

11 KEEPING THE FLAME ALIVE


Most people like to play with fire. There's something rewarding about burning long sticks until they're short, melting things, roasting things, or just sitting and watching the flames. But if there is not enough kindling, the fire will not ignite; and if there is too much wind, the flame will go out. Even so, keeping the flame alive is really not that tricky. By having the right resources and providing enough protection for the flame, it will keep burning (or even grow to a bonfire) and will give off light and warmth that people like to be near. If your experience in missions has allowed God to light a fire under you, or to fan the flame, then add more kindling, add more wood, and make sure you protect the fire from things that will put it out or slow it down.



"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16

There are many things you can do to keep the flame alive and to continue to be a L.I.G.H.T. in the world. Here are some practical steps you can take to stay on track spiritually and in ministry.



Live differently. Do you know what will keep your STM from becoming just another mountain-top experience in your life? You. Only you can determine if you will continue the amazing journey of growing nearer to the Lord and of being a blessing to others. For this to happen, you must take on that responsibility and plan for your journey to continue.



"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Romans 12:1-2

You've learned valuable lessons through Scripture and experience. Putting these lessons into practice may cost you something, but consider it in light of God's mercy as a living sacrifice and as an act of worship to him.

invest in the mission field. You can be a great encouragement to your ministry hosts by keeping in touch with them. Write letters, send birthday cards, pray for them, and join their financial support team.

Guard your mind. The things you allow into your mind have an impact on the way you live. A steady stream of less-than-wholesome television, movies, books, and music will affect your attitude, and will rob you of the joy you have in Christ. Since you might not see any effect at first, it might feel as if you are "getting away with it." However, in the long run you will find that it is like a slow leak. Eventually there will be a blowout, and you will find yourself out of commission spiritually. Remember the old saying, "garbage in, garbage out?" The Bible says:



"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

Galatians 6:7

An open mind is good. So is an open window. However, we put a screen on the window to keep the bugs out. Treat your mind like a window and screen what you allow in.



"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

Philippians 4:8


"I Refuse
to be
entertained
by that
which
crucified
Christ."

Steve Truitt

Hide God's Word in your heart. Stay consistent in the study and memorization of the Bible. A diligent effort to know God's Word better will result in a vibrant growing relationship with him. In addition, you can read inspirational missionary biographies that will remind you of the great things God can do with a life that is totally surrendered to him.

Take risks—stay out of your comfort zone! Decide right now that you are not just "at the end of your STM" but actually at the beginning of a new ministry. Plan to live in a way that will continue to stretch you beyond the level of faith you now have. Put your trust in God. Seek to hear his voice and to obey and put into practice all that you have learned. Radical living encourages radical faith!

Do you realize that walking actually requires that you set yourself off balance? As you put one foot in front of the other, you are actually tipping forward—off balance. If you never took the risk of being off balance, you'd be stuck in one place. It's like that in life and faith. The act of "stepping out" and getting a little off balance is the very act that allows you to move



forward spiritually. Think about the big steps you took in deciding to go on this short-term mission and look how you've grown! So keep taking risks, following God's wild imagination, and being in the place where you will only succeed if you trust in him and him alone.

Now What?

"Thank you, God. Now I don't know what to do with my life!"

You're back from your short-term mission experience, now what? Is God calling you to return as a long-term missionary? If this question isn't already keeping you up at night, beware—someone will ask it soon. God has shown you what he's doing in the world, and you want to be a part of it. However, packing all your earthly belongings and flying back tomorrow doesn't quite seem right. Even if that day is coming, other factors—school, debt, ministry experience, finding a spouse—may need attention first.

But what if you could significantly build God's kingdom around the world even when you aren't living in another country? Mission work isn't just about those who go. It involves the "Six Practices": praying, sending, welcoming, going, mobilizing, and learning. How many of these is God leading you to do today? Is he preparing you to focus on others in the future?

Pray: "In the ongoing work of the Kingdom of God, nothing is more important than intercessory prayer" (Richard Foster). Talking to God about the needs of others is vital to growing God's church. Commit to pray for a specific missionary, ministry, or people group (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

Send: Often lost in the "going" of missions is the "sending." Missionaries don't just go overseas: God's people send them. As we so often find throughout the New Testament, the sending-going relationship is one of interdependence: the sender needs the one who goes; the one who goes needs the sender. Intentionally send missionaries through encouragement, logistical support, and finances (Romans 10:15).

Welcome: Every year America hosts over 720,000 international students. Most of them come from the least-reached parts of the world. God can use you in cross-cultural ministry in your city right now. Serve a local English class or international student group while these future leaders live in your neighborhood (1 Kings 8:41–43).

