

# Radical Zeal

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Discovering God's Word  
Bible Study Series

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**Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series**

Written by Eric Krieg

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# Radical Zeal

## Lesson 1: What Is It

God's people are radical (reaching to the roots of faith in Christ, different from what is considered normal). This involves the expectation that every Christian who has been redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus Christ must be zealous (Titus 2:11-14). Yet, true zeal is rare. This makes true zeal radical in that it is far different from how most people live, even among those who profess to follow Jesus. Therefore, those who truly desire to please God must desire, develop, use, keep, and spread the kind of zeal Jesus desires to be present in His followers. Ultimately, this zeal will only come through a study of the Scriptures and requires that one develops a proper understanding of what the zeal God prescribes actually is.

**1) Common pictures of zeal.** There have been many different ways people have come to think about zeal that differs from how God actually portrays it. First, some mistake a jealous desire for some physical thing/cause as being zeal that pleases God (as seen in Acts 17:5; James 4:2; Galatians 4:17; note that the same Greek word can be translated either "zeal" or "jealousy" depending on the context, as both involve a heated passion). Second, some mistake mean-spiritedness that demonstrates a lack of concern for others as being zeal that pleases God (contrary to Matthew 10:16; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 4:6). Third, some mistake enthusiastic and energetic attitudes and feelings without the appropriate works of obedience to God as being zeal that pleases God (contrary to James 1:22-25; Luke 6:46). Fourth, some mistake good works that are done without any passion (i.e. going through the motions) as being zeal that pleases God (similar to the situation in Revelation 2:2-6). Fifth, some mistake religious passion that is not properly directed in faithful and obedient ways as being zeal that pleases God (similar to Romans 10:2-3; Paul, Philippians 3:5-6; Acts 22:3-5; Acts 26:10-11).

**2) Biblical pictures of zeal.** Now that we can see many pictures of what the zeal that pleases God is not, let's consider some of the pictures God gives for what zeal that pleases Him actually looks like. To begin, let's recognize that the Greek word refers to passion. Perhaps the best illustration of zeal is that of a fire that burns in your heart (inner person). You might also consider the picture of a boiling pot of water. Specifically, it is a spiritual passion/fire in your heart that burns to accomplish the good works God desires from your life (Titus 2:11-14)! It simply cannot sit stagnant, like a pot of water before it boils. Instead, it is active in what it does.

Consider some Biblical pictures of the radical zeal that pleases God. First, consider Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:7-9). Although Jeremiah faced extremely difficult circumstances to do God's work of spreading God's message to people who did not want to listen, he could not hold God's word back and stop the work God had sent him to accomplish. Second, consider Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-8). While many people respond to God's desire for people to do His work in different ways, Isaiah embraced the opportunity and volunteered to be sent by God into God's work. Third, consider Jesus (John 2:13-17). Jesus could not sit by while He watched people misusing the temple that was to be dedicated to the glory of God and did what He could to correct the situation. Fourth, consider the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 9:1-5). These Christians had embraced the Lord's cause so as to give themselves to the Lord and therefore gave themselves over to doing what they could in the Lord's work to contribute to the needy saints in Jerusalem. Fifth, consider Paul (Acts 17:16-17). Though there are many pictures of Paul's zeal in the Scriptures, this demonstrates the fire that was burning in him so much that he was ready and willing to do and say whatever was necessary to help people come to honor the Lord Jesus Christ in their lives.

**3) Essential qualities of true zeal.** When you consider the differences between the common

pictures of zeal and the Biblical pictures of zeal, there are several characteristics that we find are necessary to develop true zeal that pleases God. First, true zeal that pleases God requires faith (2 Timothy 1:12). This zeal must be built on the foundation that truly believes in the promises and warnings that God has given so much he/she will obey whatever living for God requires. Second, true zeal that pleases God requires knowledge (Romans 10:2). This zeal must develop an accurate knowledge of who God is, what He has done for you, and how He desires you to live. Third, true zeal that pleases God requires wisdom (Matthew 10:16). This zeal involves being able to take the knowledge that comes through a study of God's word and make the right applications so that what your zeal leads you to do is pleasing to God and helpful in His kingdom. Fourth, true zeal that pleases God requires courage (1 Peter 3:13-17). This zeal must be willing to do and say things that others may not like or that pushes you beyond your comfort zone in order to please God. Fifth, true zeal that pleases God requires love (Matthew 22:36-40). This zeal does not just go through the motions of doing what is good and right but must have love for God and others at its core. Sixth, true zeal that pleases God requires good works (Titus 2:14). This zeal must respond to God by doing those things that actually please Him.

