

Light the Fire

*~lighting the fire of God's passion in your church~
~14 Day IMPACT Prayer Adventure*



REFOCUSING AND IGNITING THE FIRE OF THE CHURCH

"The shepherds are senseless and do not inquire of the LORD; so they do not prosper and all their flock is scattered - Listen the report is coming...." - Jeremiah 10:21

Introduction to *Light the Fire*

The Great Dream:

One of my greatest dreams has been to be a part of a church like the New Testament Church—a church on fire for God. A church with a burning passion to be like Christ in character and love.

Have you read Acts 2 recently? Verse 42 in *The Message* begins with five powerful words: “Everyone around was in awe.” Can you imagine? Can you imagine having your city and community in awe because of what is happening in your church?

Continue reading from *The Message*, and it states:

*Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person’s need was met. They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. . . . Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved. (Acts 2:42-47, *The Message*)*

Have you, like me, ever read this account of the New Testament church in Acts 2 and longed for any of the following?

- A church on fire for God?
- A church growing rapidly in numbers and in spiritual maturity?
- A church where true fellowship, discipleship, and servanthood exist?
- A church that affects its surrounding community so much that others long to be a part of your church family?
- A church where everyone is in awe because of all that is happening there?
- A church that truly makes a difference for God?
- A church that lives out the Great Commission daily?
- A church with new converts, with new disciples?

Honesty Time:

Do you really, honestly, want this for your individual church? For the church in which you are a leader? What would it take for your church to become a modern example of the Acts 2 New Testament church?

"I want the whole passion of my heart for my Savior, the whole Bible for my book, the whole church for my fellowship and the whole world for my mission field." - John Wesley

Would you like to have the Wesleyan vision?

Would you love to know God's vision for your church?

Would you love to be doing what God wants for your church?

Would you love to be a part of a God-sized plan? A God-sized miracle?

Would you love to be an instrument God can use to reach your community?

Do you really, honestly, want this for your individual church? If so, **one word of caution:** There is no one plan out there, no one book out there that has all the answers. There is nothing you individually or you as a group at your church can follow in a step-by-step fashion that will make this happen. It's up to God, and it's up to you to listen and be obedient.

What can you do?

1. Spend the next two weeks praying about God's vision for your church.

Pray for the following:

- That God will give you direction to make your church the church on fire that you have always longed for and dreamed about;
- That God will take away your personal desires and thoughts of "what" a church should be and look like, and instead, replace it with what He wants a church to be;
- That you will be receptive to God's will, just like Samuel who "let none of [God's] words fall to the ground;"
- That, just like George Mueller, you will seek at the beginning of this study to get your heart "into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter."

2. Spend the next two weeks studying the following pages and answering the questions the best you can. Remember that many times these questions have no "correct" answers. The only answers are those that are God-directed. The key to discovering the answers to any of these questions for your church is prayer. Pray, pray, pray. Search for God's answers, not man's.

Remember the Promise:

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

(2 Chronicles 7:14)

"Where there is no vision the people perish." (Proverbs 29:18)

Why Build a Fire?

"this is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths. Ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. but you said, "We will not walk in it. (Jeremiah 6:16)

Day One:

Fire. Why choose fire to represent what God might want to do in your church? The most prominent example of fire that might come to mind from the Bible occurs in Acts, at the moment that the New Testament church gets its start. Read Acts 2:1-4.

1. What did the fire of the Holy Spirit enable them to do? _____

2. According to verse 5, why might the Holy Spirit have enabled them with this gift?

3. What did this Holy Spirit fire allow Peter to do in Acts 2? _____

4. Thinking of Peter's denial, why is this important? _____

5. What did this Holy Spirit fire allow to happen with the church? _____

6. What did it allow Peter to do in Acts 3? _____

7. In Acts 4? (Hint: See verse 14) _____

Notice how powerfully God was able to overcome all sorts of obstacles----language obstacles, human weaknesses and fears, human selfishness and personal schedules, greed and physical ailments. All of these were overcome when the fire of God's Holy Spirit came upon them.

Note the impact of the fire of God's passion on Jeremiah's life. Read Jeremiah 20:9: *But if I say, "I will not mention him [God] or speak any more in his name" his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed I cannot.* Can you imagine the impact God's passion and fire could have on our churches? What if you had 3 or 4 or a dozen people in your church who were experiencing the fire of God in their hearts? What could happen at your church?

Use the remainder of your time today to pray about what God wants to do in your church for Him. Use the list of prayers on page 3 to get you started. Claim God's promise from 2 Chronicles 7:14 for your church and Jeremiah 29:13.

Why Build a Fire?

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end, it leads to death." (Proverbs 14:21)

Day Two:

Suppose you and your family go for a weekend to a nearby state park that contains very primitive facilities and will be a true camping experience. Building a fire is essential for many reasons. What are some reasons you would want your family to have a fire?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

You might have listed things like warmth, protection from predators, light to see at night, source for cooking fires and warming water, sense of security from the dark, and a center of community around which the family gathers.

Fires in a church are just as important. We discussed some of the reasons yesterday from Acts and Jeremiah. Here are some other reasons.

Think about the people living around your church. How about your neighborhood or sphere of influence. What are their needs? Do you know anyone in your community who is lonely, is without family, has been betrayed, needs hope, needs love, needs help, needs support, needs answers? Does that sound familiar? Are there people inside the church who are experiencing the same needs?

Don't we all desperately need a fire? We need the same things that a camper needs from a fire. We need warmth, security, protection, light, a source of daily survival, and a place for community. We were born with these needs, and only God and the church family can fulfill these needs.

Gallup listed the top six needs people have today. They are: 1. To believe life is meaningful and has purpose; 2. To have a sense of community and deeper relationships; 3. To be appreciated and respected; 4. To be listened to and heard; 5. To feel that one is growing in faith; 6. To have practical help in developing a mature faith.

1. How does your church meet any of the needs listed by Gallup? Think of the positives!

Day 2 (cont.):

2. Dream big. Let no obstacle stand in the way. Remember that physical, emotional, and language obstacles; fears, and human weaknesses have never stood in the way of God. What are some ways in which your church could begin meeting the above needs? Don't worry about money or about resources. Just let God speak to you about ways your church could meet needs. _____

3. Pray. Use the following prayer as a starting point.

God, we all have needs. When I think of those around this church who don't know You, it makes me hurt. I can't imagine living a life without Your hope, without Your peace, and without Your love. How lost and hopeless their lives must be. And yet, with the attraction of the world, we are going to need Your fire to reach them. We can't do it on our own.

We at this church have a need, too. You know our needs. You know our history. You know the challenges and the opportunities we have before us. But, how we want to know Your will! We all want more of a passion, a fire, and a sense of purpose in our lives. We are doing this study to listen to You. And you've promised that if we're hungry or thirsty to do Your will, if we're really earnestly seeking You, You will answer our desire and fulfill our hunger and thirst.

