

How To Keep Our Fire Burning Brightly

- *The first time the word fire is found in the New Testament is in Matthew 3:10-12 in words spoken by John the Baptist as he prepared the way for the ministry of Jesus Christ. In these three verses the word fire is used three times, each time conveying a different type of fire and a different purpose.*
- **“And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matthew 3:10).**
- *The first fire John the Baptist spoke about was the fire of condemnation, referring to the fire of Hell. John was warning Israel to repent, turn from their wicked ways, and be regenerated to become “a good tree.” A good tree represents those who repent and turn to God. A bad tree represents those who stubbornly remain in unbelief and rebellion. This verse warns of the wrath to come on those who reject Jesus Christ.*
- **“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Matthew 3:11).**
- *Here, John pointed to Jesus the Messiah as the One who not only saves but who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire. Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire so His followers will be empowered and burn brightly with zeal, a passion, and love for God. This encourages Jesus’ followers that what He has in store for them is more wonderful, exciting, and precious than anything anyone could imagine.*
- **“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matthew 3:12).**
- *The third type of fire that John referred to was a cleansing fire that removes impurities and carnality from the hearts and lives of believers. This is to exhort those who desire to follow Jesus that He is faithful to cleanse and purify us from all remnants of carnality and sin if we are willing to trust and submit to Him.*
- *The cleansing fire referred to in verse 12 can take on two forms. If we submit to God during the fiery trials we experience during our earthly lives He will refine and purify us. “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” (1 Peter 4:12-13). James spoke about trials, saying we should not be surprised by them, and that they produce perseverance and maturity in our character. (James 1:2-4).*

- *Our attitude toward fiery trials that test and purify our faith should be one of thanksgiving and even rejoicing, not because the trials are easy, but because the results will be glorious as our faith is purified and our lives are freed from the bondages of sin. “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:6-7).*
- *The second cleansing fire is found at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Anything that we have failed to deal with during our earthly life will be dealt with and cleansed at the Judgment Seat of Christ because nothing unclean or impure can enter into Heaven. “each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.” (1 Corinthians 3:13).*
- *work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” (1 Corinthians 3:14-15). The way in which we respond to the fiery trials of life can produce two outcomes. If we allow the fire to cleanse us we will receive a reward. However, if we resist God, we will experience the cleansing fire at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and we will lose our reward. Those who resisted will experience eternal losses of the rewards, crowns, and inheritances they could have received if they had allowed God to refine them on earth.*
- *Therefore the three main categories of fires we see in the Bible are:*
- *The fire of punishment in Hell resulting in eternal damnation and torment.*
- *The fire of passion as Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit and fire and fills us with His love and zeal.*
- *The fire of purification as we pass through trials to remove any carnality, selfishness, or sin from our hearts and lives.*
- *Correct understanding of the three types of fires should encourage and motivate believers to live lives which produce good fruit.*
- *THE FIRE OF PUNISHMENT: We should be immensely and tremendously thankful that because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice we will never experience the tormenting fires of Hell. The reality of the fires of Hell should also stir within us an overwhelming desire to share the Gospel with all those around us.*
- *THE FIRE OF PASSION: We should seek daily to be filled with the Holy Spirit and the passion of loving Him, seeking Him, and serving Him with all our hearts.*
- *THE FIRE OF PURIFICATION: We should desire daily to grow in holiness and purity. When we experience fiery trials meant to cleanse and purify us, we should not murmur, complain, or become discouraged, but be thankful. It is wonderful that God loves us just the way we are, but it is even more wonderful that He loves us so much that He doesn't want us to remain that way. Instead of complaining, look at trials as opportunities for God to cleanse and empower us to mature and grow in our faith.*

Passing the test is often a precursor to being promoted in God's kingdom. "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18a).

- *Today we want to focus on and study how to stir that fire within us so that we will burn brightly with a love and a passion for Jesus so that His light will shine brightly through us. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16). We already are the light of the world; the only variable is how brightly we shine.*
- *We don't want to be smoldering—we want to be on fire for Jesus. We want to burn brightly so the world can see all that He has done for us, all that He is doing in us, and all that He will do for all who respond to the Gospel message and receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour! "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*
- *Jesus compares believers to "lamps" which is a light made by burning a wick saturated with oil contained in a relatively small vessel.*
- *Lamps shouldn't be hidden from the world under a bushel, but placed on a lampstand to cast light all around. The lampstand represents the local churches, "the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches." (Revelation 1:20b).*
- *The first principle for us to keep our fire burning brightly is that we need to be connected to a local church and have genuine relationships with other like-minded believers. This is more than just sitting in a pew during a weekly service, but sharing our lives together and strengthening, encouraging, and building up one another. It is a place where we can share our victories and our struggles. "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." (Romans 12:15).*
- *It is important that our lamps burn brightly in our hearts so we can be a witness to this world and also so we can recognize those areas in our own hearts and lives that need correction. When we are not shining brightly we do not recognize our own darkness and therefore we can never overcome it. "Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light." (Luke 11:33-36).*
- *One sign that our light is burning dimly is when we see the faults in others but fail to see our own sins and shortcomings. Sometimes the same faults we criticize in others are in us!*
- *The Lampstand also can refer to the Menorah, the seven branched lampstand that burned in the Holy Place in the Tabernacle. "For a tabernacle was prepared: the first*

part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary.” (*Hebrews 9:2*).

