

# FIRST LOVE: CULTIVATING BURNING HEARTS

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### Church-wide Requests: PRAY TOGETHER.

**Great Commission** (Mt 28:18-20): Disciple family, friends, neighbors & beyond

- The Church in Ukraine and Russia to be Spirit filled and have opportunities to share the Gospel and disciple people to Jesus
- For each of us, our church & the Global Church to FEEL the cry of maranatha (Come, Lord Jesus!) and to do everything it can to fulfill the Great Commission. That our hearts would yearn for Jesus
- Who is someone you know that needs to be discipled? Pray for them by name – it might be you!

**Our Mission Statement:** Love God, Love People, Be Discipled, Make Disciples

**READ TOGETHER: Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**READ TOGETHER: Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV)** And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

**Deuteronomy 30:11 ESV** “For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off.

**1 John 5:3** For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

**Today’s Message:** the KEY to effective discipleship and sacrifice

Today we are going to talk about the reason why many read verses like these and it goes in one ear and out the other... it doesn’t line up with our experience!

**Example #1: marriage**

#### A. The key to great sacrifice & hard work

1. **Sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice...** most? NO. unless you are a glutton for punishment.
  - a. Almost no one will sign up for doing hard things, especially those that cause **PAIN** and require **sacrifice**, with NO understanding of **why** they would do it or **what** the suffering is for.
2. **Sacrifice for a reward?** More people – YES. But they probably won’t find “satisfaction & fulfillment” while making the sacrifice or doing the hard work! They will be waiting for this at the END.

- a. **Example:** how many people try “New Years Resolutions” with exactly this intent. They are looking at some future goal they want... weight loss, more joy, feel better, improve this area or that area of life.... and yet? MOST FAIL.

**You see, there’s a THIRD scenario for empowering people to do HARD THINGS:**

**3. Sacrifice for the sake of LOVE. Possible, natural, and “worth it”!**

- a. Of course, you still might love the rewards as well!
- b. But your primary reason for DOING isn’t reward... it’s LOVE & PASSION.
- c. When you fall in love or find something you are passionate about? Almost – if not everyone –**will sacrifice BIG things for the sake of that passion!**
  - i. Free time, relationships, money and MORE. They sacrifice thought life, direction in life and give up GOOD things in pursuit of their PASSION. And despite doing all of these impossibly hard things? They will declare that they find DEEP satisfaction and fulfillment in their lives!

**Example # 2:** hockey players sacrifice money, time, relationships, and endure pain! Why? The LOVE OF THE GAME

That brings us back to where we started... our **Mission Statement. Love God, Love People, Be Discipled, Make Disciples. What is the KEY to being effective in our mission?**

**B. FIRST LOVE: the KEY to effective discipleship is burning hearts**

**Yet, if we embrace the mission without embracing the PERSON first, we will miss the entire point!**

**I have often said – LOVE GOD = OBEY GOD**

**John 14:15 (ESV)** “if you love me, you will obey my commands.”

**1 John 5:3 (ESV)** For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

- How many Christians start out fired up and end up burnt out?
- How many Christians don’t even engage in the Mission given by Jesus?
- How many Christians feel like they are always giving until there is nothing left?
- Struggle with believing that God only loves them when they are DOING good things?
- Or, are consumed with the passions of this world and have nothing left to give the Lord?
- Why is this? When Jesus said his commandments were NOT burdensome?

I’ll tell you one BIG REASON – we start with DOING before KNOWING GOD

**John 5:39-40 (ESV)** search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

**I am not saying this is every believer – no!** But I feel God is calling us to FIRST LOVE as we commit to his MISSION.

**Everything we DO in the Christian life is supposed to be as a RESPONSE to GOD’s LOVE for us.**

**1 John 4:19 (ESV)** We love because he first loved us.

**John 14:15 (ESV)** “if you love me, you will obey my commands.”

**Love and obedience are not synonyms.** It is better to think of them as **cause and effect**. You can OBEY and have ZERO LOVE in your heart. But you CANNOT LOVE and refuse to OBEY.