God, we want to know Your will for our church. We want to know what You want to do through this group of Your people. Please speak to me. Please speak to my fellow church leaders as we seek to do Your will.

Help us ignore the earthly obstacles. Help us keep our eyes on You and Your fire. Help us remember Your promise in Philippians 4:19: *"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."* Today You know my personal needs and my church's needs. I bring these needs to You, and I ask You to revive the fire, beginning in me and my life, and spreading it to the church I help to lead. Thank you, God. I love You. Amen.

Read Nehemiah's Prayer: Nehemiah 1:4-11

4. Remember. - *"for when David had served God's purposes in his own generation; he fell asleep."...for your are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Acts 13:36, Ephesians 2:10)*

“For Such a Time as This”

~knowing your climate and terrain~

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly.” Colossians 4:2-4

Day Three:

Expert scouts would tell you that part of the building of any fire would include careful study and assessment of the area where you would choose to build your fire. Part of this assessment would include knowledge about the terrain and climate where you would start your fire. You must decide what type of fire you would choose to build.

What is the climate and terrain where God planted you and your church? What is your community and city like? What are the needs? What are the desires of your people? Why has God planted you right where you are?

As you know, nothing God does is an accident. He never says, “Oops!” He has planted you and your church right where you are. Why? What is the purpose? Finding this out might help you decide what type of fire God wants to build in your church.

Are you in a community of military families? Your ministry focus will be different than a church in the midst of young, middle-aged families. Are you placed in a downtown city location where you are surrounded by families in need of food, love, and support? Why has God planted you right where you are?

The book of Esther is a good place to start when looking at your church’s placement in God’s timing. By the “accident” of Esther’s beauty and the “accident” of the former queen’s dismissal, Esther found herself queen of one of the greatest powers of the world. When life seemed to be going smoothly, suddenly Esther found herself in a very scary position. A vengeful prime minister, Haman, had made up his mind to destroy God’s chosen people, the Jews. The “accident” of Esther’s religious and ethnic background played a key role in the next part of the story.

Read Esther chapter 4.

1. Why is Esther scared of approaching the king? (vs. 9-11) _____

2. Mordecai reminds Esther in verse 14 of God’s provision for His people and her role in this by telling her _____

Day 3 (cont.)

3. Esther makes a bold statement in verse 16: _____

Esther shows that God’s perfect timing—combined with the courage of His people who are obedient to Him by being in the right place at the right time—made His chosen people prosper.

You, too, have been placed at the right place at the right time. What is right about your church? What is right about the leadership of the church? Why has God placed you right where you are? The child of God who makes a difference in His Kingdom learns why God has placed him right where he is and what God’s will is for his life.

Are you willing to recognize God’s exquisite placement of your life and your church? Are you willing not only to recognize it, but then say as Esther did, “And if I perish, I perish.”

God worked a miracle for His people through the obedience of one young woman. What is God wanting to do for you, your family, your church, and your community? “For such a time as this,” you are where you are.

Tell of a time when you sensed God’s perfect placement of another human in your life or His perfect placement of you in another’s life? _____

Prayer for Today: Pray that God will reveal His perfect placement of you. Pray that God will reveal His perfect placement of your church.

Thoughts/Observations: _____

Lord, why am I where I am - Lord? _____

“For Such a Time as This”

~knowing your climate and terrain~

"Without fire in your heart you will never achieve your potential." - Howell Bell

Day Four:

Yesterday we studied God’s perfect and exquisite timing in our lives by studying the story of Esther. We prayed for God to reveal to you why you are where you are.

Scouts know how to build different types of fires, depending on whether they are built on a hillside or on flat land, in a forest with lots of overhanging branches or on sand, in wet weather or in dry weather, in snow or in heat. Depending on your climate and terrain, fire preparation and safety concerns become completely different.

You and your church are trying to build a fire of God’s passion and His Spirit in your congregation and in your community. What is the climate? What is the terrain?

First of all, where does the fire need to be lit? Inside your church first? Outside of the church to catch your congregation on fire? In one department of the church so that the whole church captures the excitement?

Thoughts/Observations: _____

Next, what are the needs and concerns of those in your congregation? Do you really meet the needs of your church family? Or is there something you need to do with your church congregation to prepare them for the fire? Perhaps, focusing on discipleship, prayer, God-sized miracles in the Bible? Is there anything you need to do to prepare the terrain of your congregation for this fire-building experience? Ask God to give you guidance on this. Don’t get frustrated by past experiences or by the apparent unwillingness of your congregation to get excited by anything. God is able to work

through anyone and any situation if the leadership is praying for a God-sized work.

Thoughts/Observations: _____

“For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29: 11-13

Day Four (cont.): Think about the climate and terrain where your church is located. Think of common needs or characteristics of the individuals in your community. Remember to step beyond your box. For example, think about the concerns and needs of:

- a. every age groups
- b. all socio-economic groups
- c. professional & blue-collar groups
- d. needs of teens and children and babies
- e. those who are married, divorced, or single
- f. those of all religious backgrounds

Each church will have different groups living around them. Why are you where you are? List some common needs or characteristics of the individuals in your community.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

How could your church begin to minister to these groups and these needs? Don't worry about resources, money, or facilities yet. Instead, let God speak to you about how He might want to use you and your church at this time and at this place. Think about senior adult day care, after-school child care, teen weekend programs, divorce recovery classes, parenting classes, or opening your church to a congregation of another culture. Let God put the limits on your dreaming. Why are you and your church placed right where you are?

Thoughts/Observations: _____

Read Acts 2:42-47 : What did the early church do to reach people?

- _____
- _____
- _____

God's Perfect Firestarter

~Selecting Your Site~

"It felt like a fire burning in us when Jesus...explained the Scriptures to us." (Luke 24:32)

Day Five:

As we studied in Days 3 and 4, the awareness of your climate and terrain makes a big difference in the type of fire you choose to build. The selection of your site is also very important.

Think about God's selection for sites and for firestarters in examples throughout the Bible. God knew all about the right firestarters for the right fire. Although others didn't understand, God knew exactly who He would use to start the fire and how He would use this person to build the exact fire in the exact place He wanted.

For example, let's study Moses and his life. Let's do a pretend resume of his life.

1. His heritage (Exodus 2) _____
2. His adopted parent (Exodus 2) _____
3. What he learned while with his adopted parent _____

4. His crime of passion (Ex. 2:11-14) _____
5. His place of escape (Ex. 2:14-end) _____
6. What he learned in the years between Exodus 2 and 3 _____

If others saw Moses, they would see a sheep-herder living in the desert, living a life of isolation. They would wonder what had happened to the "high and mighty" Moses who had lived in the palace of the Pharaoh. They would see a man who was a murderer, a man with a bad temper. They would see a man who had a speech problem who was very insecure about his abilities.