True zeal is like a spiritual fire. It is not a fire that is behind glass just for show. It is not a fire that is burning a path that is contrary to God's will. Nor is it a fire that is burning out of control and damaging everything in its path. Instead, it is a fire that burns to accomplish the will of God and bring glory to Him that is fully controlled by God! This kind of radical zeal stands out and stands above all other forms of zeal and service to God!

## Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

**Teaching:** What did you learn from this lesson?

**Rebuking:** What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

**Correcting:** How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

**Training & Equipping:** How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?

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# Radical Zeal

## Lesson 2: Why Have It

If you truly understand why zeal is so important to your spiritual life of service to God, you will do everything you can to develop, use, maintain, and spread it. But, without the right motivation, you will struggle to add this kind of radical zeal that pleases God to your life and use it in the way God desires. Instead, you may find yourself never quite getting around to working on your zeal. Therefore, we need to search the Scriptures to see why you should consider it of utmost importance to develop the kind of radical zeal God's word approves.

**1) Every other spiritual condition displeases God.** God never approves of any spiritual condition that cannot be properly described as being zealous. Consider a brief survey of the five churches Jesus rebuked in Revelation 2-3 (the other two were only commended and encouraged). The church of Ephesus (2:1-7) was commended for doing many good things but was rebuked for doing those things without having the love God desires. The church in Pergamum (2:12-17) was commended for holding to the name of Christ during the time of persecution but was rebuked for tolerating false teaching. The church in Thyatira (2:18-29) was commended for their works and endurance but rebuked for tolerating false teaching and immorality. The church in Sardis (3:1-6) was commended for having a few who were spiritually alive but rebuked for the rest being spiritually dead. The church in Laodicea (3:14-22) was not commended and was rebuked for their lukewarm condition. Particularly consider this congregation that was neither cold nor hot in their service to God. This was a repulsive condition to Jesus, as He would evidently rather people be all the way against Him than be lukewarm. His cure for their condition was to be zealous and repent! Then, all the other congregations also failed to have the radical zeal Jesus wants from His people in their service to the

Lord, as they did not zealous serve Him as they should (Romans 12:11)!

**2) Jesus died to produce zeal in you.** Jesus was zealous for you to the point that He willingly left Heaven, came to earth, suffered, and died so that you could be saved from your sins (2 Corinthians 8:9). In seeing your poverty and choosing to sacrifice Himself for you, He redeemed you with the cost of His blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). There was simply no other way for you to be saved from your sins. Now, you need to consider *why* He chose to do this. Yes, it was because He loves you, wants you to be saved from God's wrath, and wants you to live eternally in Heaven (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-11; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9). But, there is more. Consider Titus 2:11-14. Jesus also gave Himself for you to make you part of His special people who would be zealous (eager) to do good works. Therefore, Jesus did not do everything He did for you so that you would just go through the motions of living for Him, tolerate sin and false teaching, have a reputation of being a "Christian," and/or be lukewarm in His service! Instead, He wants you to reflect over all He has done for you and be zealous for Him!

**3) To fuel good works.** All that God has done for you is intended to make you into His masterpiece that will then do good works (Titus 2:14; Ephesians 2:8-10)! For, there are many things Jesus expects you to do with your remaining time on this earth to serve Him. However, these good works do not just happen by accident. For, they are sacrificial in nature. Something must provide the motivation for these good works to be done – and to be done in the spirit God desires. Zeal for God will provide the fire that fuels all that God wants you to do. For, it takes your works of service to God out of the realm of something that "has" to be done to being what you desire to do (1 John 5:3-4). It takes your service from seeking the "minimum

requirements” to get to Heaven to seeking how you can glorify God to the best of your ability (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5). This kind of zeal that fuels the service of good works produces the proper combination of our motives plus good works that God is pleased with, making our food to do the will of God (following Jesus’s example, John 4:34)!

