

Alright, hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad that you are here with us today. Whether this is your first time with us, or if this is your community of faith, we are so glad that you are here with us. Welcome to Valley Creek, and welcome to 2026. We are a movement of hope for the city and beyond, a movement, a bunch of individual people who have come together, have evaluated the world, and decided that Jesus knows what is good and true and is right, and we've decided to follow him with all of our lives. He is our teacher, he is our Lord, he is our leader. We want to become like him. We want to learn to think like, and act like, and live like, and believe like him. A movement of hope. We believe in the hope of the kingdom of heaven, that it is here and available now, that the gospel has restored our identity, reconciled our relationships, redeemed our purpose in Jesus's name, for the city and beyond. We are hope carriers, living on mission to take the life of Jesus everywhere we go. See, church is not an event, a building, an organization, or a gathering, it is a people. And when you pick a church, when God places you in a church, he doesn't place you in a building or an event, he places you in a community. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish. And when we align our lives with what God is doing in that place, there is a power, and a blessing, and a grace upon it. And so, what a great start to this year we have had as a church. 2026, God is moving. I mean, we started this whole year with our one thing weekend. Remember that? We spent the whole service only talking to God. We had no idea if it was going to work, and it did, and it was incredibly powerful. And then our staff pulled away for three days at our dream retreat, where we pulled away to dream, to pray, to seek God, to get aligned with one another. Then we had three days of re, three-day encounter with God. I've heard from so many people who have been here for years that it was the most powerful re-experience we have ever had. God was speaking, and moving, and releasing things, and touching people in profound ways. We started our new reading plan. We've just now had a week of prayer and fasting. God is moving. And we do all of those things for one reason, to help you move forward on your journey with Jesus and experience and encounter him. So, can I encourage you, if this is the community of faith that he has planted you in, then when those things come along, with humility and faith, jump in, and let God release the blessing of what he is doing into your life. I am so glad you are here with us, because today we are starting something new. We are starting a conversation on fueling the fire, a conversation on fueling the fire. For most of this spring, as long as we feel like God wants it to go, we are going to have a conversation. This is not a series. This is not logical. This is not linear. This is not about information and Bible knowledge. This is about having a conversation together, and wrestling through some things, and reflecting on some things, and processing some things. And what I am hoping is, is that we have a conversation together here in this room, but that when it is over and you leave, the conversation keeps going. That you have a conversation about the fire of God with your spouse, and with your children, and with your parents, and with your roommates, and with your friends, and with the people in your circle, and on your serve team. That you have a conversation with yourself, and most importantly, a conversation with the Holy Spirit. A conversation on fueling the fire. It is time to fuel the fire in this place and in your life, in Jesus's name. It's time to make it hot. It's time to set it ablaze. It's time to get it vibrant, and burning, and radiant. It's time for the heat of God to be released in your life and in our church, in the

city and beyond. And notice, it is a conversation on fueling the fire. It is not a conversation on fanning the flame. It is not a conversation on starting the spark. It is not a conversation on igniting the light. It's a conversation on fueling the fire. Why? Because the fire is already burning, in Jesus's name. There is a fire in this place. The fire of God is alive. It's moving. Can you see it? Can you feel it? Can you smell it? There is a fire. We don't need to start it. We need to steward it, and tend it, and fuel it, in Jesus's name. In fact, what I would say to you is, I believe that right now we have the most amount of people we have ever had that want more of God at the same time. I have been here 20 years. Right now, I believe we have the most amount of people we have ever had who want more of God at the same time. Now don't misunderstand me. We've had larger crowds along the way. We don't have the most amount of people here that we've ever had. We have the most amount of people who want more of God at the same time than we have ever had before. I will take that over large crowds all day long. Because here is why I believe you are here, I believe you are here because you are looking for God. I believe you are here because you are either looking for God, or you're looking for more of God. Some of you, you are here, you're just looking for God. "Is he real? Is there more to this life? Is all of this authentic? Like, is it worth my life?" Well, you are in a great place, because God is here, and I believe you are going to find him. And then a whole bunch of other of us, we're here and we're looking for more of God. There is a divine stirring in your soul. You're hungry, you're thirsty. You're like, "I need more of God. I am not content with what I've got." And so, in Jesus's name, we are going to start a conversation on fueling the fire, and we're going to believe that God is going to help us fuel the fire of God within us, and our families, and our church, in the days to come, as we walk through this conversation together.