God saw someone different. God saw a perfect firestarter. God saw a man perfect for the fire He wanted to start in Egypt. God saw a man with all the right qualifications to speak to the Pharaoh. God saw the man perfect for leading the millions of Israelites out of Egypt into the Promised Land.

"The burning bush is a symbol of everything that surrounds the person who is ready, and it is on fire with the presence of God Himself." -Oswald Chambers

Day Five (cont.): Just think of the way God worked in Moses' life:

- What better man to talk to the Pharaoh than one who had lived in the Pharaoh's house?
- What better man to present logical evidence to the Pharaoh than one who had learned logic and his education in the house of the Pharaoh?
- What better choice to speak for the rights of the Israelites than someone who had risked his own life out of concern for others?
- What better choice to defend his own people than one who was an Israelite himself?
- What better choice to help a group of people survive in the desert than the one man who knew how to survive in the desert for 40 years?
- What better choice to lead a group of unruly, stubborn people than the man who had experience leading a group of unruly, stubborn sheep?

God knew exactly what He was doing. And He knows exactly what He wants to do in you and in your church. Are your eyes open to what He is revealing and your ears sensitive to his calling voice from the "burning bush" experience?

Prayer Suggestions:

Pray today that God will give you His wisdom in finding firestarters in your church, people who might otherwise go unnoticed but who have the God-given talents and skills to start a fire in an area of your church.

Pray today that God will give you His wisdom in discovering how your experiences and your skills might also be used for His Kingdom.

Pray today that God will allow you to use all of His children in some important area of ministry in which they are already prepared. God gave each of His children to your church for a reason. Let's pray for wisdom that God show you how each of these children is to be used.

Remember that God personally crafted each of us and allows us to go through life experiences so we may comfort others.

For help with this, re-read about God's personal creation of each of us in Psalm 139: 13-16. Each of us is truly a wonder!

Also, look at II Corinthians 1:4 which states: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

What experiences have those in your congregation gone through that could be used as a fire-starting ministry to comfort others in your congregation or community?

Read 1 Samuel 17: What does David & Goliath story have to say to us?

God's Perfect Firestarter

~Selecting Your Site~

"do not put out the Spirit's fire" (1 Thess. 5:19-23)

Day Six:

In *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby uses a great illustration to discuss how God builds the church to match the fire that He wants that specific church to build. He writes,

"If I were going to be a weight lifter, I would train my body so that it could lift weights effectively. If I were going to be a sprinter, I would train my body differently. When I want to do a job well, I train my body to match the assignment.

When God builds a local church as the body of Christ, He adds members to the body and trains them to match the assignment He has for that body. He builds a local church body in a way that enables that body to respond to Him. Then God can accomplish an assignment through that body." (181)

I know this is true. A friend of mine shared this story with me: "In a church I attended, we often commented about how many nurses and others in the medical field there were in our church. After taking the *Experiencing God* class, I began thinking about why God put these individuals together. Soon, a medical ministry grew from this church, with therapists, nurses, and doctors using the skills God had given them to comfort others. As the church was placed in a location with many retirees and elderly, many began feeling a burden to share their medical training as a ministry to others. They gathered used medical supplies—walkers, bathtub rails, portable toilets—and they offered them at no cost to church members who had a need for them. They answered questions about what to expect during certain procedures. They offered classes on care giving, on Alzheimer's, and they gave defibrillator training to many in the church. Several began driving the elderly to their doctors' appointments or to chemotherapy. They hosted blood drives and a church blood bank."

God truly put these individuals in one place to serve an important need in this congregation and in the community. Think about the possible results of such a loving ministry. One person in a mobile home park shares with her neighbor about the church giving her help with her health problems, and the work of God is being done. The "salt" of God's people is being shared, then, with possible unbelievers.

I could share story after story about people brought to a specific church for a perfect time—of an elementary school principal brought to a church just in time for the church to begin a preschool that used her as its new director, of a church with a retired psychologist who was able to use his abilities to deal with someone who desperately needed his advice, of a church wanting to meet the needs of its divorced adults and finding within its congregation a person with a great burden for divorce recovery, or of a church needing a part-time children's pastor, etc.

God does work in this way. I'm sure you have stories of your own. Right now, think about some of the "fires" you listed on Day 4. Think of some of the needs in your community you listed.

Next, think of those God has sent to your church. What are their unique abilities or skills or experiences? Do any of them match up? Or, think just about the people in your congregation. Are there any ideas of how God sent them to you "for such a time as this"?

Some Ideas to Get You Started:

- Do many of them have preschool teaching experience? Could they possibly help you begin a preschool program or a parents' night out program at your church?
- Do you have any who have been through recovery? Could they possibly start a Christian-based recovery course?
- Do you have those who have experienced financial success who could teach finance courses?
- Do you have those who have experienced divorce who could teach divorce recovery?
- Do you have teachers who could start an important parenting ministry?
- Do you have young, stay-at-home mothers who could begin a mothers' support group?
- Are there many children in your community without transportation who could benefit from a van ministry?

Thoughts/Possibilities: _____

Read Rom 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4:10

My Response:

“All for One, and One for All”

~building one fire together~

“for you were created by and for Jesus Christ.” Colossians 1:16

Day Seven:

Do you remember this phrase made popular by the Three Musketeers? It would be great if this could be true more often in our lives and in our churches. How great if we could truly be all for The One, knowing that His will and His purpose is for all of us.

It's not as much fun in life or in church if all of us aren't helping. Have you ever been part of a car wash fundraiser? If you haven't, have you observed one? What typically happens? If it's like any car wash fundraiser in which I've ever been involved, a few do the work while the rest watch. And if the group isn't unified as one, the ones doing the work will complain about the “lazy” ones, while the ones who aren't working don't understand why the others won't loosen up. They lack unity of focus and purpose.

It's hard being unified when not all are ready to roll up their sleeves and get into the action. It's hard building a fire when two of the fire-starters are arguing about what site to pick or what type of fire to build. It's hard when everyone appears to support the fire, and then a few start a fire on their own somewhere else, trying to get recruits to join theirs. Has this happened to you in your church? If you've been part of a church for long, you'll know that this happens more than we want to admit. This problem didn't start with us. It started long ago in the Old Testament.

Let's study this issue of unity for a while. Look at Numbers 12.

1. What did Miriam and Aaron do that displeased God? _____

2. What happened to Miriam as a result? _____ 3. After

she was confined outside of camp, what did the rest of the people do? _____

What ends forward growth and forward movement? Disobedience. Disrespect. A lack of unity. God is displeased with this. There are always consequences of a lack of unity. Bitterness and discontent and a failure to discover God's perfect will usually result.

Think about the Israelites in the following chapter of Numbers 13. It seems they would have learned their lesson from Miriam's example, but once again, they prove themselves to be just as unruly and hard-headed as sheep. Twelve men are sent into the land of Canaan to explore and give a report back to the Israelite mass.

