

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE Keep the Fire Burning

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE Leviticus 6:8-13

SYNOPSIS God provides the spiritual fire, but we are responsible for keeping it lit.

HIGHLIGHTS



☛ Keep the Fire Burning

We've been talking about the fire of God the last few weeks. Elijah showed us how to catch fire when he challenged the prophets of Baal. It comes with prayer, unity, sincerity, and sacrifice. We also saw how Jesus wants to be a consuming fire in us, taking priority over everything else. He wants to refine us to reflect only him and let the light of his fire shine in this cold, dark world. Then last week we talked about fanning the flame. We don't want to quench the Spirit or neglect our gifts, but rather use what God has given us for his glory and to bless others.

Leviticus 6:8-13

8 The Lord said to Moses: 9 "Give Aaron and his sons this command: 'These are the regulations for the burnt offering: The burnt offering is to remain on the altar hearth throughout the night, till morning, and the fire must be kept burning on the altar. 10 The priest shall then put on his linen clothes, with linen undergarments next to his body, and shall remove the ashes of the burnt offering that the fire has consumed on the altar and place them beside the altar. 11 Then he is to take off these clothes and put on others, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a place that is ceremonially clean. 12 The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire and burn the fat of the fellowship offerings on it. 13 The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out.

A bishop tells of visiting a parish church in California and finding a stirring red and orange banner on the wall. "Come Holy Spirit. Hallelujah!" it declared in words printed under a picture of a fire burning. The bishop was also interested in the sign directly underneath the banner, which said: "Fire extinguisher." So much for that parish's commitment to spiritual renewal.

The question we need to ask ourselves is this: are we fire igniters or are we fire extinguishers?

Romans 12:11

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord

The basic instruction here in Leviticus is to keep the fire burning. It was to never go out, even at night. The priests were responsible to keep on fueling the fire so that it kept on burning indefinitely. God was in the fire, but he expected the priests to work at keeping it lit.

Church, we are the priests today and God wants his fire in us to keep on burning without interruption. Even though this world is in darkness, like the middle of the night, we need to keep the fire burning. Don't let the darkness prevail.

We love the fire of God when the Spirit moves and stirs our hearts, but it's not all glamor and glory. Just as the priests had the mundane, monotonous job of fueling the fire, we also have to work, sometimes without fanfare, to keep the fire of the Spirit burning in our hearts. We can go to conferences and we can hear special speakers, which sort of "super" ignite us. They can be like gasoline to the fire. But most of the time, it's the day in, day out routines of simply adding



☞ firewood to keep the flame burning. **The daily disciplines of bible reading, prayer, and Christian fellowship are key to this ongoing flame.**

The priest was to put on linen clothes and remove the ashes from the burnt offering. Revelation 19:8 tells us that fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints. In dealing with spiritual matters (the fire), God expects righteous behavior from us. **To keep the flame burning, we need to live a godly life.** Right along with this righteous living (the linen) was the removal of ashes.

Ashes represent the impurities which don't burn up. This one is obvious. To keep the flame burning, there are sinful tendencies in each of our lives that need to be dealt with. **Each one of us ☞ has sins, which need to be confessed to the Lord. And, those sinful patterns need to be removed.** We often try to just keep those things under control, or filtered out, but what **we really ☞ need is a "sin-ectomy."**

Colossians 3:5-9

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry... rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other...

It's natural to have any or all of these issues, but that does not excuse them. We tend to treat sinful tendencies like a cream puff, but in reality, they are more like a puff adder – they are poison to our soul and deadly. They need to be removed and exterminated or else there will be deadly consequences to pay.

The priests here didn't just brush the ashes away, they actually carried them outside the camp to dispose of them. We need to take a similar action with our sinful tendencies. **Remove whatever it is that keeps that sin alive.** If you're prone to lust, then don't expose yourself to imagery which tends to feed that lust. If you're prone to anger, then avoid all the drama on social media, which can stir that up. If you're prone to filthy language, then don't listen to programming that is chock full of f-bombs and such. Get rid of those things. Remove the ashes!

Then, we see that the priest was to have a daily, morning routine to keep the fire burning. He was instructed to add firewood, arrange the burnt offering, and burn the fat.

☞ **Add Firewood**

This was the primary fuel for the fire in those days. They didn't have natural gas or propane. They had to go out and gather the wood for the fire and then keep on adding it to the fire as needed in order to keep it lit. What is the fuel for your spiritual fire? What comes to your mind? What gets you fired up about the things of God? I think there are several components for every believer.