And I want to say to you, right before we get started, this first verse says this, not by might nor by power, but by my? [Spirit] Says the Lord. It's not going to be by might, nor by power, it's going to be by the spirit, and only by the spirit. You say, "What does that mean?" The spirit is the fire of God. Only he can start the fire. Only he sustains the fire. So, it is not by might or power. In other words, it's not going to be by entertainment and events. It is not going to be by performance and polish. It's not going to be by rules and religion. It's not going to be by activities and programs. It's not going to be about knowledge and information. No, it's going to be by the spirit of the living God. And so, what I want you to understand as we get started is this conversation is not head-to-head. It is not even heart to heart. It's spirit to spirit. I'm asking, and believing, and praying that the spirit of the living God is going to stoke the fire in your soul, and fuel it until it rages, in Jesus's name. So, maybe before we even get started, maybe you can just even say, "Holy Spirit, fuel the fire." Like, "Holy Spirit, fuel the fire in me. I am looking for you. I am looking for more of you." You see, all throughout Scripture, one of the primary ways that God reveals himself to us is through fire. We know that Jesus has many names, and he shows himself to us in many things, the good shepherd, the way, the truth and life, the living water, the bread of life, he has so many things. But the primary way, all throughout Scripture, that God reveals himself to us is through fire, this all-consuming, uncontainable, uncontrollable, ever burning, everlasting energy, power, authoritative fire. First time the word fire is mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis, when God is revealing himself to

Abraham and creating a covenant with him, and he shows up as a blazing torch. He shows himself as the fire of God. And then we go a little further and we see Moses has an encounter with God at the burning bush, and he sees this bush that is on fire, burning from the inside out, and though the Bush doesn't get consumed, it continues to burn, and it's the presence and the power of God that forever changes Moses' life. And then we go a little further and we see God leading the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land through a pillar of fire by night that warms and lights and shows the way and declares to all the nations of the world that the Lord is God. And then they create the tabernacle, and the fire of God was on the altar representing his presence that was never to go out. And then Solomon builds the Temple, and they bring all of these sacrifices, and the fire of God falls from heaven and consumes it in such a way, with such power and such energy and such life, that the priests can't even do their job. They fall to the ground because of the life and the vibrancy of God through that fire. Then you fast forward and we see Elijah confronting the prophets of Baal because the people of God have turned their back on God, and he sets up a sacrifice, calls down fire from heaven to show the people that the Lord still is God. Then we get to the New Testament, and John the Baptist says that Jesus is coming to baptize us with the Holy Spirit and fire. Then Jesus goes on to say he has come to set this world ablaze. Then we see in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit is poured out, tongues of fire come upon the people as the spirit was released. Then Paul tells us do not quench the Holy Spirit, in other words, don't put out the fire of God within you. Then in Revelation, John sees the glorified Jesus, and it says his eyes were ablaze with fire. From Genesis to Revelation, God reveals himself to us in fire. In fact, look at this verse, his name is, for our God is a consuming fire. He's a consuming fire. He is, it's part of his identity, it's a part of his nature. He is a consuming fire. And he consumes, he consumes. He's waiting for us to offer ourselves, to surrender ourselves, to be the living sacrifice that he can come and consume and burn without burning up. It's time to fuel the fire in Jesus's name. Are you with me on this? [Yes]

