



When God
STRIKES
A Match

A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL ABOUT CHRIST
AS OUR SUSTAINING FIRE

World Challenge 



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DAY 1

THE FIGHT AGAINST APATHY

by Gary Wilkerson

You may notice in your own life when the Holy Spirit wants to bring you a greater measure of himself, a greater baptism of his power, that you often find these times accompanied by tears. Don't ever try to remove yourself from the emotions that come when God begins to move in your life. He wants to move not only your mind but also your heart and bring you to a place of tears as well.

This is confirmed by the Apostle Paul, “Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ” (*Philippians 3:17-18, ESV*).

The reason he's saying this so emphatically is not because somebody out there in the wide world is an enemy of the cross, but rather the devil is trying to work inside the body of Christ, in the church itself, to get us to be enemies of the cross. Does this mean you

could suddenly become an atheist? No. Being lukewarm, however, becomes a lifestyle all too easily. Remember what John writes in Revelation? “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth” (*Revelation 3:15-17*). This is what I believe that Paul alluding to in Philippians.

Could you continue to live in apathy and not be concerned about it? Could you continue in the compromise of sinful living and your heart isn't broken over it?

Oh, church, it's time we get on our faces before the Lord and cry out for his mercy on us and this generation. “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence” (*Hebrews 5:7*).

We need to pray for passion, holy grief and fervency in these final days.

DAY 2

THE DANGER OF COLDNESS

by David Wilkerson

Some who have backslidden tell themselves, “I can get right with the Lord whenever I choose. I’m just not ready. I’m not mad at God; I just need time with my friends, time to enjoy myself. I know God is loving and merciful, so when I’m ready, I’ll come to him. I’ll know when that time is.” I hear these thoughts especially among people who are drifting away.

The Holy Spirit has compelled me to show you the danger of coldness. It is not that God turns aside from those who backslide; his grace is offered continuously. The blood of Christ toward sinners will never lose its power, but spiritual coldness has a potent and predictable effect. It leads to hardness of heart.

The term “hardness” indicates a condition that is beyond the influence of any gracious pleadings, any persuading from the Holy Spirit. It begins with coldness, a self-imposed exclusion from God, with no intention of obeying the call of his gospel. Continuing in coldness to

God's voice and keeping distant from the Holy Spirit will result in hardness.

Paul refers to this when he says that prior to Christ's return, "There will come a falling away" (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3). He is speaking of a mass apostasy, to be followed by the release of an Antichrist spirit at that time. Those who "did not receive the love of the truth" will fall under a great delusion; they will believe lies rather than truth. And those who turn away from him who is truth will perish (see 2 Thessalonians 2:10)

Hebrews offers this warning: "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (*Hebrews 3:12-13, NKJV*).

DAY 3

HOPE FOR THE WANDERING HEART

by Gary Wilkerson

Temptations are coming at you, and you notice your resistance is weaker. God's Word seems uninspiring, and your prayer life is weak and anemic. Even your affection for Christ is strangely dimming. What is going on? You may be falling into spiritual lukewarmness but don't despair. There is hope for you! The Savior is working on your behalf to pluck you from dullness of spirit and light a fresh fire in your spirit.

How good to know that Jesus has made his cleansing provision available not only to the hot-spirited but also to the lukewarm and the cold. He is available to wash away sin from any of us. We are not only forgiven but Jesus imputed his righteousness to us. It is important for every Christian to search their heart for lukewarmness, being assured that his Holy Spirit within us gives us power over sin.

Some of the hallmarks of a lukewarm Christian are

prayerlessness, lack of interest in God’s Word, little regard for the lost, neglect in gathering with other believers.

Jesus speaks to the lukewarm church in Revelation: “I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth” (*Revelation 3:15-16, ESV*). Christ is talking specifically about the church in Laodicea which had become very complacent in their faith, but it is also a clear warning to every generation within the church.

Even though Jesus has a distaste for lukewarmness, he offers grace to whoever will respond to his warning. “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne” (*Revelation 3:20-21*).

Jesus wants your full affection! Don’t take God’s offer for granted, but search your heart. Your heart is precious to him, and he has promised to bring you back to himself if you have wandered away.

DAY 4

WATER FROM THE LORD'S WELL

by David Wilkerson

One of the great wonders of America is the incredible New York aqueduct. Made of bricks, it is all underground and runs for miles and miles from upstate, bringing water to this metropolis. What would happen if that aqueduct were cut off and suddenly there was no water supply flowing to the city? New York City would become a “parched place . . . a salt land and not inhabited” (see Jeremiah 17:6).

The same thing happens in our lives! When people lose hope, they curl up on the inside and give up hope, and their hearts become a parched place, a salt land. Today many Christians are experiencing overwhelming despair, much like what I have just described.

In Jeremiah, God points out an incredibly horrible sin being committed by his own people. “Therefore thus saith the Lord; Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing. Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? Or

shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?" (*Jeremiah 18:13-14, KJV*).

What is this horrible thing God's people are committing? God's people often continue on their way dry, empty and sad, saying, "We have been left to ourselves. We'll just go our own forsaken way, unwanted!" This is a picture of despairing Christians who have forgotten the promises of God, who sit dejected beside a flowing stream of God's love, thinking, "The Lord is not at work in my life. I'm just going to have to grit my teeth and do the best I can. It's no use hoping anymore. I have to do what I can to survive!"