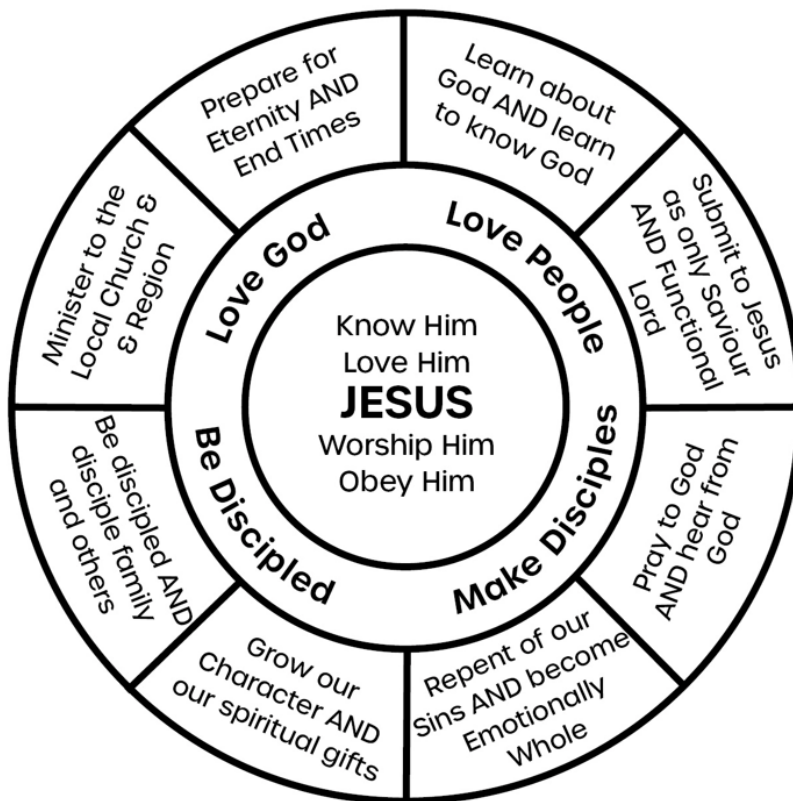
We err BIG TIME when we assume that all God wants is our OBEDIENCE so that we can go to HEAVEN!

**Example #1: MARRIAGE** – would you want to marry someone who didn’t love you. They just agreed to marry you because of the benefits of marriage? So they promised to OBEY the ‘marriage vows’ simply to receive the benefits you offered them.

**Jesus is JEALOUS for our LOVE & AFFECTION!**

**WE ERR:** when we talk only about the **BENEFITS** of following JESUS and **HEAVEN** as a place where **WE WILL BE HAPPY.**

**Which is why we start in the MIDDLE circle!**



We start with JESUS – he is the beginning and the end – he is the eternal one!

**KNOWING HIM IS THE HIGHEST GOAL & REWARD**

**This is why the key to effective discipleship** Is a BURNING HEART FOR JESUS – a heart that is in LOVE WITH HIM.

**And EFFECTIVE discipleship? ALWAYS leads people to Jesus...** to gaze upon his beauty and majesty... to encounter Him... to know him... love him... worship him... AND obey him...

**Discipleship Target: If we do not start in the MIDDLE! Addressing our hearts** – we are setting ourselves up for **burn out, legalism, disappointment, disillusionment, religion** and possibly **worse!**

**Matthew 7:21-23 (ESV)**

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

**Look what Jesus said to the Church of Ephesus**

**Revelation 2:2:2-5 (ESV)** ‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.’

**Just like in Marriage, our love can grow cold if we do not do the work on growing our love & relationship**

**Jesus is calling us to FIRST LOVE. And he is faithful to stoke the flames of our heart IF we come to him with a desire to KNOW HIM.**

We are going to spend the next few weeks talking about how we CULTIVATE A BURNING HEART.

**C. Putting faith into practice:**

1. Can you think of one thing in your life that you love and are passionate about? Why do you love it? Do you find it difficult to spend time and money on your passion? E.g. movies, sports, friendships, art, hobbies, exercise, giving gifts to others, etc.
2. How would you say your current level of passion and love for Jesus ranks? 1-10 why?
3. **Commit: set aside 60 minutes** this week to spend time with Jesus. Bring your physical Bible, journal, pen.
  - a. **FAST:** to find the time – consider FASTING from something you LOVE to do to make space for Jesus.
  - b. **PRAY:** Tell Jesus you want to know him. Personally. Tell him you want a burning heart. Be willing to put aside anything he impresses on you.
  - c. **SING:** Pick your favorite two worship songs. And sing them! With all your heart to Jesus.
  - d. **READ:** Romans 8 (entire thing)
  - e. **JOURNAL:** Rom 8 is split into three segments. Write down what stands out to you in each segment.
    - i. What did you learn about God?
    - ii. What did you learn about God’s heart towards you?

**REMEMBER THIS:** we have a part to play in cultivating a burning heart – BUT – ultimately this is something that the Holy Spirit does within us. This is NOT another thing you add to your “to do” list.

**MARANATHA!! Come, Lord come!**

**SC CHURCH WIDE PRAYER REQUESTS 2022**

**Cruise Ship → → → → → Battleship**

1. **Great Command** (Mt 22:37-40): Love God – Love people: hospitality, generosity, serving & empathy
2. **Great Commission** (Mt 28:18-20): Disciple family, friends, neighbors & beyond
3. **Word & Truth** (1Pet 3:15): Know the Gospel, grow in discernment, speak the truth in love
4. **Persecuted Church** (2 Cor 4:7-10): Religious freedom, freedom of speech, spiritual fortitude, wisdom
5. **Church Renewal:** Directors for India & the Chinese worldwide, make many global disciple makers (The Way)
6. **Leadership:** Wisdom and direction in the search for Lead Pastor and Executive Pastor