

*Keeping Your Heart
On Fire*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet, a Doctrine Weekly classic, came from four messages preached by Pastor Carl H. Stevens. Many people have been blessed and motivated by these thoughts and we have transcribed and edited them for the purpose of inspiring each reader to practice the principles of keeping his heart on fire toward God.

The following chapters are not designed to build upon one another, but were given as separate messages on various aspects of this subject. When considered carefully and applied, its content will draw each reader into a more intimate communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are grateful to Dr. Lee Robertson and the late Dr. Jack Hyles who preached messages that consistently encouraged believers to have a heart that is on fire to serve the Lord. It is our prayer that you will benefit deeply from these thoughts from a pastor's heart.

Chapter One

“OF SOME HAVE COMPASSION, MAKING A DIFFERENCE”

Jude 21-22 expresses a key principle in keeping your heart on fire: “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference.”

Thousands of church services across the world honor Jesus Christ, glorify God, and preach the truth. Many men and women serve God diligently and love God with all their hearts. Yet, there is a lack of warmth today in the church of Jesus Christ because many believers do not keep their hearts on fire.

God has given us a number of vital ways to keep our hearts warm and on fire with God. Keeping your heart warm and on fire means to let God’s Holy Spirit move as He motivates your heart.

One of the most vital ways to keep your

heart on fire is to keep in touch with Calvary. Let the eye of faith show you Jesus Christ as He took your place on the Cross. Consider that every personal sin was transferred to Him. He was perfect in His humanity; He never sinned. He loved us when we were guilty. We cannot think of Calvary in the power of the Spirit without having it break our hearts.

Unfortunately, one thing that has characterized much of Christendom is indeed a coldness of heart. Many believers allow their hearts to get cold because they serve God through duty. They are faithful in stewardship, but they do not have a warm heart toward people. Others live in rigid intellectualism, never allowing God to break them. There are also religious people, like the publican by his self-righteous prayer (verses 11, 12).

So many Christians know nothing about keeping their hearts on fire for God. They may be duty-bound and faithful in their religious convictions, but they do not understand what it means to allow the Holy Spirit to give them insight into the love of God and the needs of people.

Remembering a Person's Background

To keep our hearts on fire, we need to re-

member that some people have not had the same privileges we have been given in life. My dad died when I was three, and I grew up in poverty, yet I had the privilege of having a loving family and a mother who laid down her life for us. Instead of judging someone, consider how they were brought up. Consider what they have gone through and how much they may have suffered. Remembering their value in Christ and their individuality before God will keep your heart warm.

Perhaps the person who rubs you the wrong way has never had a peaceful home life or a good marriage. They may have wealth and possessions, but perhaps they have never experienced happiness because they have never been treated kindly. When we consider these people with God's heart, it will keep our hearts warm.

Remembering Certain People and Places

There are various places that warm our hearts the moment we think of them. The cemetery is a place that should warm our hearts. How readily loved ones are forgotten, and how easily friends who have died go unmentioned. Yet, we can sense God's presence as we remember their lives when someone brings them to

mind—the sweet fragrance of memory.

My heart gets warm when I think of all those who have been dear friends and loved ones—beautiful men and women of God—who have gone home to be with the Lord. My father, my mother, my first wife, my mother-in-law, brothers, and many dear friends are there. Remembering those who have died will keep our hearts warm.

Key Phrases

“Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:2-3).

Key biblical phrases that impart the character of God warm my heart. Phrases may differ from Christian to Christian, but the principle is the same.

For example, I can think of God’s grace, which is so great that sin cannot exhaust it. This thought will warm my heart any time.

I can think of the Father of all mercies, and I will be broken in very quick order.

I can think of the God of all comfort, and as I think of the millions that He has comforted, I

will be moved in my heart every single time.

Certain Names Keep Your Heart Warm

Certain names keep your heart warm. You may bring up a certain name, someone who meant very much to you—someone who was always there, someone who deeply cared, someone who did not criticize, someone who was faithful to friendship and diligent in responding to and giving love. Any time your heart gets cold, simply think of certain names and your heart will become warm.