Yet like the cold, refreshing waters that flow down from melting snow, God gives an unceasing supply of power to his people. This water is the water of strength, available and unfailing.

DAY 5

VICTORY THAT LOOKS LIKE DEFEAT

by Carter Conlon

We read in the Word of God that in the last days, sin shall abound and the love of many will grow cold. Who can deny that this is happening today? Society continues to spiral down into deeper darkness almost daily, and it can become easy to grow cold to every form of love. Eventually, many Christians will end up disheartened.

The book of Luke tells us about two disciples who “were traveling...to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know him” (*Luke 24:13-16, NKJV*). These two were so engrossed in their own assessment of what had just taken place with the crucifixion of Jesus that they could not see when the Lord himself began to walk with them.

When Jesus asked the men why they were sad, they replied, “The chief priests and our rulers delivered [Jesus] to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we were hoping...” (*Luke 24:20-21*). Jesus had already been resurrected from the dead but what was actually a great victory was still nothing but defeat in their eyes.

This is the same dilemma we must guard against. We think we know what God is about to do, and we formulate in our minds the complete picture of how everything ought to unfold. Yet when it does not develop the way we think it should, we find ourselves battling discouragement. The men on the road to Emmaus were ill informed but hopeful. That is when the Lord appeared to them and essentially said, “I’m not going to force myself on you, but if you desire I will open to you the scriptures and show you things you may not have considered yet” (see *Luke 24:27*).

Are you willing to let God unlock the scriptures and show you his ways? Remember, God’s ways are higher than yours and what may look like defeat is actually victory! Like these disciples, ask Jesus to abide with you and show you how true strength is found.

DAY 6

HOW TO NAVIGATE DOUBT

by Gary Wilkerson

Throughout my life, I've often been filled with doubts. The good news is that doubt won't rob you of God's goodness. He won't withhold himself from you because your faith is mixed with questions and uncertainties. Jesus still healed the child of the father who cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" (see Mark 9:17-27).

God is a holy God, and we should always approach him with reverence; but doubt is not irreverence, and God understands our questions. Believe it or not, doubt can promote a greater revelation of God within us. We can see more of God's glory when we are willing to wrestle with our conflicts and get to the other side of our questions with a more solid faith and deeper knowledge of him.

There are three steps to working through doubt. First, approach your doubt with an honest heart. If we say, "I want truth and life," we will find truth and life. If we're trying to simply prove a point or avoid obedience to God, we aren't being honest.

Next, take time to meditate and study the scriptures. We live such busy lives that many of us are holding on to doubts that we have simply ignored for years. We don't take the time to quietly contemplate and enter those doubts. I use a notepad and write down things that I'm wrestling with. I reach for my Bible and seek out the harmony of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

Finally, find a good Christian friend to talk to. If you're in an environment where you can't express your doubts, find someone who will listen with an open heart. Just because we lead a ministry or church doesn't mean we won't face doubts, and we need a trustworthy friend or counselor.

Don't be afraid to take your questions to God. He loves your honesty, and he has provided a clear path from doubt to faith. It's a lifelong process of meditation, searching the scriptures and seeking God; but it will always yield a stronger, more robust relationship with him. If you're like me, you'll enjoy the journey.

DAY 7

ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY?

by Jim Cymbala

God is not as interested in what we “do” for him as in our bearing spiritual fruit. And only his Spirit at work within us can produce the godly character he desires. Consider Paul’s prayer for the believers in Colossae: “We pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God” (*Colossians 1:10, NIV*).

If only Christians were as concerned about their spiritual growth as they are about their physical growth! When Paul entreated the believers to “live a life worthy of the Lord,” he simply meant that they should grow in grace and bear fruit to the glory of God. Fruitfulness, in fact, is the only evidence that someone is a genuine Christian.

How can we tell we are growing spiritually? Scripture offers the only standard by which we can measure ourselves. Jesus declared, “You must be born again” (*John 3:7*). Just as physical birth is a beginning point

for physical growth, being born again is the beginning point for spiritual growth. We have the capacity to grow spiritually in much the same way that flowers, trees and babies grow and develop. We are to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (*2 Peter 3:18*). Further, we are exhorted to “crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (*1 Peter 2:2*).

“God ... makes things grow” (*1 Corinthians 3:7*). If we fail to display signs of spiritual growth, either something is terribly wrong with us or we never experienced life from God to begin with. “The righteous will flourish like a palm tree ... they will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green” (*Psalms 92:12, 14*). The goal of this growth process is that we bear fruit.

The Holy Spirit will help you recognize areas where you need to grow spiritually if you will humble yourself and ask him for discernment.

DAY 8

OVERCOMING SEEDS OF DOUBT

by David Wilkerson

John the Baptist was a man of the Word. He had spent his entire life studying the scriptures in solitude and meditating on the law. He had seen the Holy Spirit descend on Christ as a dove and heard the Father's voice declare Jesus to be his own Son. Yet John found himself in prison with his powerful, anointed ministry cut short by the wicked King Herod (see Luke 3:19-20). Now the crowds who had followed John were gone; the "voice of one crying in the wilderness" was silenced.

John's public ministry had lasted only a year; but during that time, God had demonstrated his power through John's preaching. Jesus knew that this fiery prophet would rather be dead than locked up in prison. After all, he had lived all his years in an open wilderness, walking through the land and sleeping in caves.

