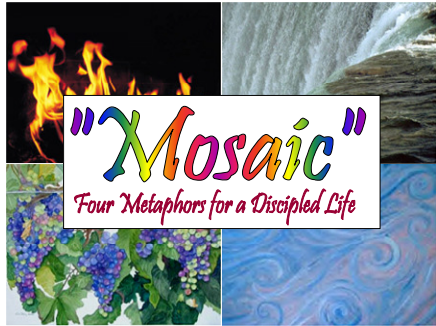


Fire

Heb 12:28-29

Matthew 6:33



INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1978 I served as seaman aboard a USCG 32 Search and Rescue craft. We were doing standard maintenance when a distress call came into Station NY--a cabin cruiser in NY Harbor was on fire with people on board. Every boat available to muster was launched and raced to the sight. This was my first boat fire.



Arriving on scene as the second assist boat I was stunned by what took place. The first crew had already removed all persons form the heavily smoking

craft. As three boats rigged for pumping and firefighting, flames began to appear on deck. Within a matter of minutes likely 3-5, this huge cabin cruiser pleasure boat was burned melted and was totally consumed to the water line.

I had never seen fire consume anything like that but it happens all the time.

Every year there is at least one story or a wildfire born of carelessness quickly spreads, consuming the thick, dried-out vegetation and almost everything else in its path. What was once a forest becomes a virtual powder keg of untapped fuel. In a seemingly instantaneous burst, the wildfire overtakes thousands of acres of surrounding land, threatening the homes and lives of many in the vicinity.



An average of 5 million acres burns every year in the United States, causing millions of dollars in damage. Once a fire begins, it can spread at a rate of up to 14.29 miles per hour (23 kph), consuming everything in its path. As a fire spreads over brush and trees, it

may take on a life of its own -- finding ways to keep itself alive, even spawning smaller fires by throwing embers miles away.

Did you know that god is portrayed in one word picture as being a consuming fire. It has nothing to do with judgment or punishment. The reference is found in a passage that defines how we relate to him.

Heb 12:28-29

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

If God is a consuming fire, then the only way to truly be successful in our walk with God is to be consumed by him, for "our God is a consuming fire."



FOLLOWERS ARE INTENDED TO BE CONSUMED BY THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

I. A consuming relationship with God is juxtaposed to the Ballad of the lukewarm.

Ballad –

III: [Sing the Ballad of the Lukewarm.](#)

Appl: We find the Ballad of the lukewarm humours because we lack a clear picture of what it means to be lukewarm.

Francis Chan in his book *Crazy Love* spends a few pages defining what it means to be lukewarm

A portrait of the halfhearted, the lukewarm, the partially committed.

1. **Lukewarm People** attend church fairly regularly. It is what they believe is expected of them; they believe "Good Christians" do, so they go.

Isa 29:13

13 The Lord says:

"These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.

2. **Lukewarm People** give money to charity and the church as long as it doesn't impinge on their standard of living. They give out of the extra when it is safe and easy to give.

King David – the example of a man with a heart truly devoted to God said when he had a chance to give a gift to God that cost him nothing.

1 Chron 21:24

24 But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing."

Luke 21:1-4

21:1 As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3 "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more

than all the others. 4 All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

3. **Lukewarm People** tend to choose what is popular over what is right when their sacred and secular worlds collide. They desire acceptance in both worlds.

Matt 23:5-7

5 "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; 6 they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; 7 they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'

4. **Lukewarm People** tend to not want to be saved, delivered, freed from sin; they desire to be saved from the penalty and consequences of their sins.

Very different from the Apostle Paul's words:

Rom 6:1-2

6:1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

5. **Lukewarm People** are moved by stories about people who do radical things for Christ, yet they do not act. They assume that action is for "extreme" Christians, not normal ones.

James 1:22-23

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

James 3:17-18

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

6. **Lukewarm People** rarely share their faith with their neighbors, coworkers, or friends. They do not want to be rejected; nor do they want to make other people uncomfortable by talking about private issues like religion.

They discount Jesus words.

Matt 10:32-33

32 "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

7. **Lukewarm People** gauge their morality or goodness by comparing themselves to the secular world. While they might not be as on fire as another person is for Jesus, they are not as horrible as the guy down the street.

Luke 18:11-12

11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-robbers, evildoers, adulterers-or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

8. **Lukewarm People** say they love Jesus, and He is indeed a part of their lives, BUT only a

part.

Luke 9:57-62

57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

59 He said to another man, "Follow me."

But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family."

62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

9. **Lukewarm People** love God, but they do not love Him with all their heart, soul, and strength.

Matt 22:37-38

37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

10. **Lukewarm People** love others but do not seek to love others as much as they love themselves. Their love is typically focused on those who love them in return.

