

Restoring Your Spiritual Prime through Intimacy with God: Pt 3 By Todd Bentley

Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house. - Job 29:4

Commit these truths to heart:
Matthew 7:7; John 15:13; John 14:6 ; 1 Corinthians 1:9

Introduction:

This is the final teaching in my three-part series. If you have missed parts one and two, [please click here](#).

Deep, raw, hunger for intimacy with the Holy Spirit is only satisfied through expression. However, many find it difficult to express this desire or any other things of the heart. The psalmists did this very well, and I believe this is why the psalms are so popular. They not only provide us with models to follow, but they also inspire us to voice our own deepest feelings and aspirations. Psalms express heart cries, wonderings, longings, thanksgiving, and praise, and satisfy the innermost yearnings to do what we were created for...worship the King. They take us from the heights to the depths, and we can feel God Himself cry with us. It is as if the Psalms give us a "sick start" because they help our emotions come to the surface as we identify with the cry of the Psalmists.

With this in mind, let us examine two particular verses composed with great sensitivity by the psalmist. "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, the living God" (Ps. 42:1, 2). The word pant means more than just breathing rapidly and heavily. It also means to yearn eagerly. Do you yearn eagerly for God? Are you thirsty for the Living God? The second verse found in Psalm 84:2 also describes an intense longing for God's presence. "My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God" (emphasis mine).

Listen. It is time to know Him and be known by Him! God is issuing a personal invitation to you (Rev. 3:20). He is looking for a response. His Spirit is welcoming you to come into His presence to spend time with Him, alone, so that your love and passion for Him will reach new heights. If you are willing to say "Yes," He will fan the flames of desire for intimacy with Him.

Open Heavens

The Holy Spirit revealed to me that when we really desire His presence, He will cause awesome things to happen and will release even those things we are not expecting. Isaiah the prophet said, "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence" (Is. 64:1). Yes! Oh God, tear open the heavens and come down! Isn't that what we all want?

The heavens opened over my own life in 1998, and God indeed caused great things to happen, things I had not expected, as well as things I had asked for. Today, I carry my open heaven with me; I live and minister under an open heaven, and God continues to surprise me day-to-day. I believe God's favor came upon me because I pursued His presence and nothing more. I desired Him alone, above all else. I sought His presence, and the blessings His presence brought. Today, people often pursue Him for increased benefits, and sometimes that is their motivation for time in their secret place. However, that is not a hunger for God but a hunger for the fruit. Yes, there are many blessings in that place, but when we desire Him and Him alone, when we seek His Face; He gives us His kiss of love, which in my opinion, is so much better than anything other blessing!

Perhaps the Holy Spirit is revealing that your love relationship with Him is alive, spontaneous, and passionate. Great! You might even be thinking, how can I take that fire that I already have in my heart and make it an inferno? Alternatively, He may be revealing that your level of desire and passion for Him is weakening. If so, He wants to arouse and awaken your love for Him. He wants your passion to strengthen.

Understanding God's Love for You

"When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine" (Ezek. 16:8).

Although this message from God was spoken to the inhabitants of Jerusalem through Ezekiel (the prophet), it is still a significant "now word" for us today. It reveals so well God's heart of compassion and love toward us. He wants you to know that He sees your vulnerability and He is covering you with His love and protection. That is the bottom line. You are loved! You are covered! And His love for you is whole-hearted. By that, I mean His love isn't just talk. He doesn't just whisper empty words into our ear! God is good! He backs up His words with actions, confirmations, and evidences of His love that we can see or perceive. He wants the same from us—He doesn't want us to love on Him with just rote lip service with no action, passion, or emotion. God wants us fervent in spirit. The definition for fervent paints a picture of an erupting, boiling volcano. He wants us to be fiery hot! Are you an erupting, burning volcano—fiery hot? Boiling over is the word!