While John was imprisoned, some sort of deep and dark trial of the soul overtook him. He began to doubt. John must have wondered why Jesus had not delivered

him from prison. After all, Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would set the captives free when he came. Frankly, Jesus was not living up to John's expectations, and he started to wonder, "Is Jesus really the promised Messiah?" (See Matthew 11:2-3.)

The same devil who tempted Jesus in the wilderness attempted to destroy John's faith. He uses these same lies and deceptions against us today. His goal is to plant seeds of doubt in us about God's promises and delight in us. Satan wants you to become impatient as you wait for answers to your prayers.

James gives us this encouragement: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (*James 1:2-4, NKJV*). Right now, Satan wants you to be anxious about God's promises concerning your life, your family, your future, your ministry. John took his doubt directly to Jesus, and Jesus gave him exactly what he needed. Likewise, hold on in faith and you will see his perfect work completed in your soul.

DAY 9

THE POWER OF GOD'S PRESENCE

by David Wilkerson

The Old Testament is filled with many accounts of the blessings that came to those who had the presence of God with them. These stories are meant to encourage and exhort us to seek God's presence in our lives.

God's presence was so evident in Abraham's life that even the heathen around him recognized the difference between their lives and his. "Abimelech...spoke to Abraham, saying, 'God is with you in all that you do'" (*Genesis 21:22, NKJV*). This heathen king was saying, "Abraham, there's something different about you. God guides you and blesses you wherever you go!"

God promised Joshua that no enemy could stand against him when God's presence was with him. "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life... I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage" (*Joshua 1:5-6*). When God's Spirit is present with us, we can be strong and courageous because no enemy can harm us.

God told Gideon, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor! ...Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel” (*Judges 6:12, 14*). God was saying, “Gideon, there is a might in you that is so powerful, it can save Israel. And that might is my presence.” Even though Gideon lacked courage, God wanted to prove to him that any person can do great things when the Lord’s presence is with him.

God warned Jeremiah that the whole nation would turn against him and reject his prophecies. Yet God promised, “They shall fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you; for I am with you to save you and deliver you” (*Jeremiah 15:20*). God was saying, “It doesn’t matter if the whole country turns against you, Jeremiah. All that matters is that my presence is with you. Be confident of that!”

Seek him with all your heart, and desire his presence in your daily life. You will experience the incredible glory of God.

DAY 10

A JOURNEY'S UNANTICIPATED STOPS

by Carter Conlon

When Joseph was a young man, he received a great promise from God. God revealed to Joseph through dreams that he would become a leader with great influence. A mark of immaturity still rested on Joseph at that point, however. He was rather boastful as he shared with his family the dreams he had. “Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. He said to them, ‘Hear this dream that I have dreamed: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf.’ ...So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words” (*Genesis 37:5-8, ESV*).

Joseph still lacked understanding of the purpose of God’s power and provision. In eager anticipation of seeing God’s promise fulfilled, he neglected to realize that there would be unanticipated stops along the journey. The first stop? A pit and a place of abandonment and betrayal.

Out of jealousy, Joseph's brothers threw him into a pit then sold him off to a band of Ishmaelite merchants for twenty pieces of silver. I don't think we can fully grasp Joseph's pain. How deeply it must have wounded his heart to know that this treachery had been done at the hands of his own brothers. Betrayal is perhaps one of the most difficult classrooms we have to go through in life. Yet we must remember it is also the road Christ traveled, so we cannot expect to escape it.

I understand that these things can hurt very deeply. The most severe wounds inflicted by people you have grown to love and trust over the years. Perhaps, like Joseph, you shared something God had given you, only to discover that some people who were close to you did not believe in your dream or actively worked against it.

In times like this, we must cling to the knowledge that God's provision for a vision he has given us also covers betrayal and suffering. He knows exactly what we need to grow into the vision he has given us.

DAY 11

A PROMISE FOR DAILY PROVISION

by Carter Conlon

Jesus himself highlighted the importance of the Word when he gave us a specific manner in which to 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 this day our daily bread” (*Matthew 6:9-11, NKJV*). Notice that he described it as “our daily bread.” There is a daily provision which Jesus promises to give us.

Jesus said it this way in the book of John: “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (*John 6:48-51*).

Jesus was essentially saying, “I am the bread! I am your strength, your vision, your redemption, your freedom. I

am your protector and your guide. Everything that you need for life and godliness can be found in me.”

Biblically speaking, I suppose one could say that you are what you eat! If you choose to go on a diet from the Bible, you are going to become weak, and eventually you will end up very confused. Incorrect thoughts will begin to guide you. In your desperation, you will start turning on the television and listening to voices that are not speaking truth. They will stand before you and essentially say, “Look at me! This is what the Christian life looks like. Come, follow me!”

If you are not reading the Word of God, you are not eating this living bread, and you will end up being deceived at the end of your days.

DAY 12

STEPPING INTO THE BATTLE

by Gary Wilkerson

There's a gap in our understanding of one of the Bible's most important passages to believers. God promises, even over-promises, abundant life far above and beyond what we can even imagine. The problem is that we're down here saying to ourselves, "Oh, I'm not experiencing that."

We keep going to church and hearing their encouragement, "This is the year of overcoming" or "This is the year of prospering." By the end of the year, though, it hasn't been a year of breakthrough or flourishing. Maybe it's been harder than the year before. We're left confused, discouraged or even angry. There seems to be this gap between God's promise of abundance and our reality.