**4) There is too much at stake not to be zealous.** We have seen that God wants you to be zealous and any other condition displeases God (James 4:17; Romans 6:23). So, this means that your soul and where you spend eternity will be impacted by whether you are zealous as God desires or not. For, there will be many who profess Jesus as Lord and have done some good things who Jesus will sentence to eternity in Hell (Matthew 7:21-23). As we saw in Revelation 2-3, doing some good things without radical zeal to obey God simply is not sufficient. Also, without zeal for good works, you will be much more likely to tolerate sin and false teaching in your own life. Then, not having this zeal will also impact the souls of others. For, God has chosen to use those who follow Christ to share His message of salvation with others (2 Timothy 2:2, 24-26), encourage those who are trying to follow Him (Hebrews 3:12-13), correct those who have turned away from Him (James 5:19-20), etc. So, if you are not zealous, you simply will not take this responsibility as seriously as you should – to the detriment of their souls!

True zeal is necessary to pleasing God. This is what Jesus died to produce in you. It is needed to fuel the good works God wants you to do. Then, both your soul and the souls of others are dependent on your zeal. Therefore, if any of these things are important to you, you must do what is needed to cultivate, use, maintain, and spread the zeal God desires in your life!

## Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

**Teaching:** What did you learn from this lesson?

**Rebuking:** What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

**Correcting:** How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

**Training & Equipping:** How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God’s service?

# Radical Zeal

## Lesson 3: How To Develop It

Just knowing that you should be zealous does not make you zealous. Instead, many know these things and never unlock the radical zeal God wants in their lives. Therefore, there must be more than just taking in information about zeal. In fact, we can learn from those who were truly zealous for good works in the Scriptures to see what was present in their lives. This, then, will serve as a blueprint for you to develop (and even increase) in zeal for Christ.

**1) Draw near to God.** God is the *only* source that can provide the kind of zeal He desires. Therefore, you will never kindle the fires of zeal through any other means (i.e. through experiences, relationships, books, etc.)! For example, Jesus spoke of being the True Vine that produces life so as to produce fruit (John 15:1-8). This was how Peter and John were able to passionately defend the cause of Christ in Acts 3-4, though they were otherwise uneducated and untrained men (Acts 4:13; Matthew 4:19). Therefore, those who desire to be zealous for Him will actively, intentionally, and regularly draw near to Him (James 4:7-10). This involves submitting (yielding) to whatever God says, putting off evil things in your life, being miserable concerning the sin you have committed, and humbling yourself before God. Being serious about drawing near to God will also require you to put certain things in place in your life. These include diligent Bible study (1 Peter 2:2-3), prayer (Philippians 4:6-7), and gathering to worship with other Christians (Hebrews 10:24-25).

**2) Let Christ's love control you.** For you to be zealous in the good works Christ desires from your life, you must truly appreciate the price He paid for your salvation (1 Peter 1:18-21). This was a continual theme of Paul's writings when he spoke of his own service to Christ (1 Corinthians 15:9-10; Galatians 2:20; 1 Timothy 1:12-17). Understanding the love of Christ, though will require you to study the

Scriptures so as to let the Holy Spirit pour out God's love through its pages (Romans 5:5)! Let every page deepen your understanding of your brokenness and what God has done to save you through Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-11; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-11). Then, recognizing this great love that has been shown for you should cause you to reciprocate selfless love for Christ so that your life is controlled by whatever He desires of you (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Therefore, make it your goal to grow to more fully understand and appreciate the love of Christ each day (Ephesians 3:16-19)!

**3) Long to be with God.** Everything about serving Christ requires you to be focused in a spiritual way rather than a physical way (Romans 8:5-8). It only stands to reason, then, that those who have become focused on or distracted by the things of this world will not truly live to please God (Mark 4:13-20). This can even happen among those who profess to follow Christ. Although we can know the Bible's teachings, we can still be focused on our lives on this earth and feel at home in this world rather than pressing toward the eternal home of the soul. Yet, Paul pressing toward Heaven was a prominent attribute that led to his zealous service of Christ (Philippians 1:20-24; 3:7-17; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18). You must embrace your existence on this earth as being like an exile (stranger, pilgrim) who is passing through this land on your way to a much better place (1 Peter 1:1-2). As such, you will have many earthly trials, but your longing to be with God for eternity in Heaven will keep you serving Christ (1 Peter 1:3-9)!