You see, in the Old Testament there's this fascinating little thing. They set up the tabernacle, and God gives the priest their directives on what they are supposed to do, and here's what he says. The Lord says to Moses, give Aaron the high priest and his sons, the other priests, this command. The burnt offering is to remain on the altar hearth throughout the night til morning, and the, say with me, fire must be kept burning on the altar. 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. The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously. It must not go out. Do you get it? The priest had one job and one job only, to keep the fire burning. Keep the fire burning. Don't worry about all the sacrifices and all that stuff, don't get, to keep the fire burning, to keep the fire burning. Every morning, every night, keep the fire burning. Whether it was hot or whether it was cold, keep the fire burning. Whether it was windy or whether it was calm, keep the fire burning. Whether it was sunny or whether it was rainy, help me out, keep the fire burning. Whether your family was interested in it or wasn't interested in it, keep the fire burning. Whether there was a victory or a defeat, keep the fire burning. Whether you felt like doing it or didn't feel like doing it, keep the fire burning. No matter what was going on, no matter where everyone was, keep the fire

burning. They had one job. It was do not let the fire of God go out. And every day they were supposed to add fuel to the fire and arrange it in such a way that it could stay ablaze. Every day you and I are called to add fuel to the fire of God and arrange and rearrange our lives in such a way that the fire of God does not go out. No matter what is going on, no matter how you feel, no matter what everybody else says, no matter what the circumstances are, no matter what the situation is, keep the fire burning. Remember, the Old Testament is physical pictures of spiritual truths. No, you don't have to offer continual sacrifices of animals and actually throw wooden logs on this thing, but you are called to keep the fire of God burning in your life. You are called to fuel it and arrange your life in such a way that it never goes out. The fire of the presence of God, his beauty, his holiness, his glory, his power, his authority. I offer my life as a living sacrifice today because I don't want the fire to go out today. You can't tend the fire of the past, and you can't tend the fire of the future. You can only tend the fire of the today. Today I wake up and arrange my life so the fire of God burns. This is so significant that just a few chapters later, after he gives them this command, Aaron the high priest and his sons Nadab and Abihu, priests, took their censers, put fire in them, and added incense, and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. So, fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, "Do not let your hair become unkempt, and do not tear your clothes or you will die, and the Lord will be angry with the whole community. Do not leave the entrance to the tent of meeting. Keep the fire burning, or you too will die, because the Lord's oil is on you." So, they did as Moses said.

Let me just try to explain this to you for a second. God tells them that the fire can never go out. It's sacred fire. It's holy fire. It's set apart to God. And then Nadab and Abihu come along, and they offer unauthorized fire to the Lord. Another translation says strange or unholy fire. In other words, don't get lost in the details of it, here's what they do.

They come to God and they treat him as common. They come to God, and they treat him with contempt. They come to God and they treat him as if he is casual, dismissively, with apathy. They're going to offer God what they want, not what he asked for. And so, they come to the fire of God with the works of flesh instead of in the power of the spirit.

In that moment, they treated God casually and with contempt, and they died. Whenever you and I treat God casually and with contempt, dismissively and apathy, and we give him what we want instead of what he asks for, just so you understand, you die.

You die, you become lifeless, you become cold, you become dark, the fire goes out. See, people who understand the power of fire are the people who respect it the most. Do you ever go like camping, like with like a group of people, and you got that one guy? Everybody else is like flicking things in and out of the fire, you know, and then you got that one guy, he's like, "Guys, this is a fire." Because he respects the fire. He understands the power of the fire. He knows that fire is incredibly dangerous, and yet we can't live without it.

Can I just tell you something? God is incredibly dangerous, and yet we can't live without him. God is good, but make no mistake about it, he is dangerous. He is dangerous to your pride, and to your flesh, and to your sin, and to the things of this world that you want to bring into his

presence with contempt. They walked up to the Lord with no fear of God, as if they could control, as if they are the creators and the authors of and the sustainers of fire. No, he is. He is, and he starts a fire in our life, and he asks us to fuel it the way he asks us to fuel it. This is like the rich young ruler, right? Jesus says, "Sell everything you have, give it to the poor, then come follow me." If the rich young ruler would offer Jesus anything except that, it would have been strange fire. Why? Because he would have been giving Jesus what he wanted, not what Jesus asked for. It's like the story of Achan in the Old Testament. When God says, "Jericho belongs to me," and they defeat Jericho. And Achan steals a few little treasures for himself, and then the whole nation gets defeated by the enemy because of this one man's contempt. Why? Because he gave God what he wanted, not what God asked for. Hear me, you can give God what you want after you have given him what he has asked for. This is coming to the fire with respect and fear of the Lord and health and awe and reverence and wonder, because he is God. And I think we have lost so much fear of the Lord, so much sense of holiness, so much sense of he is not common. He is not casual. There is no contempt here. Yes, he is good, and we say it every single week, but make no mistake about it, he is incredibly dangerous to your flesh.

