain gave something from the cursed ground, and God didn't accept it. You cannot live a life of disobedience like I did before being born again and expect God to answer your prayers, bless you, and set you on fire. The Bible says when you live in disobedience you fall under the curse (Deuteronomy 28:15–20). You might say Jesus took all the curses (Galatians 3:13). He did—but if you're not abiding in Jesus, living for Him, and obeying Him, you disqualify yourself from those benefits (John 15). Like Cain, you open the door to Satan (Genesis 4:7) and allow him to destroy you. You end up living a cursed, miserable, angry life because of disobedience.

Look what God says through the apostle Paul:

Romans 12:1–2 "So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect."

**The Meaning of Living Sacrifice** When you brought a sacrifice to the temple, the priest would cut the animal's neck—there was no going back. To present yourself as a living sacrifice means to die to self daily, constantly crucifying the flesh and not giving in to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16–17).

When you live like that, you will know God's will and be pleasing to Him, and He will accept your offering—your reasonable act of service.

What does this have to do with fire? In the Old Testament, the priests burned the sacrifice on the altar. Before the tabernacle or temple, God accepted offerings by sending fire from heaven to consume them. Some theologians believe Cain knew God didn't accept his offering because no fire fell, while fire did fall for Abel's offering.

**Biblical Examples of God's Fire**

**Gideon, the Mighty Man of Valor** In Judges, God called Gideon to face Israel's

enemies. Though fearful and doubtful at first, he realized God was with him and presented an offering.

Judges 6:19–22 "So Gideon went into his house and cooked a young goat and used a bushel of flour to make bread without any yeast. He put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, brought them to the Lord's angel under the oak tree, and gave them to him.

"The angel told him, 'Put the meat and the bread on this rock, and pour the broth over them.' Gideon did so. "Then the Lord's angel reached out and touched the meat and the bread with the end of the stick he was holding. Fire came out of the rock and burned up the meat and the bread. Then the angel disappeared.

"Gideon then realized that it was the Lord's angel he had seen, and he said in terror, 'Sovereign Lord! I have seen your angel face-to-face!'"  
God accepted his offering with fire.

Elijah, the Powerful Man of God Israel was worshiping Baal, a supposed god of increase. Like Israel, we can believe we must do our own thing to be provided for—scamming, stealing, and conniving, which is idolatry. We worship money. But Jesus said we cannot serve both God and money. The Israelites should have remembered one of God's names: Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord our Provider (Genesis 22:14). Remember that name before you bow to money.

Elijah challenged Jezebel's 450 prophets of Baal to a showdown to see who is the true God.

1 Kings 18:21–24 "Elijah went up to the people and said, 'How much longer will it take you to make up your minds? If the Lord is God, worship him; but if Baal is God, worship him!' But the people didn't say a word.

"Then Elijah said, 'I am the only prophet of the Lord still left, but there are 450 prophets of Baal. Bring two bulls; let the prophets of Baal take one, kill it, cut it in pieces, and put it on the wood—but don't light the fire. I will do the same with the other bull. Then let the prophets of Baal pray to their god, and I will pray to the Lord, and the one who answers by sending fire—he is God.' The people shouted their approval."

Read the whole chapter—it's powerful. Elijah told them, "You build an altar; I'll build an altar; the true God will answer by fire." The Baal prophets prayed, danced, cut themselves, and shouted—nothing happened. Then Elijah called the people near:

1 Kings 18:30–39 "Then Elijah said to the people, 'Come closer to me,' and they all gathered around him. He set about repairing the altar of the Lord which had been

torn down. He took twelve stones, one for each of the twelve tribes named for the sons of Jacob, the man to whom the Lord had given the name Israel. "With these stones he rebuilt the altar for the worship of the Lord. He dug a trench around it, large enough to hold about four gallons of water.

"Then he placed the wood on the altar, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, 'Fill four jars with water and pour it on the offering and the wood.' They did so, and he said, 'Do it again'—and they did. 'Do it once more,' he said—and they did. The water ran down around the altar and filled the trench.

"At the hour of the afternoon sacrifice the prophet Elijah approached the altar and prayed, 'O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove now that you are the God of Israel and that I am your servant and have done all this at your command. Answer me, Lord, answer me, so that this people will know that you, the Lord, are God and that you are bringing them back to yourself.'

"The Lord sent fire down, and it burned up the sacrifice, the wood, and the stones, scorched the earth, and dried up the water in the trench.

"When the people saw this, they fell face-down and exclaimed, 'The Lord is God; the Lord alone is God!'" Elijah rebuilt the altar of the Lord. It's not only about praying, dancing, and shouting—it's about rebuilding what God wanted from the beginning: a life laid down, sacrificed to Him. When you do that, people will notice God's fire in your life and return to the Lord, just as in the story. They also seized the false prophets and killed them. It's time to stand out like Elijah. God hasn't called us to blend in but to stand out. When you do, God will answer with fire.

King Solomon finished building the temple of the Lord and dedicated it. In chapter 6 he prayed that God would dwell there, help His people, hear their prayers, and when they sinned and repented, forgive and restore them.

2 Chronicles 7:1–5 "When King Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and burned up the sacrifices that had been offered, and the dazzling light of the Lord's presence filled the Temple. Because the Temple was full of the dazzling light, the priests could not enter it.

"When the people of Israel saw the fire fall from heaven and the light fill the Temple, they fell face downward on the pavement, worshiping God and praising him for his goodness and his eternal love. Then Solomon and all the people offered sacrifices to the Lord. He sacrificed 22,000 head of cattle and 120,000 sheep as fellowship offerings. And so he and all the people dedicated the Temple."

If you keep reading, the altar wasn't big enough to hold all the sacrifices, so they used the temple courts.

Here's what we need to realize: Solomon's temple no longer stands, but we are the

temple of God.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 “Don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and who was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourselves but to God; he bought you for a price. So use your bodies for God’s glory.”

There is no longer a Levitical priesthood to take our sacrifices, but the Bible says we are a royal priesthood.

1 Peter 2:9–10 “But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”

We Are the Complete Worship System There’s no more bringing animal sacrifices to a temple because Jesus Christ is the supreme offering to God. As Christ was a sacrifice, we should live sacrificially because we are the sacrifice:

Romans 12:1 “So then, my friends, because of God’s great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer.”

So we are the temple, the priest, and the sacrifice. We are the whole worship system. Where is the fire? There is no true worship without fire. Like Solomon, we should see fire—God’s presence—fill our temples. When Solomon presented his offering, God accepted it with fire.

Conclusion In the stories of Abel, Gideon, Elijah, and Solomon, their lives were pleasing to God; He accepted their offerings and answered with fire. When your life is not pleasing to God, you will not see His fire and praise in your life. So ask yourself: Am I pleasing to God?

If you say no—praise God—you’re reading the right book. If you apply what you read, you will be set on fire by God’s presence and become a fire starter. If you don’t apply it, you’ll live like Cain—unaccepted, destroyed by the enemy, angry and jealous of those on fire for God, and full of regret. It’s time to live the life God called you to live—accepted, redeemed, set free, and blessed.

To a true Christian, it shouldn’t be a choice. Read the next chapter and I’ll explain.

## **Chapter 2 It’s Fire or Nothing!**

Jesus said something that really amazed me. First, in Luke 12 He talks about whom

we should fear—not man, but God, who has the authority to throw you in hell. Then He tells a story about a man who made life all about his possessions and didn't acknowledge God; God required his soul one night, and he wasn't ready. Jesus goes on to say not to worry about the things of the world—please God and He will add to your life. He continues: if He comes back and faithful servants are serving Him, they'll be rewarded; if He comes back and the servants are unfaithful, they'll be punished. Then He says:

"I came to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism to receive, and how distressed I am until it is over! Do you suppose that I came to bring peace to the world? No, not peace, but division. From now on a family of five will be divided, three against two and two against three." (Luke 12:49–52)

Jesus came to set the world on fire. Look at the context: hell; a person living for himself; faithful servants rewarded; unfaithful servants punished; and a rebuke of hypocrisy. It's simple—Jesus came to bring fire to the earth so we won't have to face hell's fire. In our homes today there are people on fire for God and people who are not willing to fully submit to God. That is the division He spoke of.

Consider the definitions of kindled:

- To set on fire; to cause to burn with flame; to light
- To inflame, as the passions; to rouse; to provoke; to excite to action

Jesus said in John 8:12: "Jesus spoke to the Pharisees again. 'I am the light of the world,' he said. 'Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness.'" He is the Light—and the source of light then was fire.

Jesus also said in Matthew 5:14–16: "You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead it is put on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven." We are meant to be light—fire.

Remember what John the Baptist said in Matthew 3:11: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." This was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit filled the place where they were meeting:

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1–4)



Water baptism is an outward declaration of our faith. The baptism Jesus is truly concerned with in your life is the baptism of fire.

Jesus said in Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Thayer's definition for power (dunamis) in Acts 1:8:

- Strength, power, ability
- Inherent power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature
- Power for performing miracles

Strong's definition (dunamis): force, ability, abundance, might, miracle(s), power, strength, mighty (wonderful) work. Dunamis is where we get the English word dynamite—an explosive powerful enough to level mountains and buildings and change the atmosphere wherever it's used.

If God is truly in our lives, there should be evidence of change.

Picture a paper napkin and a lit candle. If you put the napkin into the candle's flame, what happens? The napkin is set on fire, and several things happen:

- The napkin changes—from a napkin to ashes.
- The napkin gives off light because it's on fire.
- The napkin gives off heat; it's warm around it.
- The fire spreads from one end of the napkin to the other.

