
MAINTAIN
ING
YOUR
FIRE
KEEP YOUR
ENCOUNTERS WITH
GOD ALIVE
PHILIP OLUBAKIN

MAINTAINING YOUR FIRE

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to **Bro Gbile Akanni** who neither knows me nor has met me before but his life and ministry has had the strongest influence and impact on the growth of my personal walk with God;

And to **Evang. Gboyega Shitta** whose life and mentoring has consistently stirred me not to relent on my prayer life and hunger for more of God.

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INTRODUCTION

As I travel around to preach the Gospel, the question I get asked the most is: How can you maintain your fire for God? How can one stay hot without rising today and falling off tomorrow? How can I maintain a consistent walk with God?

Most times, after a strong Holy Ghost meeting, the people are touched and it won't be uncommon to see teary eyes with people weeping before the Lord with stirred hearts but in a matter of days, a lot of people are back into the former struggles they had in their walk with God.

This is why throughout Scriptures; the Patriarchs built altars around their encounters with God and His revelation to them. This is to make sure there is a memorial. Today, we must build such altars but now in our hearts to ensure the experiences remain fresh.

In this book, I describe the three most dramatic encounters I have had with God, how I have kept them strong in my heart and how I have been able to maintain the effects of that fire that was ignited at those encounters.

It is my deepest prayer that reading through this short book will stir up a fire in your heart or reignite a dead one and cause you to fall deeply in love with God again.

CHAPTER ONE

UNDESTANDING DIVINE ENCOUNTERS

God is a God of encounters. Throughout scriptures we see him meeting with his children, sometimes to redirect their lives like he did to Saul of Tarsus, or to reignite a dead fire like he did for Moses, or to start a journey with them like he did for Abraham.

Every time we notice that our fire for God or the intensity of our love for him is beginning to burn low, then we need a new touch from him.

The key to having an encounter with God is to be hungry for it. God has never turned down a hungry heart.

Isaiah 44:3 (KJV)

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

John 7:37-38

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Jeremiah 29:13

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Matthew 7:7

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

We must desperately desire to have an experience with God. We must never be comfortable with the boredom of religion. We must consistently desire to know God for ourselves, to see and experience his promises first hand and not rely solely on

what other people say about Him. It is possible to be in church for years and even serve in the work teams and never experience God. Oh what joy that comes with experiencing the loving presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives!

It is easy to forget a sermon or a song but it is difficult to forget an encounter. Moses will never forget the burning bush, Paul will never forget the road to Damascus where he collided with the king of kings, or Peter, the day of Pentecost, when God poured himself out on 120 people and baptised them with the Holy Spirit for the first time.

Whatever it is that you do for a living, whether you are a minister of the gospel or a businessman, we all need to have an encounter with God.

Hunger for God does not happen at once. It gets stronger and develops with time. Time spent studying the word, in prayer and in the company of other believers who are also hungry for God.

The next few chapters will take you on a journey of how my hunger for God opened me to experiences with him.

I have had several encounters with God but three of them stand up so tall I can never forget them. I built an altar around them in my heart and just remembering them keeps me on my toes. Two of them were in my private prayer place and one during a general meeting.

Spiritual things are very slippery and that's why we must hold fast to the things we have heard from God lest they slip off our hands. So I would like you to follow me very closely.

(Heb 2:1) KJV

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

It is possible for the ground to be so dry after a flood that there won't be a single trace that rain ever fell.

I believe God will begin a work in your heart as you read on.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FIRST BURNER

The first encounter I will share with you happened about 11 years ago. I was very depressed because I had failed in my walk with God and I thought everything was over. I was pastoring a small students' fellowship and had failed in my leadership.

I was on the verge of backsliding but the love of God will not let me go. Out of frustration, I decided I was going to go to a secluded place and talk to God and if God does not talk to me, I will not eat and that I was ready to die there before God and never return. I left a note at an undisclosed destination at home, picked a few clothes and went to Redemption Camp at Lagos-Ibadan Express Way, Nigeria.