Day 7 (cont.): They know that God has sent them to conquer and possess this land. They know that God rescued them from the Egyptians so they could possess this land. They know how powerful God has been in the past, but suddenly, the giants of the land—all of the great problems and obstacles—become so giant they become afraid.

They know they are to “build a fire” in this new land. They know it, but they’re scared and discouraged. As you probably already know, ten of the twelve men come back with scary and horrible reports that discourage the people. What fears do they return with? (Exodus 13:31) _____

What do Joshua and Caleb try to remind the people? (Exodus 14:8-9) _____

What is the punishment of God for their fear and disobedience? (Ex. 14:33-35) _____

What does this say to you and your church? God wants you to build a fire started by Him that will truly impact the world. He wants you and your church to build His fire and His passion in others. However, it will not be without attack. You have to realize this. Satan will be sure to attack you, maybe even as you’re sitting here right now, to fear what has always happened in your church or to fear the reactions of others. You may be just like the ten men and see the giants before you. What are some of the giants you will face as you build your fire? _____

THOUGHTS FOR YOU TO PRAY ABOUT:

What would happen if you would focus on God rather than the giants?

What would happen if you trusted God enough to say, just like Joshua and Caleb, “The Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of the giants.”

Will you be a Joshua OR will you be one of the ten who is kept from the Promised Land due to fear? Will you lead your church into God’s purpose for them?

“All for One, and One for All”

~building one fire together~

“David said to Saul, Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.” (1 Samuel 17:32)

Day Eight:

Giants are scary, but as David learned one sunny afternoon, God is bigger than any giant. If God wants to deliver you from your giants and claim His promises for your church, then He can. No giant of the past, no financial obstacles, no facility obstacles, no “this-is-the-way-it’s-always-been” obstacle can stand in the way of God. On Day 1, we looked at all the obstacles that stood in the way of the New Testament church becoming the New Testament church we all long to have, and God didn’t allow any of the typical obstacles to stand in the way of scores of people being added to their number daily.

Look again at Acts 2:42-47. What pronoun is repeatedly used (and for those who might have forgotten high school English, a pronoun is “he,” “she,” “they,” “it”)? _____

Notice that verse 44 says, “All the believers were together and had everything in common.” Do you think that means all the believers were exactly alike? There’s no way this could be true, but in God, their purposes and goals and focus were exactly the same. They wanted to be His, to serve Him, and to do His will. And, in that way, everything that was important in life was in common. No wonder they had no problem sharing everything they owned with each other.

Wouldn’t it be great if we could say that about our churches today? Can you imagine someone telling his neighbor about your church and saying, “We’re all together and have everything in common. We are all for one, and one for all.” Why don’t we adopt the Three Musketeer motto for our Christian church? We are all for Him, and because of Him, we are for each other.

Let’s think for a moment about your church. How is this going to happen in real-life terms? Blackaby states that in many churches today, we are more interested in what God wants us to do than in what He wants us to be. We think our church is great if we have 15 programs a day for each age group, when actually, our church isn’t growing in Him. God wants a church to do what He wants us to do. However, He also wants us to be what He wants us to be. Never does He want a church to split because one group wants to do one thing for God while the other group wants to do something else.

We have to listen to the whole, knowing that rarely will everyone agree with the same idea. However, we do have to listen and love one another because we are Christ’s body, united together as one. It is everyone’s job to listen to God and to do His will.

To quote from Henry Blackaby one more time, he uses the Parable of the Train Tracks to demonstrate the responsibility we have to work as a whole to discover God’s will.

Day Eight (cont.):

Suppose your eye could say to your body, "Let us walk down these train tracks. The way is all clear. Not a train in sight." So you begin to walk down the tracks.

Then suppose your ear says to the body, "I hear a whistle coming from the other direction."

Your eye argues, "But nothing is on the track as far as I can see. Let's keep on walking." So your body listens only to your eye and keeps on walking.

Soon your ear says, "That whistle is getting louder and closer!"

Then your feet say, "I can feel the rumbling motion of a train coming. We better get our body off these tracks!"

It would seem silly for us to keep standing on the train tracks because the eye still sees nothing. Our bodies work as a cohesive whole to protect and defend the body. To listen to just one sense or one organ would be very dangerous. Our churches should do the same thing. If God is speaking through this booklet to more than one of you about a fire that needs to be set, God is probably wanting to see it happen. The church wants to hear how God has been working in you to see this fire lit. When the church begins to pray as a whole for God's will and several of its leaders bear witness to God's movement in their lives, the church may then sense that it truly is God's will and pray for it to be confirmed in them as well.

Continue the rest of today's study, praying for God to unify your church. Do you know how important unity was to God? Do you know that this was one of the last concerns Jesus had before His death? In John 17, He prayed for us, for you and your church. Pray this with Him.

"I'm praying not only for them but also for those who will believe in me because of them and their witness about me. The goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind---just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, so they might be one heart and mind with us. Then the world might believe that you, in fact, sent me. The same glory you gave me, I gave them, so they'll be as unified and together as we are---I in them and you in me. Then they'll be mature in this oneness, and give the godless world evidence that you've sent me and loved them in the same way you've loved me."
(John 17:20-23, The Message)

What does this passage of Scripture say to the church? _____

_____.

What Do You Have in Your Hand?

~discovering the tools and materials you already have~

"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13)

Day Nine:

Some days I've wanted to do something really special with my kids to be able to create a permanent memory-maker. Without money or time to travel to Disney World or some other kid-friendly "magical" place, I search for things to do that will **create memories**. I've often planned for days on end, getting supplies together for a really exciting craft or project. I've planned events, such as traveling to a nearby children's museum or zoo. I've planned events I thought would **be permanent memory-maker events**. However, what I've discovered is that these aren't the moments that usually make the memories.

What make the **memories** that my kids will remember—swinging my youngest son on our backyard swing for hours on end; playing games with my older son and wrestling with him on the floor; reading the same dinosaur book to my boys night after night, complete with sound effects and emotion; sitting around the dinner table, seeing who can slurp the longest spaghetti noodle; making a tent with an old sheet, pillows, and the dining room chairs on the living room floor.

Real memories come from things I already had in my hand, from the everyday possessions I already own. If only I could see and really realize the resources at hand! I know One who did! I know One who saw the resources available to Him. **Jesus desired to build a fire-igniting team of men. However, He didn't choose as we would.**

Jesus had the chance to surround himself with the best and the brightest the world had to offer. When he started ministry, he could have created the ultimate Dream Team of service-minded men and women. He could have taken applications to find the most energetic, dedicated, and---team players. He could have made teachable hearts and the ability to follow through on definite job requirements. A quick peek into hearts could have revealed those with the natural gifts of preaching, teaching, evangelism, and missions. He could have signed on a youth leader, a children's ministry coordinator, and even an administrative pastor for good measure. But he didn't. Take a look at the men and women who surrounded Jesus. They kept missing the point. They couldn't seem to trust their leader. They were always blowing it. And finally, they all bailed on him. Hardly what we'd expect in a ministry team. So why did Jesus pick this bunch of people for his closest companions? Because he loved them. And he knew how his love would change them into the kind of people God could use mightily. (source unknown)

Think about Jesus' Dream Team of disciples---his very first group of students. Actually, they would be the only group of individuals to be taught by The Teacher, a group of

Day Nine (cont.): individuals destined to change a world. Their job would be to teach others and share with others the teachings of God, of the New Covenant, of Jesus Christ the Messiah. Their job would be bigger than you and I can even imagine.