Now ask yourself these four questions:

1. Is my life completely changed because of Christ? "Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)
2. Am I shining my light as a good witness for Jesus? "The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him." (John 1:7) Like John the Baptist, we are to bear witness to the Light—Jesus—by shining our light.
3. Am I showing love for people—do I have a warm heart toward others? "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal." (1 Corinthians 13:1) If you have no love, you have no Jesus.
4. Am I spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do I go out of my way to share Jesus with others? "He said to them, 'Go throughout the whole

world and preach the gospel to all people.'" (Mark 16:15)

If you're not doing these things, you are not on fire for Jesus. If you're not serving Jesus, you're working against Him. "Anyone who is not for me is really against me; anyone who does not help me gather is really scattering." (Matthew 12:30)

If you are not a new person in Christ, not shining your light, not loving Christ by obeying Him and loving His people, not helping and ministering the gospel—you are not baptized with fire. If you want to be effective for Jesus, it's time to seek the baptism of fire.

The Laodicean church in Asia Minor thought they had everything: a booming city, a big congregation, lots of money. Jesus sent them this message:

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: This is the message from the Amen, the faithful and true witness, who is the origin of all that God has created. I know what you have done; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. How I wish you were either one or the other! But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am going to spit you out of my mouth!" (Revelation 3:14–16)

Many misunderstand this. They say, "I can't be hot, so I'll be cold. I won't try to go to church or read the Bible or pray because I don't want to be a hypocrite. I don't want to be lukewarm." When Jesus said, "I wish you were either hot or cold," cold represents a nonbeliever; hot represents someone on fire for God. Believers don't have the option of being cold; we can be hot or lukewarm—claiming Christ but living like an unbeliever.

Why would Jesus wish they were either hot or cold? Why not just hot? Because if they were nonbelievers, God could send someone on fire for Jesus to show them a true witness. That's why Jesus introduces Himself as the Faithful and True Witness (Revelation 3:14). Too many live like hell expecting to go to heaven. People from the world come to church and see lukewarm "Christians" and think that's normal Christianity—especially with sugarcoated preaching that doesn't present the full gospel. This is why people don't understand God's judgment.

Jesus says because you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth. In Laodicea they had a water problem and built an aqueduct to bring water from six miles away. It entered the system ice cold, but after six miles under the desert sun, it arrived lukewarm—disgusting. Jesus was saying, "The same way that lukewarm water disgusts you, your lifestyle disgusts me." If Jesus spits us out of His mouth, we're cast out of His presence.

Here's a scripture that changed my life:

"People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. They worship idols, (practice witchcraft), hate others, and are

hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well. I told you before, and I am telling you again: No one who does these things will enter God's kingdom. God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. There is no law against behaving in any of these ways. And because we belong to Christ Jesus, we have killed our selfish feelings and desires. God's Spirit has given us life, and so we should follow the Spirit." (Galatians 5:19–25)

"Practice witchcraft" in the Greek includes drugs and fortune-telling. I was going to church doing most of these sins. If I had died, I would have gone straight to hell—cast out of God's presence. I was lukewarm.

Go over Galatians 5 and see if you're dealing with any of those sins. We should show the fruit of the Spirit, not the works of the flesh. How do we get fruit? You need seed. The Bible is the seed that brings forth the fruit of the Spirit of God. I started reading in 2004 and never stopped. The Word of God is the fuel for the fire. We'll talk more about that next chapter.

Should we want the fire of God in our lives? More than want it—we should seek it. We should urge others to seek it. It should be our mission to get on fire for God, stay on fire for God, and spread the fire of God. Without the fire of God:

- There is no freedom from bondage, because where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.
- There is no true joy, because in His presence is fullness of joy.
- There is no heaven for those who refuse the Spirit's work, because without pleasing God on earth, you will not serve Him in heaven.

That's why this chapter is called "It's Fire or Nothing!" If you recognize your need for the baptism of the Holy Spirit with fire, get ready to learn how to receive it from God's Word in the rest of this book. We will look at seven things believers need to get on fire and stay on fire for God:

1. The Word of God
2. Eyes free from lust
3. Strength to get through trials
4. Prayer
5. Fasting
6. Fellowship
7. Time devoted to witnessing

## **Chapter 3: Fuel for the Fire**

I was in the east coast in May of 2011 on a six day crusade, and on one of those days I was scheduled to preach in Washington, D.C., for a pastor friend of mine, Pastor Frank. I was actually going to preach a sermon on how to get on fire for God, and on the way there my van ran out of gas. I was so frustrated; we were only blocks from the church when it ran out of gas. The church service had to start without us, we were 30 minutes late. I was upset at one of my guys that was on the trip with me because he was driving and he didn't pay attention to the gas gauge. I start walking in frustration, and then God ministered to me and said, "I'm going to use this in the sermon tonight so calm down." So I did; we got some gas and went to church and the fire of God fell on that place like I haven't seen in a long time!

The point God gave me about the gas is this: to have fire you need fuel. You're responsible to make sure you have the fuel. No one else is to blame, you have to constantly watch your spiritual gauge and can never allow yourself to run out because you might be close to where God wants you, but it's not about being close it's about being right on for the glory of God! Don't get me wrong, I'm a person who runs out of gas a lot. I just don't pay attention or sometimes I think I can stretch the gas longer than it can go. We will not be perfect in this life with God, but God sure does want us to try. The word perfect in the Greek means "mature"; it is time to grow up and put gas in the car and make sure it never gets low.

What is the fuel? The Word of God! Jesus said in Matthew 4:4: "The Scripture says, 'Human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks.' " Like my mother-in-law told me, "you can pray, go to church, fast and be in the choir, but if you're not in the Word of God it's all for no reason!" You need to realize the Word is seed. 1 Peter 1:23 says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Jesus said in John 3:3: "You must be born again to SEE the kingdom of God," and in John 3:5 Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot ENTER into the kingdom of God." The water in this text represents the Word as well so when you get seed and water something is going to grow! It produces the fruit of the Spirit! "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). Then you will SEE God's Kingdom move in your life here and then when it's all done you will ENTER God's kingdom in Heaven later.

Look what the book of 1 John says in chapter 3, verses eight and nine: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Jesus the Word was

manifested to us for this very reason, to destroy the devil and to bring forth the Word of God for us so we can have fuel to be on fire for God!

Sometimes you see people and they look like they are on fire for God but then the fire dies down. Why is this? The answer is found in In Luke chapter eight. Jesus gave an illustration about a man that sowed some seed on four different types of ground, then later He explained the story to the disciples more clearly. This is what He said: "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light." Luke 8:11-16

So the reasons why people start to look like they're on fire for God then die out are because: one, their hearts are hardened; two, they have no Word in their daily life, only in church (they have no root in themselves, that's why when temptation comes they are too weak to fight it off); and three, those who are worried about the cares and riches and pleasures of this world. Notice the person that had the good ground received the seed and produced fruit (see Gal. 5:22), then right after that Jesus talks about the sower and the seed He immediately starts talking about a lit candle being displayed, not hidden. He says in Luke 8:16, "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light."

The Word is the Fuel for the FIRE so all can see!

I love this quote from John Wesley: "If we get on fire for God people will come watch us burn." That is what it is all about, showing God's glory! This quote reminds me of a story about Moses. In the book of Exodus chapter three Moses, after forty years of being gone from Egypt, gets called by God to help bring His people out of bondage and slavery. The way God did it is what amazes me. Moses is tending His father-in-law's sheep when something happened... One day while Moses was taking care of the sheep and goats of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, he led the flock across the desert and came to Sinai, the holy mountain. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him as a flame coming from the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was on fire but that it was not burning up. "This is strange," he thought. "Why isn't the bush burning up? I will go closer and see." When the LORD saw that Moses was coming closer, he called to

him from the middle of the bush and said, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Yes, here I am." (Exodus 3:1-4)

Moses probably saw many burning bushes in the desert but there was something strange about this bush—it wasn't burning out! So Moses gets curious. He never saw a bush on fire that did not burn out, so he leaves what he is doing to check it out. When He gets there it is the Lord Himself! The LORD gives Moses a mission to go back to Egypt and bring the people out of bondage.

I want to connect it to the church. People have seen their share of burnouts in the church, but when people start hearing and seeing people on fire for God that don't burn out but keep on burning for the Lord what will happen is people will stop what they are doing to talk to you. They will stop what they're doing and they will come to your church. They will see the light from the fire in you and your ministry and they will be drawn to you to hear what you have to say (Moses' name actually means drawn out), what your church leader has to say, and when they do they will get a Word from you because when you are on fire for God you will always have a Word. Jeremiah said (see Jeremiah 20:9 ) "But when I say, 'I will forget the LORD and no longer speak in his name,' then your message is like a fire burning deep within me. I try my best to hold it in, but can no longer keep it back."

When they get this Word they need for their life they might be stubborn at first. Moses was hesitant to go, but God kept on encouraging Him. He finally gave in and accepted the mission that forever changed his life and helped millions of Hebrews be delivered from the hands of the Egyptians and the bondage they were in. In the book of Jeremiah it says, "My message is like a fire and like a hammer that breaks rocks in pieces" (Jeremiah 23:29). This is our mission as well—to be fired up for God so people can come watch us burn, so that they can see the hope in God in our lives through our testimony, so they can be delivered from the bondage of the world and set on fire as well! Remember, we are the bush, God is in the center. He's the source of the fire. The Gospel of John says Jesus is the Word and the Word came down and dwelt among us (John 1) so when you have the fuel always in the center you'll always be on fire!