I will like to quickly explain that this was based on my knowledge of God then and God understood that I didn't know much (I still don't know much compared to what there is to be known) and He loved me enough to help me in my ignorance. Now I know that all the while I felt He wasn't taking to me, He actually was but my

feelings of guilt and condemnation had overwhelmed me so much I didn't hear Him. I remember vividly that as I walked through the gates of Redemption Camp that evening, I had made up my mind I wouldn't eat until God meets with me and reassures me that He still wanted me. I heard His voice, "Son, I will meet with you today." I said "Lord, if You like meet with me, if You like don't meet with me. I have made up my mind to die right here in Your presence if You don't."

This was my level of understanding but the love of God is stronger than our foolishness. Just then the Lord told me He would meet with me shortly before 12 midnight that night and I should be awake. At about 11p.m., some fellows came to pray so I joined them. By 11:30, God said "Son, don't forget we have an appointment." And at exactly 11:50p.m., He called me out from the prayer and told me to come outside the auditorium we were praying in. I obeyed the voice and when I came out, He told me to keep walking.

This is about the most 'foolish' thing I have ever done.

It was late in the night, Redemption Camp then wasn't as developed as it is now and I was following a voice telling me to keep walking into a thick darkness with forest all over. I followed the voice, when He says turn right or left, I just followed and after walking for about one hour and nothing had happened, I said "Lord, is it because I said I wanted to die that you decided to bring me into this thick bush so wild animals can kill me? You can't force me o, it is my die and I will die it at my time." So I turned to go back. Now, this time I had walked too deep into the place and I had lost my track. There was no way I could get out and this was about 1a.m. I didn't know the way forward and I didn't know how to go back.

You must understand the flesh cannot lead you further into the things that the Spirit first led you into.

In my confusion, I raised my head and I saw the figure of a man walking towards me with a stick in his hand. I thought the man was a hunter or a night watchman. Since I couldn't find my way anymore, I walked towards him to see if he could help me find my way back. When I got close to

him, I saw he was the revered Pastor E.A. Adeboye himself. He is the General Overseer of The Redeemed Christian Church of God and he had come to that bush to pray all by himself. In His sovereignty, God had ordered my feet to meet him there without any protocol, prior engagement or appointment. My eyes became teary. I was going through my lowest emotional time. I pleaded with him to pray for me and he laid hands on me, prayed and walked away.

I wished I took God serious when He said He would meet with me. I wished I had prepared questions to ask Him. I was on my knees with tears. God said to me "Son, if I would lead you for over one hour through this dark and thick bush to meet with My son here without your prior knowledge, then you can be sure I am not done with you yet. I will use you just like I promised to use you. I will never leave you."

I wept my eyes out.

Then I saw 2 people walking towards me, they told me how to find my way back and they disappeared into the darkness. I believe they must have been angels. I stayed in Redemption Camp

for four more days without eating any food but this time not out of a threat but out of thankfulness. I spent the days thanking God and declaring my faith in His Word. I will never forget this experience.

When I come to dark moments in my life today, I cast my mind back and remember this day. I know God would not have wasted one hour to guide me 11 years ago if He was going to abandon me later in my life.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SECOND BURNER

I had just decided I was going to separate some days to pray in the Spirit. I decided I would pray in tongues for 5 hours each day for 3 days. I walked away from my room to my school's sport complex and would start praying at 10p.m. and finish by 3a.m.

I would like to state here that you shouldn't make a doctrine or a formula from anybody's experience with God. It is supposed to be a relationship and not a religion. We have liberty in the Spirit to walk with God as He nudges us in our hearts.

I went the first day and nothing happened. I usually will plug my ears with earphones listening to worship songs as I prayed in the Spirit, pacing from one end of the sport complex to the other. The first day was just one long stretch of prayer time. Nothing spectacular happened.