In order to really understand God's abundant life, we need to go to another set of promises that Jesus made to his disciples. "Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home,

and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (*John 16:32-33, ESV*). The Son of God promises you that you will have tribulations in this world.

Israel’s promise of abundant life from God was “I’m leaving five enemy nations in your land to test you” (see Judges 3:1-6). The word ‘test’ here means something closer to a contest like a boxing match. God was setting up opponents for Israel so he could show them how to fight. He was going to make them victorious, if they trusted and followed him.

A lot of us don’t expect trouble in life. When it comes, we get discouraged and withdraw. We think abundant life means no need to fight. Abundant life actually means getting into the arena. It means getting scarred up in the fight because we know that Christ won the war. This doesn’t mean we don’t have to fight in the battles; we must engage.

DAY 13

LIVING THE MUNDANE WITH PURPOSE

by Carter Conlon

We read in the book of Isaiah, “He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might he increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall” (*Isaiah 40:29-30, NKJV*). In other words, there comes a season in each of our lives when we feel we cannot go on. We feel as if we are going to crash and burn, spiritually speaking. Similarly, we all face seasons when coldness gets into our heart, perhaps because of the monotony of daily life.

Marriages often get into trouble because there is no effort on the part of either spouse to rekindle the flame of love. Likewise, coldness can seep into our relationship with God, particularly when we become so accustomed to the pattern of our Christian walk that we begin to do things on autopilot. Soon the weight of repetition and personal trials start to crash in upon us, and before we know it, we feel like we are going to lose lift, just as an airplane does when it loses speed.

It is imperative that we recognize God has already told us what to do when this happens. Just as a pilot is trained in certain procedures so that he will respond properly, so we must heed God's instructions and trust what he says rather than relying on our own instincts.

The Bible tells us, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths" (*Proverbs 3:5-6*).

God has told us in Jeremiah 29:11: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you...thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." He will bring you to that place of freedom that you long for, give you the strength you need, place a renewed vision within you. So trust the Lord and acknowledge him in all your ways, and then watch where he will lead you!

DAY 14

IS MY HEART CHANGING?

by David Wilkerson

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves” (*2 Corinthians 13:5, NKJV*). The Greek word for “examine” here means “scrutinize, assess.” The apostle Paul is saying, “Test yourself to see if you are walking according to God’s Word.” We are to constantly ask ourselves, “Am I changing? Am I becoming more loving and tenderhearted? Is my conversation becoming more righteous? Am I still complaining or am I beginning to speak edifying words of faith? Am I consciously trying to please Jesus?”

We should take this matter of self-examination very seriously. If you are a Christian, yet you are still apathetic about your spiritual growth, then you have not allowed God’s Spirit to do his work in you. Ask yourself if you are becoming more excited about Jesus and his Church every day; or do you hold grudges, resentment, roots of bitterness?

It is possible for you to experience growth in many areas of your life and yet remain childish in other areas. Here is an easy test to assess whether or not spiritual growth is taking place. Simply ask yourself, “Am I thirsty? Do I want more of Jesus and his holiness?” If the answer is yes, you can be assured that you are growing, because the Word promises, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (*Matthew 5:6*).

Do you want to grow spiritually? If so, ask the Holy Spirit to shine his light on any area of weakness or sin in your life and cry out to him, “Lord, I love you and long to know you better. I want to measure up to your Word. Please help me to grasp by faith that you are at work in me, enabling me to grow up spiritually!”

Don’t forget that God stands beside you right now, even if you are in a storm. He is watering your spirit, feeding your soul, putting down strong roots in you, helping you to grow in him!

DAY 15

WHAT IS LIMITING YOU?

by Gary Wilkerson

“We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open” (*2 Corinthians 6:11, ESV*). Paul is speaking to a church that is coming into a new season. They have a good and glorious history, but they have also endured some trials and difficulties.

Everyone reading this has something in common with everyone else: it’s called the flesh, that thing that causes you to fall short of God’s best. The church at Corinth was full of what Paul called carnality, sexual immorality, divisions among them; but Paul assures them that his heart is wide open to them.

I love that. Paul challenges them and wants to correct them, but he also longs to see growth and maturity take place in them. In verse 12 he says, “You are not restricted by us.” In other words, he is telling them that no limitations are on them and they are free to go all out for Jesus.

In the same way, we are not to be people of small faith, restricting the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Paul goes on to say in verse 12, “But you are restricted by your own affections.” What is keeping you limited? What is keeping you moderate, even ho-hum in your faith? Why are you not seeing an explosion of faith and zeal in your life?

Perhaps you have been wounded — who hasn’t? — and this keeps you from moving deeper into the things of the Lord. But the Word says, “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters” (*2 Corinthians 6:18*). A father gives direction and speaks blessing over your life. He calls forth great things in you and gives you an inheritance.

This should be our response: “Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” (*2 Corinthians 7:1*). As you take hold of the promises of God, you can have renewed fellowship with Christ that causes you to walk in reverence and holiness in a way you have never experienced before!

DAY 16

DEVELOPING A HABIT OF PRAYER

by David Wilkerson

“When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret, will reward you openly” (*Matthew 6:6, NKJV*).

When Jesus speaks of going into a secret place to seek the Father, he is talking about something much greater than a physical closet. He is referring to any place where you can be alone with him in intimate communion.