Certain Songs Warm Our Hearts

Certain songs warm my heart. Some songs are inspirational. The stories behind some songs and the reasons why they were written make them very significant. But other songs just warm your heart. Songs about Jesus, songs about the Cross, songs about victory—these warm my heart. I have always liked the lyrics, “On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

When I am going through something heavy and I sense my heart growing cold, I study to be quiet and consider “What a friend we have in Jesus.” Think of it. What a friend we have in

Jesus! What a friend! He is the one who sticks closer than anyone on the earth (Proverbs 18:24).

Being Used for the Sake of Christ

Someone said to me the other day, "Pastor, I don't think I can ever love again, because every time I love, I get hurt." I said, "Oh, yes you can, because there is Someone who loves you so much that He will never leave you, not even for one moment. Jesus will always be with you."

The Lord Jesus said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5b). You can love again if you are not selfish, if you don't have the wrong motives toward others. Loving is not what I can get out of a relationship; love is what I can give someone. Love is not characterized by what I need. Love is measured by what I can share and give.

That person repeated again, "Every time I love somebody, they hurt me." The Holy Spirit began to usher in these thoughts: "Do you mind? Does it make a difference if they do not return your love?" Is there something wrong with letting other people use us for Jesus' sake, for love's sake, and for the sake of grace? Paul was used for Christ's sake. In 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 he said,

“Always carrying about in the body the liability and exposure to the same putting to death that the Lord Jesus suffered, so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be shown forth by and in our bodies. For we who live are constantly [experiencing] being handed over to death for Jesus’ sake, that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be evidenced through our flesh which is liable to death” (2 Corinthians 4:10-11, Amplified Translation).

Oh, we are such strong Christians! We don’t want anyone to use us. “No one will take advantage of *me!*” says the modern Christian. What is wrong with letting people use you for the Gospel’s sake? What do you think laying down your life means? What do you think loving your enemies means? What do you think turning the other cheek means? What do you think 1 John 3:16 means? Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. Should we not lay it down for one another?

“Greater love hath no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

There is nothing wrong with letting people take unfair advantage of you as long as the life of Christ is being imparted. Your life may bring

conviction to the guilty. I made up my mind a long time ago that if people want to use me, then God will give me the grace to let them. I will not resist it. It always warms my heart when I think I can be used by God to lay my life down for others, for Jesus' sake. This always warms my heart.

Thoughts of the Bema Seat

When I consider the Bema Seat evaluation for believers (sometimes called the Judgment Seat of Christ), I think about the fact that every blood-bought child of God will be there. At the Bema Seat, Jesus Christ will determine in righteous judgment whether or not the works of each believer were motivated by the Holy Spirit, or whether they were done in the energy of the flesh.

“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:9, 10).

“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of

Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account for himself to God" (Romans 14:10-12).

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

One day, you and I will face the Lord Jesus. I think of each one going before Him—each one in his glorified body. As born-again believers who have eternal life, each one will face Him alone. Knowing this should keep my heart on fire. I don't want to be ashamed on that day. I do not want to suffer the loss of rewards. I want to hear Jesus say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). Until I meet Him at the Bema Seat, I want to always "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

The Bema Seat will reveal motives that were wrong as well as motives that were right. It will

bring out secret motives that no one knew but God. The Bema Seat will show why we did what we did; it will bring out what we did in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Bema Seat will reveal opportunities that were lost because we never took advantage of the many chances He gave us to serve, evangelize, visit the sick, feed the poor, pray, and lay our lives down for others. God will show you how He called your attention in countless situations, but you would not take advantage of redeeming the time. God will show you when the Spirit moved in the services, but you quenched Him by not responding.

The Lord will reveal the time when there was a terrific urgency to evangelize the lost, yet you did not respond. The Bema Seat will reveal the time when there was a tremendous emphasis on prayer, and many people loved it. Yet, you failed to pray.

Keeping Souls from the White Throne Judgment

Something else that warms my heart is winning souls for Christ who would otherwise be headed for hell. I think of the last words that will ever be spoken by those who reject Christ. On that day, those who died without Christ will

already be in hell, but they will also have to come before Christ at the White Throne Judgment.

“And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:29).

At the White Throne Judgment, they will receive their final sentence based upon their works:

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them (Revelation 20:11).