I came back the next day and repeated just what I did the previous day and again nothing happened

except that as I rounded up, I heard God tell me He was going to meet with me the next day.

The next day I was prepared, I took a note pad. I didn't know what God will do or say but I sure wasn't ready to miss it. I also had some questions in my heart I would like to ask. I didn't want to repeat the mistake I made the first time. I got to the prayer spot as usual and started praying but this time I kept looking around, I was curious and anxious at the same time. I didn't know what will happen. After praying for about 2 hours, I suddenly felt my legs getting weak and as though something went through my body, I fell on my face. I turned back still on the floor to see what happened. I saw the clouds drawn aside like curtains and beyond the cloud was the most beautiful scenery I believe man can ever behold. I am an artist and by nature I'm extremely gifted in replicating the pictures I see in my imagination. However, after all these years I still don't have the words to describe the beauty and splendour of the sight. The streams, rivers, the flowers, the butterflies... the light... oh the light. There are no words in the human vocabulary that will sufficiently describe Heaven.

Just then the Lord began to speak to me. I had tears flowing down my eyes as I laid on my back on the floor looking at the most beautiful things I had ever seen. I had tried earlier to get up but could not. God told me a lot about me, He told me how deeply He loves me and has forgiven me of all my iniquities. He reminded me I will never be qualified to do what He will do through me and that His righteousness is His gift to me.

I remember vividly that as I struggled to get up He said laughingly, "Son quit trying you cannot get up." I didn't know how long this vision must have lasted but when the manifest presence was lifted, I struggled and got on my feet. I looked around, the light had gone and I was alone. It was still midnight. I knew I had seen God. It affected my ministry afterwards.

When I preached there was always a stirring in the atmosphere. I would have hardly started and you will see hunger for God rise in the meetings. It wasn't uncommon for people to walk away even while I was preaching to find a place to pray. His words became like fire in my mouth. Hunger for God became the mark of my ministry. I started seeing God when I preached more than I

have ever seen Him. I started seeing healings, from terminal illnesses to health conditions with internal organs. Since then till now, nothing excites me more than to preach on what God can do through a man He has a grip on, much less a man who now has a grip on God. That day was the day I got it.

A fire was ignited in my heart that day and even till today I can remember vividly the day my eyes saw the Lord.

I will like to reemphasize that you do not make a formula or doctrine out of anybody's experience with God.

One of the ways Satan steals the precious things God has for His children is to cause them to trivialize it; to hold spiritual things very casually. **Hebrews 12:16-17** describes Esau as being profane. He undermined his birthright and took it lightly. We were warned not to be like that.

There are folks who have had experiences with God in the past and when they look back now, Satan convinces them to think it was nothing serious and that they were ignorant in those days or maybe just hallucinating or being deceived. He

tempts them to take it casually. These are people who in the heat of prayers have received prophetic words with hot tears and weeping; people who were touched with the fire of God's Word. Some operated in the gifts of the Spirit and were indeed a flaming sword in the hands of God but 10 years down the line, there is no trace in their lives today that they were ever used by God. These were men who on campus saw visions, healed the sick and wrought righteousness.

They were up to pray every morning, they prayed out and loud. You could hear their voice in the distance breaking through the dead silence of the night. These men and women saw God and felt Him, they stirred many to follow Jesus but today mock people who do the same and bask in euphoria that they sometime had done so too. One of the things that has kept my fire for God burning is that I never forgot those days. It is like the altar Abraham built around every encounter he had with God, like the stones Joshua picked from Jordan.

What you did to catch the fire is what you must do to keep the fire.

If you stayed in the place of prayer to catch the fire of God, you must stay in the place of prayer to keep it burning. If you stayed with the Word to stir up a hunger for God in your heart, you must stay there to keep the hunger. If you stop putting the wood, the fire will die. Supernatural Life Conference (SLC) is always stirred from at least 30 days of daily prayers and fasting by the volunteers. Many of those days, without food at all.