Kindle the Flame

The Father has created a holy and intimate place in the spirit called the Secret Place. Psalm 31:20 describes it as a place to hide from the plots of man, and the strife of tongues. Many are familiar with Psalm 91:1, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Reserved for true believers in Jesus Christ; this is a place of freedom where our love for Jesus can intensify our intimacy with the Holy Spirit and cause overflowing life-giving joy! I am continually in this place of intimacy and my cry is "Holy Spirit, make me fiery hot! I want to be like John the Baptist. I want to be a burning, shining lamp" (John 5:35). Listen. God not only wants to brand many believers with His fiery touch, He also wants to impact lives deeper than we ever thought possible. He wants to fan the flame in your heart! So it is time to ask Him for new passion, new fire, and the gift of holy hunger.

In my life, this holy hunger caused such a passion in my heart for the one thing that is far above anything else, and that is the precious presence of God. Like David, my deepest cry to God is "Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11). I weep when I pray this and I have prayed it often. "God, please, I have received such an outpouring of Your grace—if that were gone—if Your Spirit lifted from my life, it would all be over. Please take not thy Holy Spirit from me." And He hasn't.

Stoke the Fire

We can choose to stir up our love! To stir up our love means to raise up, to excite, rouse or arouse to action. Like warming up a musical instrument, we have to warm up our love and passion, stir it, warm it, awaken it. The question is, "How do you warm up your love or arouse your heart for Him even more?"

In Song of Songs, Solomon writes, "do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases" (Song. 3:5b) in other words, "Don't let love come alive in your heart until you are ready for it because it will cost you. If you are not ready to abandon yourself to Him, then don't even awaken it."

Are you ready to be a lover of God? It is a choice to be passionate, to be hungry, and to arouse your love for God. Bottom line? You got it. We choose. For the sake of cliché, love is a choice.

Steward and Tend the Flame

What are you going to do with all of that hunger and desire for the presence of the Holy Spirit that you have asked Him to stir up in you? How will you care for the love and passion that you have asked for? Let me tell you, it is a commitment, and takes time, passion, and sacrifice! God does not want dull lovers or insensitive stewards of His blessings.

For the most part, the Church wants the passion but it remains lukewarm. And we know what lukewarmness does to God. It makes Him throw up! "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:16). Cold or hot. You either want it or you don't. If you want it, you had better keep fanning that flame and keep the love exchange fiery hot! The sad thing about those who are lukewarm is that they very well know that they are not hungry or desperate enough for God's presence in their lives and barely realize that it is only by His grace that His love can come upon their hearts and supernaturally empower them to love the way that He wants them to. The only way we can love passionately is to be intoxicated with the influence of His affection. Did you get that? With the influence of His affection. How to get influence? Koininia. Communion. Relationship. The Word. Prayer. Worship. Hanging around lovers of God.

Keep the Fire Burning

My prayer for you is that you would receive a "holy hunger" for intimacy with the precious Spirit of God. I believe God is going to pour out this gift according to your measure of hunger, according to your desperation. Holy hunger goes hand-in-hand with His desire to help you stir up and awaken your passion for Him. God deserves our love more than anything in this world. He is worthy. Listen, at this very moment, Jesus Christ is preparing a place for us in our Father's house. We are going to be with Him forever (John 14:2, 3). Therefore, it is time to make ourselves ready, even as a bride would get ready for her wedding day and her husband-to-be. The story of the Shulamite bride in the Songs of Solomon is filled with imagery and intimacy. The confidence of the bride and the spouse in each other gives us valuable insight into how to fan the flames of desire, stir, and awaken our love for God.

1. GET STARTED: "My beloved spoke, and said to me, 'Rise up my love, my fair one, and come way'" (Song. 2:10). God is the initiator. He speaks to us. Having said that, though, we still need to get started by responding to Him. So in that sense, it starts with you. How hungry are you? Set a time to meet with God. Set a place. Rise up! Purpose this in your heart and say, "God you are my God! Early will I seek You!" Don't wait for the grace to pray. Pray for the grace to pray. Rise up and say, "I will stir myself up to take hold of God." There are times when the presence of God comes and it is the four hours of glorious Holy Ghost! Then there are other times when you need to purpose in your heart to rise up and pray for four hours because you are hungry. So sometimes, it just starts with you. Be disciplined.