Go: Have you heard glamorous stories of missionary jungle life, extreme risk, suffering, and faith that seem well beyond the capacity of the average Christian? In reality, God doesn't call "super-Christians" to be missionaries; he calls you to live for him in another place. For some, this is just for a few weeks on

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practices

PRAY

SEND

WELCOME

GO

MOBILIZE

LEARN

a short-term ministry. But to others, he gives the opportunity for long-term impact through many years of life in another country. Let God place you overseas for as long as he chooses (Luke 4:43).

Mobilize: Picture yourself trying to build a new house. Would your first few days of work be better spent cutting wood or finding committed friends to build with you? Mobilization is drawing others into the work of building God's church. It's more about steadily encouraging people you know than it is about organizing big events. Share the vision God has given you with people you know (Luke 10:2).

Learn: Explore and study what God has stirred up in your heart. Equip yourself to be successful in the mission ministries God gives you. Excellent resources are available in every area of mission involvement. Take a class or read a book to strengthen your ministry.

Work on these practices in small steps. Don't be intimidated by the image of a mobilizer speaking to hundreds of people. Start by sharing one mission story with one friend. Find a community to join you in your exploration. Your teammates may be ideal candidates. Talk and pray often about the Six Practices, how God is leading you, what you're learning, and how to keep charging ahead. Through you, may God's name be made great among every people on earth! (Habakkuk 2:14)

James of OMF International

OUTREACH AND EVANGELISM




"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."

2 Timothy 4:2

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect"

1 Peter 3:15

We have a job to do here on earth. With love, patience, and respect, we are to speak up for what we believe and for who we are in Christ. Hopefully you have new found courage after your short-term mission because you've spent time with people who are courageous and outspoken about their faith. De-



termine in your heart today that you will keep that fire burning in you and that outreach will become an ever-increasing part of your lifestyle.

When it comes to outreach and evangelism, there are two categories of Christians. The first category is those who are bound up in the activities and pressures of the day. They're always on the backside of the things that they believe "happen to them." They are wrapped up in their performance at work or school, running errands, fixing things, trying to stay in touch with people, but always too busy to do so. To them, life practically drowns out the fact that they are Christians. They are the ones who always say, "Spiritual things just never seem to come up at work."

Then there is the category of Christians whose faith seems to just flow from life's activities. They, too, live a hectic life, but somehow they have a fruitful influence in the lives of people around them. They are the ones who, because of their lifestyle, have people asking them about spiritual things.

There is a fundamental difference. To the first kind of Christian, Christianity has taken a back seat. To them, what they do is more important than their Christian faith. To the second kind of Christian, faith and responsibility to God are always in first place. Higher than education. Higher than acceptance or fitting in. And higher than any circumstances. Ask yourself the following question by filling in the blank with what you do or what activities you are involved in. (IE: Student, Clerk):

Am I a _____ who "happens" to be a Christian or a Christian who "happens" to be a _____?

Christians who "happen" to go to school or have a certain job will always place their faith and the responsibility to touch lives for Christ first. Their perspective is that God put them in that school, workplace, or situation because he wanted to affect the lives of those he has entrusted to their care. If you want to live a God-centered life, plan to live your life as a Christian first. If your relationship with Christ is your first concern and you are always looking to become more like him, your spiritual walk will deepen and grow.

This will add strength to your commitment to ministry, and he will use you to influence people all along the way.

Launched to the Ends of the Earth

Jesus does two cool things when the disciples return from their first short-term mission in Mark 6. In verse 31 he says he'd like to take them camping for a little rest. Then in verse 37, after they ask him to send away the hungry crowds, he replies, "You feed them." Rest, then a wild new assignment. Take a break, then launch into a new realm of ministry.

Jesus sets the trajectory for this launch when he tells his followers in Acts 1:8 that they'll be his "witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Can I encourage you to use this grid when you consider how God may be leading you on in ministry? Ask him if your next assignment might be farther down the line from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

Jerusalem: While not home sweet home for the disciples, Jerusalem was their starting point. Begin where you are. Bloom where you're planted, you know? For us this means living like Jesus among people like us. Friends, neighbors, co-workers. People who speak our language, who share our culture. The disciples preached, prayed, suffered, healed, lived and died visibly in their Jerusalem. In the wake of your short-term ministry, how are you doing?

Judea and Samaria: These two provinces of Israel represented some cultural hurdles for the disciples. The accents were a bit off, customs were different, and of course there were the Samaritans. Everyone had a story about a Samaritan. Our Judea and Samaria could be local or around the globe. Working here involves dealing with some minor cultural boundaries. Can you imagine learning a new language that's similar to yours? How about serving in a community center in a neighborhood from which you might normally shy away? Planting churches among lost youth in West European cities?