Moses' right hand guy was Joshua. After Moses died and Joshua took over the leadership position, God told Joshua something that is actually what I live by as well: "Be sure that the book of the Law is always read in your worship. Study it day and night, and make sure that you obey everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Remember that I have commanded you to be determined and confident! Do not be afraid or discouraged, for I, the LORD your God, am with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:8-9)

It is time to get in the Word every day—then you will be successful and prosperous. Jesus told the people in John 8:31-32: "If you keep on obeying what I

have said, you truly are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." If you keep on continuing in the truth and obeying it you'll be set free. People don't continue in the Word, that's why they are still in bondage. Psalm 1:1-3 says: "Happy are those who reject the advice of evil people, who do not follow the example of sinners or join those who have no use for God. Instead, they find joy in obeying the Law of the LORD, and they study it day and night. They are like trees that grow beside a stream, that bear fruit at the right time, and whose leaves do not dry up. They succeed in everything they do."

The word of God gets you through your trials and makes you succeed when you're in it every day.

This chapter should have taught you the Word of God is your fuel for the Fire of God and this fuel allows you to destroy the work of the enemy (Matt. 4:4), makes you successful and prosperous (Josh. 1:8), it sets you free (John 8:31-32), it gets you through trials and tribulations (Psalm 1:1-3), it makes you produce fruit (Gal. 5:22), it's the fuel for the fire of God (Luke 8:16), and most importantly it makes you born again (1 Peter 1:23).

Show me a person on fire for God and I will show you a person that is in the Word!

If you read three chapters a day and four chapters on Sunday, you will read the Bible in one year! Start in the book of John then go right around. Since 2004 until now (June 2011) I have read the entire Bible three times and the New Testament over 10 times. I'm presently going through the Bible again for the fourth time, reading a Bible with a commentary edition, reading one chapter and all the commentary with that chapter. Why am I telling you this? Because I need to fuel up everyday to keep the fire of God strong in my life. I need my daily bread. However you plan to read the Bible, just start reading the Bible.

There might be people who cannot read in your family; tell them the Bible is available on CD, DVD and mp3 nowadays, so they can still get in the Word! You might say I don't understand the Bible, what's the use? Let me tell you a story that I found on the Internet one day; this is exactly how I read it:

There was an old man that lived in the mountains of eastern Kentucky. The old man had a big family. One day one of the old man's grandsons approached him with a problem. The Grandson said, "Pap, I read the Bible and I don't understand it, and what I understand I forget as soon as I close the Bible covers. What's the use of reading the Bible!" The Grandfather ordered the grandson to get the basket they used to carry the heating coal into the house and run down to the river and bring back a basket of water to the house. To please his grandfather, the lad grabbed the basket, ran to the river and got a basket of water. The lad ran back to the house with the water. By the time the lad reached the house the basket was

empty.

The grandfather chided the young boy, "Hurry and go bring me a basket of water. DO IT NOW!" The lad ran quickly from the river. The basket was full when he left the river, but by the time he arrived at the house the basket of water was dry. After his third trip, the boy told his granddad, "It is no use, I cannot retain the water in the basket until I get here. It is useless." The grandfather looked at the disgusted young boy and said, "So you think it is useless?" "Yes! Pap it is useless to try!" the boy replied. The Grandfather said to the boy, "BUT LOOK AT THE BASKET, CAN'T YOU SEE SOMETHING?" THE SMALL BOY WAS AMAZED, AFTER THREE TRIPS TO THE RIVER, THE DIRTY COAL BASKET WAS CLEAN. Pap said, "See, that is what the Word of God does to you. As you read, you say you don't retain and understand it, it's no use but your basket is cleaned. THE WORD OF GOD DOES THE WORK OF GOD!"

Ephesians 5:26: "That he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word." Don't focus on what you don't understand in the Bible. Focus instead on what you do understand, and apply that. In time, the Holy Spirit will lead you into deeper truths, and you will continually understand more as you grow deeper in the Lord.

Always remember: Keep fueling up and you will keep burning up!

## **Chapter 4 Keep Your Eyes on the Fire**

When you hear the names King David, King Solomon, and Samson, what comes to mind? Mighty men of God, famous men of God, good-looking men of God? All of that is true. But they share one more thing in common: they all fell to the lust of the eyes.

King David was known as a shepherd, an armor-bearer, a poet, a prophet, the ultimate king, a warrior, and a man after God's own heart. King Solomon was known as the wisest, richest, most famous king; he built the temple of the Lord and saw fire come down from heaven. He saw God twice in visions and was so loved by the Lord that God gave him another name—Jedidiah—which means "beloved of Jehovah." Then there was Samson, one of Israel's most famous judges, the strongest man who ever lived. What happened to these mighty men beloved by God?

King David fell for Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:3). King Solomon fell for hundreds of pagan women whom God strictly forbade—he had 1,000 women altogether, including wives and concubines—and he even burned incense to his wives' false gods (1 Kings 11:7–9). Samson fell for Delilah and other pagan women (Judges 16:6).



The quickest way the fire is extinguished in believers' lives is falling to the lust of the eyes.

Remember from the previous chapter that the fuel for the fire is the Word. Every one of these men heard the voice of God and knew the Word of God. King David said, "I have hidden thy Word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119). The point is, they stopped looking to the Word for help; they didn't look to the Word for strength; they stopped obeying the Word of the Lord. And they all paid the consequences for their sin.

David's consequences included the death of three of his children and the rape of his daughter by her half-brother; his own son also lay with his concubines in broad daylight (2 Samuel 12:1–23). For Solomon, one consequence was the division of the kingdom into a northern and a southern kingdom (1 Kings 11:11–13). Samson's consequence was being beaten, mocked by the enemy, and having his eyes gouged out (Judges 16:21).

Even when we repent and receive God's mercy and grace, sometimes our sins still have a negative impact on our lives (2 Samuel 12:12–13). God forgives and forgets the sin, but some consequences do not go away. I want to show you why they all fell into the lust of the eyes by looking at a story Nathan the prophet told King David to illustrate his sin. It is found in 2 Samuel 12:1–10:

"The Lord sent the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan went to him and said, 'There were two men who lived in the same town; one was rich and the other poor. The rich man had many cattle and sheep, while the poor man had only one lamb, which he had bought. He took care of it, and it grew up in his home with his children. He would feed it some of his own food, let it drink from his cup, and hold it in his lap. The lamb was like a daughter to him.

"'One day a visitor arrived at the rich man's home. The rich man didn't want to kill one of his own animals to fix a meal for him; instead, he took the poor man's lamb and prepared a meal for his guest.'

"David became very angry at the rich man and said, 'I swear by the living Lord that the man who did this ought to die! For having done such a cruel thing, he must pay back four times as much as he took.' "'You are that man,' Nathan said to David. 'And this is what the Lord God of Israel says: I made you king of Israel and rescued you from Saul. I gave you his kingdom and his wives; I made you king over Israel and Judah. If this had not been enough, I would have given you twice as much. Why, then, have you disobeyed my commands? Why did you do this evil thing? You had Uriah killed in battle; you let the Ammonites kill him, and then you took his wife! Now, in every generation some of your descendants will die a violent death because you have disobeyed me and have taken Uriah's wife.'"

The “visitor” in the story is the devil. He wants to come to your house to destroy you by making you lazy and leading you to lust. When David fell into the lust of the eyes, he was supposed to be on the battlefield fighting with his soldiers, but he stayed home and saw Bathsheba taking a bath (2 Samuel 11). That sin gave birth to more sin. He had Bathsheba’s husband Uriah killed to cover up his sin of a love child and to take Bathsheba as his wife.

When you fall into the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, you “kill Uriah” in your life. What do I mean? Uriah, in Hebrew, means “the fire of Jehovah.” When you take your eyes off God’s fire and put them where they shouldn’t be, you end up killing the fire of God in your life.

Look at the first sin in the garden in Genesis 3:

“The woman saw how beautiful the tree was and how good its fruit would be to eat, and she thought how wonderful it would be to become wise. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, and he also ate it.” (Genesis 3:6)

Satan came as a snake and deceived Eve by first getting her to lust with her eyes for the fruit. Then, after she lusted with her eyes, she lusted in the flesh, saying it would be good to eat. Third, she wanted to be wise like God—the pride of life. Every sin in the world falls into one of these three categories: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life. It always starts with the lust of the eyes.

“I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know him who is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2:14–17)

The Word is the key—not only reading it or saying amen to it, but actually holding onto it. Don’t let it go; if you do, you’ll extinguish the fire in your life. If you hold on, you will overcome the evil one. Let’s learn from these mighty men. They fell; let’s learn from their mistakes so we won’t repeat them. The only way we can overcome where they failed is by listening to the Word of God and to the convicting and leading power of the Holy Spirit.

Here are some verses to meditate on as we seek to remain free from the corrupting power of lustful thoughts:

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27–28) "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." (James 4:4)

"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone." (James 1:13)

"Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes." (Proverbs 6:25)

"My child, pay attention and listen to my wisdom and insight. Then you will know how to behave properly, and your words will show that you have knowledge. The lips of another man's wife may be as sweet as honey and her kisses as smooth as olive oil, but when it is all over, she leaves you nothing but bitterness and pain. She will take you down to the world of the dead; the road she walks is the road to death. She does not stay on the road to life; but wanders off, and does not realize what is happening. Now listen to me, sons, and never forget what I am saying. Keep away from such a woman! Don't even go near her door! If you do, others will gain the respect that you once had, and you will die young at the hands of merciless people. Yes, strangers will take all your wealth, and what you have worked for will belong to someone else. You will lie groaning on your deathbed, your flesh and muscles being eaten away, and you will say, 'Why would I never learn? Why would I never let anyone correct me? I wouldn't listen to my teachers. I paid no attention to them. And suddenly I found myself publicly disgraced.' Be faithful to your own wife and give your love to her alone. Children that you have by other women will do you no good." (Proverbs 5:1–16)

Satan wants not only to kill the fire in your life by the lust of the eyes but also to have you spend eternity in the fires of hell. What do I mean? "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness ... they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19, 21). The Greek word for "fornication" here is *porneia*—the root of our English word "pornography."

