

"When the Fire Cools"

June 3, 2018



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Psalm 51:1-13 ,
John 15:1-6, Matthew 7:16-20, Galatians 5:22-23
Matthew 5:13-16, Revelation 3:17-20

DAY 1

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Today's scripture reminds us that life is filled with ups and downs. When we suffer through sickness, failure, loss of a loved one, financial struggles and broken relationships, we can experience times of doubt. Our doubts may cause us to question our faith or God's love and faithfulness. It is not unusual for us to experience seasons when it feels like the Holy Spirit has left us and that God is nowhere to be found. How we react to those times has a major impact on our ability to recover and reconnect.

- **Do you turn toward God or away from God when you experience times of spiritual dryness?**
- **Do you have faithful Christian friends to whom you can turn when you have doubts or a crisis of faith?**
- **Are you willing to ask for help from a counselor, pastor or Stephen Minister when you are struggling? If not, why not?**

If you tend to work alone through times when God seems distant, consider joining a small group, Sunday School class, or ministry team where you will find people with

whom you can share your faith journey. We are not meant to be Lone Rangers on our faith journey!

DAY 2

Read [Psalm 51:1-13](#)

Sometimes when we claim Jesus as our Lord and see ourselves as a faithful member of the church, we believe that we will suddenly become exempt from committing "major" sins. When we realize that we still fall prey to temptation we purposely or subconsciously try to distance ourselves from God because we feel guilty. If we try to ignore our own wrongdoing and let our sins fester, our disconnection from God is magnified, and the fire of the Holy Spirit feels like it is burning out. During these times it is so important for us to seek counsel from Christian friends, pray, confess, and intentionally turn toward God and get back on the right path.

- **Can you identify the circumstances that cause you to feel the fire of the Holy Spirit alive in you? What creates that kind of joyful glow?**
- **What circumstances cause you to feel like your faith is waning or your fire is burning out?**

Pray for the Holy Spirit to illuminate the things that prevent you from being on fire for the Lord. If unconfessed sin is holding you back, turn to God and confess your sin. Seek restoration, when possible, from anyone your sin harmed.

DAY 3

Read [John 15:1-6, Matthew 7:16-20, Galatians 5:22-23](#)

Those who are fond of gardening understand the Lord's teaching about the vine and the branches, pruning in order to make a plant thrive, and the joy that comes when we see plants or branches bear fruit. The Apostle Paul taught that the Holy Spirit's work in us produces fruit of the spirit,

which includes peace, joy, love, faithfulness, kindness, and self-control. When we are fruitful, our behavior demonstrates these characteristics to the world, and others observe traits in us that are Christ-like. If our actions and behaviors do not align with what we profess, then we run the risk of turning those who do not know Christ away from him rather than towards him.

- **Reflect on the last twenty-four hours. Can you identify times when you demonstrated the fruit of the spirit?**
- **Were there times when your behavior was impatient, intolerant, angry or selfish? What could you have done to control those behaviors?**

Ask the Holy Spirit to continue the work of your sanctification. Pray for the wisdom to recognize when you have an opportunity to embody and demonstrate the fruit of the spirit identified by Paul.

DAY 4

Read [Matthew 5:13-16](#)

Salt is used to bring out the best in food flavors and was used to preserve food before refrigeration became the norm. Light makes things we cannot see in the dark visible. A shining city on a hill is a metaphor for a community that exemplifies God's kingdom in a world of darkness. Our scripture today asks us to be salt, and light, and for our church to be a shining city on a hill.

- **Reflect upon your personal Christian walk. Are you salty? Where do you shine your light?**
- **Reflect upon St. Paul and our role in our community and world. What can you do to help St. Paul shine her light brightly here in Largo and Clearwater, or in other places?**

If you are not already serving in a church ministry, pray for the Holy Spirit to help you identify ways that you can

become a saltier servant. Then act on what you learn.

DAY 5

Read Revelation 3:17-20

Pastor Pam's message highlighted words spoken by Jesus that may seem harsh. He said salt that loses its saltiness is worthless and should be thrown out, that branches bearing no fruit will wither and be burned, and that he would spit a lukewarm church out of his mouth. While those words may seem harsh, they were spoken in love to hold disciples and the church accountable, and to discipline those who were not following his commands. Today's scripture reminds us that Jesus wants all of us to bear fruit for God's purpose and that Jesus corrects and disciplines us so that we will repent of our indifference and be drawn into community with God.

- **How do you respond when you hear the Lord's words that sound harsh or judgmental? Do you skip over them to read "happier" passages?**
- **Why is it necessary for us to pay attention to the scriptures that have been highlighted this week?**
- **Reflect on your Christian walk. Has it been steady or filled with ups and downs? Where are you today?**

Pray for the Holy Spirit's presence to guide you, encourage you and sanctify you as you grow in grace and embrace the ministry of all believers to which you are called.

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