Before fax machines, the Internet, phones, and UPS, these men would have to share the Gospel with people from all nations of all languages. Traveling thousands of miles from home, these men would face persecution, financial barriers, horrible storms at sea, beatings, and difficult crowds who didn't want to hear The Message.

And yet, what resources did Jesus pick to make up this Dream Team? Twelve ordinary men---twelve people like you and me. Twelve who had normal, everyday character weaknesses and strengths. Let's think about a few of these men. What were they like before Pentecost? What character traits were shown in these scriptures? Think of how these traits sound like some in your church you work with and mentor.

1. The storm (Matthew 8:23-27) _____
2. The Feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:15-17) _____
3. The Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-4) _____
4. A Teaching Moment (Matthew 18:21-22) _____
5. A Compassionate Moment (Matthew 19:13) _____
6. A Human Moment (Matthew 20:20-24) _____
7. The Last Supper (Luke 22:24) _____
8. The Garden Scene (Matthew 26:36-45) _____
9. The Garden Scene (Matthew 26:51) _____
10. The Trial (Matthew 26:69-75) _____
11. The Crucifixion: (John 19:25-27) *Note: Who is there? Who's not there?* _____

12. After the Crucifixion (John 20:19) _____
13. After the Crucifixion: (John 20:24-25) _____

If God could work with a group like this with no bulletins, no home mailings, no trained staff, no facilities, and no multi-media worship, what can He do today with the resources He's provided for us? Let's pray for God's wisdom to help us see with His eyes the resources He's already provided! **What resources has He put in your hand?**

What Do You Have in Your Hand?

~discovering the tools and materials you already have~

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Day Ten:

Yesterday we discussed the weaknesses and everyday character flaws Jesus was able to use to build His Dream Team of disciples. What a group of flawed individuals He used! From Peter's impetuous, hot-tempered, impulsive spirit to Thomas' need to see everything in black and white to the typical sibling rivalry between James and John for seats next to Christ! Jesus dealt with **all types of personalities**.

And so do you in your church! I know that probably you are already thinking of those in your church who fit the above characteristics. But do we see these individuals with Jesus' eyes? Do we see the abilities they do have even though they also have character flaws? Jesus looked beyond Peter's weaknesses and saw a man who was passionate about issues in which he believed. He saw a man determined to do what was right (even though he sometimes failed to succeed). Because of this, Jesus told him, *Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it* (Matthew 16:17-18). He saw his capabilities, not his limitations. Can we possibly do the same thing? Probably not in our human power. But with God's power, we can begin to love others and see others in His eyes.

On Day 6, we talked about the importance of seeing every individual who comes to your church as a God-ordained individual. I believe nothing is an accident with God. Why are they a part of your church family? What skills, what talents, or what abilities do they have that you could use for your church ministry? They may be unaware of the fact that God can use any skill of theirs for His church. You may have to teach them this fact, but God can use anyone and wants to use everyone. If, as a church board or a church leadership group, you don't individually know your church people, you need to. God sent them to you for "such a time as this." Why? Find out and you may discover God's Dream Team for your church.

What are the skills and abilities already available in your church family? How could you possibly use those in an area of ministry? Look over your church phone directory or photo directory? List occupations, hobbies, talents, or skills you know some of your people have. _____

Day Ten (cont.):

When you begin to think about the resources Jesus was able to use to create His Dream Team, doesn't it get you excited thinking about what He might see in your church and in your congregation? Wouldn't you love to borrow His binoculars for a moment and see what He sees? I think He wants to show us. Let's pray for His wisdom in this.

Discovering our present resources has got to be one of the most rewarding and yet the most frustrating part of church leadership. It's so rewarding to help others discover God's purpose for their lives. It's so rewarding to see the spark of excitement when they realize that God has something special for them to do in His kingdom. However, it's frustrating, too. As church leadership, plan on being let down. Plan on people not being everything you want them to be. Keep trying to remember Jesus' Dream Team. Try not to get discouraged. Let me be honest with you by revealing one of my personal journal entries (with names changed for obvious reasons) from last year. I have to admit that it was a journal entry from one of those discouraging nights when my Dream Team had let me down, and God led me to Matthew 14, the Feeding of the Five Thousand, and He taught me the following lesson:

The disciples came to Jesus to complain about their daily needs—the stuff I always complain about on nights like tonight, like the lack of workers or the lack of motivated, passionate, committed people in the church—and Jesus told them, “Feed them.” They said exactly what I do, “But it’s impossible.” And He said, “No, it’s not. Bring me what you have.” They brought Him just 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish, and He thanked God and asked God’s blessing on it, and they had enough for all 5,000 with 12 baskets left over. Could that be true for us as well? All He wants is me. I’m enough to make a difference in this church. If 7 items fed 5,000, one item could feed 714. I can do it! With God, I could feed 714. I can do it no matter what the Smith kids are like, no matter whether Tom takes over and has no sensitivity to others, no matter whether the service starts late, people are mad, or whether I have any other passionate workers. God just wants me! He can multiply me if I’m willing to let Him. He just wants me to be obedient and open to Him.

Will you pray God makes you open to Him? Will you pray others in your church become open to His call? Will you pray He gives you His eyes to see the resources already available to you? Pray He will multiply you!

**If every member in this church were just like me, what kind of Church would this be?
Are there changes I need to make...Lord?**

What Do You Have in Your Hand?

~discovering the tools and materials you already have~

"Finally, brothers pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored...."(2 Thess. 3:1)

Day Eleven:

There are three types of materials you must have to build a strong-burning fire:

A. Tinder--Tinder is dry material that ignites with little heat. In other words, with tinder, a spark will start a fire. For example, this can include charred cloth, straw, birch bark, dead grass, dead palm leaves, or sawdust.

B. Kindling--Kindling is readily combustible material that you add to the burning tinder. Kindling increases the fire's temperature so that it will ignite less combustible material.