So, when you walked in here today, did you walk in with a sense of, "I am coming to meet with the eternal consuming fire of God? May he consume everything that is in me that is not of him." And so, Aaron watches his two sons die right in front of him. They're dead. And Moses looks right at him, and he says, "Keep the fire burning." So, it means I said don't leave the entrance of the tent of meeting, that's where the fire is. Keep the fire burning. So, what I want you to understand is that if God told Aaron to keep the fire burning when he watched his two sons die right in front of him, then when you have business travel, and school activities, and sports games, and vacations, and a season, and a situation, and a circumstance, and busyness, and life, and bills, and some sickness, and some challenges, keep the fire burning. It is not an excuse, or a get out of jail free card, or a do whatever the heck you want moment. Because if Aaron had to keep it burning with that, you and I can keep it burning when we go on business travel, and vacations, and activities, and school seasons, right? Is that fair to say? That's coming to the Lord with authorized fire, holy fire, kingdom fire, because he is God. And I know some of you are like, "Bro, you're teaching us in the beginning of the year out of Leviticus." Yes. You're like, "I'm not a priest. I don't even know what you're saying." Okay. But you are a priest. Look at this. But you are chosen people, a royal, say it, priesthood, a holy nation of people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him, that you may offer your life as a living sacrifice, so the fire can consume, who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Light, light. When you see the word light now in Scripture, I want you to think fire. Why is there light? Because he's fire, and fire gives light. So, you are a priest. Are you with me on this? [Yes]

Okay, have you ever sat at an amazing campfire? Like, I just want you to think about this, like picture, have you ever sat... like, I'm not talking like one of those like wimpy, like I'm talking about like a legit, like somebody like put time to build this thing, like one of those kinds of fires. And you lie... I mean, that thing's amazing. When it is set ablaze, it is incredibly attractive,

isn't it? People from all over who see it just show, like somehow, they just showed up to your camp because they're attracted to that fire. And they come in, and when you get close to that fire, it's amazing how much light it kicks off and how much vision you have, and you can see things so clearly. And when that fire is burning, it's like it's alive. It flickers, and it flashes, and it dances. It's got this uncontrollable, uncontainable energy within it. And then if you get to that fire, it's incredibly comforting, isn't it? You find your blood pressure go down real quick when you're by a fire, and it's warm, it's hot, and it actually makes your face red. Do you ever notice that when you sit, you see your face literally becomes red from the heat of it? And it consumes so much fuel. The more fuel you like put anything in it, and it like burns up, it just keeps burning. No matter, you can throw like garbage in there, and it still burns it up, and it disappears. And did you ever notice when people are on fire, they're just like this, because it's mesmerizing. And then it's amazing how at a fire there's these things that you would say that you would never say anywhere else. And then you find yourself having these incredible relationships with other people, all because you sat at a fire. Okay, so if the fire of God is inside you or me, then guess what? That should be our life. If the fire of God is burning within you, then your life should be attractive. People should see the fire from far away and are drawn towards you. And near you, do people get attracted to your life and school and work and the places you go because there's something different about you? And if that fire is burning within you, you have light, so you can see. So, do you have vision, vision for your life and where you're going and what you're doing and which way you should take? And then if that fire is burning within you, you should have energy. Your life should be flickering, and flashing, and jumping, and dancing because the energy of God is alive within you. And then there should be this sense of comfort and peace. Why? Because I'm sitting at the fire of God that is within me. And then there should be this ever-growing holiness because all the things of the world are getting burned away. Why? Because the fire consumes, and it's consuming the things that are not of Jesus, and they're disappearing. So, I'm growing in my personal holiness if there's a fire within me, and then my face literally radiates, radiates the glow and the glory of God. And then I am in awe and wonder of God, mesmerized by him. And then I find myself having something to say. Do you find yourself saying things about God that are just incredible bits of revelation and things that are being released out of you? And then are you finding yourself with relationship with other people, these deep connections, because the fire of God is within you?