According to a CBS special, at several major hotel chains—Hilton, Marriott, Hyatt, Sheraton, and Holiday Inn—50 percent of guests view adult films on in-room pay-per-view television systems. Fifty percent. Another report notes that hotel adult rentals increase during ministry conventions. That means some pastors are viewing hotel adult movies at a higher rate than the general public. This is one reason fire has been missing in some churches: leaders have fallen to the lust of the eyes. You might say you don't watch dirty movies...

Jesus said:

"If your hand or foot causes you to sin, chop it off and throw it away! You would be better off to go into life crippled or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into the fire that never goes out. If your eye causes you to sin, poke it out and get rid of it. You would be better off to go into life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fires of hell." (Matthew 18:8–9)

Even if the movie isn't an adult film—say it's rated R with a racy scene—it can still cause you to lust. Do what Jesus said: cut it out. He didn't mean literally cut off your hand or foot or pluck out your eye. He means if anything is causing you to sin, remove it from your life. Don't set yourself up to fail. If cable is a problem, cut it off. If the Internet is a problem, cut it off or put blocks on it.

I personally don't watch anything over PG-13; sometimes I can't even watch those. You might say that's overdoing it. Ask yourself: How badly do you want the fire of God in your life? I love what Job said:

"I have made a solemn promise never to look with lust at a woman." (Job 31:1 I've made that same covenant with God. I will not lust after a woman because I want the fire of God more than the fire of passion and lust.

You can fight it off by the power of Christ Jesus. In Matthew 4, Satan tempted Jesus with the same categories as Adam and Eve: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Where the first man, Adam, failed, the second Adam, Jesus, succeeded (1 Corinthians 15:47). Jesus overcame by quoting Scripture from Deuteronomy 6 and 8. Deuteronomy means "repeat the word." That's exactly what Jesus did in every temptation. He openly quoted the Word of God and defeated the enemy—to show us how to overcome temptation.

When I'm tempted, I ask God to help me, and He does. I also quote Scriptures like Romans 6: "I am not a slave to sin anymore," or Isaiah 54:17: "No weapon formed against you will prosper." Jesus didn't "think" Satan away; He openly rebuked him by verbally quoting Scripture. If you do this and ask for His help, He will help you. "God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out" (1 Corinthians 10:13). That way out is Jesus. Also, don't set yourself up to fail. If you're tempted by someone or something, don't put yourself around them and don't give in or watch it.

Jesus said something that woke me up to keeping my eyes on the fire of God. This Scripture shows that if we set our eyes on the darkness of the world, we will kill the light—the fire—of God in our lives:

"No one lights a lamp and then hides it or puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where its light can be seen by all who enter the house.

"Your eye is a lamp that provides light [FIRE] for your body. When your eye is

good, your whole body is filled with light [FIRE]. But when it is bad, your body is filled with darkness. Make sure that the light you think you have is not actually darkness. If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight were filling you with light." (Luke 11:33–36, NLT)

Here's the takeaway: when your eyes are on God—God is good (Mark 10), and Jesus is the Light (John 8:12)—your whole life will be consumed with God's presence, and the fire of God will be evident in your life for all to see, like a floodlight. Floodlights come on during storms and blackouts—during darkness. You will be used to help people come out of the darkness of the world and to encourage those going through trials when you keep your eyes on the fire and don't hide anything from God—no dark corners—and allow Him to move in every area of your life.

Just make sure the light (fire) you think you have is not actually darkness. What do light and darkness have in common? Nothing.

If you keep your eyes on the fire, you'll be something special for God.

## **Chapter 5: Tested by Fire**

"And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." (Mark 9:47–50, KJV)

The Good News Translation renders Mark 9:49 this way: "Everyone will be purified (tested) by fire as a sacrifice is purified by salt."

In these verses Jesus first warns about what we let our eyes look upon, then He moves to how a believer is tested. We just discussed guarding our eyes in the previous chapter; now let's look at how believers are tested by God's fire for His glory.

Why are believers tested in the first place?

"Be glad about this, even though it may now be necessary for you to be sad for a while because of the many kinds of trials you suffer. Their purpose is to prove that your faith is genuine. Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure. Then you will receive praise and glory and honor on the Day when Jesus Christ is revealed." (1 Peter 1:6–7)

The Greek word for trials here is *peirasmos*. Thayer's definitions include:

trial, proving integrity, virtue, constancy adversity, affliction, trouble sent by God

and serving to test or prove one's character, faith, and holiness  
In Mark 9, Jesus also speaks of salt—our witness for Christ.

Why must a person be tested? So our witness shines. As Peter says, just as gold is tested by fire to purify it, our lives before God must be purified. The more fire, the more purity is revealed—in the gold and in us. The result is integrity, virtue, faith, and holiness. God wants you to be the real deal. Too many so-called Christians bless the Lord when all is well, but bail when things get hard, and that's why the fire burns out in their lives.

Luke 8 describes it perfectly: "The seeds that fell on rocky ground stand for those who hear the message and receive it gladly. But it does not sink deep into them; they believe only for a while, but when the time of testing comes, they fall away."  
(Luke 8:13)

We need to embrace the fire, not run from it. The book of Malachi gives us an awesome example:

"But who can abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness."  
(Malachi 3:2–3)

Notice it says He will "sit" as a refiner. A refiner sits to ensure two things happen. First, he uses a screen-like tool to skim away dross (impurities) as heat brings them to the surface, setting apart what is bad from what is good. When the fires of trial rise in your life, words may come out that shouldn't, thoughts may arise that aren't right, actions or habits may surface that aren't pleasing to God.

He wants you to see them, bring them to Him, and let Him remove them so you can live a sanctified life.

Second, the refiner sits to make sure the gold or silver isn't ruined. "If you think you are standing firm you had better be careful that you do not fall. Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out." (1 Corinthians 10:12–13)

God does not want you to fail. He wants you to succeed, and He will help you.

"Israel, the Lord who created you says, Do not be afraid—I will save you. I have called you by name—you are mine. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; the hard trials that come will not hurt you." (Isaiah 43:1–2)

You might say, I've been tested too much. Keep believing and waiting—God will get you through. But make sure it's a test and not discipline. Many confuse the two:

they commit adultery, lie, cheat, live according to the flesh, and then say, "I'm going through some trials." No—that's discipline. Repent, and God will stop the discipline.

"For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters: but if a man suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." (1 Peter 4:15–16)

Here's a story that brings the refiner's picture to life:

There was a group of women in a Bible study on Malachi. As they studied chapter 3, they came across verse 3: "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." The statement puzzled them. One woman offered to find out more about refining silver and report back.

She visited a silversmith and watched him at work. Without explaining her reason, she observed as he held a piece of silver over the fire, letting it heat up. He explained that to refine silver, he must hold it in the middle of the fire where the flames are hottest to burn away all impurities.

She thought about God holding us in such a hot spot—and then about the verse that says He sits as a refiner. She asked if he really had to sit the entire time the silver was in the fire. "Yes," he said. He not only had to sit and hold the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on it the whole time. If left even a moment too long, the silver would be destroyed.

She asked, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" He smiled: "Oh, that's easy—when I see my image in it."

This is especially meaningful for those in the hottest part of the flame right now. God's eyes are fixed on those He is refining. Nothing in your life goes unnoticed by the Father. He is aware of all—and He is for you. Jesus will allow strong fires of testing until He—and everyone else—sees His image, His character, in your life. There's a story in Daniel that shows people seeing Jesus in your life through trials. Three Hebrew men were carried to Babylon and taught its ways. The king made a golden idol and commanded all to bow when the music sounded. The three refused, because it was against God's law. Summoned before the king, they still would not bow. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego said:

"O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." In fury, the king ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter and had the three bound and thrown in. The fire was so hot it killed the men who threw them in. But then:

"Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered, "True, O king." He said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods." Then he called them out, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came forth from the fire. (Daniel 3:16–26, selections)

They came out unharmed and loosed. The only thing that burned was the ropes—and the ones who threw them in. When you go through a test of fire without bowing to the world or giving in to the enemy—even if God doesn't change the situation—and you can say like they did, "Even if God doesn't deliver me, I will not give in, I will not let go, I will not bow," then the only thing that will burn are the bondages that tried to hold you. The enemy won't touch you because you submitted to God through testing by fire. You will go through the fire without being burned. And like the refiner's fire, people will see Jesus in you. The people saw a visitation of Jesus in the middle of the fire, protecting them with His holy fire.

Many don't realize that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego's Hebrew names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (see Daniel 2:17). Hananiah means "favor," Mishael means "like God," and Azariah means "the Lord helps." The king gave them Babylonian names after Babylon's gods. Their character stood firm. They had God's favor—right after they came out, the king promoted them. He also declared that no other god could save like the God of the Hebrews. God helped them—and because of this, people saw the Son of God in their lives.

Another reason God allows tests of fire is to promote you. Don't be discouraged—your setback might be a set-up.

Here is the biggest test I've gone through. In August 2005, I received a call that my mother was brain-dead in the hospital, and people said her husband did it. I flew to New York. I saw my mother full of tubes, with cuts and scrapes on her arms and neck. I remembered two weeks earlier she told me, "Anthony, this man is going to kill me; he put a knife to my throat and cut me." I was looking at those scars. She had asked me for money, and I had said no because I was upset she stayed with him, even though I warned her.