- “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” (*Ephesians 5:18*). *The oil represents the anointing of the Holy Spirit and we are exhorted to be filled daily with the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot burn brightly because the light with which we shine is not from us but from Christ within us.*
- *The wicks of the lamps had to be trimmed daily so the light shone brightly. We are to lead lives that are under the control of the Holy Spirit and not driven by the selfish lustful desires of the flesh. “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:27).*

Besides the Menorah there were two other places where fire was found in the Tabernacle: the Bronze Altar located in the outer court where the sacrifices were made and the Golden Altar in the Holy Place next to the Menorah where incense was burned before the Lord.

- *The fire at the Bronze Altar was never allowed to go out and had to be maintained day and night. “And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order on it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.” (Leviticus 6:12-13).*
- *The Bronze Altar is where the sacrifices were slain, the blood collected, and the animals burned. The Bronze Altar represents Calvary and Jesus’ sacrificial suffering and death.*
- *The Bronze Altar can also represent the place where we consecrate ourselves to present ourselves as living sacrifices so we live a life totally surrendered to the glory of God. “Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”” (Matthew 16:24).*
- *Having our hearts captivated by Jesus’ love and sacrifice for us ignites our hearts with love for Him and a desire to lay down our lives as a sacrifice for Him. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (Romans 12:1).*
- *The second altar is the Golden Altar found in the Holy Place right next to the Menorah and directly in front of the entrance to the Holy of Holies—in which resided the very Presence of God.*

- *While the Bronze Altar represented the place of sacrifice, the Golden Altar represented the place of worship and prayer. “Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” (Revelation 8:3).*
- *The incense burned before the Lord on the Golden Altar represented the sweet smell of our prayers, worship, and adoration. “Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” (Psalm 141:2). We also see in Revelation “golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” (Revelation 5:8).*
- *However, unlike the Bronze Altar and the Menorah, whose fires never burned out, the fire on the Golden Altar of Incense had to be rekindled every morning.*
- *The fire for the Golden Altar was to be taken only from the hot burning coals on the Bronze Altar—the same coals that consumed the sacrifices. “And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which is for himself. Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die.” (Leviticus 16:11-13).*
- *The fire that ignited the coals on the Bronze Altar did not come from any human effort or ingenuity but came down directly from Heaven sent by God. “And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.” (Leviticus 9:23-24).*
- *At Calvary the Father sent down His consuming fire from Heaven onto His Son Jesus Christ to be the perfect sacrifice for sin. “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.” (Isaiah 53:10).*
- *Just as the hot coals from the Bronze Altar consumed the sacrifice and were used to ignite the coals on the Golden Altar of Incense, our hearts of worship are to be ignited and stirred by God’s love for us as demonstrated by the unfathomable sacrifice that Jesus made for us at Calvary. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16).*

“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.”

- *We may not know exactly where Nadab and Abihu found their strange fire, but we can be certain they did not bring it from the hot coals on the Bronze Altar.*
- *The warning from Nadab and Abihu’s example is clear—our love, passion and worship for God must not be ignited from any other source than the fires of Calvary as we begin each day meditating on Jesus’ sacrifice.*
- *Many times Christians can get side tracked by good things that distract us from the centrality of Christ and lead to spiritual lethargy at best or back sliding at worst. “They’re completely out of touch with the source of life, Christ, who puts us together in one piece, whose very breath and blood flow through us. He is the Head and we are the body. We can grow up healthy in God only as he nourishes us.” (Colossians 2:19, The Message).*
- *Strange fire can represent hype or anything that attempts to stir up a zeal for God that is not founded on Calvary, because eventually we will grow tired and seek to pursue some new and more exciting experience. What can be more stirring, exciting, and wonderful than to contemplate and meditate upon the eternal salvation we have received through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice!*
- *God can give us many exciting and wonderful experiences but we must be careful not to mistake the purpose of those experiences. In difficult times, their remembrance can be a great source of encouragement and comfort. They can ignite the fire in our hearts that may have grown dim.*
- *Those wonderful experiences were not given to make us think that this is how our daily lives with God will continue, but an invitation to pursue God and what He has in store for us in Heaven.*
- *Every day we should pray for renewal, revival, and the miraculous to be manifest because “And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.” (Mark 16:20).*
- *In reality, the miraculous is really more for the unbeliever to convince them of the truth of the message of the Gospel than for believers. As believers, our faith in Christ should grow to the place where we do not constantly need to see or experience something miraculous in order to be continually reassured that He is faithful and that we can trust Him. “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7).*
- *It is wonderful when we experience seasons in our lives where God manifests His presence in such overwhelming and supernatural ways but we need to recognize that*