2. REMEMBER GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU: "We will remember your love" (Song. 1:4). Something happens in our heart when we remember visitation, when we remember the promises of God. We are stirred when we think back to those days in which we really were experiencing the "rapture of love." Remembering God's love for us is so important, because in the remembering, our hearts are touched once again with God's faithfulness toward us. This helps us to trust Him, and to stir up and awaken lost love.

3. BE A STEWARD OF HIS PRESENCE: We need to allow the presence of God to touch us every day. I call it soaking or marinating. More, Lord! We need to allow ourselves to be touched daily by the glory of God. Sometimes I will wait every day for a whole hour for the presence of the Holy Spirit to come and when He comes, I fill myself up with Him! Spending time with the Holy Spirit soaking in His Presence is crucial to our love relationship with God.

4. BE REDEEMED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST: "I am dark, but lovely" (Song. 1:5). The Shulamite bride is saying (about herself), that she is dark but lovely. Being dark symbolizes sinful desires. She goes on to say, "Don't look upon me, because I am dark" (v. 6). Don't judge me." You sense shame, guilt, and condemnation but the flip side is that she is lovely. I believe that once we have been redeemed by Jesus Christ we become lovely (1 Pet. 1:18-23).

5. PURSUE GOD FIRST AND FOREMOST: Then in her next breath the bride says, "My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept" (Song. 1:8, emphasis mine). The "vineyard" can represent numerous conditions; for instance, ministry work can sometimes rob us from taking care of our own "vineyard." To paraphrase: "They made me the keeper of the vineyards—ministry. They gave me all this responsibility but I am burned out. They gave me all this work, all this ministry, but my own vineyard I have not kept. Because of that, I am ashamed because I am not looking after my own spiritual life with God. I feel abandoned because somehow the church has rejected me even though I've been working so hard." There is something wrong with this picture! Pursue God. Don't pursue vineyards. Then, God will desire your beauty and He will draw you aside with Him so that He can awaken and renew your "first love" for Him (Rev. 2:4).

6. REST IN GOD AND BE CONNECTED TO THE BODY OF CHRIST: "Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions?" (Song. 1:7). Here we see the bride's earnest desire for Him. Let me put it this way. "Tell me O you whom I love. Even though I am dark and even though I am burning out, I have a hunger for you. Can you please tell me where I can get some revelation? Can you please tell me where you feed your flocks the manna of heaven?" Isn't that the cry of the Church today? We want to know the place of revelation even like Job had it at the prime of his spiritual life—the friendly counsel of God walking at his tent (Job 29:4). We want to hear the voice of God and have visions, dreams, encounters, experiences, and visitations. People have asked me how I receive revelation. They want to know, "What book did you read?" I answer, "Hey! I found a place in the spirit where He feeds His flocks and I go there!"

7. FOLLOW THE FOOTSTEPS: We find revelation of His love in the green pastures and beside the still waters mentioned in Psalm 23:2. And we find it by following the footsteps of the flock, as noted in Songs of Solomon 1:8. "If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds' tents." Follow the footsteps of God's people, His flock. Look for the footsteps of the "God classes"—those that have prophetic history and destiny. Find out where they walked. Be inspired by the stories of Abraham, Moses, David, Deborah, Esther, and Ruth. Read about other great saints used by God like Smith Wigglesworth, Kathryn Kuhlman, Aimee Semple McPherson, and others. Find the footsteps of the flock. You see, God wants to give us revelation and we need the rest of God (Heb. 4:9-11), as well as connection with the Body of Christ (Heb. 10:25), beside the shepherd's tent. The revelation of God's love for us arouses our love and passion for Him.

8. IMITATE THOSE FULL OF FAITH AND PATIENCE: "But imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12b). We can stir up our passion and love for God by trying to be like Jesus, by imitating Him and the way in which He walked. Don't forget the forerunners of faith, too, they can spur us on!

9. CATCH THE LITTLE FOXES! "Catch us the Foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes" (Song. 2:15). If we want to awaken love, we need to catch those little foxes—the subtle areas of our life that distract, disturb, and hinder us from resting in the secret place. Many believers are not caught up in big sin, but rather there are subtle areas that dull their love for God. I call these little foxes "the intimacy robbers." Intimacy robbers are those conditions that try to make our love for God grow cold. The devil knows how vital it is to rob from us deep intimacy with God. He knows that in the secret place of intimacy, believers discover the essence of true worship, and how our devotion to God causes His heart to be ravished with love for His creation. If the devil's schemes remain untested, he can keep us out of the secret place of God's presence by pushing those little foxes into our circumstances.