**4) Embrace what is at stake.** In the midst of all that goes on in life from a physical perspective, it can be easy to lose perspective as to what is really at stake. For, while you deal with the daily grind of life, you can miss the spiritual war that every person on earth is fighting (Ephesians 6:10-13). The stakes are

either spending eternity in Heaven or Hell! Once again, Paul knew what was at stake for both himself and others and used this to motivate his service to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11; 1 Timothy 4:16). This means that you will have to take your own daily life serious in Christ's service (Philippians 2:12; 1 Peter 2:11-12). Then, you must be able to see the spiritual needs of those who are around you (Matthew 9:35-38; 2 Timothy 2:24-26)! As you do, you must consider the implications if you choose to do nothing!

**5) Recognize your usefulness to God.** It is unfortunate that many people seem to undervalue the contributions they can make in God's service. Yet, God wants every saint to be equipped to do His work and contribute what he/she can (Ephesians 4:11-16). The Bible, in fact, is full of examples of how God would use "ordinary" people to do extraordinary things (i.e. Moses, Gideon, Mary, Peter, etc.). One example of this is a Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well and learned He was the Messiah (John 4:28-30, 39-42). The Scriptures regularly speak of how you are expected to do whatever you can in God's service (Romans 6:12-13; 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 2:2-5, 9-10). In fact, you (and others who follow Jesus) are God's plan for doing His work on earth today! Consequently, you must regularly challenge yourself to push beyond your "comfort zone" to do what faith in Jesus requires.

There is no real secret to developing radical zeal. The things we have identified are simply things that come from studying the Bible with an honest heart that is looking to apply what you read. For, God's word is powerful and will ignite and then grow this kind of fire inside of you *if* you will not just read it for information, but for transformation! Seeking God in this way will make you become passionate for those things He has a passion for!

## Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

**Teaching:** What did you learn from this lesson?

**Rebuking:** What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

**Correcting:** How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

**Training & Equipping:** How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?



# Radical Zeal

## Lesson 4: What To Do With It

When God builds a spiritual fire inside of you through the powerful and life-transforming teachings of His word, He intends for that fire (passion) to be used to do the good works He approves, desires, and even requires (Titus 2:11-14; Ephesians 2:8-10). As we have seen, being connected with Jesus produces spiritual fruit that pleases Him (John 15:2, 5, 8). Let's consider some specific ways God desires His people to use their zeal.

**1) Faithful obedience.** What God wants from your life can be summed up in the concept of "faithfulness" (Matthew 25:14-30). Your zeal should prompt you to be trustworthy to keep God's commandments no matter what challenges you face to do such (Revelation 2:8-11; 1 Corinthians 15:58). This will include living a holy life that does not tolerate sin, as defined by God's standard of holiness (1 Peter 1:13-16; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). This will extend to holiness in your thoughts, words, actions, dress, entertainment, etc. Furthermore, your zeal should lead you to obedience regarding personal responsibilities God has given you concerning the roles you have to fulfill (i.e. as a member of a local church, a husband/wife, father/mother, etc.; Ephesians 4:11-16; 5:22-6:4). In everything, you will desire to conform your life to the instructions God has given in the pages of the gospel.

**2) Spiritual growth.** Whenever you became a Christian, you began a journey. A key part of this journey involves making spiritual progress in your knowledge of God's will and becoming more mature in Christ. For example, your zeal should compel you to study God's word regularly and diligently so as to know more about God's will for your life and not to be misled by false teaching (1 Peter 2:2-3; 2 Peter 3:14-18). Doing this will help you progress from a spiritual diet consisting of milk (basic principles) to solid food (more advanced principles, Hebrews 5:11-

14). Then, your zeal for God should compel you to diligently strive to become more like Christ each day – in your thoughts, speech, character, decisions, actions, etc. (2 Peter 1:3-11). For, your goal as a disciple of Christ should not merely to possess knowledge of God's will, but to become mature in Christ so that you can be more and more useful and fruitful in Christ's service (Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:3-8; Colossians 1:27-28).