Do you have a place of prayer? Do you have a habit of shutting yourself in with God? It could be in your car while you commute to work or in your study at home. The Holy Spirit woos you, and your spirit responds, “I must talk with my Father today!” Having a prayer habit, a daily practice of disciplining yourself to come before God, is vital to your spiritual growth.

Jesus warned against hypocrisy in prayer. He drew a dramatic distinction between those who seek God in the

secret place and those who pray so that they can be seen by others as holy. Hypocrites are actors, people who act holy in order to receive the praise of others. Jesus said there are many such actors in his church. “When you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward” (*Matthew 6:5*).

Far too many Christians do not practice a wonderful, daily communion with the Lord. The vast majority pray only in church and at meals with perhaps a few quick words to God before going to bed. Beloved, there is absolutely no power in haphazard, on-again-off-again praying. God sees the very depths of your being and he desires for you to seek him with all your heart.

The habit of daily drawing near to God is meant for every one of us! “Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with the whole heart!” (*Psalms 119:2*).

DAY 17

BEARING FRUIT THAT REMAINS

by David Wilkerson

Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away; and every branch that bears fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit... If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned” (*John 15:1-2, 6, NKJV*).

True disciples of Jesus Christ cannot ignore this great responsibility of bearing fruit. God watches over his vine and all the branches engrafted to it with great concern. He also stands alongside with a pruning knife in hand, lovingly watching for the slightest evidence of corruption, blight or disease which could hinder its growth. God expects every branch to bear fruit; in fact, it is impossible to honor and glorify God or be a true disciple without fruit. Jesus said, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be my disciples” (*John 15:8*).

Bearing fruit has everything to do with pleasing God and becoming more like him. Bearing fruit brings glory to the Father through what we are becoming rather than simply what we are doing. The Bible makes it very clear that many will have great results, casting out devils, healing the sick, doing great works in his name; but God knows if there is barrenness of spirit.

An abiding believer is one who loves and fears God, who dreads his righteous judgments, and who hungers for the Word. He delights in having the Word prune away all hindrances, allowing the very life and likeness of Christ to be ever-increasing in him. It is impossible to bear the fruit of righteousness without his Word abiding in you!

The more you allow Christ's fullness to be revealed to you, the more of his life will touch everyone you are connected to. The Word says, "That you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (*John 15:16*). May you remain in the flow of Christ's life and continue to bear much fruit that will glorify him.

DAY 18

UNNOTICED GROWTH IN HARD GROUND

by David Wilkerson

Some believers can tell you all about their spiritual growth, and you can clearly see the changes in their lives. They testify to you about how the Holy Ghost has vanquished the enemy for them, and you rejoice with them in their victory.

These kinds of Christians are the exception. Most believers are totally unaware of any spiritual progress in their lives. They pray, read the Bible and seek the Lord with all their hearts, but they can't discern any growth in themselves. I'm an example of this type of believer. I know I walk in the righteousness of Christ, yet I never sense that I'm making progress. In fact, I get down on myself whenever I do or say something un-Christlike. I wonder, "I've been a Christian for years. Why don't I ever learn?"

I think the Thessalonian Christians were stunned when they heard Paul's glowing assessment of them. "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is

fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other” (*2 Thessalonians 1:3, NKJV*). When you’re doing battle with the enemy, you’re calling forth all the grace and power of God. Even though you may feel weakened, that grace and power are strengthening you. For one, you’re becoming more urgent in your praying. Second, you’re being stripped of all pride.

Paul knew that spiritual growth is often a secret, hidden thing. Scripture likens it to the unseen growth of flowers and trees. “I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow like the lily and lengthen his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon” (*Hosea 14:5-6*).

God is telling us, “Go to the lilies! By day’s end you won’t see any growth whatsoever. But know this; I water the lily every morning with the dew I send, and it’s going to grow.” The same is true of most spiritual growth, especially in the middle of trials. It’s imperceptible to the human eye. Take heart, friend. You are growing in your struggle. In fact, you may be growing by leaps and bounds because of your struggle.

DAY 19

REAPING THE BENEFIT OF REPENTANCE

by David Wilkerson

We know Daniel as the stalwart, gifted young man who loyally served Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and interpreted his dreams. His greatest exploits came as a result of his being a righteous man of prayer.

Daniel lived such a devoted, holy life that you would not expect to find him repenting before the Lord, but his heart was very sensitive to sin, and he identified with the horrible sins of the people of Israel.

Notice his use of the plural pronoun ‘we’ in this prayer. “We have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled... Neither have we heeded your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land” (*Daniel 9:5-6, NKJV*). Then he noted, “I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God” (*Daniel 9:20*).

Daniel was saying, in essence, “Lord, deal with me while you are dealing with your people. If there is any iniquity in my heart, bring it out and show it to me!”

Are there really benefits to repentance? Yes! One truly wonderful benefit is the gift of a new, clearer vision of Jesus Christ. After Daniel repented, he had a vision: “I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen [appeared]” (*Daniel 10:5*). Daniel was the only one who saw the man, who was actually Jesus in all his glory!

Understand, Daniel was not praying for this vision; he was just repenting, confessing and mourning over sin. Jesus took it upon himself to come to Daniel in this revelation! When we humble ourselves before the Lord and make things right with him and others, we don’t have to seek a revelation. Jesus will manifest himself to us! It may not be in a vision, but we will know that he is present.