So, my question for you is, is the fire of God burning within you? Is it burning within you? That's how you know. Maybe let me ask you a better question. It's like this, do you smell like smoke? Smell like smoke. And probably the best question to ask is, do the people in your life think you smell like smoke? Because if you've ever been around a fire for a long time, you smell like smoke. You go inside and you see your wife, she's like, "Who, what is that smell?" You're like, "Me. All right. I don't, I can't..." you can't even smell it anymore because it's become so normative to you. Do you smell like smoke? Do the people in your life think you smell like smoke? And if not, does it concern you to keep the fire burning? You say, "Well, how do I fuel the fire?" Like, "What am I supposed to do?" There's lots of ways, and we'll work through a bunch of stuff as we go through this conversation, but some real fast ones, because I know

some of more logical, linear people, I'm going to lose you at the concept of fire. So, let me just say, "How do I fuel it?" Get baptized in the Holy Spirit. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit? Not in water, in the Holy Spirit, filled, overflowing, dipped, immersed in the Spirit of the living God. Have you ever had somebody lay hands on you, anoint you with oil, and say, "We're going to pray that you'd be filled with the Spirit of the living God?" When was the last time you asked someone to anoint you with oil and pray that you would be filled with the Spirit of the living God? Have you ever come down after service and said, "Hey, I got nothing going on in my life that's bad, I just want more of the Spirit of the living God and fire, so please pray for me that fire would fall in my life?" If we're immersed in the Holy Spirit, Jesus says there comes fire, fire. So, if you want to know if you're filled with the Holy Spirit, it's not, do you have a certain gift, it's, is the fire of... do you smell like smoke? Do you smell like smoke? Because if you're immersed in the Holy Spirit, you smell like smoke. Why? Because it comes with fire, because he is the fire. So, if you want to fuel your fire, be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Jesus, immerse me in the Spirit of the living God. Second thing would be, be engaged in Scriptures. Remember the story of the road to Emmaus? These guys are defeated. They encounter the resurrected Jesus on the road, and then they realize it's him, and they say, were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us? They're not talking about eating bad pizza. They're talking about having a heart on fire with the Spirit of the living God as the Scriptures were opened. If you want the fire of God to be fueled in your life, engage the Scriptures. Consume the Scriptures. Meditate on the Scriptures. Memorize the Scriptures. Declare the Scriptures. Pray the Scriptures. Fill your life with the Word of God. Jeremiah says, "Your word was like a fire in my bones." It is not just a fuel, it is actual fire that you put within you when you engage the Scriptures. If you want to burn, you must engage God's Word. Like, "I don't get it." We just... great, we just started a reading plan. I'm doing the reading plan for no other reason because I want a fire of God in my life. I don't understand anything I read, but I want a fire of God in my life. This makes no sense to me, but I want the fire of God in my life. Do you know that every person that commits to be a leader here memorizes a chunk of Scripture every single semester? Why? Because I refuse to have cold-hearted leaders in this church. I want leaders with burning hearts, and we know that's only possible by opening the Scriptures. Do you know why every kid's leadership experience and student leadership experience next gen person memorizes Scripture? Because I refuse to raise up a generation of cold-hearted students. It's got to be more than chicken fingers, sneaker giveaways, and hanging with my friends. Some of you just take that home, just meditate on that one thought, that one thought. Would you ever wonder, you're like, "Bro, why do you use so much Scripture?" Because I refuse to have a cold-hearted church, and I know without the Scriptures there will be no fire in your life. I am not a monkey in a cage dancing for you up here, telling you stupid stories of my life that have nothing to do with the word of God in your life. God wants your heart to burn, and it takes Scripture. Fire flickers, it flashes, so if one shoots out at you, it's okay, I love you, though we go to the next one. We behold him. If you want to fuel the fire, behold him. The fire... or excuse me, no, offer sacrifice. The fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice. All throughout Scripture, sacrifice attracts fire. So, when you offer God sacrifice, sacrifice of time, energy, money, life, agenda,