You cannot be a volunteer for SLC casually, but then the danger is the question: What happens after SLC? Do we go back to looseness, lethargy and laziness? Do we go back to eating everything we see and sleeping all night and then wonder at how soon our fire went out? For what was done to bring the fire down on SLC must be done more intensely to keep the fire burning in our hearts. You must never return to how you were before He touched you.

So Philip, how have you kept your fire and passion for God burning for all these years?

I did the same things I did to start the fire, read the same kind of books and kept the same kind of friends, nothing more.

Jesus was awoken from sleep and he calmed a storm. He wasn't coming down from a prayer mountain; he was awoken from a sleep so deep that the turbulence of the storm could not wake him. That is how your life should be. **The fire of God should consistently burn in your heart so whether awake or asleep, the surge of fire in your spirit never goes out but is always on standby to kick the devil out of every situation you come across.**

You must understand that Satan will always come after God.

After SLC, Satan will come back. He will come to test you on the discipline needed to sustain the things you have received. One day I went for a 3-day prayer retreat and on the third day of the fast the Lord said to me, "Son, prepare for Satan," I said "Lord, that's not a problem if it is still time I can deal with that." God said "No son, you are looking towards the wrong direction. Satan will never come to you in ways you expect." He will

come to you to procrastinate your prayer and study time to later, tell you to rest a little, tell you that you are taking things too seriously and soon just before you know it, this fire that now burnt so fiercely in your spirit will be out.

Every encounter with God is a spark of fire but immediately places a responsibility on the person to fan it into a flaming fire. If you don't fan it, it will die and soon there will be no trace that you had a touch from God.

CHAPTER FOUR

THIRD BURNER

I was the University Joint Christian Mission Choir Coordinator. It was the Joint Campus Choir for all the fellowships and we were preparing for our concert. It was the concert at which I was to hand over to my successor. And most times, I will spend the first one hour of rehearsals preaching and laying hands on the choristers.

I still don't know why they would make a preacher a choir coordinator. I usually will make them pray and pray. I found out, from experience that there is a genuine desire to pray in every believer particularly if they find a leader that can help and stir them. One day, I told them we were going to walk to and fro the campus gate of Obafemi Awolowo University praying in tongues. I put the take off time at 5:30a.m. and it ordinarily would take about one and a half hours to walk to and fro.

I was hoping we would have like 50 people because I thought it would have been too much sacrifice for people to be out that early and that only the very serious people would make it but

shockingly, we had about 200 and many were already at the take off venue before I got there.

We ended up praying in tongues for three hours with people baptised afresh with fire and refilled over and over with the Spirit. I saw people manifest in the gifts of the Spirit like I had never seen before. Glory to God!

The choir began to grow from the less than 50 people we started with to over 300.

We had testimonies of miracles from choir rehearsals and it was very obvious God had birthed a new fire in our hearts.

Sadly but uncontrollably, some students stopped going to their fellowships and would rather come to rehearsals. Their claim was that everything they needed was in the rehearsals. This soon put me on the edge with some campus fellowship pastors who thought I stole their members but God found a way to sort that out.

It wasn't long before we started having people who weren't even singers at all coming to the rehearsals. Sometimes I would walk up to someone who I was sure I hadn't seen before and

ask him or her who he or she was. They would usually point at someone and claim he was the one who invited them; I would look at the person's face and be sure I had never seen him too.

It was becoming an uncontrollable fire.

God blessed us with tangible healing testimonies. Someone whose mom had been sick and bedridden at home came and I declared that someone's mom was being healed. Immediately after he left the rehearsals, his mom called his phone and he refused to pick. His father died after a prolonged sickness just the previous semester and when he died, it was his father's phone that was used to call him to tell him his father had died. So he was scared to pick the call thinking his mother had died too. After a while he picked and it was his mom calling to tell him that she was healed and she can't trace how. He went to share this testimony in his fellowship and our choir rehearsals 'bursted' with crowd.