DAY 20

NO MATTER WHAT YOU THINK

by Gary Wilkerson

When we accept the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we fulfill this commission: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (*John 14:12, ESV*). An entire world needs his healing, cleansing, saving power, and that happens only by his perfect sacrifice: “Because I am going to the Father.”

Never doubt any opportunity that Jesus brings to you. The key to this is believing that he is always at work. When the disciples asked Jesus to give them faith, his answer tells us everything we need to know. “I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it would move. Nothing would be impossible” (*Matthew 17:20, NLT*).

Despite Christ’s incredible gifts to us, some of us are convinced we are not worthy to represent his gospel.

However, that contradicts the very nature of the gospel. We become his holy representatives not by our ability but by God's work in us. "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (*Philippians 1:6, ESV*).

Peter was probably the first Christian to be taught this powerful truth. In Acts 10 when he was staying in Joppa with a tanner named Simon, Peter had a vision during prayer that would affect the spread of Christ's gospel down to today. He was puzzled by the vision, but he obeyed God's leading and the door to healing and the saving power of God was opened to the world (see Acts 10:9-48).

No matter what you think of yourself today, I urge you to accept his holiness and receive his anointing to fulfill the work he has prepared for you. He will open every door, and you will see him perform unexpected wonders.

DAY 21

GOD-GIVEN BURDENS

by David Wilkerson

Have you been challenged to step out in a direction that demands supernatural faith? Do you need God to work a miracle in your life so that you can realize your dream?

In God's eyes, true faith has nothing to do with the size of a work you aim to accomplish. Rather, it has to do with the focus and direction of your life. You see, God isn't as concerned with your grand vision as he is with who you are becoming. Indeed, no work, regardless of how great, is of any value to the Lord unless the lesser, hidden matters of faith are being done.

“If you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?” (*Luke 16:12, NKJV*). Jesus was saying to his disciples, “You say you want a revelation, something to enable you to do greater things. Yet how can you be entrusted with that kind of faith if you're not reliable with the things others have given you?”

Jesus' words must have left his disciples scratching their heads. The Master knew they didn't own anything

and they had forsaken all to be his disciples. So what does Jesus mean when he said, “that which is another man’s”? He was speaking of our bodies and souls, which he purchased with his own blood. “You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (*1 Corinthians 6:20*).

Jesus was saying, “Your body doesn’t belong to you anymore, and if you don’t take care of that body, if you don’t allow me to look inside you, deal with your sin, and sanctify you, how can you expect me to entrust you with something greater? I want you to look at what you’ve done with the things I have already given to you.”

I thank the Lord for heaven-sent visions and God-given burdens. Many burdened believers don't realize that before a dream can be brought to pass, God often does years of stripping and breaking. Jesus wants us to just bring our faith; he will bring about a true vision.

DAY 22

SEEKING OUT GOD'S DIRECTION

by Nicky Cruz

I was just twenty-two when God imparted into my heart his will for me to become an evangelist. He instructed me to use my past and my testimony to draw sinners to salvation, and since that time I've remained faithful to that calling. At times I've grown tired of telling my story, and I've wished God would use me for another purpose. It's hard to relive the memories over and over again.

Often I've thought to myself, "What harm would it be if I simply went into another line of ministry? Maybe I could pastor a church or put together a seminar on marriage and family issues, something that would allow me to use more of my gifts and talents. Or maybe I could go into business!"

Then I remember my calling, and those thoughts quickly subside. There is nothing wrong with any of these professions; they are simply not what God intended for my life. I am an evangelist, an ambassador of God's grace and forgiveness. I tell people about Jesus and lead them to salvation before his throne. That is my purpose

before God as well as my spiritual gift. When God gave me this calling, he not only gave me the ability to carry it out, but he placed in my heart a compassion for the lost. He gave me eyes to see clearly the people who need forgiveness, then he set me on a path to find them. Because I have tried to stay true to that vision, he has been able to use me for his glory. Gloria, my wife, has always felt this same call on her life.

You may have another calling and profession. God has created each of us with different talents and gifts, but all of us are called to reach the lost! We must seek out his direction and vision for our lives and then stay focused and committed to that cause.

DAY 23

WHEN GOD CHANGES YOUR PLANS

by Carter Conlon

Our good ideas are not always “God ideas.” We see this illustrated in the life of the apostle Paul. “Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them” (*Acts 16:6-7, NKJV*).

Just as it happened with Paul, a sincere disciple of Christ, it can happen with all of us. We may want to go certain places and do certain things, expecting God to go with us. However, sometimes the pathways we choose for our lives during a particular season may not actually be the pathway of God for us.

Paul had a vision of a man appealing to him to come to Macedonia and help them. “Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them” (*Acts 16:10*). So, although Paul had had different plans, he and his company headed off to

Macedonia. On the way they ministered to a group of women meeting for prayer.

Next, they encountered a demon-possessed slave girl; and when she was delivered, her masters seized Paul and Silas and had them beaten and thrown into prison (see Acts 16:22). Sometimes obeying the will of God will actually get us into trouble, but God's plans are always far superior to our own.

In prison, Paul and Silas sang praises to the Lord and witnessed to the jailer, who in turn was transformed and baptized along with his entire family (see Acts 16:33). Just think, all this started with a vision of a man appearing to Paul when he was praying at night, saying, "Come and help us."

The power of God is always found where the Spirit leads you. Today I implore you to have the courage to say, "Lord, I do not want to live simply for my will. What would you have me do? Where do you want me to go? Let your will be done in my life." Then watch God do miracles!