**3) Service.** Your zeal for God is not just to be something that transforms your beliefs and character, but something that also transforms how you conduct yourself toward others. In fact, your zeal should lead you to develop the character of looking for and taking advantage of opportunities to serve other people – even when it costs you significantly (i.e. time, money, energy, convenience, etc.; Luke 10:25-37). Rather than being zealous (jealous, envious) for people to serve you, you must be zealous to serve others (John 13:12-17). The Scriptures speak of many different ways we can serve and indicates that whether you have served others or not will directly be subject to Jesus's judgment (Matthew 25:31-46; Galatians 6:7-10; James 1:26-27). However, zeal for God will not make such service a burdensome thing. Instead, zeal for God will recognize that serving others is just another way that you can serve Jesus! So, you must use your zeal to carefully evaluate your opportunities and abilities and commit to serving those around you.

**4) Evangelism.** Of all the ways you can serve someone who is not a Christian, there is no greater way than to help them understand the gospel of Christ (John 4:13-14)! Although Jesus often had compassion on others so as to serve them physically, His greatest compassion was for spiritual needs (Matthew 9:35-38). This is why Jesus left Heaven to come to earth, suffer, and die! It is no wonder, then, that those who followed Jesus in the New Testament

(His disciples) would also learn to be zealous for the lost (Matthew 4:18-20; Matthew 10:6-7; Luke 10:1-3, 9; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:4). This should also be true about every disciple of Jesus Christ today – that he/she is concerned about the lost like Jesus was! If you are zealous for the Lord in this way, you will try to grow in both your knowledge and abilities to impact others for the cause of the kingdom of God so as to help rescue those caught in Satan’s traps (2 Timothy 2:2, 24-26)!

**5) Fellowship.** God’s people are not just to be zealous for those who are lost in sin, but also for those who are saved in Christ! As a Christian, you share (have fellowship) with other Christians in this relationship with Christ as brothers and sisters (1 John 1:5-7). The New Testament often paints the picture of Christians being eager to be with others who are Christians (i.e. Acts 2:42, 46). This relationship involves several responsibilities Christians have toward one another such as: Loving one another (1 Peter 4:8), showing hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9), carrying one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), correcting one another (James 5:19-20), encouraging one another (Hebrews 3:12-13), praying for one another (James 5:16), weeping and rejoicing with one another (Romans 12:15), etc. Zeal for God will lead you to accomplish such to the best of your abilities and sacrifice whatever is necessary to do so!

Radical zeal for Christ will ultimately accomplish whatever God’s word teaches you to do. Regardless of what it is and how much it calls for you to sacrifice, you will give yourself to God as a living sacrifice eager to do His will (Romans 12:1-2)! Therefore, you must look carefully at both the word of God and your own life and identify the opportunities for you to carry out God’s will in your zeal!

## Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

**Teaching:** What did you learn from this lesson?

**Rebuking:** What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

**Correcting** How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

**Training & Equipping:** How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God’s service?

# Radical Zeal

## Lesson 5: How To Keep It

Having zeal for God requires regular maintenance and examination. For, like a fire that takes effort to build, it cannot just be left burning without it being tended to. Satan will certainly try and extinguish your spiritual fire that motivates your service to God any way He can (i.e. through trials, temptations, persecutions, discouragements, negative influences, apathy, etc.). Sadly, after once being zealous, some have lost their first love, become dead, and/or grown lukewarm over time (Revelation 2:2-4; 3:1, 15-16). Thankfully, God has given His people everything needed to continue zealously serving Him.

**1) Draw nearer to God.** Since God is the source of spiritual life and provides the fire to drive your service to Him, spending regular time with God is essential to keep the fire going. For example, the Psalms present some pictures of those who are righteous as being like trees planted beside the water who do not wither like the wicked (Psalm 1:1-6; 92:12-15). You must continue to grow in your appreciation for who God is, what He has done, and what He promises to do so that you will thirst for Him as a deer for the water (Psalm 42:1-4). For, you must recognize that God provides spiritual nourishment (John 4:13-14; 6:35). Therefore, spending time with Jesus and being connected through the life-giving resource of His word is necessary to having the spiritual fire you need to survive Satan's challenges. Although Satan often tempts people to spend less time in Bible study, prayer, and worship, you must recognize your continual need for both quality and quantity of time in these to draw ever nearer to God, who is your life!