C. Fuel--Fuel is less combustible material that burns slowly and steadily once ignited.

Isn't that true for the people you know? Do you know those who resemble tinder? Those who resemble the slow-burning fuel? In studying this, I thought about the possibilities in relation to setting a fire at church. We need to have all three types of people in any fire we ignite. Jesus did, too. He had those like Peter who would be ready to burn at a moment's notice. He, however, also had those in His group who would keep burning, no matter the cost and no matter the time involved. Notice that Peter turned from Tinder to Fuel. Think about those you know in your church:

1. Tinder People: *Strengths:* It doesn't take much for them to be excited about something. People who have the "tinder tendency" often burn with intense fury and passion, igniting with little force or motivation, and without any concern for whether others are jumping into the fire or not. Yet, they are crucial to a fire-igniting experience at your church because their excitement will get others ignited as well. They are the types of people who catch others onto the fire. *Weaknesses:* They tend to burn out quickly. Once the original ignition is done, their flame flickers. They're ready to move on. These people have great influence and they either don't know it or don't care one. They have the potential to ignite explosive passion. the sad fact is they are easily discouraged and would rather "burn out" than 'fan the flame."

2. Kindling People: *Strengths:* These people are ready to burn and ready to work on whatever you ask them to, if only you provide them enough information and enough motivation. They aren't ready to jump into anything at the first suggestion. They need to see details and need to know that this fire is worth building. They need to see that they are part of a group and that others will join them in this fire-building experience. However, once ignited, their strength rapidly increases the temperature of the fire at your church. Once they are ignited, the fire is well on its way to being a strong fire. *Weaknesses:* They need others to keep them lit and they need to see details. Their fire lasts longer, but they need stronger ones around to keep them going. These people are caught in the "facts" game instead of the "faith" game.

Everything has to make perfect sense and the fire has to be "built their way." It is sad how many people in the church suffer because of this.

Fuel People: *Strengths:* Fuel people are the energy behind a long-lasting, well-burning fire. These people will burn slowly and steadily once ignited. They don't have an immediate flare-up and then go out. Once lit, they keep burning, no matter how many others are still lit, no matter what the circumstances, no matter how long it keeps going. Fuel people are the strength of your fire. *Weaknesses:* It takes them time to get burning and to see the value of this fire. (CAUTION: I think it's easy to think that these are the "party-poopers" who don't see the value of anything new. We tend to put them in a certain age bracket and see them as traditionalists. However, Fuel People can be of any age. Instead of focusing on their weaknesses, realize that these Fuel People are probably those who are the backbone of all of your church programs. They are the steady, dependable people who show up every time they're supposed to. They are crucial and necessary to keep your fire going. When all the others drop out and the newness wears off, you will need your Fuel People.)

Think about the ramifications of this. If you sense God has placed your church in a community to begin an after-school children's program, it is vitally important you place within the leadership of this program all three types of fire material. Ask God for discretion and wisdom. Be sure your leadership contains the tinder, the kindling, and the fuel. You don't want to invest time, money, facilities, and energy in a program that will flicker out at the first sign of discouraging news or frustrating times. However, you also need the quick-lighters, the ones who will quickly ignite the passion of the importance of this after-school program. You want those excited about God's plan!

Pray about how this applies to the church. What "people resources" has God led to your church? How can you use God's wisdom and discretion to allow people to fulfill God's purpose for both their lives and for the church?

Use Proverbs 2:1-6 as motivation for this prayer:

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

What Do You Have in Your Hand?

~discovering the tools and materials you already have~

"And they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42)

Day Twelve:

I know churches. And I know people. And I can probably hear the one thing that has been in the back of your mind since we started talking about tools and materials you already have. You may be blessed as a church with an abundance of people resources, but you have another problem. You may find yourself with no material or financial resources.

The question is, then, how do you ignite a new fire and challenge people to start a new ministry with no money, inadequate facilities, and few materials to run the programs you're already running? What if you're out of money and operating in the red?

What do you do when you have no amazing video series to bring in community people? No up-to-date children's nursery? What do you do with old, metal folding chairs and a TV that doesn't work half the time? What do you do when your sound system is on the blink and half your light bulbs are out?

How can you get people excited about a fire when your lack of resources is so apparent? How can you start something new when you can't afford "the old"? I know those thoughts. I know the limitations. I've been there. And I know it's so hard to get motivated and see beyond what's not available.

Let's join Jesus again in Matthew 14 and see that things have not changed at all. In this story, He's been working so hard all day to minister to the needs around Him where God has placed Him. He's tired and hungry, and so are the people. He doesn't have food or resources with which to buy food for the people, but that doesn't seem to phase Him at all. When He sees the people, He has compassion on them, and nothing else matters. He hurts so badly for those in need around Him that nothing matters except "feeding" their needs---especially their spiritual needs.

Is that true for you and your church as well? Do you care more about the people in need around your church building than you do about the resources available? I know it's easy to say that, yes, you care about people more, but when you have to find money that's not there, suddenly reality is staring you in the face. Imagine the disciples. Have you thought about the looks on their faces and the thoughts in their minds when Jesus told them, "[The crowd] doesn't need to go away. You give them something to eat."

Day Twelve (cont.): I know if I had been there, I would have thought Jesus was out of His mind. I would have thought, “Yeah, well, that’s easy for you to say. You haven’t seen the little we’ve finally scraped together for our supper. If you saw how little we have for how many we have to feed, you’d say something different.”

However, the lack of resources didn’t stop Jesus at all. When the disciples brought Him just the 5 loaves of bread and the 2 fish, He thanked God and asked God’s blessing on it, and it multiplied. They had enough for all 5,000 men (and who really knows how many women and children) with 12 baskets left over.

Has God stopped working miracles like that? Can we step out in faith and believe that if He did it before, He’ll do it again. That means one item of food fed at least 714 men. Talk about multiplication! 714 times the product. It just takes obedience.

And lest you think that was a one-time event, think of Luke 5:1-7. When Jesus called His first disciples, the same thing happened. Simon told Jesus, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything.” However, because Jesus told Simon to put the nets in one more time, they did. When they were obedient with just one more cast, He filled up the net so full it took 2 boats to carry in all the fish. He did it with Elijah and the widow woman, with the wedding wine, with the feeding of the 4,000, and in John 21 with the disciples fishing again. Then, at Pentecost, thousands were added to their numbers because of one sermon Peter obediently preached.

Did any of those miracles happen because of human power, human skill, human resources, or human abilities? No. They happened because human beings asked God to provide, trusted God to provide, went ahead and acted in obedience, and were blessed as a result.

So what can God do with some metal folding chairs? With a used TV and VCR? With some donated speakers? With a couple of cans of paint? With some nursery equipment donated by a young family? With some volunteer carpentry work? What can God do with the simple obedience of a group of people trusting God to do a God-sized miracle in their church? With a group of people trusting God to be as big as He says He is? With a group of people trusting God to do a miracle for His glory?

If 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish fed approximately 15,000, what can He do with you? Pray for Him to work and speak to you in a very real way right now.

What is he saying to you? _____

Keeping the Wolves at Bay *~protecting yourself from the predators~*

"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one" JN. 17:15

Day Thirteen:

Have you read a book or seen a movie in which somebody is running for his life in the woods? Whether he's a good or bad guy, he usually knows one thing. To keep from getting caught, he must avoid revealing his location. He cannot allow the light or smoke from a fire to be seen, so any fire he builds must be so small it avoids detection.