I think of the saints who will be gathered together there. The Christians will have their glorified bodies. I think of how the Word of God records that Jesus is so holy that the unsaved people who will be judged cannot stand before Him. Soon they will hear the last words they will ever hear, from the Son of God. They will see faces of redeemed loved ones for the last time, and never see them again.

Imagine what it will be like not to see a loved one ever again because he rejected the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for his sins. Imagine people who work with you who are lost. Can you imag-

ine what it will be like when they look at you for the last time before they are cast into the lake of fire? You are saved, and they are lost. Does this thought motivate you to win the lost while there is still time?

Can you imagine what this last look will be like? No wonder that after the White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:10-15), God wipes away the tears from our eyes. The former things *must* pass away, otherwise we could not stand the pressure of knowing that loved ones and friends are separated from God for eternity. God, in His great compassion, erases them from our memory (Revelation 21:4).

The former things are passed away and all things become new, otherwise heaven would not be heaven. I think of the White Throne Judgment and of the teenagers who never got right with God. Many of them went to evangelical churches but never received Jesus Christ as their Savior. I think of people who sit in church pews and profess to be saved, yet they may never have had a real born-again experience. With compassion, I think of those who are lost, and it keeps my heart on fire to think that there is still time and hope for them to be saved.

Disciplined Thinking

One reason why some people have cold hearts is that they are not disciplined in their thinking. They do not plan their thinking. The reason that people become angry is that they do not think before they react in the flesh. The reason why people are resentful is that they do not think. Their free volition acts in cognizance of their old sin nature. The greatest need for God's people is to be disciplined in their thought life and to plan what they are going to consider.

Most people go through the day without acknowledging the Holy Spirit. They live as though He doesn't exist. Christians need to be constantly filled by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18*b*). The Holy Spirit controls the human spirit; the human spirit and the Word of God control the mind; and as a result, the mind controls the body. A believer must live in disciplined thinking. He must plan how he is going to speak and when he should be silent.

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, Paul said: "For though we walk [live] in the flesh, we are not carrying our warfare according to the flesh and using mere human weapons. For the weapons of our warfare are not physical (weapons of flesh

and blood), but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, [Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the (true) knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, Being in readiness to punish every [insubordinate for his] disobedience, when your own submission and obedience [as a church] are fully secured and complete" (Amplified Translation).

People become cold and insensitive when they are not disciplined to think with God. A person can be blessed by God and three days later act indignant around other people. This is a consequence of a lack of self-discipline. There is no excuse for having a cold heart.

Thinking of Heaven

When I think of heaven, it warms my heart. I think of the loved ones who are already there. When you think of heaven, does it warm your heart? Jesus Christ has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us, for He has promised:

"In My Father's house there are many dwelling places (homes). If it were not so, I

would have told you, for I am going away to prepare a place for you. And when (if) I go and make ready a place for you, I will come back again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:2-3, Amplified Translation).

Considering What Others Have Done for You

When I think of all the things that people have done for me, it warms my heart. When I think of all the things that people have done for the church, it warms my heart. When I think of all the sacrifice, dedication, commitment, and all the selfless hours of work that have been given for the sake of Christ, it warms my heart.

Consider all that everyone has ever done for you, and it will keep your heart on fire! I thank God for my wife and children, for the way they have always co-labored to glorify Christ. I thank God for their faithfulness. I can think of each one individually and it causes my heart to be warm.

Chapter Two

TEARS OF COMPASSION

In John 11:33, it is recorded that Jesus “groaned in the spirit.” Even though He was about to perform a great miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, still He wept at the graveside (John 11:35). Also, in Luke 19:41, when Jesus drew near and could see the city of Jerusalem, He wept audibly over it.

Jeremiah was called the “weeping prophet.” In a time of experiencing a great burden for the people of Israel, he cried out, “Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a reservoir of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.” (Jeremiah 9:1, Amplified Translation). Isaiah also wept for God’s people in the “day of trouble” (Isaiah 22:4, 5). The Apostle Paul was a brilliant, intellectually gifted, and well-educated man, yet he wept day and night for the duration of three years. The original Greek says, “Paul, in humility served

the people in tears” (see Acts 20:19). Those were tears that came from God.

The Scriptures contain so many verses on the subject of weeping. We are referring to tears which are motivated by God’s love for the sake of truth.