The ends of the earth: Jesus' scope is global. He opens his arms to include all peoples. Witnessing in the "ends of the earth" will usually involve learning another language, diving into a culture distinctly different from yours, and seeking a following for Jesus among a people where none have yet followed. Often these roles are far away. Other times they are a huge cultural leap, but only a short drive from home. Either way, this is a big deal. For you, and for your Mom, too. Learn a new language, eat weird, hot food, raise the grandkids ten time zones away. Not for the faint of heart, but essential to complete the work God's given us.

So, I hope you get a bit of "camping" time with Jesus. And when he says, "Feed them" to you, may your eyes, with his, be looking toward the ends of the earth.

Shane Bennett, Caleb Project

Preach the
gospel of
all times,
and if
necessary
use words.

St. Francis
of Assisi

FIND MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH, COMMUNITY, AND WORLD

The continual, joyful giving of yourself for the sake of God's kingdom purposes will help you maintain a close walk with him. Now that you are home, seek out opportunities to serve in the church, community, and world. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Pray for the ability to see whatever God might be asking of you. It may be possible to join an existing ministry effort. But if it isn't, don't let a lack of opportunity slow you down—you may need to start something new. Jolaine started a weekly park outreach with a youth ministry team and it lasted for three years. Curtis started an evangelism committee at his church and it is still fruitful today. Darla inspired her church to reach out to the Japanese population in their city. Today there is a Japanese church within their church. Carl left his job and started a company that provides technical support to Christian organizations. As a result, the efforts of each organization are multiplied and there is a much greater impact for the kingdom.

Here are some other possibilities to spur on your creativity:

Ministry in the church

- Help with the youth or children's ministry
- Be a part of the worship team
- Volunteer to be on the missions committee
- Have a ministry of prayer
- Take part in visitation, neighborhood outreach, and evangelism
- Perform acts of service
- Become a Bible study leader or Sunday school teacher

Ministry in the community

- Organize an annual neighborhood clean-up day
- Get involved with local leadership in schools and other public arenas
- Have a cross-cultural outreach to ethnic groups in your city or town

**JUST
DO IT!**

- * prayer walk of school
- * join a school club
- * join a campus ministry group
- * help with a 'homeless teen' ministry
- * help of a teen pregnancy ministry
- * help of a senior citizen home

- Lead Bible studies
- Do a park outreach
- Help at a weekly soup kitchen, food bank, or clothes closet for the poor
- Get involved in campus outreach
- Host a kid's club or Vacation Bible School

Ministry in the world

- Adopt a Bibleless people or an unreached people group
- Organize a prayer vigil on behalf of a ministry, mission, country, or church
- Support missionaries
- Organize future STMs
- Begin the process of becoming a mid-term or long-term missionary


Seek God and listen carefully as you choose the things you will be involved in now that you have returned home. Trust him for creativity, availability, and resources to do whatever he calls you to, wherever, and whenever.

Whatever, Wherever, Whenever

You heard the call of God. It's as real as talking with your friends. God is at work in your life. That's right! Almighty God is communicating with you—everyday-normal-variety-of-person you. But maybe you aren't ordinary. You have opened your life to God. That alone is rather amazing. But even more awesome is that the Almighty is having private conversations with you!

God is consistent. What he is saying to you is probably very close to what he says in the Bible, where he clearly tells you what his will is for you in two general areas:

1. God wants your life, completely and fully. "Understand what the Lord's will is ... be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:17, 18). "It is God's will that you should be sanctified ... that is holy and honorable" (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4). "Be perfect ... as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).
2. God's will is that every person in the world will come to faith in Christ and spend eternity with God. "The Lord is ... not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). "Your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these ... should be lost" (Matthew 18:14). "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:3-4).



God is asking you first to be like him (to be holy) and then to expand his kingdom (to share his gospel). He wants you to Do ... Whatever he wants. Go ... Wherever he sends. ... Whenever he calls. Maybe that is what God is talking to you about. So how are you answering when he asks you "Whatever, Wherever, and Whenever?"

You are willing to die for Christ, but are there other things that God is talking to you about? You've quarreled with someone. You know you were partly at fault. God wants you to make it right. Will you? The other day you weren't totally honest. God is asking you to be a person of integrity. Will you? You have something that doesn't belong to you. God is telling you to return it and apologize. Will you? God is talking to you about those DVDs, games, or Internet sights you visit. Will you confess and leave it behind? You and your special friend have been a bit freer with each other than what God, through his Spirit, is telling you is right. Will you listen?