Do you realize the same is true about the fire you're praying for God to ignite in your church? As long as it's a small fire, warming and providing security for only a few people, you're probably safe from the Wolves that are out to get you. You're probably safe in your church. I Peter 5: 8 states, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." The moment you begin building a bigger fire, attracting the attention of those in your community, providing a place of warmth and security and passion for them, plan on the Enemy noticing you and coming closer.

In *When All Hell Breaks Loose*, Steven Lawson writes that we are like lightning rods in the storm. "The taller you stand, the more fire you draw" (23). The more our churches stand tall and accept God's challenge, the more attention from the Enemy we'll attract.

Years ago, when our church began seeking God's will, a small group of us began to plan a personal growth campaign at our church. At our first meeting, we prayed for each other, knowing that Satan would be sure to attack us, praying for a hedge of God's protection around each of us. We probably underestimated the intensity of the attack that was to follow and how quickly Satan would attack. It did happen, but God was bigger. He protected and sheltered us, even though it cost each of us to be a part of God's God-sized plan at our church. However, realizing that many came to know God through the campaign, it was worth every bit.

If you're honest with yourself, it's scary, in a way. No one likes to attract the attention or attack of any enemy, much less Satan. However, God did not want us to live in an attitude of fear. He wants us to know He is bigger than any Enemy out there who is hunting us down. Isn't that great news? Don't we all want to be on the winning team? And if we can keep our minds on God and His power, the fear is minimized.

Do you remember the story of Elisha and his servant in II Kings 6:15-17? Let's read it.

1. When Elisha's servant awoke, what did he find? _____
2. What was Elisha's response? _____

Day Thirteen (cont.): Have you ever known someone who responded to your fears in this way? Sometimes, to be honest, it's annoying. We want them to agree with our fears. However, it's good to know that Elisha wasn't just quoting some feel-good cliché. He had a different vision than his servant. Elisha could see God's power in this situation. Elisha then prayed his servant's eyes would be opened to see the truth.

3. What did Elisha's servant then see? _____

Wouldn't you like to have this type of vision? Rather than seeing the obstacles, the challenges you will face in building this fire, the fear of the attack of Satan, wouldn't you love to have the type of vision that sees the power of God's fire surrounding you? God wants you to have this type of vision. Did you know that He wants you to see His size rather than the size of the Goliaths in your church as you build the fire? The one thing Satan would love to do is to defeat you before you've even started. He would love to discourage you and get you to think it's impossible.

In the personal growth campaign mentioned at our church, we originally prayed for a growth of 3 small groups to 15 small groups, and we didn't know how God would even do this. However, He spoke to several of us on the committee, and instead of decreasing our goal, we enlarged our God-sized vision to 30 small groups. How would this happen? Only through God. God provided us 28 groups, and the church has never been the same since!

If you've been in the church, you probably know that the number one source for finding protection for yourself in the midst of spiritual battle is in Ephesians chapter 6. Read from verse 10-18.

1. Whose strength are you going to be using in the coming days? (vs. 10) _____

2. Whose armor will you have to put on? (vs. 11) _____

To help you understand the attack of Satan in the coming days, the following is a commentary on Ephesians 6 in the *Student's Life Application Bible*, the New Living translation. You probably already know that Satan uses tricks and strategies to attack us. God's armor will protect you from these tricks.

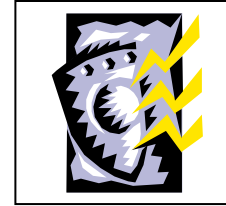
The Belt--God's truth: Satan fights with lies, and sometimes his lies sound like truth. God's believers have God's truth, which can defeat Satan's lies.

The Helmet--Salvation: Satan wants us to doubt God, Jesus, and our salvation. The helmet protects our mind from doubting God's saving work for us.



Day Thirteen (cont.): The Breastplate (body armor)--God's Righteousness: Satan often attacks our heart—the seat of our emotions, self-worth, and trust. God's righteousness is the breastplate that protects our heart and keeps us obeying God. By protecting our heart, we continue to believe that Jesus saved us and cleansed our hearts from sin.

The Shoes--The peace that comes from the Good News: Satan wants us to think that telling others about God is a worthless and hopeless job---the size of the task is too big, and the negative responses are too much to handle. But the "shoes" that God gives us are the true peace that is available in God, which prepares us to share the news with others.



The Shield--Faith: The shield of faith protects us from Satan's bullets that attack us in the form of insults, setbacks, and temptations. With God's perspective, we can see beyond our present circumstances and know that ultimate victory is ours.

The Sword--The Word of God: The sword is the only weapon of offense in this list of armor. There are times when we need to take the offensive against Satan. When we are tempted, we need to trust in the truth of God's Word.

The Key: Pray! Pray! Pray! Pray for each other. Pray for God's protection. Pray that God keeps your eyes on Him and His power and His army of angels fighting for you! Prayer and staying in The Word are the keys!

31 Days of Power by Ruth Myers is a powerful book about living in spiritual victory. It is full of prayers that will help us fight effectively. Let this final prayer from the book (Day 2) be your prayer today:

Lord, You are the living Rock, solid and unshakable. Your glorious power surrounds me, overshadows me, and prepares the way before me. You are my Strength and Shield, my Saving Defense and Refuge, my Sure Footing, and my all-sufficient God who is enough. You make me steadfast and immovable! I worship You as the greatest, most awesome of all beings---more impressive, more powerful than anything on earth. You are exalted high above any hindrances or adversaries that loom large in my life right now, whether in my personality or my present circumstances of my future. I exult that You are seated in the heavenlies, high above all enemy powers, and I am seated with You! So in my battles with Satan I can come at him from above. I shout to You with a voice of joy and triumph, for You're the One who subdues the enemy under my feet.

Tick-Tock; The Sky is Getting Dark

~reminding yourself of the urgency of the fire~

"Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you." Joshua 3:5

Day Fourteen:

If you have been camping, when dusk approaches, the urgency of building the fire becomes more apparent. No one wants to be camping in the dark without a fire! The fire is the source of all the warmth, light, safety, and security in the midst of the dark and the unknown dangers of the surrounding woods.

There are many examples of Jesus' walk on Earth when He sensed the urgent need for the fire. It seems that in each of these examples, Christ reacted in one way---His heart was moved with compassion. He longed to provide comfort for the hurting, for the scared, and for the lost. When He approached Jerusalem, as told in Luke 19, He wept. He realized how lost and misinformed the people were. He knew how much they needed to hear and believe and accept the fire He was providing for them.

Do you cry and weep for those around you? For those who are addicted to the things of this world---drugs, alcohol, materialism, pornography? For those who long for some satisfaction and love in this life? For those abused and unhappy? For those desperately needing hope? The sin and sickness and unhappiness of the world is so apparent. Just watch the TV sitcoms for a few minutes, and the sickness of the world comes into view.

Do you hear their cry for help, for answers, for satisfaction, and for love?