I prayed and fasted for days, asking God for strength not to lose it, because her husband was at the hospital the whole time. One day he came into the room. I stood up, and God put such peace on me. He talked about praying to some saint, and I told him the only way to the Father is Jesus. As days passed, God worked on me. One day, reading Jeremiah—"vengeance is the Lord's"—I knew what God wanted me to do.

Days later my family decided to remove life support. God gave me peace about it. The doctors said there was no way she would recover, even though I knew God could raise the dead. If it was His will, He could have raised my mother.



I told them to take the machines off. If it was God's will for her to live, the machine wouldn't stop it. The Lord's will came to pass, and He took her to heaven. Shortly after, we buried her, and God gave me grace to forgive and forget. I told her husband I wasn't crazy—I knew he did it—but I shook his hand and forgave him by God's grace.

You might ask how I know he killed my mother. My wife's aunt was married to his son. When my wife asked her aunt what happened, she said, "I can't tell you because they will kill me too." He had been accused of more than one murder and never charged. The Bible says God directs government officials (Romans 13:1) and that vengeance is the Lord's. I would rather he be transformed and serve Christ—like Saul, who persecuted Christians but turned to Jesus and became Paul the apostle (Acts 9). Whatever God has planned for him, I pray for mercy on his soul.

God gave me strength to get through the test. If you remember my testimony, I was very angry. I fought anyone who gave me attitude. I beat my wife and even threw my father through a wall. But in Christ, the old is gone and the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). If God got me through that test, He can get you through yours.

I believe God used that time to purify me from rage and anger. The enemy still tries to attack me with anger sometimes, but I give it to the Sanctifier, who purifies me more and more through tests of fire.

God also turned that test into a testimony. I wrote a book about it—How God Moves—about how God moved during that trial. The book ended up in the hands of a young girl whose mother was also murdered. She held unforgiveness toward the killer, was upset at God, and had stopped going to church. Someone from a church where I used to do outreach in Indianapolis gave her the book. She read it, and praise God, she returned to church.

Some say, "I don't want to become a Christian because I'll be broke." That's a lie from Satan. If He does pull your wealth, it's either because you made money your god or because He wants you to show you will serve Him no matter what, like Job—and like Job, if you remain faithful, you'll be blessed double. Others say, "I'll go through too much." God allows trials, but they are for our good. I'd rather go through hard things with God than without Him. God allowed me to go through a lot because otherwise I couldn't minister and connect with people in their pain. You can't give what you don't have. Get through the tests, and God will turn your test into a testimony—there's glory in the stories of God's people.

I'll close with this: I recently learned my mother had a dream in August 2003. In it, she stood in a huge room full of stained glass with a bright light she couldn't look at shining through—she said the light looked like silver. She saw many people

rushing to an open wooden doorway with no door, people from all nations. She rushed to go through too, but a woman at a desk stopped her: "Where are you going?" "Through the door," my mother said. The woman opened a huge book, searched the pages, and said, "Your name's not in the book." My mother asked, "Why does my name need to be in the book to go through the doorway?" The woman replied, "You have two years to turn Christian; then your name will be in this book and you can go through the doorway." Then my mother woke up. Two years later, in August 2005, my mother died. Praise God, she made heaven.

Why mention the dream? She saw the light—God, a consuming fire. Why did the light look silver? I studied this. Our fires shine orange, blue, and purple because of impurities. But a fire without impurities shines bright white—like silver. Each test of fire you pass purifies you. The more purified you are, the more you shine like Jesus.

As John Maxwell said, "Don't allow the fire of adversity to make you a skeptic.

Allow it to purify you."

## **Chapter 6 The Consuming Fire**

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:28–29)

I want to spend this chapter on the importance of prayer. Jesus said, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing." (John 15:4–5) The psalmist adds, "But it is good for me to draw near unto God: I have made the Lord Jehovah my refuge, that I may tell of all thy works." (Psalm 73:28) These verses show we must draw near—and stay near—to our Savior. Only then will our lives have lasting significance.

Because God is a consuming fire, the more we abide in Him and draw near to Him, the more our lives will be set on fire and our character will become like Christ. One meaning of consume is to waste away or be exhausted. As we remain in His presence, the old nature slowly wastes away, and we become new in Christ.

Key Scriptures on prayer:

- "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." (Philippians 4:6)

- "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." (Colossians 4:2)
- "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18)
- "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:1–4)
- "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing." (1 Timothy 2:8)
- "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)
- "But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord." (James 1:6–7)
- "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." (James 4:3)
- "Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (James 5:13–16)

Now listen closely to Jesus in Matthew 6:5–12: "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be

heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.'"

Three times Jesus says, "When you pray." He expects us to pray. Not "if" you get around to it—but when you pray. It should be normal in a Christian's life, as it was for Jesus. His favorite place was the Mount of Olives. Don't just want to pray in public or on request; do what Jesus said—go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father. Notice He didn't say, "God will hear you." He said, "Your Father... will see you." He will see your dedication and your hunger to be consumed by His fire, and He will reward you.

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."  
(Hebrews 11:6)

The Greek word for diligently is *ekzēteō*, meaning:

- to seek out, search for, investigate
- to seek for oneself; to beg, crave
- to demand back, require

As you seek God's presence and investigate His Word—who He is and all He promises—you will begin to crave His fire, and you will require it by spending time with Him, like Moses did:

"And Moses went up into the mount, and the cloud covered the mount. And the glory of Jehovah abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the appearance of the glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights." (Exodus 24:15–18)

The Hebrew word for devouring here is *'akal*—"to eat, devour, burn up, consume." Like Moses, when we spend time with God, we are consumed by His fire and learn to hear His voice clearly so we can minister properly. Moses stayed forty days and forty nights—the number forty in Scripture often points to life change. Our lives change when we develop a life of prayer.

In 2007 I toured Israel, with a day in Athens. I stood on Mars Hill (Acts 17), visited Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the Sea of Galilee where Jesus walked on water, called His disciples, and delivered the demoniac. We worshiped at the Garden Tomb and I

was baptized in the Jordan River. I even stood on the Mount of Olives—Jesus' favorite place to pray.

People ask, "Did you feel different—closer to God?" It was a dream come true and deeply moving. But the strongest I ever felt God's presence wasn't in Israel. It was when I first got serious about Christ—when I shut down my crooked businesses, let go of the nice cars, and stopped scamming. I went broke. One day, oppressed and hopeless, with no money for the mortgage and no plan, I went into my office, shut the door, dropped to my knees, and cried, "God, please help me." As I lifted my hands, it felt like a thousand pounds lifted off my chest. I stayed there about seven hours—reading the Word, worshiping, and soaking in His presence—when a fragrance filled the room, like roses and cedar. My wife came in asking if I was burning incense. I wasn't. She returned with my mother-in-law; when she entered, her knees buckled and she said, "God is here." She added, "God's presence smells like this; Satan smells like garbage." Jesus called hell Gehenna—the garbage dump of His day.

God's Shekinah glory filled that office. You don't have to go to Israel to experience God's presence. Do what Jesus said: go to your room and shut the door. When you pray, He will see you. He will take the garbage and fill your life with His glory—His fire—if you let Him.

Develop a daily prayer time. We expect 100% from God—do we give Him even 1% of our day? One percent of a day is about 15 minutes. Do you spend at least that much with Him? Many want everything from God but won't give Him even that. Then they wonder why they're not on fire. Start spending time with God—not only in the prayer closet, but while driving, walking, working. Talk to Him. Fill your mind and heart with God, and you will be filled with God. You will never be consumed by His fire if you don't draw near to the consuming God.

On that 2007 tour, our guide told us about leading Neil Armstrong—the first man on the moon—to a site in Jerusalem that's unquestionably from Jesus' time. Standing in that same spot, he said Armstrong was like a kid in a candy store. Then Neil said, "For me to know I'm walking where my Lord Jesus Christ walked is better than me ever walking on the moon." His greatest earthly achievement couldn't compare to being where Jesus had been. That is a heart on fire for God.

Remember Chapter 1—when God answers with fire.

When you are on fire for God, He answers by fire. When an evil king sent men to arrest Elijah: "Then he sent an officer with fifty men to get Elijah. The officer found him sitting on a hill and said to him, 'Man of God, the king orders you to come down.' 'If I am a man of God,' Elijah answered, 'may fire come down from heaven and kill you and your men!' At once fire came down and killed the officer and his men." (2 Kings 1:9–10)

Prayer is spiritual warfare. God sends fire to destroy the enemy's works that hinder

your life.

Consider this: the earth's circumference is about 25,000 miles; the speed of light is about 186,282 miles per second. God is light, and His angels are often accompanied by light. When the church prayed for Peter, an angel appeared and "a light shone in the cell" (Acts 12:7). When Elisha prayed for his servant, "The Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." (2 Kings 6:17) If God is light and His angels are associated with light, then at the speed of light an angel could circle the earth more than seven times and still stand by your side in one second. Pray. I pray as Elisha did—may your eyes be opened to the fire of God.

Nothing you can do or achieve will ever compare to the presence of our consuming God.

## **Chapter 7 Fasting for Fire**

"And when you fast, do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites do. They neglect their appearance so that everyone will see that they are fasting. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. When you go without food, wash your face and comb your hair, so that others cannot know that you are fasting—only your Father, who is unseen, will know. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you." (Matthew 6:16–18)

Jesus expects us to pray—and He also expects us to fast. He said, "When you fast." Prayer and fasting go hand in hand. Jesus also said:

"Then the followers of John the Baptist came to Jesus, asking, 'Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples don't fast at all?' Jesus answered, 'Do you expect the guests at a wedding party to be sad as long as the bridegroom is with them? Of course not! But the day will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.'" (Matthew 9:14–15)

Fasting means to abstain from food (to "cover the mouth"). Some people also set aside TV, radio, or negative inputs—that's helpful self-denial, but biblical fasting is abstaining from food so you deny the flesh and feed the Spirit by spending time with God, becoming more sensitive to His voice and leading. Elijah fasted forty days and heard the still, small voice of God (1 Kings 19:12).