DAY 24

DESIRING NOTHING BUT CHRIST

by David Wilkerson

What is it that our Lord wants most from those who claim to be devoted to him? Shall we build him more churches? More Bible schools? More homes and institutions for hurting people? These are all worthwhile and needed, but he who dwells not in buildings made by hands wants much more than that. Solomon thought he had built an everlasting temple for God, but in less than four hundred years, it was destroyed.

The one thing our Lord seeks above all else from his people is communion at his table. He desires a place of oneness and time of intimacy, a continual coming to him for food, strength, wisdom and fellowship. This generation has a limited revelation of the Lord Jesus because so many are missing from the feast of communion with the Lord. Few know the grandeur and majesty of such a high calling in Christ Jesus.

We mistakenly get our spiritual joy out of service rather than communion. We are doing more and more for a Lord we know less and less about. We run ourselves

ragged, burn out and give our bodies to his work, but we seldom keep the feast. We are not serious enough about taking our place to learn of him.

Paul speaks of spending three separate years in the Arabian desert. They were glorious years, sitting in the heavens at the table of the Lord. A one-time supernatural vision of Christ and miraculously hearing his voice from heaven was not sufficient! He had caught a fleeting vision of the Lord, and he wanted more.

Something in Paul's soul cried out, "Oh, that I might know him!" No wonder he could say to an entire Christian system, "For I am determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (*1 Corinthians 2:2, NKJV*). He was saying, "Let the Jerusalem Judaizers keep to their legalism. Let others argue their points of doctrine. Let those who seek to be justified by works wear themselves out. But as for me, I want more of Christ!" Beloved, we should have the same desire.

DAY 25

THE CONSUMING FIRE OF GOD

by Jim Cymbala

Jesus never baptized anyone with water. Why? Because the baptism that he would administer was the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire (see Luke 3:16). Don't mistake those words as indicating two baptisms, one of the Spirit and another of fire. Instead, Luke was using imagery, fire as a symbol representing the Spirit, to describe one baptism. Jesus baptizes in the consuming fire of the Holy Spirit.

If you light a match and set a piece of wood on fire, the fire will penetrate the wood. That's what the Holy Spirit does in our lives. He goes beyond surface appearances to the root of our beings. The Spirit doesn't put Band-Aids on anything; he goes to the core of our problems to provide help.

Likewise, preaching that is anointed by the Holy Spirit is fiery preaching. That doesn't mean beating people down or condemning them; rather, it means ministry that penetrates the heart, reveals sin, and vividly shows

the need for Jesus Christ. Without the Holy Spirit's fire, preaching can descend to mere entertainment or displays of oratory.

When Peter preached the first sermon of the Christian era, those ineloquent but fiery words produced deep conviction and a response of "What shall we do?" (see Acts 2:37). Teaching aids that help preachers communicate are useful, but without the Spirit's fire, hearts will never be humbled and broken before the Lord.

In Jeremiah, God asked, "Is not my word like a fire?" (*Jeremiah 23:29*). The Word preached with the Spirit's fire cuts through the clutter and deals with the troubled condition of our hearts. Many people probably have little interest in experiencing God's fiery word; they prefer entertaining services and sermons that aren't confrontational. However, the Spirit's fire always cuts to the chase and deals with the hindrances that keep us from the blessing of God.

DAY 26

HIS SUPERNATURAL FIRE

by David Wilkerson

Isaiah cried, “Lord, you are our Father and we all are your people! Reveal yourself and touch us once more” (see Isaiah 64:8-9).

Centuries later, the same cry was heard among another remnant, 120 believers who had gathered in a rented room in Jerusalem. It was a time much like Isaiah’s day, a period of great religious observance with multitudes flocking to the temple from all over Israel. However, the people were going through the motions, observing the rituals.

You may wonder, “How could this be? This was the generation that had sat under the fiery preaching of John the Baptist. A generation that had beheld God in flesh walking among them, working miracles.” Yet they were lifeless, dry, empty.

Jesus himself had wept over these highly religious people. He cried, “You have the very appearance of godliness, and you go about doing charitable things,

but inside you're dead." They weren't stirred by the signs and wonders Jesus performed. They weren't moved when he cast out demons, freeing people who had suffered demonic bondage for years. In the end, they rejected him, turning away from God's offer of grace.

Yet the Lord never gave up on his people. Jesus prophesied to his 120 disciples, "I am going to rain down my Spirit on all flesh." To prepare them for this, he instructed, "Go to Jerusalem and tarry there until I come."

Christ's message to his followers was essentially this: "When you're together, fire is going to fall on the whole gathering, and your hearts will melt. My supernatural fire is going to remove all mountains in your neighbors, your fellow Jews and in all nations. Hardness and unbelief will dissolve, with thousands saved in one hour. The very mention of my name will convict and convince multitudes."

DAY 27

THE ONLY GUIDE YOU'LL EVER NEED

by Jim Cymbala

Thank God that the Holy Spirit's fire produces light, something we desperately need in a world full of difficult decisions and hidden dangers. The Spirit illuminates our lives and our choices so that we can see the path ahead and know what to avoid. Despite this, too often we don't seek the Holy Spirit's direction when making vital decisions.

The Holy Spirit is God's only agent on earth. He was sent here to guide us. Read the book of Acts and you will see that a computer-mapping program didn't govern Paul's trips. The illumination of the Holy Spirit guided his path.