motive, got to offer this to you as a sacrifice, fire will fall. If you want to fuel the fire, get in community. Do you realize the pouring out of the Holy Spirit did not happen in a big gathering? It happened in a circle. Look at this. They went to the room where they were staying. They all joined together constantly in prayer. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place, in a circle, in a small group, and suddenly tongues of fire came to rest on each of them. There is something about getting in a small group of people, a circle of people. Jesus says, "Where two or three are gathered, there I am also." Fire begets fire. Sometimes you just go into that circle because you have no fire, and if I go into your circle and I have no fire, but you have fire, I can steal a coal from your life, and it'll start my fire back on. So, get in a circle, not because you... go to the circle and literally be like, "I'm only here because I need fire. I don't even like any of you. I just need fire, and I don't really want to like any of you, but I need fire, and if that's where it comes, that's where I'm going to go." How much do you want fire? Then if you want to fuel the fire, behold him. His eyes were like blazing fire. I'm just telling you this right now, if you just look at Jesus, eyes of fire will eventually set your soul ablaze. You say, "What does that mean?" Just look at, just look at. You ever just look at Jesus? You say, "What does that mean? I'm looking up there, I see a light and ceiling grid." Just look at Jesus. Meditate on his names. Look for him in his word. See his glory in creation. See some of his image and his likeness in the best of humanity that you see around you. Just look at him. We are told in 2nd Corinthians that we become what we behold. The more we behold him, we become like him, and we go from glory to glory, which means the hotter our fire gets, because if he is ablaze, then we will become ablaze if we look at him, from glory to glory. But the more I look away from him, the colder and colder, the darker and darker, the more depraved and more depraved I become. Look at him. And then the last thing, if you want to fuel your fire, get in the secret place. Get in the secret place. But when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place. If he is a consuming fire and he is in the secret place, then when I go into the secret place, fire comes into my life. So, what's the secret place? Getting alone with God. Meeting with God. Praying with God. Talking with God. Engaging the word with God. Just, I get alone. I go into a secret place. Not about everybody else. It's about me in Jesus, and where he is, there his fire is. So, he's already in the... so here's what, read it like this. There is a burning fire in the secret place. If you will go in there, you will be set ablaze. Only go to the secret place if you're willing to let your flesh be burned off. Only go to the secret place if you're willing to let your motives be purified. Only go to the secret place if you're willing for the lust of the eyes, the cravings of the flesh, and the pride of life to start leaving your life. Because if I go in there, there's a fire in there, and once I go in, fire begets fire, and it'll jump to my life.

Are you with me on this? Got to fuel the fire. If it's sacred to God, it's got to be sacred to us. We got attended, which means we got to fuel it, but we also got to get rid of the retardants. Do you know there are things that put fire out, fire retardants that literally are designed to put fire out? You know what the number one fire retardant I think there is? Division. Do you ever watch a dad after a campfire? What does he do when he wants to put the fire out? He takes a shovel, and he starts pushing everything away from each other. Why? Because the moment I