Fasting is not twisting God's arm to get what you want; it is bringing your body into discipline to find out what God wants for your life. In Exodus, Moses went up the mountain fasting forty days to receive God's will for His people:

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Write these words down, because it is on the basis of

these words that I am making a covenant with you and with Israel.' Moses stayed there with the Lord forty days and nights, eating and drinking nothing. He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments. When Moses went down from Mount Sinai carrying the Ten Commandments, his face was shining because he had been speaking with the Lord; but he did not know it. Aaron and all the people looked at Moses and saw that his face was shining, and they were afraid to go near him." (Exodus 34:27–35)

As Moses fasted and met with God, he received instructions (the Law, tabernacle details, and history by revelation). When he returned, his face shone—the light of God, His fire—so intensely that people were afraid. Our flesh cannot bear the unveiled glory of God; that's why the corruptible must put on the incorruptible before entering heaven (1 Corinthians 15).

Every time we fast, we "put to death" the flesh so we can be sensitive to the Spirit. The fire of God rests on us to hear His instruction—and, like Moses, to share it.

Fasting and spiritual warfare "Then a hand took hold of me and raised me to my hands and knees; I was still trembling. The angel said to me, 'Daniel, God loves you. Stand up and listen carefully to what I am going to say. I have been sent to you.' When he had said this, I stood up, still trembling. "Then he said, 'Daniel, don't be afraid. God has heard your prayers ever since the first day you decided to humble [fast] yourself in order to gain understanding. I have come in answer to your prayer. The angel prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief angels, came to help me, because I had been left there alone in Persia. I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the future. This is a vision about the future.'" (Daniel 10:10–14)

Daniel fasted twenty-one days for understanding. The angel explained a spiritual conflict delayed the answer. Our battle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:12).

Fasting strengthens our prayer life and diligence; the enemy's grip weakens. God sends help—His angels, ministers of fire—to give understanding and break opposition (Hebrews 1:14).

Another example: a father brought his tormented son to Jesus. The disciples had tried and failed. Jesus rebuked the demon and set the boy free. When the disciples asked why they couldn't do it, Jesus said, "This kind goes not out except by prayer and fasting" (see Matthew 17:14–21). Sometimes opposition is stronger; fasting breaks through.

A testimony On Christmas 2009, a father from Indianapolis called weeping. His son

had been acting strangely, calling himself "the dark lord," seizing, and watching demonic content. I asked a brother to fast with me, and we drove from Chicago to Indianapolis praying and fasting. At the house, God's peace was present. In the basement (where manifestations had been strongest), I led the boy to repent and pray, anointed him with oil, and declared Scripture (Colossians 2:15; 1 John 4:4; Luke 10:19).

He collapsed, convulsed, sighed deeply, and then came to—free. Later, the Lord led me to the garage where occult symbols were posted; we removed and destroyed them. The house had been used for satanic activity. Through prayer and fasting, Jesus delivered that young man. Christians cannot be possessed, but those who claim Christ while living in rebellion can be oppressed and harassed (see Luke 11:24–26).

If a bondage keeps pulling you back—habits of action, words, thoughts, attitudes—pray and fast. I fasted weekly (sometimes twice a week) for a year for deliverance from anger. God worked deeply. Temptations may still knock, but prayer and fasting make a real difference.

Fasting for others In Esther, all Jews faced annihilation by Haman's plot. Esther, a Jew and queen of Persia, risked her life to intercede—but first she called a fast.

"'If anyone, man or woman, goes to the inner courtyard and sees the king without being summoned, that person must die. That is the law... There is only one way around this law: if the king holds out his gold scepter... But it has been a month since the king sent for me.' "When Mordecai received Esther's message, he sent this warning: 'Don't imagine that you are safer than any other Jew just because you are in the royal palace... If you keep quiet... help will come from heaven to the Jews... Yet who knows—maybe it was for a time like this that you were made queen!' "Esther sent Mordecai this reply: 'Go and get all the Jews in Susa together; hold a fast and pray for me. Don't eat or drink anything for three days and nights.

My servant women and I will be doing the same. After that, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. If I must die for doing it, I will die.'" (Esther 4:11–17)

The king received her, the Jews were spared, and Haman was hanged. When we fast, we find favor with the King of kings. Perhaps you were placed where you are "for such a time as this." Fast and pray for those who are lost.

Fasting shows dependence on God In 2 Chronicles 20, multiple enemies marched against Judah. "Jehoshaphat was frightened and prayed to the Lord for guidance. Then he gave orders for a fast to be observed throughout the country. From every



city of Judah people hurried to Jerusalem to ask the Lord for guidance." (2 Chronicles 20:3–4)

As they gathered, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon... Jahaziel... and he said, 'Your Majesty and all you people of Judah and Jerusalem, the Lord says that you must not be discouraged or be afraid to face this large army; for the battle is not yours, but God's.'" (2 Chronicles 20:14–15)

Fasting declares, "The battle is the Lord's." Judah obeyed—sending singers ahead in praise. God turned their enemies against each other. When Judah arrived, they found only fallen foes and spent three days gathering plunder (2 Chronicles 20:24–26).

I preached this in Chicago for Pastor Leo when his wife, Tonya, was diagnosed with cancer. I wrote "You are healed of cancer" on a chalkboard (hidden), told the church to praise God in advance, then turned the board around. The church prayed, fasted, and worshiped. A week later, doctors declared her cancer free. Hallelujah.

More testimonies My wife, Gina, and I have seen God move through fasting. When our church needed a permanent building, we entered a 21-day Daniel fast for three things: God's blessing on the ministry, our immediate family, and salvation for our loved ones. Soon after, the Church of God (Great Lakes Region) gave us a church property—the one I grew up in—with a connected parsonage. It saved us \$4,300 a month in rent and left only \$15,000 owed on a property worth over \$600,000. Family began attending because it was closer. We kept praying for more.

We then held a 40-day revival—full services every day—with many guest pastors; I preached 15 of them. A few of us fasted the full 40 days (21 as a Daniel fast, then without meat). God's presence was powerful, we raised over \$5,000 to help build a church in Armenia, and many preached for the first time. Forty in Scripture often marks life change. Prayer and fasting change you forever.

I also did a three-day water-only fast while my mother was dying. It was hard, but God sustained me, and He turned that pain into a testimony that helped others.

Why some fasts seem ineffective "You wonder why the Lord pays no attention when you go without eating and act humble. But on those same days that you give up eating, you think only of yourselves and abuse your workers. You even get angry and ready to fight. No wonder God won't listen to your prayers! "Do you think the Lord wants you to give up eating and to act as humble as a bent-over bush? Or to dress in sackcloth and sit in ashes? Is this really what he wants on a day of worship? "I'll tell you what it really means to worship the Lord. Remove the chains of prisoners who are chained unjustly. Free those who are abused! Share your food with everyone who is hungry; share your home with the poor and homeless. Give clothes to those in need; don't turn away your relatives. "Then

your light will shine (fire) like the dawning sun, and you will quickly be healed. Your honesty will protect you as you advance, and the glory of the Lord will defend you from behind. When you beg the Lord for help, he will answer, 'Here I am!' Don't mistreat others or falsely accuse them or say something cruel. Give your food to the hungry and care for the homeless. Then your light will shine (fire) in the dark; your darkest hour will be like the noonday sun. "The Lord will always guide you and provide good things to eat when you are in the desert. He will make you healthy. You will be like a garden that has plenty of water or like a stream that never runs dry. You will rebuild those houses left in ruins for years; you will be known as a builder and repairer of city walls and streets. "But first, you must start respecting the Sabbath as a joyful day of worship. You must stop doing and saying whatever you please on this special day. Then you will truly enjoy knowing the Lord. He will let you rule from the highest mountains and bless you with the land of your ancestor Jacob. The Lord has spoken!" (Isaiah 58:3–14)

"And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." (Isaiah 58:12, ASV)

When you fast with right motives, God will bless you, your light (fire) will shine, and He will use you to rebuild lives—restoring people to paths of righteousness.

Remember: Jesus fasted forty days and nights in the wilderness (Matthew 4). He destroyed the enemy's works and launched His ministry. If we are Christians—imitators of Christ—we should do what Jesus did. He said, "When you fast." It's time to fast for fire.

How to fast God sees the heart. If you fast with right motives for His glory, He will give you strength. Always check with a doctor if you have health conditions that may prevent certain fasts.

#### Full fast

- Liquids only (you set the number of days).
- Daniel fast
- No meat, no sweets, no bread.
- Drink water and juice.
- Eat fruits and vegetables.
- Traditionally 21 days, but you can set the duration.

#### Three-day fast

- Can be a full fast, a Daniel fast, or give up at least one significant item of food.
- Partial fast (half day)
- From 6:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., or from sunrise to sundown.

Choose a full fast, Daniel fast, or give up at least one item of food during those hours.

Remember: God responds to a sincere heart (Isaiah 58; Jeremiah 14:12; 1 Corinthians 8:8). May God greatly bless you as you fast.

Scripture references for fasting

- Personal fasting: Matthew 6:16–18; Matthew 9:14–15; Luke 18:9–14
- Corporate fasting: 1 Samuel 7:5–6; Ezra 8:21–23; Nehemiah 9:1–3; Joel 2:15–16; Jonah 3:5–10; Acts 27:33–37
- Relation to prayer and the Word: 1 Samuel 1:6–8, 17–18; Nehemiah 1:4; Daniel 9:3, 20; Joel 2:12; Luke 2:37; Acts 10:30; Acts 13:2

Recommended resource: Jentezen Franklin, "Fasting."