God is calling you to take the next step: having more consistent devotions and prayer, fasting, tithing, sharing Christ with family and friends, doing a short-term mission, going the next mile—taking a longer mission venture, committing to a life of service. Are you willing to say, "God, I am yours from this day forth for Whatever, Wherever, Whenever?"

Glenn Kendall, WorldVenture

ADOPT-A-PEOPLE

There are so many who have not yet heard the good news of Jesus Christ. And there are people groups who do not yet have a Bible in their language. Consider mobilizing your church to adopt an unreached people group or a Bible-less people group. For more information, there are links on The Next Mile website at www.thenextmile.org.

Unreached Peoples: The Unfinished Task

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb." Revelation 7:9 gives us a clear picture of God's heart—he desires none to perish! Jesus commanded his people in what we call the Great Commission (Matthew 24:14) to make disciples of all nations. You may have heard talk that the gospel has been preached in every country. This may or may not be true, but every country is not what the biblical text says. The word nation in the original Greek text of the New Testament is *Ta ethne* from which the word "ethnic" is derived. It has only been in recent centuries that we

see more modern nations like the United States as a mix of ethnic groups. For most of history, one's nation was one's nationality or people group. What we call a "nation" in the English language today is more precisely a geopolitical grouping of people; a geographically and politically-defined state.

Throughout history the gospel has spread more easily within people groups. Due to language, cultural barriers, and suspicions between ethnic groups, the gospel often hits a wall outside our own culture. Special efforts need to be made to reach those people groups beyond our own culture.

Let's take a look at a couple of modern-day examples which might help illustrate the point that many countries are really an amalgamation of nations. In the former Yugoslavia there are actually more than five nationalities lumped together; Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Montenegrins, and Albanians to name a few. Tensions rose among them, resulting in what sadly became well-known as ethnic cleansing. In Iraq we see at least three major nationalities at work, Sunni Arabs, Persian Shiites, and Kurds, with violence erupting among them in a power vacuum. The world is full of these examples.

There are many definitions of "people group," but when boiled down to the simplest definition, a people group is any group that shares a common language and culture that calls us "us" and them "them."

Although the gospel has probably been preached in all geopolitical states, there are still thousands of people groups that have not been reached! These are known as "unreached people groups."

If indeed it is God's heart to reach all nations, it is to these remaining unreached people groups that Christians are commanded to take his message of love and reconciliation in order to fulfill the prophesy of Scripture.

Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). God is waiting for his church to take action. Perhaps God is calling you to follow the example of the apostle Paul in taking the gospel to unreached people groups and join him in saying, "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known" (Romans 15:20).

Two websites can help you get started. To learn more about unreached peoples and how you might get involved, visit Joshua Project at www.joshuaproject.net and Caleb Project at www.calebproject.org.

Alex Areces, Independent Consultant

Bibleless Peoples

Powerful, life-changing, amazing—you have returned from a trip that has altered your worldview forever. Nope, your life will never be the same ... or will it? During your mission you made some serious commitments to change your lifestyle. So how can you? How can you continue to impact the world? Here's one way—partner with a Bibleless People Group.

What is a Bibleless People Group? It's a group of people who speak a language that does not yet have a translation of the Bible. There are more than 2,000 such groups worldwide. Isn't that crazy?! Have you ever considered what it would be like if you didn't have the Bible in English? Imagine that John 3:16 looked like this:

Ty så älskade Gud världen, att han gav sin Son, den enfödde, på dett att var och en, som tror på honom, icke må förgås utan hava evigt liv.

Big problem, huh?! Without being able to read the language, how would you know that God loves you? How would you grow spiritually? How would you worship? How would you share Christ with others?

More than 300 million people face these problems. You can be part of the solution! Partner with a Bibleless People Group, praying for them every day until they have the Bible in their own language. Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? And yet, prayer is the most powerful thing you can do because prayer moves the hand of God.

There are other ways you can help as well. Share some of your resources so that people can read the Bible in their heart language. Help fund a translation or literacy project. It doesn't take much. You can do it on your own or as a group. Talk to your leader about the possibility of collecting an offering for the Bibleless group you choose to help ... or do a car wash, bake sale, garage sale, or any other innovative fundraiser. Get creative!

Start now! For more information on praying and giving, go to www.wycliffe.org/pray or www.theseedcompany.org.

Your mission experience not only touched those you visited; it also changed your life. Now that you're back, don't let that experience die. Continue living a life of prayer and sacrifice so that a Bibleless People Group can someday enjoy a relationship with God just as you do. Missions—it's not a trip, it's a lifestyle!

Maralee Gutierrez, Wycliffe