separate the coals, it all starts going out. So, when I'm divided, when I'm offended, when I have unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, a sense of entitlement, gossip, slander, or if I just start to withdraw my life, not out of an offense but just out of busyness, out of consumerism, out of comfort, or can be, go ahead, withdraw your life from the burning coals of God, and you will go out. It's a retardant. You know what another retardant is? Ongoing, unconfessed, unrepentant sin. I just, I know it's wrong, I just keep doing it anyways. That's Paul saying, "Don't quench this." You're literally quenching it. You're literally putting it out. Another one is just skepticism. This constant sense of doubt, unbelief, ungodly beliefs. It's like standing there with a water hose over the fire and wondering why it never burns. And then the last retardant that I just feel so strongly that I needed to say is duplicity. To say one thing but live another. It's like putting a wet blanket over the fire, and it sucks all the oxygen out, and it will go out just like that. It's Ananias and Sapphira. The whole First Century Church was on fire. They sold some land and they came to give some of it, but they lied. They wanted to look good, so they told Peter, "We're giving... it's all of it," but it wasn't. Peter just looks right at him. He goes, "Why would you lie to the Holy Spirit? You're not lying to me, you're lying to the Holy Spirit." And Ananias falls on the ground dead. The duplicity literally was a wet blanket that took the fire right out of his life. A few minutes later his wife comes in, tells the same lie, and he says, "Why would you lie to the Holy Spirit?" The same men who buried your husband are now here to bury you. To the ground, dead. Why? Because God is good, but he is dangerous to our flesh, and duplicity chokes the fire out. So, just be honest. When we're honest, God can burn the things of this world out of us. But when I'm duplicit, I throw a wet blanket over it and it chokes it out. Are you with me on this? We must become people with radiant faces, burning hearts, and holy lives. So, we've got to fuel it, and we've got to get rid of the retardant, and we'll talk more about it. But here's what I want to say, is this whole conversation is not about having a gas fireplace with a switch. It's about having a real fire that burns. You picture the two for a second, okay? I'm from Buffalo. I'll accept your condolences for yesterday later. When I first moved here, everybody had gas fireplaces, and I remember thinking, "That is the stupidest thing. It's like three degrees. We need some fuel and some fire and some heat. You all over here going. Now I want you to think about this with me for a second. There is a difference between a facade and a fire. Gas fireplace; I can turn it on, on my own, and I can turn it off, on my own. And it's amazing how the gas fireplace, it's got like marble tile and gold trim and glass and these little green rocks inside, and it's just like. A fire requires constant tending once it's been started. Require, fire once it's been started you can't stop it. You have to tend it. You have to steward it. You have to take care of it. And if you've ever noticed, it's usually like these rough pieces of stone around the fireplace, and they're kind of chipped up from use because of all the fuel that's been thrown in. And there's usually black soot everywhere and tons of ashes from what's been burnt up. I think what we often want is we want the facade of the fire instead of a real fire, because it is so much easier to turn Jesus on when I walk in here today for one hour. And then when that hour's over, and then I go to my circle, and I leave my circle, and I go to my serve team, and I leave my serve team, and I get around someone who thinks I'm a Christian, so I need to act Christian, versus tending, fueling, stewarding, taking care of, caring

about, wondering. I've got to go get some more, and I've got to deal with these ashes. And yes, my life is sooty, and I don't look all that great, but there's life. There's life inside of me. Can you imagine, the priest in Leviticus that we just talked about at the tabernacle. And they walk in. It's their turn, they're up, and they're supposed to tend the fire. And they're like, "Morning Bill, morning George. Let's turn that fire on." 6:00 p.m., shift's over. "Turn the fire off, George." "Okay Bill, see you tomorrow." Ain't that American church? 9:00 a.m., Sunday mornings, 12:30, "See y'all." Facade or fire. One is very costly, one looks very nice. This matters. This matters. You will never have a radiant face, a burning heart, or a holy life with this. Never. Oh sure, it looks good to your friends. You look cool on social media. But if we want the life of God, like the actual life of God, there must be people of fire. And we must care, and we must fuel it, and we must tend it.