Get Desperate

The Holy Spirit loves it when I am desperate for Him. "Holy Spirit, I'm not getting into the pulpit tonight without you, we're not doing this unless I have Your manifest presence. I am not going! Holy Spirit, I am not going! I want to see something. I've got to see what's going on tonight, what's the Father doing?" Before I go evangelizing, it is like, "Holy Spirit, we are going into the street today to talk about Jesus! Who knows Jesus, Holy Spirit, better than You? There is not a greater evangelist, Holy Spirit, than You. You can witness and testify about Jesus more than I can, so let's go into the street. Let's open up the door, come on, let's go out into the street, and let's reach people for Jesus tonight! You are the one that reveals. No one can come to the Father; no one can say that Jesus is Lord unless You come. No one can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Spirit of God. Holy Spirit, I am not going to win souls without You! If You don't come with me, I want to go home."

I can tell you about fellowship and describe my own experiences with the Holy Spirit until the cows come home, but it will not affect you unless you experience Him for yourself. The heart of the Holy Spirit asks, "Why do you draw back when you could have intimacy with Me? Do you want an encounter with the UST? Walk, work, play, breathe, and have your whole being with the holy spirit and you will come to depend upon Him as your closest, most intimate friend.

Set the World Ablaze

As our "love-life" with the Spirit of God enters into its prime, He is ever mindful of the multitudes of people who are lost and dying. They need to be reached with the Gospel by Christians whose hearts are aflame with His burning love. "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; it's flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame" (Song. 8:6). Love—is flames as flames of fire. A most severe flame!

Friends! God's fiery seal of supernatural love comes upon our hearts to empower us to love a lost world with the very love that Jesus has. It is a mature, fiery, passionate love, full of flames of fire. Sustain it, and you will stay in the prime of your spiritual life. Do your part. Kindle, rekindle, stoke, fan, and stoke the flame. Ravish the Spirit of God's heart and ask Him to stir His fiery, hot, intoxicating love on you today, and to consume you with a holy desperation for one thing only—to know His fullness. His way, His truth, His life, in the intimacy of His precious presence. His fullness will keep you in a perpetual state of spiritual prime!

Pray

Forgive me Holy Spirit for every time I have grieved You, for tormenting You, wounding You, and using You. Forgive me for not knowing You as a Person, for every time I have chased You away. I never served you. I never appreciated You. Spirit of God, I am sorry about that. I am sorry and I want You to know and I know You will come, Holy Spirit. Where is Your closeness? Where is Your closeness Holy Spirit? I want to encounter and experience You way beyond the power and the gifting. I desire to know the heart of Jesus and the love of God through You. I want to enter into koininia, to know Your heart for my life. Holy Spirit, I want communion. I want to know Your closeness. I want to be a partner and know a sharing and intimate bond with You. I want to be Your resting place. I yield to You. I surrender to You, sweet and loving, tender Spirit. I want to know Your emotions, I want to know Your glory. I want to recognize Your voice, and understand Your character. I want Your presence to move with me. I will love You, Holy Spirit. I will cherish You, Holy Spirit. I will embrace You, Holy Spirit. I will welcome You, Holy Spirit. I will adore You and honor You. Come, rest in me with Your olive branch. Come, Sweet Spirit of God. In Jesus' Name, amen.

Note from the Ministry Team: This is the final part of a three-part teaching entitled, "Restoring Your Spiritual Prime," concerning intimacy with the Holy Spirit, and we invite you to visit our website often, or sign up to receive future teachings by email. As always, know that we are praying for you, and particularly as you identify those things in your life that keep you from spending quality time with the Precious Holy Spirit. We love you, and we cherish you! Available in our resource center. Todd's "Marinating...Pickling in God's Presence" soaking CD, which is sure to take you into the glory and presence of God!

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