One clear component is the Word. God's Word feeds our soul. Jesus compared the Word to bread which is a basic form of food for the body. The fire in your Spirit also needs to be fed the Word of God. And, just like the priests adding wood every morning, we need to **consume the ☞ Word every day.**



Another component is prayer and worship. In fact, the entire image of the altar with a sacrifice and fire is a picture of prayer and worship. These two pieces were always part of the altar experience. When you pray, it's not just about asking God for something, but rather about simply connecting with God, and he is the source of the fire. So, **pray daily to keep the fire burning.**

Worship also fuels the fire. Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about. When you sing a song of praise and worship, there's something that happens supernaturally which fuels your spiritual fire. So, **worship daily.**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-20 puts these and more together in relation to the Spirit's fire: 16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire; 20 do not treat prophecies with contempt.

There's joy, which according to Numbers 8:10 is strength to the believer. I've turned that into an acrostic before: J = Jesus; O = Others; Y = Yourself... in that order.

There's prayer, which we just discussed.

There's giving thanks, which is one of the fundamentals of worship. What are you grateful for? Then, it says "do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt." We talked about that last week – don't despise the gifts. Be open to the Holy Spirit working in you as well as others who are flawed human beings just like you.

All these things are adding firewood to keep the flames burning.

☞ Arrange the Burnt Offering

In the Scriptures, as a believer, you are not only the priests, responsible for keeping the fire burning; you are also the burnt offering, itself. Romans 12:1 calls it a "living sacrifice." **Offering yourself to the Lord as a living sacrifice is key to keeping the fire burning.** You're not going to stay aflame if you keep getting off the altar and living for yourself. You have to stay on the altar, continually giving yourself to God.

The key word here is "arrange." It means to set in order or to line up. Each day you need to check yourself for alignment with God. Are you still obeying him? Are you still following his lead? Are you still close with him? **Put yourself in a posture of submission to God** – that's arranging, or aligning the offering.

In a car, you sometimes need a front-end alignment. If one or both of your front wheels are out of alignment, your car won't drive straight. It will tend to veer off to one side or the other. It will be a rough ride. But an alignment can fix that and make your drive a lot smoother and easier. It's the same in your walk with God – you need a daily alignment.

☞ Burn the Fat

The fat was considered the best part. When it burned, it was a pleasing aroma to the Lord. In a steak, it's what adds all the flavor to the meat. I'm not talking about gristle; I'm talking about fat.



When it's blended into a good steak, there is so much flavor, it's fantastic! **God wants the best part of us** as well. To keep the fire burning, we must give God our best. This covers a lot of ground...

We are to seek first his kingdom and righteousness. Everything else is to fall into place after that. It's not our stuff first, then God, but the other way around. That means that **God gets the best of your time**. God gets **the best of your energy**. God gets the best of your all.

The Bible gets really nitty-gritty about this. God gets the first fruits of your labor. That means God gets priority in your bank account before everything else. **God doesn't want what's leftover, he wants the best part, which comes first.**

God wants the best part of your relationships too. Our love for him is to be so intense that in comparison, every other relationship is like hate. Those are not my words, but Jesus said it, himself in Luke 14:26. That means that **God is your most important relationship**. Your spouse and your kids need to fall into place behind him. That's how the fire is kept aflame. **Give God your best in all things!**

Keep the fire burning! Don't let it go out. Remember the Human Torch? His name was Johnny Storm and he was one of the Fantastic Four, a team of super heroes in the Marvel Universe. He would say, "flame on" and burst into flames! And He could fly while he was on fire, and he could throw fire, and everything he touched would catch on fire. When it comes to the Spirit, I want each of us to be a Human Torch. Look at your neighbor and say, "**flame on.**"

Let's keep the fire burning. If your spiritual fire has gone out or dwindled down to a little flicker, then it's time to catch fire for God. Get back to prayer. Strengthen the unity with other believers. Sacrifice your time and energy to God. Let Jesus have priority in your life and use your gifts to serve others. That's how you catch fire and fan the flame. Then, keep that fire burning with the Word, prayer and worship. And, offer yourself to God daily, giving him the best part of everything in your life. With those things happening in your world, you can be a Human Torch for Jesus. Flame on!

🔥 Music video: Keep the Fires Burning