In contrast, we all recognize that there are sentimental tears which originate from the emotions. Those tears do not stem from the love of God. Sentimentality produces tears which have no eternal value. For example, one time, the children of Israel wept all night because of self-pity. Those were not tears motivated by God. Therefore, when people cry, it does not necessarily mean that they are compassionate or spiritual.

Have you ever wondered how some pastors can preach on such sacred topics, and yet weep so little? Many servants of God are cold though proper in their presentation of truth. In order to produce results, God’s Word must be pondered over, identified with, and experienced in His unconditional love. We must be constrained by the love of God (2 Corinthians 5:14) as we learn to think with God in a disciplined manner.

What Causes Godly Weeping?

A man of God may weep for many reasons.

First of all, he may weep because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In his heart and mind he pictures Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary bearing our sins in His own body. This vision is always fresh in his mind.

When we take communion and the Holy Spirit pours out the truth of the love of Jesus Christ, this should always make us weep. Picture Jesus Christ loving the unlovely; consider His great compassion for the lost. Jesus loved people beyond their sin. He taught men and women how to be released from the bondage of self-destruction caused by negative volition toward the Word of God.

The Word of God teaches us to call on the Lord Jesus Christ in time of need and to make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). Jesus Christ taught men how to abide in the Word and let the Word abide in them (John 15:7). The magnificent provision of the Word of God can make us weep.

Reconciliation Makes Us Weep

In a moment, the truth about Jesus can make us weep. There is no one who is righteous, “no, not one” (Romans 3:10). Yet Christ, who was perfectly righteous, died in my place at Calvary.

He became sin for me—He “who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21*b*). God, through Jesus Christ, came to redeem us while we were dead in our sins (Romans 5:6, 8). While man was unworthy and absolutely unable to help himself, when he was still an enemy, he was “reconciled to God by the death of his son...” (Romans 5:10).

In Romans 7:18*a*, Paul said, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.” Every person must understand that in his natural state (in his flesh) he is depraved. People in every walk of life must believe what the Bible teaches: that man, apart from God, is utterly helpless and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). There is no good thing to be found in our flesh. Jesus said, “The flesh profits nothing” (John 6:63), and “without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ...” (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Jesus Christ is everything! He that sows is nothing, he that waters is nothing, but God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6*b*). No wonder the apostle Paul, in Colossians 3:11*b* said,

“Christ is all and in all.” No wonder the disciples could not but speak of Jesus and the things which they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20). No wonder Jesus was the center of attention when He spoke in the synagogue (Luke 4:16-21). No wonder, when Philip met the Eunuch, he began to preach Christ (Acts 8:35-37). No wonder, when Elijah and Moses had disappeared on the mount of transfiguration, that only Jesus remained. When Peter, James, and John lifted up their eyes, “they saw no man, save Jesus only” (Matthew 17:8).

Can you see this with me? “...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

When a believer thinks of Jesus Christ, it will take no time at all before his eyes are filled with tears. No matter how difficult the circumstances of life may be, when we think of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, it will make us weep. If only every pastor would preach the Word of God with a heart that is broken by Calvary!

Tears Motivated by God's Love

A person who now goes to our church gave

this testimony: "I didn't like your voice; I didn't like your humor; I didn't like your presentation; I didn't like *you*. Yet, something made me come back. I didn't like it when you cried out from the pulpit because I felt convicted. I waited a week, and something motivated me to come back. I tried to figure out what it was about the church that made me return. Then, I found out what made this assembly so different. I realized that while I was fighting the love of God because of my intellectual pride, you wept because of the love of God."

Compassion and love characterize a ministry that keeps hearts on fire. That individual's testimony reveals his sensitivity toward a ministry that loves God deeply and his understanding of a pastor-teacher who is not afraid to express God's love in tears.

Men and women who are after God will recognize genuine compassion. For example, an unsaved man came to one of our Sunday services. He had been unable to receive Scripture as the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Then, the compassion and love of God took over his heart as a pastor shared with the congregation about an 88-year old woman who needed people to visit her when she was in the hospital.

This unsaved man had never wept in a church service before, yet on this day, because he sensed that pastor's heart toward the loneliness of this woman, he wept. After the service he said, "That is the way it ought to be. Pastors ought to love like that."