## Chapter 8 Fellowship of Fire

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1–4)

Fire came upon the disciples when they were in one accord. The Greek word for accord (*homothumadon*) helps define the kind of people we should fellowship with.

Thayer: with one mind, with one accord, with one passion. Strong: unanimously; with entire agreement of minds.

The people who want the fire of God should surround themselves with those of the same mind (Philippians 2:5)—people passionate about saving the lost, serving, and obeying Jesus no matter what.

We cannot hang out with the double-minded; it will hinder your walk and fire. Paul illustrates the seriousness:

"In my other letter I told you not to have anything to do with immoral people. But I wasn't talking about the people of this world. You would have to leave this world to get away from everyone who is immoral or greedy or who cheats or worships idols. I was talking about your own people who are immoral or greedy or worship idols or curse others or get drunk or cheat people. Don't even eat with them! Why should I judge outsiders? Aren't we supposed to judge only church members? God judges everyone else. The Scriptures say, 'Chase away any of your own people who are evil.'" (1 Corinthians 5:9–13, CEV)

Like Paul, I am not saying avoid unbelievers altogether—we must reach them. I am saying do not fellowship with people who claim to be Christians yet live contrary to the gospel. Paul says don't even sit down and eat with them.

Why apply this?

- It's a command. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14) The Greek word for believe (*pisteuō*) speaks of a true believer—one who respects, entrusts, and commits their life to God.
- Those who claim Christ but do not respect, entrust, or commit themselves to Him live like unbelievers. If you want the light (fire) of God to rest on your life, do not fellowship that way.
- Their ways can rub off. "Don't fool yourselves. Bad friends will destroy you." (1 Corinthians 15:33, CEV) "A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray." (Proverbs 12:26) "Don't make friends with people who have hot, violent tempers. You might learn their habits and not be able to change." (Proverbs 22:24–25)

I once stopped by a family member's dinner with out-of-town guests. They were drinking, cursing, and claiming to be Christians (see 1 Corinthians 5:9–13). I stayed to witness, but the old drinking friend grew prideful and gave me attitude; I responded in the flesh and condemned him. His spirit rubbed off on me. While writing about this, I thought, "I need to call and apologize." Just then he called me—while trying to reach a drug dealer. I apologized, told him God had a plan, and that this "wrong number" was God's intervention. He said he was coming to church that night. If I had gone with a brother, as Jesus modeled (Mark 6:7; Ecclesiastes 4:9–10), he could have corrected me in the moment.

You could fall away. If you witness to unbelievers or rebellious "believers," take a solid, born-again believer with you. Jesus sent them two by two (Mark 6:7). I knew an usher once on fire for God. He began to hang with someone living in open rebellion. I warned him, but he insisted he'd be fine. Within two months he was no longer serving or on fire.

Please take the warning. Many have lost their fire because of who they chose to keep close.

Jesus said, "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life

also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26–27) "Hate" here means to love less. We must put everyone and everything in second place to Him (Proverbs 18:24). Crucify the flesh and refuse the pull of relationships that dishonor God.

"It's evidence you follow Christ when you have right fellowship: 'If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.'" (1 John 1:6–7)

The Greek for fellowship is *koinonia*—partnership, sharing, joint participation. In Luke 5:10, James, John, and Simon are called partners (*koinonoi*) in a fishing business. Then they left everything to partner with Jesus:

"As Jesus walked along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw two fishermen, Simon and his brother Andrew, catching fish with a net. Jesus said to them, 'Come with me, and I will teach you to catch people.' At once they left their nets and went with him. He went a little farther on and saw two other brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in their boat getting their nets ready. As soon as Jesus saw them, he called them; they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and went with Jesus." (Mark 1:16–20)

Peter, James, and John formed Jesus' inner circle and saw what others didn't.

Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:35–42):

- Jesus allowed only Peter, James, John, and the girl's parents into the room.
- He put out the mourners (hired wailers who mocked Him).
- He took the girl by the hand and said, "Talitha koum" ("Little girl, get up!"), and she rose.

Three keys from this:

- Wise counsel: Jairus listened to Jesus over the messenger of death.
- Good fellowship: Jesus kept the mockers out and brought faithful companions in.
- The Word of God: Jesus' command brought life.

Follow wise counsel and good fellowship, and you will see God resurrect "dead" areas of your life.

The Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–8): Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain. His face shone like the sun; His clothes became dazzling white. Moses (the Law) and Elijah (the Prophets) appeared and talked with Him. A bright cloud overshadowed them and the Father said, "This is my beloved Son... listen to Him."

Moses' face once shone with glory (Exodus 34:29). Elijah called down fire (2 Kings 1:10), saw fire consume sacrifice (1 Kings 18), and departed in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11). Jesus—the Son—is the source of natural and divine fire; the fullness of the Word spoken by Moses and the prophets is fulfilled in Him.

Again: wise counsel (God), good fellowship (Moses, Elijah, Jesus), and obedience to the Word. This is the fellowship of fire.

Will you, like those three, leave lesser things and call those around you to seriousness about Jesus? If they refuse, will you still follow Him no matter what?

Break "fellowship" into "fellow" (companion) and "ship" (a vessel moving you from point A to point B). Your companions determine your direction. Choose fellowship that's on fire, and you'll see what others don't and move from where you are to where God wants you—on fire for Him. Expect persecution from those you disconnect from:

"You have spent enough time in the past doing what the heathen like to do. Your lives were spent in indecency, lust, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and the disgusting worship of idols. And now the heathen are surprised when you do not join them in the same wild and reckless living, and so they insult you. But they will have to give an account of themselves to God, who is ready to judge the living and the dead." (1 Peter 4:3–5)

Keep praying for those who insult you. Pray for unbelievers and for professing believers living against God's Word—that they would be consumed by His presence and live set on fire by God.

"Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:19–20) The Greek for "agree" here (*sympōneō*) parallels the idea of accord. When the disciples were in one accord, God sent fire and the Holy Spirit.

A testimony: At a men's retreat in Houston, a friend took a photo of a group praying. In the photo, a ring of fire encircled the group. God allowed the camera to capture what was happening spiritually: the consuming fire was in their midst. Fellowship with the world brings demonic activity; fellowship in the light (fire) brings God's presence.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15)

Make your stand, as Joshua did. Connect to people passionately serving Christ,

and get ready for the fire to fall as it did on the Day of Pentecost.

## Chapter 9 Fan the Fire

"I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News." (2 Timothy 1:5–8)

In his final letter (2 Timothy), Paul encourages Timothy about his sincere faith, nurtured by godly women who taught him the Word. Then he urges him to "fan into flame" the gift God gave him and to face persecution, trial, and tribulation without fear—by boldly spreading the gospel.

Before Jesus ascended, He said: "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:18–20)

Shouldn't the last thing Jesus said be the first thing we do? Go. Make disciples. Baptize. Teach obedience. Paul's charge to Timothy—fan the flames—echoes this.

"Go" is a verb. Too often we talk about witnessing, even pray about it, but never go—and then wonder why the fire dies down. We must fan the fire by ministering to people.

I once took an eight-week witnessing course, The Way of the Master. The plan was to hit downtown Chicago afterward. We prayed for boldness (Romans 1:16). But we never went out together. God showed me we shouldn't wait to be invited or organized; going should be normal for believers—and a priority if you want to get and stay on fire.

A woman once asked evangelist Billy Sunday, "Why do you keep doing revivals when they don't last?" He replied, "Why do you keep taking baths?" Fire, like a relationship, must be maintained.

Think about charcoal. When it burns low, you fan it to rekindle the flame. Spiritually, many start hot—witnessing, serving, fellowshiping—then stop and

later say, "Remember when we were on fire?" They didn't keep fanning the flame. Jesus told a parable about three servants entrusted with talents (Matthew 25:14ff). Two invested and were rewarded; the third made excuses. The master called him "wicked and lazy." God has entrusted us with the most precious thing—His Son and His message. We cannot be lazy. We don't know when Jesus will return. Be found faithful. I'm not saying you'll go to hell if you don't witness; I'm saying witness so others won't.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." (Romans 1:16)

You don't have to wait until you know everything. Yes, study and be ready to give an answer—but you can witness as you grow. Paul wrote: "I... came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom... For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:1–2)

Tell people what Jesus did for you—how He saved you and brought peace—and that He wants to do the same for them. It's the Holy Spirit who convicts; your job is to share the Good News. "How can they believe if they have not heard the message?... How wonderful is the coming of messengers who bring good news!" (Romans 10:14–15)

After the Holy Spirit and fire came at Pentecost (Acts 2), the disciples witnessed. Think of the six things we covered to get and stay on fire: the Word; eyes free from lust; passing tests; prayer; fasting; right fellowship. The disciples did these—and spread the fire. This is number 7: spread the Word. Sometimes you can be doing 1–6, but the flame still dims because you're hiding your light. "No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl... In the same way your light must shine before people." (Matthew 5:14–16)

Jeremiah tried to quit: "I will forget the Lord... But your message is like a fire burning deep within me... I can no longer keep it back." (Jeremiah 20:9) We must move from us "having" the Spirit to the Spirit having us. Church is not a building; it's *ekklēsia*—"the called-out ones." Called out of darkness into light—and called out to go bring others to the light.

"But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses..." (Acts 1:8) The Greek for witness is *martus*—the root of martyr. The first martyr, Stephen, was witnessing when he was killed (Acts 7). In the early church, being a "witness" meant you were willing to die for Christ. That's why Paul told Timothy, "God has not given us a spirit of fear." (2 Timothy 1:7)

The early church suffered brutal persecution—burned at the stake, fed to lions, scourged, stoned, imprisoned, crucified. Many of us face far less and yet stop witnessing over bills or pressure. The apostles crossed land and sea to win souls;



many won't go down the street. Then we ask, "Where is the fire?"