To the believers in Thessalonica, Paul wrote, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire" (*1 Thessalonians 5:19, ISV*). Amazingly, although the Holy Spirit is fully God, it is entirely possible for believers to hinder his work and quench his sacred fire. Some people falsely believe that whatever God wants to do he will do. Consider Jesus' invitation to his own church in Laodicea: "Here I am! I

stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me” (*Revelation 3:20*).

If he is Christ, and he wants in, why doesn't he just come in? Why does he bother knocking and asking?

That is the mystery of God's sovereignty and our free will. We must respond to him or else we will miss out on his planned blessing. “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline” (*2 Timothy 1:6-7*). Paul is telling Timothy to stir up the embers, to keep the fire going. We need to do the same.

We need the fire of the Holy Spirit changing our lives; we need it spreading throughout our towns and cities, spreading so Christ can be glorified. May that be your prayer today. Send the fire, God. Burn, change, renovate, illuminate as we wait in Christ's name.

DAY 28

A LAND OF PLEADING HEARTS

by Gary Wilkerson

“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (*1 Peter 1:6-7, ESV*).

No one wants to just go through the motions. Don't you want to be a man or woman who clearly has the touch of God on your life?

I believe God wants to raise up people and say, “Ah, there's a vessel right there that I can work through. There's a heart, there's a mouth, there's a voice that I can speak through in these dark days.” He wants people through whom he can stretch out his hand to heal and give signs and wonders. As the enemy comes in like a flood, the Lord sets up a counterpoint. That's what he wants to do in your life.

If you're living in a generation that is raging against the Holy One, then you're going to need a pleading in your heart saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come! Come, Holy Spirit in your fullness and your power, come to your church and revive us. Awaken us."

We need the Holy Spirit to shake this place once again and put us through the refiner's fire, burning off the dross so that we might come out as pure gold. We want to come out of hard times and oppression on fire for God.

I pray that once again the Holy Spirit would capture our hearts. Lord, stretch out your hand on our lives. Lord, put the touch on our country. Oh God, that's our cry. I ask that our prayer lives would once more be on fire and that we would become almost obsessed with seeking the Lord's face. We need to ask our Lord to rid us of backsliding and a coldness of heart, an unwillingness to be corrected. He must heal us so that we can come into the fullness of the anointing he has for us.

DAY 29

FAN THE FLAMES OF YOUR GIFT

by Gary Wilkerson

We all understand that Jesus gave us the Great Commission, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (*Matthew 28:19-20, ESV*).

Now the commission we have here is very fire-breathing and very passionate, but it’s also not very specific. It’s just kind of “Go and make disciples and teach them and train them to observe and go out around the world and do all these different things.”

So Paul helped clarify what we’re to do. More than building a program or a system, Paul wanted to build up a man. There are six aspects of disciple living that we can learn about in one part of Paul’s letter to Timothy. “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice

and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Timothy 1:5-7).

Number one, we can glean from this passage there is a forging of love. The second one is a faith that is sincere. The third one is a flame that can be fanned. The fourth is a fearlessness that is of faith. Number five is the following of a pattern. Number six is a fellowship of fire.

These are six things that I hope will build your heart to become that kind of disciple that Jesus so longs for you to be and that I believe you desire to be as well.

How we begin being a disciple or making a disciple does not start with power or authority or a job. The first movement in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ is learning how to love one another. “So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13). Start by simply loving one another.

DAY 30

WHEN GOD STRIKES A MATCH

by David Wilkerson

As the hundred and twenty disciples gathered faithfully in the Upper Room, they weren't just waiting for a date on the calendar. The Bible says, "They were all with one accord in one place" (*Acts 2:1, NKJV*). This means they had come together as one body for one purpose: the hope of seeing Jesus' promise fulfilled. Their cry was the same as in Isaiah's day: "Lord, rip open the heavens and come down. Let all mountains of opposition, human and demonic, melt at your presence, so the lost may be saved" (see Isaiah 64:1).

We know what happened next. The Holy Ghost fell, with visible fire appearing on the disciples' heads.

This holy outpouring took them to the streets of Jerusalem where thousands of lifeless religious people saw and heard what was happening. Immediately, the Spirit fell on that crowd, melting every mountain of opposition.

Peter stood up to preach, and suddenly, the masses of those who had hardened their hearts and rejected Jesus melted at the mention of Christ's name. Three thousand people cried out to be saved.

Consider what God was doing. All around the world at that time, there were wars, uprisings, great darkness, empires invading nations. Multiple millions were busy with commerce as cargo ships and trade caravans traversed the globe. However, God's interest and focus was on a hundred and twenty humble, praying saints gathered in a small, rented room.

What does this tell us? Simply put, when God strikes a match, there must be kindling for it to catch fire. As his Spirit blew on those saints at Pentecost, a flickering flame became a fire that soon would cover the whole earth.

Once again, the same cry is rising all over the world today.



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HOW DO WE LIVE PASSIONATELY FOR CHRIST?

The apostle Paul urged his son in the faith, Timothy, “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God...” (2 Timothy 1:6, *ESV*). That imperious call applies to all of us.

We have been given the gift of the Spirit with salvation; the Father has placed his fire in our hearts. However, we must be conscious of what dims our awareness of God and press into the Word, stirring up our longing for heaven and urgency on earth.



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