A believer in Jesus Christ has the capacity (through Him) to love a stranger. The love of Christ constrains him (2 Corinthians 5:14a). The love of Christ will cause him to experience legitimate tears of compassion. There are too many preachers who say too much without shedding a tear. If you had the opportunity to hear a sermon given by the apostle Paul, do you think you would be moved by his tears? There are men who preach the Word of God continually, but have not shed a tear in months!

What are some of the reasons God moves us to tears of compassion? As believers in Jesus Christ, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit. Consider the fact that the Holy Spirit uses us to edify the Body of Christ and to win the lost. Therefore, we should acknowledge His presence more and more, throughout each day.

It is also very important to understand that God always empowers us for special responsibilities and tasks. Believers have access to the

constant filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). In the original Greek text, the word *pleroo* is the command "to be filled"—a command which is carried out through the operation of grace.

Another facet of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life is to give him the awareness of the magnitude of Christ's love for the lost, as well as His great compassion for the needs of man. God's compassion is expressed through the life of the believer who is abiding in the Spirit and motivated by divine love.

Thoughts from a Pastor's Heart

When I see people in our assembly walk into church, I do not see them as ordinary people. Each one is an ambassador for Christ, and each one has a special calling on his life. Although we may not speak to one another often because we all have tremendous schedules, I think of how much I love each one in a special way. I watch their countenances and I think about them. I have already prayed for them, but now I see their faces. I think of how deeply God loves each member of His body. Individually I look at them, and it warms my heart.

There are many people I look upon as I deliver the message, and it keeps my heart warm

when things are difficult. Perhaps I am tired or under pressure. When I look at them I can see the purity, wholesomeness, fervency, and the love of God in their eyes. I may look at one person and their countenance will reflect a godly smile. I may look at someone else, when no one seems to care or understand the fervency of the moment, in the depth of the moving of God, and this *one* person's countenance will reveal that they are receiving the message in faith.

Oftentimes, Christians forget to thank God for the message; they act as though they had never heard it. We may have experienced a great visitation of God, yet no one is moved! All of heaven is moved, yet no one says a word. Oftentimes, during a service I may look at two or three people, and their countenances testify that they were visited by God. They were weeping as I was preaching. I may look over and smile at them—smiling keeps my heart warm. People who walk in the Spirit keep their pastor's heart warm.

As I consider a person's background in life, it keeps my heart warm. I saw a young boy about the age of seven in church the other day. I looked at him and thought, "I wonder what his life is like." He is from a very poor family. He is

not loved, so I've been told, and he doesn't have much of an opportunity in life right now. As I thought of him, I picked him up and threw him into the air, and I hugged him—because he needed it. Thinking of the needs of people should warm your heart.

Then I thought of a widow who never says a word, but she comes to church week after week. She has lost her mate, yet she goes on serving God. She is godly, loyal, pure, and honorable. But she is human, and I know that she misses her husband. I thought of her faithfulness to God. Although she doesn't have the intimacy of marriage anymore, she sits in these pews week after week, faithful to the church. She loves, prays, and ministers. She is kind and she always edifies others. When I think of widows, it warms my heart.

When I think of the many young people who are saved and fall into sin, it breaks my heart. There is one girl who has made a tremendous mistake and she has been on my heart for weeks now. She fell into sin. She is a beautiful girl as far as I'm concerned, and she is a lady. I know that she will come through for God. But at night, I weep as I pray for her. Praying for her warms my heart. She sinned and is now preg-

nant, but she has repented. Repentance should warm your heart. Her sin was wrong, and she is terribly sorry. You see, the needs of people should always warm your heart.

There are those who are handicapped, yet they come to church week after week in wheelchairs. There are those who suffer from chronic illnesses, yet, they are strengthened inwardly by Christ, and they serve God with joy. When you think about their lives before God, it should warm your heart. In the midst of an academic message, in the midst of presenting an exegesis, I may interrupt the sermon to say, " You know, God loves you." Expressing the love of God always warms my heart.