Matt 22:39-40

39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

11. **Lukewarm People** will serve God and others' but there are limits to how far they will go or how much time, money, and energy they are willing to give.

Luke 18:21-24

21 "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said.

22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.

12. **Lukewarm People** may differ from unbelievers in some outward ways, perhaps drinking or swearing less, but really are not that different from the typical unbeliever. They equate keeping a sanitized list of do's and don'ts with holiness.

Matt 23:25-28

25 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

27 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

13. Lukewarm People think about life on earth much more often than eternity in heaven.

Col 3:1-2

3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

14. Lukewarm People are thankful for the “good life” their comforts, luxuries and blessings, but rarely consider how those blessings obligate them in ministering to others.

Matt 25:34, 40

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

15. Lukewarm People feel secure because they attend church, made a profession of faith, were baptized, come from a Christian home. . .

Matt 7:21

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

16. Lukewarm People are concerned with playing it safe and being in control keeping them from taking faith sized risks for God.

1 Tim 6:17-18

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

17. Lukewarm People do not live by faith; their lives are structured so they never have to. They don't trust God if something happens—they trust their resources.

Luke 12:16-21

16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. 17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." "

20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

18. **Lukewarm People** are confident in their relationship with God as long as life is easy with little challenges or difficulties. Problems choke out their relationship with God.

Matt 13:20-21

20 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

II. A consuming relationship with God is predicated upon three changes.

To be truly transformed followers we must feel the heat of God's consuming fire on each of these areas.

A. Confessing that your relationship with God has been an add on application

I phone add on Apps. One of the most popular last year was **Shazam**

You hear a really catchy, unfamiliar song on the radio and you have no idea what it's called. You hum it to yourself repeatedly and attempt to memorize the lyrics, only to forget it. Shazam will never leave you struggling to recollect these thoughts again: Hold the iPhone up to a speaker playing the unknown tune and

the app will identify it — album, artist and song title — just like that

Matt 6:33

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

NIV

B. Admitting that the tyranny of everyday life has usurped Jesus' place as Lord and Leader of your life

- We live in the tyranny of the urgent little needs.

Paul G. Stoltz

"IN AN AGE when we face an average of twenty-three adversities a day, most of us are ill-equipped to manage, let alone thrive, amid such unprecedented demands."¹

I read that I tried to figure out what could be the twenty-three adversities a day.

The only way that is true is if we have let the little things become gods in our life so things like this overwhelm us.

- #1 Getting up
- #2 Getting dressed
- #3 Getting the kids to school
- #4 Getting the house cleaned up
- #5 Eating breakfast.
- #6 Morning commute
- #7 Doctors appointment
- #8 Grocery shopping

¹ Adversity Quotient @ Work : Make Everyday Challenges the Key to Your Success--Putting the Principles of AQ Into Action by Paul G. Stoltz

- #9 Parking the car
- #10 Caring for the car
- #11 Repairing the car
- #12 Yard work
- #13 Washing the dishes
- #14 Paying the bills
- #15 Raising the kids
- #16 Dealing with the boss
- #17 Coping with relatives
- #18 Coping with our spouse
- #19 Dealing with a headache
- #20 Dealing with sickness
- #21 Dealing with sick family
- #22 Getting enough sleep.
- #23 Brushing our teeth

Look what Jesus said about these things.

Matt 6:28-34

*28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 **So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'** 32 **For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.** 33 **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** 34 **Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.***

NIV

What about you. What consumes you? Does the hassle of your everyday existence overwhelm you? Do you find yourself more enslaved to the tyranny of all the little things in your life? Or has your consuming relationship with God brought you a great peace about the little things?

C. Giving up the American dream for a greater reality

How does one achieve the American Dream? Savvy marketers have convinced their audiences that a new wave of television game shows, lottery luck, and lucrative lawsuits are the way to wealth.

- Who wants to be a millionaire?
- State lotteries
- Compensation lawsuits

19-year-old Carl Truman of Los Angeles won \$74,000 and medical expenses when his neighbor ran over his hand with a Honda Accord. Mr. Truman apparently didn't notice there was someone at the wheel of the car when he was trying to steal his neighbor's hubcaps.

Look at Jesus words the issue of our treasure.

Matt 6:19-21

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

NIV

What about you? Do you long for your next vacation more than you long for the presence of the Lord?

THE CHALLENGE:

If God is a consuming fire, and

If we see the characteristics of the lukewarm in our lives,

Then, are we willing to make the choices to change that reality?

- Confess that your relationship with God has been an add on application.
- Admit that the tyranny of everyday life has usurped Jesus place as Lord and Leader of your life.
- Give up the American dream for a greater reality.

Rev 3:15-16

15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm- neither hot nor cold- I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

NIV