If it's sacred to God, it's got to be sacred to us. And there's so much that's got to go, so much that he wants to bring. And the problem is, once it's started, it's uncontrollable and uncontainable. So, be careful before you start the fire of God in your life, because he may ask you to throw something in there that you want to keep. So, it's often easier. But can I tell you what happens? You can only flip this switch so many times before you are like, "I'm good. Let's not even turn it on today." Why? Because it offers you nothing of value or substance. And this is why the American Christianity cycle does what it does over and over, because you get tired of flipping the switch, because there ain't nothing. Just ain't nothing. I mean, in the fall I showed you this. I said I spend so much time praying and wrestling, like how do we have a great organization, all the things that are required to do what we do, but our heart is to have this kingdom movement and to go to new places with God. And as I've been reflecting on this, coming into this conversation, and I know this, but I want to say it out loud. A great organization will never create a kingdom movement. A great organization will never start the fire of God. It cannot. But if we flip them and we focus on the fire of God, oh, a great organization will come. "See, I don't care about your organization." I know if you get the fire of God in your life, a great family will come. You get a great fire in your life, then guess what, a great home will come. You get the fire of God in your life, a great business will come. You get the fire of God in your life, a great future, a great life, a great whatever it is that you want great of will come when the fire of God is burning in your life. And so, I want you to know that what I'm praying for you, my fast, is praying that you would have a divine stirring, insatiable hunger, passionate pursuit, extravagant worship, loving obedience, a sense of radical holiness, because the fire is burning off your flesh and the things of this world, and that there will be a supernatural outpouring. That's the heart. We've got to be people with radiant faces, burning hearts, and holy lives. This is why it's going to be a conversation, and it's going to go a long time, because I'm out of time and I'm not even close. If you're honest with yourself today, do you have the facade or the fire? Maybe we're just supposed to start there. Do you have the facade, or do you have the fire? Here's the good news. If you have the facade, we can convert your gas fireplace into a wood-burning stove that actually has the fire of God within it. But it's only possible, it's only possible, if and when you say, "Jesus, I acknowledge I got a lot of facade and no fire. Will you help me? Will you help me? Because You're the all-consuming fire.

So, if I will just offer You my gas fireplace, You'll come consume it, and You will renovate it, and You will reignite it, and You will rekindle it, and You will bring the fire, and it will fall on my sacrifice." And if you have a fire, this is the season to get it hot and blazing. Some of your fire, you got fire, but it's, it's time to stoke it, and poke it, and fuel it, and tend it, and say, "I've let this go for too long. It was burning. I went on that business trip for the last six years and forgot about it," because that's what happened. That's what happens when you walk away from the fire. You think, "I'll be right... 20 seconds, I'll be right back." Six years later. Some of you are right now, I literally, I just nailed you. It's like literally you're like, "Oh my gosh, yeah, it was, it was like 2020." You thought you were walking away because of COVID. I will be back after. Just be honest about it. If you pretend like your fire, "Oh, my fire is great." Is it? Because I don't smell any smoke. Fair. Smoke. Here's the first conversation you have, okay. First conversation is facade or fire. Second conversation is, if you say fire, great. Ask three people in your life this week, "Do I smell like smoke?" Because you don't get to define whether or not it's actually fire. Only we around you do. Are we attracted, is there warmth, is there holiness, is there things that you're saying about God, are we connected, you know what I'm saying? Is that fair? So, this is my point is this, this is a conversation. And you're like, "That's exposing." No, it's called humility and honesty, and that opens me up to God moving in my life in a profound way. We must not, we must not, we must not be a church of facade. Because Jesus is worthy of radiant faces, burning hearts, and holy lives. As both individuals, but as people. And if you're not there, and you're like this is all, you're in the greatest spot ever, because what we're saying is we're going to convert you, we're going to not... I'm sure to Christian it does not... that wasn't the point of that word. We're going to convert your gas burning, pretty but pointless thing. Because you are created to not live a pretty and pointless life. You are created to live a life with the fire of God in Jesus's name. That's the best I got for you to finish this up today, so close your eyes with me.

So, Holy Spirit, we just want more of You. And I believe that more of You starts by being honest about where we are. So, would You start a conversation with us, and would You give us grace and courage to be humble and authentic. Holy Spirit, You are the fire of God, and we invite You to burn in our lives. We don't always know how to do that. We don't know what it means. We don't know how to get there. But we know You do, and you can. So, Holy Spirit, come. Holy Spirit, move. Holy Spirit, fall afresh. Holy Spirit, rekindle the embers. Bring life to the fire. Bring hope to our hearts. I pray for every person that is looking for you and looking for more of You, that You will show Yourself to them. Holy Spirit, do it only You can do, as we continue to follow You in the days to come. In Your name we pray, amen.