are many difference seasons in our walk with Jesus and some will be less demonstrative. However, in those times that we experience something very special from God we are not to disregard it but treasure it, record it, and rejoice in it. Those special times are given to us so we can look back at them in times of trials or when we feel worn out by the dull, routine, and ordinary things of life and be encouraged and refreshed.

- *When we have a wonderful experience with God we are not to pursue the experience but to be motivated more fervently to pursue a deeper relationship with God.*
- *Even an immature Christian can walk with God when God is moving in incredible ways but the test for true maturity is found in being able to walk with God during the mundane day to day things of life.*
- *Fallen human nature fosters an attitude that is hostile to the idea of waiting and especially Western society. We are always seeking something new and exciting but what could be more exciting then walking with God every moment of every day.*
- *Is it any wonder that Christians in the West tend to struggle so much spiritually? They tend to seek the experience rather than seeking God.*
- *How many times do Christians get upset with God because they have to wait for an answer from Him? They want something new and exciting when in reality the most exciting and wonderful thing we can do is spend time with God in prayer and in His Word.*

Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV)

³¹**But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.**

- *“But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength;” One reason Christians struggle spiritually and are spiritually weak is because they fail to develop and practice the discipline of waiting.*
- *It is interesting the order given: flying, running, and walking.*
- *One may think it should be walking, running, and flying, but that would be the order of the natural mind.*
- *What takes the greatest level of spiritual maturity: flying, running, or walking?*
- *A flying eagle requires very little effort, since the winds carry it along and upward, soaring above the earth.*
- *Although running expends much energy, it is usually for a short period of time and gets you to your destination quickly.*

- *Walking is a much slower paced activity and may require many days to get to the final destination.*
- *It is interesting to note in Isaiah 40:31 that running may cause a person to grow weary, but walking may cause a person to faint and drop from exhaustion.*
- *God trains us in waiting, starting from the experience of flying like an eagle and then running, but the greatest level of strength, endurance, and maturity is seen in those who have learned to walk with the Lord.*
- *Even an immature believer who has a supernatural encounter with God can wait upon the Lord in prayer during those experiences.*
- *Those times when God visits us in extraordinary supernatural ways are wonderful, but they don't reflect day-to-day living.*
- *However, through supernatural encounters God is wooing us into a deeper relationship with Him—it is not the place we can live, but is a glimpse of where we will one day live.*
- *While flying represents being caught up in those supernatural experiences with the Holy Spirit where we are not at all in contact with the earth, running represents perseverance in ministry.*
- *When a person runs they are not fully in contact with the earth, but they leap from foot to foot as they fly through the air.*
- *When a person is ministering and the Holy Spirit is anointing them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit as they preach, teach, or pray for people, they are energized by the Holy Spirit and minister with such conviction and faith that it appears they have unstoppable faith.*
- *When a person is ministering, the full weight and pressure of life is lifted as the Holy Spirit empowers the person to speak words of life and faith.*
- *However, our lives do not consist of always preaching or ministering, but just living.*
- *While flying represents being caught up in those supernatural experiences, and running represents ministering under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, walking represents living moment by moment, day by day, in the reality of the struggles, sorrows, and joys of this life.*
- *When a person flies his feet never touch the earth, when a person runs his feet are only sometimes in contact with the earth, but when someone walks their feet are firmly in contact with the earth.*

- *While some have experienced God in supernatural ways, when those experiences don't reoccur they quickly fall back into their selfish pattern of complaining if they fail to understand it is their relationship with God that is the ultimate goal.*
- *Others seem to do well when they are engaged in ministry, but their private lives and their thought life sadly lacks the discipline of enjoying God's presence when they are not in the limelight.*
- *However, those who have learned to walk daily with the Lord enjoy His presence, and have developed the discipline of waiting on Him daily, they are the ones who will be able to weather the storms of life and shall renew their strength and not grow weary and faint.*

1 John 2:6 (NKJV)

⁶He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

- *If we are abiding in Him and are learning to wait upon the Lord then even as He walked we are to walk—in other words, the way Jesus lived out His life day by day and moment by moment is the way we are to live. Remember, most of Jesus' life on this earth He spent simply working as a carpenter.*
- *If we learn to walk with Him then running and flying are not going to be a problem.*