"'If any of you want to come with me,' he told them, 'you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me. For if you want to save your own life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for me and for the gospel, you will save it.'" (Mark 8:34–35)

It's time to be true witnesses. Press toward the goal—winning others to Christ and entering eternal life. Often when I don't feel like witnessing, if I encourage others anyway, I get encouraged. Life is about faith, not feelings.

Even on the cross, Jesus witnessed to the thief who repented: "Today you will be with me in paradise." He didn't let suffering stop Him from saving one more soul. When you feel weak or discouraged, pray as Jesus prayed, "Not my will but Yours be done," and go.

Paul wrote, "I want very much to see you, in order to share a spiritual blessing with you to make you strong... both you and I will be helped at the same time, you by my faith and I by yours." (Romans 1:11–12) Be an encourager; bless others with your faith. When you go, you are in God's will—and His presence and fire will rest on you.

"And these signs shall accompany them that believe... they shall cast out demons... they shall speak with new tongues... they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark 16:17–18) Signs accompany those who go. First go—then the Spirit shows.

Examples:

- A man in our church asked me to join his uncle's oncology appointment. I shared about relationship with Jesus, repentance (2 Chronicles 7:13–14), and James 5:14. We anointed and prayed. Two hours later, the doctors reported he was cancer free. Signs follow when you go.
- Another time, I went to pray over a family and their new house. Their son had returned to rebellion after prior deliverance (see Matthew 12:43–45). We shared Scripture, prayed, and he was freed. Then the Lord led me to the kitchen; his mother manifested. We declared Colossians 2:15; she collapsed, saw a vision of a Man in white, reached toward His feet, felt fire move through her, and the spirit left. Jesus delivered her by the Holy Ghost fire.

I'm not telling you to chase demons or be reckless. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love, power, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). When you go to witness, God will give the signs needed for the situation.

- One night I shared about Jonah running from God—depression, isolation, trying to sleep through storms, even suicidal thoughts. A young woman said she had been locking herself in her room and had recently attempted suicide. We prayed. God met her. The fire was fanned.

“When you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say... the Holy Spirit will speak.” (Mark 13:11) You never know who you’ll reach and who they’ll become.

Consider this story (paraphrased from Christian Biography Resources): D. L. Moody, at 18, was a shoe clerk in Boston. His Sunday school teacher, Edward Kimball, prayed and went to the store to speak with him. Nervous about interrupting business, Kimball nearly passed by, but turned back, went in, and briefly told Moody of Christ’s love. Moody was ready; he yielded to Christ there in the stockroom. Forty years later, Moody described the joy that flooded his life that day.

What if Kimball had walked away? Millions have heard of Moody—schools, radio, evangelism—yet it started with a faithful witness. Years later, Moody’s ministry became mechanical. Two ladies prayed for him to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire. He began to seek God earnestly. After the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 destroyed his work, walking the streets of New York, the Holy Spirit fell on him. He hid in a friend’s room for hours, overwhelmed with God’s presence, until he cried out for God to stay His hand. He rose in the power of the Spirit, and the fire marked his life.

Think of Andrew, the first disciple to follow Jesus. He brought his brother Simon (Peter) to Jesus. Peter became a foundational leader. Andrew didn’t need the spotlight; he wanted the job done. You may become a Moody or a Peter—or you may be an Edward Kimball or an Andrew. All of them helped change the world. And Peter wasn’t fully the man God called him to be until the Holy Ghost and fire fell at Pentecost (Acts 2).

When God called me to host Bible studies, I was still being freed from habits. As I sought the baptism of the Holy Spirit and applied what you’re reading, the Spirit fell, and I spoke in new tongues. I used to say, “If God wants to give me that gift, He will.” Then I realized I want every gift God wants to give (see 1 Corinthians 12:10). But don’t just seek a gift—seek the Holy Spirit and fire to consume your whole life. One key way to receive is to witness. As I witnessed and hosted studies, God poured out His fire. When my flame wanes, I fan it by witnessing and taking evangelism trips. Since June 2007 to June 2011, I’ve ministered in multiple cities and churches.

Before one trip, a choir member asked if we should do our workers' retreat first. I said I wanted to be fired up before the retreat, and this trip would help. We saw people repent from drugs, witchcraft, and other sins. A man even gifted me a watch as a love offering, saying, "You've never quit." It was an awesome time in the Lord.

Jesus promised: "Those who leave home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and for the gospel, will receive much more in this present age... and in the age to come... eternal life." (Mark 10:29–30) I'm not a prosperity preacher, but God does provide as He wills. Even if you never receive a thing for preaching on earth, hearing "Well done, good and faithful servant" will be worth it.

That trip fired me up. On the Day of Pentecost (Sunday, June 12, 2011), God woke me with the idea for this book. I started writing the next day and could hardly step away. Seventeen hours later, the first draft of this message poured out. The fire fell to write this as a tool to help people get set on fire and spread it. We'll be using this at our workers' retreat next week.

Why this urgency? According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), roughly 1.8 people die every second worldwide—over 100 per minute, more than 150,000 per day, over 55 million per year. More than 6,000 people die every hour. How many enter eternity without Christ? Our mission is to get on fire and fan the fire by witnessing—so fewer go to hell's fire.

John Wesley said, "Give me ten men that hate nothing but sin and love nothing but God and we will change the world." Will you be one? Pray: "Give me the love that leads the way, the faith that nothing can dismay, the hope no disappointments tire, the passion that will burn like fire. Let me not sink to be a clod: make me Thy fuel, flame of God." (Amy Carmichael)

Remember: when the fire feels like it's going out—fan the fire.

## **Chapter 10 Conclusion**

"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6)

Zerubbabel was helping restore the temple but faced opposition. God gave Zechariah a vision of a golden lampstand fed directly by two olive trees—oil flowing straight into the lamps—then said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit." In the temple, priests kept the lamps filled with oil so the fire would

continually burn. The vision shows that God can supply His own oil and His own fire; yet He invites us to serve. Today we are the temple, the priesthood, and the living sacrifice. Our part is to maintain the anointing through obedience. If you apply the seven keys from this book, you will find it far easier to keep the flame burning:

- The Word of God daily
- Eyes free from lust
- Passing the tests
- Time in prayer
- Time in fasting
- Godly fellowship
- Spreading the Word by witnessing

God does not need us—He could set two olive trees beside every lamp—but He wants to use us. We must submit. Recently, during a two-day revival at our church, the choir sang, “Lord, I am broken in pieces, but your strength is perfect in all of my weakness.” As we worshiped, a bottle of anointing oil fell from the pulpit and shattered. No one touched it. The fragrance filled the sanctuary, reminding me of the woman who broke the alabaster jar to anoint Jesus (John 12). I believe the Lord illustrated this truth: when we allow Him to break us and rely on His strength, the anointing flows, and a beautiful fragrance rises to Him—and to the world. In the days that followed, testimonies came: an eye surgery was canceled because it was no longer needed; a cancer was found contained and removed without spread; a servant received the gift of tongues; many rededicated their lives and were set on fire.

If we refuse to be broken, we hinder the anointing and give off a foul odor. “Dead flies cause the oil of the perfumer to send forth an evil odor; so doth a little folly outweigh wisdom and honor.” (Ecclesiastes 10:1) In Moses’ day, the apothecary compounded the holy anointing oil used to consecrate the tabernacle and priests (Exodus 30:25). If flies fell into the jars, the perfume spoiled. Jesus called Satan “Beelzebub” (lord of the flies). If we cling to “flies” like gossip, slander, unforgiveness, anger, offenses, bitterness, lust, adultery, pornography, greed, lies, addictions, and the like, we will never burn brightly. Get the flies out and yield to the Spirit: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” God wants to use you to spread His fire; if you truly seek Him, He will set you on fire—so people will come watch you burn.

History bears witness. In 1906, at Azusa Street in Los Angeles, a great awakening erupted. Pastors and leaders came from around the world; they carried the flame home, kindling Pentecostal fires in their nations. Today, hundreds of millions trace their spiritual heritage to that move, with tens of thousands coming to Christ daily. During one Azusa meeting, firemen reportedly arrived because onlookers saw

flames atop the building. There was no natural fire—God allowed them to glimpse the spiritual blaze. If He sent fire on the disciples in the upper room and at Azusa Street, He can and will do it for you. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

Everyone who truly gets on fire and stays on fire spreads that fire for God’s glory. D. L. Moody said, “We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won’t need to tell anybody it does. Lighthouses don’t fire cannons to call attention to their shining—they just shine.” “The winds are your messengers, and flames of fire are your servants.” (Psalm 104:4) Allow God to break and anoint your life so you can get set on fire, stay on fire, and spread the fire of God.

Go start some fires!

**Additional Resources** If this book has blessed you and you would like additional copies or other resources from Pastor Anthony—such as CDs and other books—please contact: Email: [anthonysfgm@gmail.com](mailto:anthonysfgm@gmail.com) Phone: 708-296-7663

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**Speaking Requests** Pastor Anthony Lee is available to minister at your church, small group, or retreat. Contact him at the email or phone above to schedule.

**About the Author** Pastor Anthony is the senior pastor of Soldiers for God Ministry in Chicago, IL. He ministers to a Roma Gypsy congregation and evangelizes across the city and country. He carries a powerful testimony of God’s transformative power and shares it in the power of the Holy Spirit. God has used this testimony to deliver many from the bonds of sin. *Becoming a Fire Starter* is Pastor Anthony’s third book.