**2) Keep a spiritually-focused mind.** The mind that is focused on the things of this world will not please God and will choke out God's word from being fruitful in your life (Romans 8:5-8; Mark 4:18-19). The things that challenge your zeal often

challenge you to focus more on the physical things going on around you or that are enticing you than you do on your soul. Therefore, no matter what you are facing in this life, you must remember the temporary nature of it all and the reward God has prepared for those who zealously obey Him. Consider how the apostle Paul used this to overcome his many challenges (2 Corinthians 11:22-33; 4:16-18). To help maintain this perspective, the Bible presents three illustrations you should consider. First, you must view yourself as an exile (stranger, pilgrim) who is passing through this land in search of a better land (1 Peter 1:17; 2:11-12). Second, you must view yourself as a runner trying to win a race (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:1-2). Third, you must view yourself as a soldier fighting for your soul (2 Timothy 2:3-4; Ephesians 6:10-13).

**3) Spend time with other zealous Christians.** God uses the imagery of a Shepherd and sheep to describe the relationship between God/Jesus and His people (Psalm 23; John 10). Along with the need for the sheep to spend time with the Shepherd, this also emphasizes the need for sheep to be with other sheep. This provides security for the sheep as opposed to whenever they are separated and on their own. Therefore, one of the ways Satan tries to extinguish your zeal is to isolate you from others who zealously try to serve God. This was the case with Elijah, who was greatly discouraged at the thought of having his life threatened and being the only one who was faithfully seeking the Lord (1 Kings 19:10, 14). However, God said there were 7,000 who had not bowed to Baal (v. 18) and Elijah also found Elisha (vv. 19, 21). In the same way, God has intended for His people to live in community with others who are zealously attempting to serve God rather than be isolated. Particularly, God desires all His people to be connected in a local church (Acts 9:26-28; 11:25-26). These connections of fellowship with other

zealous Christians will work to keep your spiritual fire burning (Hebrews 10:24-25)! Therefore, you need to search out those who serve Christ zealously and connect yourself to them as closely as you can (Revelation 3:1-6; Proverbs 27:17)!

**4) Keep going.** True zeal for God is not an emotion that should constantly fluctuate. Therefore, when you are discouraged and feel like giving up, you must remember all the truths of what God has taught and cling tightly to your anchor of hope in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 6:19)! No matter what is going on, you must continue to push forward in doing what God wants from your life, trusting in Him and seeking to please Him (2 Timothy 2:3-4). For example, the prophet Jeremiah was often rejected for speaking God's words (i.e. Jeremiah 20:1-2). Because of this continual rejection, the words of God that had once brought Jeremiah joy and delight (Jeremiah 15:16) had now brought him to a point of being dismayed and ready to give up (Jeremiah 20:7-9). Yet, he could not hold God's words in and say nothing – and he continued serving God (Jeremiah 20:9)! In the same way, you must recognize that God does not promise those who follow Him an easy life on this earth (in fact, quite the opposite, Luke 9:23-26). Instead, He simply promises that zealously following Him and not giving up will be worth it and you simply must continue to do those things God desires (1 Corinthians 15:57-58; Galatians 6:7-10)!

Like a fire, you must tend your zeal so that it does not go out. For, Satan is constantly looking for opportunities to extinguish the eagerness of service for God that keeps people going. Sometimes he does so by giving people big obstacles at one time, while other times he does so by a gradual and slow process. Regardless, God has given you everything you need to keep your zeal until you reach the finish line of your faith (2 Timothy 4:6-8)!

## Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

**Teaching:** What did you learn from this lesson?

**Rebuking:** What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

**Correcting:** How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

**Training & Equipping:** How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?

# Radical Zeal

## Lesson 6: How To Spread It

Up to this point, we have been almost solely focused on *your* zeal and how *you* should use it in serving God. Yet, while this is critical, the impacts of your zeal for God will be short-lived if this is where it stops (limited by the amount of time you have on this earth). Instead, the picture presented in Scripture is for followers of Jesus to have such an impact on others that they will also desire to zealously serve God (Matthew 5:14-16; 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2). Therefore, whenever your fire has gone out on this earth due to death, the effects of your fire for Christ will still be burning in others!