Memories also warm my heart. My first wife, who went home to be with the Lord, used to sing, "*The Darker the Night, the Brighter the Light Shines.*" When it is time to preach, when I've been through a difficult day, I sometimes (though not intentionally) feel indifferent. For some reason, there are times when I don't sense God's presence. We know we should not live by feelings, but on the other hand, I thank God that He has given us emotions so that we can respond to and appreciate truth. I may stop speaking for a moment and ponder those words, "The

darker the night, the brighter the light shines. I'm walking with Jesus, the Light of the world." This memory will always make me weep. My wife used to sing the song "*Unworthy*." If anyone says "unworthy" in any circumstance, that song will be brought to mind, and I will think of her life before God and weep. You can call it sentimentality, but I call it the encouragement of a godly memory.

If someone brings up the word "mother," my whole heart is touched, as I think of the faithfulness of my own mother. I loved her. Memories can warm your heart.

Years ago, I asked God for the gift to teach more than just the letter of the Word. "The letter killeth but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:6). I knew that knowledge of the Scriptures without the brokenness of the Spirit would only bring death to its hearers.

I want to share something else that warms my heart. I watch people give in an offering. I think of the many hours they worked in order to give to support God's work. I think of how much of their own lives went into the offering. When people give money to Jesus when giving is not legislated, when people give gloriously unto God, this makes me weep.

We have so many people who attend Bible school and go out weekly on outreaches. I know they have full-time jobs, yet, they are people who are also committed to serve God. It warms my heart to watch them serve.

Names warm my heart. I think of Fred Lowell, a godly fellow, and his wife, Bea. Fred Lowell stood by me the first six months in Montsweag when no one supported me. When Fred Lowell's name is mentioned, I often weep. Fred came over every morning to go on visitation. Fred was always there beside his pastor. Names warm a preacher's heart.

"A Place of Quiet Rest—Near the Heart of God"

"There is a place of quiet rest, near the heart of God." One of the problems that many churches have is that preachers do not keep their hearts warm toward the love of God. They don't love their people. They may serve their people and preach good messages, but they do not serve their people with brokenness before the Cross.

Love is contagious, but someone has to initiate God's love. Someone must take the first step to warm the heart of another. We must first receive God's love, and then impart it to others. God's love will always warm your heart. Com-

munion with God will warm your heart. Prayer will warm your heart.

Now, do you understand a little bit better why Jeremiah said, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes were a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people" (Jeremiah 9:1)? I think I understand a little bit better why Paul in Acts 20:19b said that he served God as a slave, in humility and in tears. I love this principle. I think I understand why Paul said, "By the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31).

I think I understand a little bit more why Jesus went to the mountains and wept. I think I understand why He groaned in the Spirit and wept at Lazarus' grave. I think I understand why Isaiah wept for his people in the hour of trouble. Their hearts were broken by God's love. They put Christ first and without selfishness and self-occupation. They were able to love others with His unconditional love. Their self-life had been crucified at the Cross, and God's tears of compassion were released through their broken vessels.

Chapter Three

WAYS TO KEEP YOUR HEART ON FIRE

The Home Is the Castle of the Heart

A believer's attitude and disposition in the home reveals his heart relationship toward God. There are many things that we all do unintentionally which prevent the heart from being kindled with fire. You see, the home should be the happiest place in a person's life. It should be the place for creative fellowship, quietness, communication, and appreciating God's love.

The home should be the quietest of all resting places. We should make our home comfortable without making it an idol. In its proper perspective, our home should be made the spiritual mansion of the heart. We may not have a great deal of time to spend at home, but the time that we do have should always be very profitable. Therefore, we should not use our family as a sounding board for the moods of our nat-

ural disposition. The home should never be a place to express negative moods. The home must never be a place to express hostility toward others or any form of negativity.

Every believer is a member of God's royal family, and the home should be the castle of the soul. Therefore, we should work on ways in which we can change our lives at home if necessary. After much thinking, we should creatively implement ways of initiating the life of Christ in our family relationships. We should be effective in our approach without being contrived or superficial.

There are many ways to initiate happiness in the home. First, we must purpose in our hearts to make our home a haven for our lives before God. It is important to be kind to family members and relatives as well as those who visit our home. If I am unkind in my own home, then my message is without power, as far as God is concerned. If I am crude in my manners, then I am not honoring the Word of God in my home. Courtesy, kindness, hospitality, gentleness, and all the attributes of Jesus Christ should be expressed in the home. We must plan to magnify Christ in our home life and then act upon the Word of God. All of these things are a result of

disciplined thinking through the mind of Christ.