Read Matthew 9:35-38 and hear the heart of Christ: *"And wherever he went, he healed people of every sort of disease and illness. He felt **great pity** for the crowds that came, because **their problems were so great and they didn't know where to go for help**. They were like sheep without a shepherd. He said to his disciples, 'The **harvest is so great**, but the workers are so few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send out more workers for his fields.'" (NLT, emphasis mine)*

The crowds are around you as well, with great problems and without any solution or answers of help. The harvest is still great, possibly greater than ever, and the answer is still the same. Prayer. God is still in charge of the harvest. And He wants to save every soul out there. He wants to heal people of their hurts. He wants to use us to do this!

The key to remember is we can't do it on our own. No effort, no hard work, no amount of Bible reading and "clean living" will create a fire big enough to make any sort of difference. John the Baptist clarified the source of the fire: *I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you **with the Holy Spirit and with fire*** (Matthew 3:11, NIV).

Day Fourteen (cont.): The task before us is huge. It looks impossible. What God may be asking you to do is huge, beyond yourself. If it's something you personally can do, then it may not be of God at all. He will ask you to do something you can't do on your own. One of my favorite stories is of Jehoshaphat in II Chronicles 20. With the armies of the Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites declaring war, Jehoshaphat faced what looked like sure defeat. He was alarmed at the news of the approaching armies and did several things that we should look at and model in our own churches with our own God-sized battles?

1. In verse 3, what was the first thing Jehoshaphat did? _____

2. Next, he asked all the people of Judah to _____ and then to come to Jerusalem to _____ (vs. 3-4).

3. He then prayed and reminded God of His faithfulness before. He praised God.

4. In verse 12, he admitted several weaknesses of his army: _____

5. What was the word of the Lord in response to this prayer? _____

_____ (vs. 15)

6. What did God tell them about the fighting in verse 17? _____

What a powerful reminder for us! What are the steps Jehoshaphat modeled for us?

1. **First, we need** to go to God and seek His guidance. That's what you've been doing.

2. **Next, he prayed.** You've already been doing this as well. Keep doing it!

3. **He remembered** God's faithfulness in the past. Only by remembering God's faithfulness in the past will we hang onto His ability to be faithful in the present and the future, no matter what the odds appear to be!

4. **Admit to yourself** and to God the insurmountable odds of such a God-sized task and dream. You might have already done this during this devotional/study. Like Jehoshaphat, you've probably said that your church is powerless to do this and to fight the "routines" you've always had. God wants us to be able to admit to Him, "We do not know what to do, but we are looking to you for help.

5. Remind yourself of God's promise to them and to you:

Do not be afraid! Don't be discouraged by this mighty army, for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . . You will not even need to fight. Take your positions; then stand still and watch the Lord's victory. He is with you . . . Do not be afraid or discouraged. Go out there tomorrow, for the Lord is with you!

This is our promise as well! No matter how big the God-sized task is before you, God is with you! This will be God's battle to fight.

Day Fourteen (cont.):

Pray. Ask for His will, and then stand still and watch Him win the battle.

6. As Jehoshaphat and his people did, go ahead right now and claim the victory. Praise God for what He will do. Offer yourselves as willing vessels for Him to use, be obedient to what He is asking, and watch God win the victory for you, your church, and your community. Note that they praised Him before they won!

7. As verse 20 states, "Believe in the Lord your god, and you will be able to stand firm."

In other words, wear the Armor of God. Believe in His ability to defend you.

In Closing: In the past fourteen days, you've been through quite an experience. Hopefully, you've sought God and humbled yourself before His omnipotence. How much more powerful He is than we'll ever know! You've prayed, you've studied, and you've opened yourself up to God's plan for you and your church. You've sought to be an open vessel for Him to use.

I've been praying for you as I've written this. I've prayed for God's will to be apparent, and I've prayed for you not to get in the way of what He wanted to say to you. I've prayed for your churches as I know God has amazing plans for you in the place where He's located you. I've been attacked by the Enemy, but I can tell you right now as my personal testimony: God has been faithful! And He will be faithful to you as well.

As Joshua and the Israelites marched into the Promised Land, ready for the dream God had prepared for each of them, God told them,

Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you (Joshua 3:5).

God seeks for us to be humble enough to admit we can't do it on our own; we need Him to provide for us the internal fire; and then **HE** will do the amazing things among us! We have to humble ourselves, listen, obey, and watch! And if God says they'll be amazing, they will be!

What will He do among you? Pray and respond!

"Then the Lord said, "Whom shall I send? And who shall go for us?"

And I said, "Here am I, send me! Isaiah 6:8

Lord what do I need to fully consecrate to you? Am I holding back? _____

Promises from God

*"See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare;
before they spring into being I announce them to you."*

(Isaiah 42:9)

*"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a
new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making
a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."*

(Isaiah 43:18-19)

"Remember the former things, those of long ago;

I am God, and there is no other;

I am god, and there is none like me.

I make known the end from the beginning,

From ancient times, what is still to come.

I say: My purpose will stand,

and I will do all that I please . . .

What I have said, that will I bring about;

What I have planned, that will I do."

(Isaiah 46:9-11)

*"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth the former things will not be
remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will
create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and it's people a joy. I will rejoice over
Jerusalem and take delight in my people."*

(Isa 65:17-19a)

*"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who
proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation;
who say to Zion, "your God reigns!"...for the Lord will go before you,
the God of Israel will be your rear guard."*

(Isaiah 52:7,12b)

"The Lord will cleanse by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire."(Isaiah 4:4)

*"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful,
and so worship God acceptable with reverence and awe,
for our "God is a consuming fire."
(Hebrew 12:28-29)*

*"Commit to the Lord, whatever you do and your plans will succeed."
Proverbs 16:3*

FORMULA FOR STARTING THE FIRE (Nehemiah 1-2)

GOD PUTS IT IN: (2:12)

- Pray for the passion because God works from the inside out...Bringing visible passion.
- "God dwells in a state of perpetual enthusiasm" - A.W. Tozer

GOD WORKS IT OUT: (2:13-17)

- Passion gets us to a level in our life that causes us to do things that we would not do; which allows God's entrance to bless things that he would not bless before.
- Going to a new level moves the hand of God.

AND THE PEOPLE BUILD IT UP: 2:18-20)

- The fire went in Nehemiah, out of Nehemiah, and into the people.
- When we are obedient to the blaze with us, then the "fire" will spread to OTHERS.

Jeremiah said, "for His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones."

"The Church of the Nazarene is a Church of 'people' for the 'people'. - ~Phineas Bresee

"I want the whole passion of my heart for my savior, the whole bible for my book, the whole church for my fellowship and the whole world for my mission field."

~ John Wesley

"If I had 100 men who feared nothing but God, hated nothing but sin, and determined to know nothing among men but Christ, and Him crucified, I would set the world on fire!"

~John Wesley (Don Cowan paraphrase)