**1) Create the right environment.** Fires do not thrive in just any environment. The same is true whenever you are attempting to spread your zeal. For example, Jesus used various environments to help people be His disciples who were zealous for good works. First, Jesus would use the crowds (large gatherings), where many would be taught at one time (Matthew 13:2). This would be an effective way to teach a message many people need to hear. In the same way, there are times when you may have the opportunity to address many people at one time (i.e. during the assemblies of a local church, Acts 20:7). However, Jesus would also use a more relational environment to go deeper with those He was training (Matthew 13:36). This environment provides an opportunity to really help others understand the teachings and then know how to use and apply those teachings in his/her own life. All of this demonstrates that you should spend intentional time with others in a variety of contexts (as Paul also did in Ephesus, Acts 19:8-10; 20:20). So, be thoughtful of each person you are trying to help be a zealous follower of Christ and work to create the proper environment for each one.

**2) Be wise in building.** When you attempt to build a fire, it may be tempting to pile a large

amount of excellent wood all at once so that the beginning product looks like the end you envision. However, if you try to do this, you will smother the fire you are trying to start. Instead, you first get some tinder (dry leaves, paper, wood shavings), then some kindling (small twigs and branches), and then put on the logs and gradually grow it. In the same way, those who are zealous and looking for ways to spread their zeal must use wisdom in how they lead others (Matthew 10:16; Colossians 4:5-6). The Scriptures clearly demonstrate that people are at different places in their spiritual development. To start, those who have never come to saving faith and obedience in Christ are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1-3) and must yet experience the new birth (John 3:3-6). Then, after this new birth, there are three stages of spiritual progression – little children, young adults, and parents (1 John 2:12-14). As one progresses, he/she becomes more mature in Christ, able to handle an increasingly more mature diet of God's word, and more equipped to serve God. Therefore, you must use wisdom in knowing how to help others take the next steps developing zeal in their lives.

**3) Give opportunities.** As you work to help others develop zeal in their lives, this will involve helping them know what they should do with it. Therefore, you can encourage others to do good works and even help guide them in their efforts. For example, Jesus gave people who were with Him opportunities to serve and use their zeal rather than just doing everything that needed done Himself (Luke 10:1; 22:7-13; John 6:10, 12-13). It can certainly be tempting for those who have developed their skills in serving Christ to just use what they have learned to do themselves. However, there should be a progression with others. Although it begins with others watching you, you should equip and encourage them to use their zeal by giving them opportunities and training to do

God's work more and more – until they can do it without you by their side. Consider, for example, how Jesus gave the apostles the “Limited Commission” when He was on this earth (Matthew 10:1-15) before He gave them the “Great Commission” prior to leaving this earth (Matthew 28:18-20).

**4) Encourage to multiply.** 2 Timothy 2:2 describes God's plan for His people and their zeal. Paul had been taught and equipped to be zealous in Christ's service (1<sup>st</sup> generation). Paul had then helped to teach and equip Timothy (2<sup>nd</sup> generation). Timothy was then to teach and equip “faithful men” (3<sup>rd</sup> generation). These “faithful men” were to then teach and equip “others” (4<sup>th</sup> generation). And, the implication is that this should continue. Therefore, through this, Paul and Timothy's zeal for Christ continues to impact others even long after they have died. The process you help others go through in their development should then continue by those you have impacted being able to impact others, who will impact others, etc. Consider the example of Christians in Jerusalem who had heard the gospel (i.e. Acts 2:41; 4:4), who were then scattered and preached the word (Acts 8:4), who found others who would believe and preach the word (Acts 11:19-21; 13:1-3).

God wants you to be zealous in His service (Titus 2:11-14). Jesus simply did not die for you so that you would just wear the title of “Christian” as a sort of badge. Instead, He wants to use you in His service. Consider the process described in Ephesians 2:1-10, as one moves from spiritual death to working in His service. Therefore, you must consider your faith and carefully evaluate whether you have reached to the roots of your faith and been zealous for Jesus in the radical ways He has instructed!

## Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

**Teaching:** What did you learn from this lesson?

**Rebuking:** What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

**Correcting:** How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

**Training & Equipping:** How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?