Setting Apart Time for God

Another way to keep our heart on fire is to set apart specific time to spend with God. Disciplined communication, action, and application of the Word in circumstances of life come from having a disciplined relationship toward God. A relationship that has been trained in the Word of God is then controlled by the Spirit of God. Therefore, time should be set apart to praise God, to thank Him for what He has done, and to worship God for who He is.

Also, time should be set apart to confess sin and to ask for and implement forgiveness. Confession should be a spontaneous response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Time should be set apart to meditate, to deeply think about what you already have received. Every Spirit-filled believer should schedule a time every day to worship God for who He is. Even if you have only five minutes each day to be alone with God, simply say, "God, I want to worship you for who you are." Praise God for what He has done; worship Him for who He is! Think over what you already know without studying anything new for that period of time.

Meditate on a particular verse and ask the Holy Spirit to bring life through the Word of God.

Keep the Fire Burning on the Altar of Your Heart

In Leviticus 6:12-13, we are given a beautiful picture of keeping God's fire perpetually burning:

"And the fire upon the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be allowed to go out; the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it, and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. The fire shall be burning continually upon the altar; it shall not go out" (Amplified Translation).

Every morning the priest placed wood on the fire and it burned continually upon the altar: *The fire would never go out.* All believers are saved by Jesus Christ's Finished Work on the Cross of Calvary. Christ has paid for all of our sins; He will never impute sin to us. The fire of salvation will never go out! The fire of grace will never go out! The fire of love will never go out! The fire of forgiveness will never go out! The fire of redemption will never go out! It is impossible for the fire of the Finished Work to go out because it is a perfect work of God, apart from the effort of sinful men. But, wood has to be put upon the fire by each believer-priest every morning. The

wood speaks of our humanity.

"It is of the Lord's mercies and lovingkindnesses that we are not consumed, because His (tender) compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great and abundant is Your stability and faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23, Amplified Translation).

As we rest in His promise of mercy, it keeps our hearts warm every morning. This is the secret of keeping your heart on fire. When we purpose to bring ourselves into the inexhaustible love, grace, and power of God every morning, the fire cannot go out. The Finished Work does not cease.

What happens when the wood is not laid in order upon the Finished Work altar of our heart? If God's order is not honored, the heart will cease to be warm. This principle cannot be emphasized enough. Behind every effective pastor, behind every productive servant of God, behind every fruitful Christian is a heart fixed on the new mercies and tender compassions of our faithful God, according to Lamentations 3:22-23.

By placing our humanity upon the altar every morning, we exchange our natural life for his supernatural provision. The fire is always there, but unless we choose to walk with God, the wood has not been placed on the altar.

Whenever a believer backslides, the fire did not stop burning; the believer simply did not place his humanity upon the altar. This means that he did not receive grace so that the fire of the Spirit could consume the dross of sin. When you look back over your life and the times that you became cold, see if these were the times that you did not put the wood of your humanity on the altar in the morning.

Jesus Christ met Peter, John, and James and the other disciples in the morning (John 21:9-14). They had been out fishing and caught nothing, until Jesus filled their net with fish. Meanwhile, as they came closer to shore, the disciples recognized that Jesus was there, already cooking breakfast for them (John 21:9).

It is a beautiful thing to meet Jesus in the morning. Communing with Jesus helps our hearts to be aflame all day long. When we go to bed at night thinking negative thoughts, we will wake up in the morning thinking negative thoughts. The wood of our humanity must be placed on the altar of our hearts continually. Unless we cherish the time of prayer, meditation, praise, and worship in the morning, our humanity will not touch the fire of God's grace, His Word, and His Spirit.

CONCLUSION

Let us never allow our hearts to grow cold toward God, toward serving the needs of others, or toward winning the lost. Although you may know the letter of the Word perfectly, are you in communion with the only One who can give you the words of life? How can you impart the essence of God's life to the world if you are not in intimate fellowship with God?

Every believer needs to develop a fervent, effectual prayer life so that he can get to know the One whom he has believed for salvation (2 Timothy 1:12*a*). The time is tragically short and the urgency to win souls for Christ is greater now than in all of human history. We encourage each believer to place his humanity upon the altar of the Cross each morning so the perpetual fire of God can ignite the heart throughout the day.