This was supposed to be a choir but it was growing into an army and we were on the verge of the strongest outpouring we had ever seen.

I believe right now even as you read this book, your heart is being stirred and a new fire and deep hunger for God is being birthed. I don't want you to waste this moment.

If you were in that choir with me in those days and somehow you have lost your fire, latch on now, the fire of God will touch you wherever you are and you will experience again what you used to have before.

We started preparing for our concert and the Lord said to me "**Son, the scope of your voice is the limit of your influence; anywhere your voice can reach, my anointing on it can reach.**" So I started to prepare the hearts of these over 300 choristers for what God will do on that day. I told them everywhere they can be heard, the power of God would be felt, whether the persons came for the concert or not. I told them the glory of God will fill the whole auditorium and people will hardly be able to stand on their feet. I emphasized that just like the glory of God came into the temple in the days of Solomon in 1 Kings 8:11, we also would not be able to stand to minister.

I made a lot of boastful statements. I said God will heal all the sick people and even raise the dead. But sometimes, I will get scared and say to God, "Lord, are you sure you will do all these?" He will respond "Be bold son! Keep talking; if you don't say it, I can't do it."

One midnight, as I prayed, a strong grip of fear came on me. Satan showed me the picture of something that happened when I was a little boy. My elder brother was a very mature believer and had a very strong influence on my picture of what God can do. I could almost say he was the symbol of Christianity to me. One day, he was trying to pray for a boy with a condition on his leg but the boy didn't get healed.

This happened when I was a little boy and there was no way I could have remembered by myself but Satan had brought it back. **It is possible for Satan to supernaturally remind you of your past failures to hamper you from attempting the things that God says you can do**. That day, he reminded me and he followed it with a question: "If your brother couldn't do it then, what makes you think you can do it now?"

This almost broke me. My heart was beating fast; what was I going to do now?

My brother who obviously was a 'better' Christian couldn't do it; how could I? How could I imagine holding a meeting where many will be healed when I haven't even done anything like that before?

But how sweet the Holy Spirit is, He blurted it through my lips even before I could think.

Whooooooooshhhh!!!

I laughed loud and said "Satan you missed!" I have several elder brothers. My elder brother, Brother Paul did it; my elder brother, Brother Peter did it and my eldest brother, Brother Jesus did it. I am going to follow them and do it!

Faya!!!!

I bursted into tongues.

I feel a very strong anointing right now as I type this. It is very similar to what I felt that night. Let's take out some moments and pray in the Holy Ghost!

Whooooooosh!!!!

The Lord will never leave us without a word. He says to us to take no thought about what we shall say for at that very moment it shall be given to us what we shall say.

The next morning, I quickly called a meeting with my close prayer team members and told them what Satan told me and how I responded and we all rejoiced at what the Lord will do.

Then the concert night came…the night we have been praying for… oh that night...

Everything started normally, people kept flocking into the 3,000 seater amphi theatre where the concert was to hold. The choir had planned to sing about nine songs and we had just concluded the praise and worship and taken about two of our songs when suddenly, the power went out and the electricity generating set refused to start.

The technical crew did all they could and some people ran off to get an alternative generating set. We were there in the darkness for over one hour and then everything was beginning to look

gloomy. Every promise was beginning to look like a lie.

I looked at the choir members and their faces were down.

What happened to all the promise that God will show up in this meeting?

I grabbed my assistant then, Femi Adedeji who is also a law colleague now and ran with him outside the hall to pray that a miracle will happen but it still wasn't working. Nothing changed and the people who came for the concert were beginning to go back home disappointed.

Just then one of the pastors called me and said we needed to round up since there was no way we would be able to restore power as all options had been exhausted and that the small electricity generating set available could only power a portion of the sound system and some of the lights.

I said "Lord, but you told me, you will show up. Nothing is happening and everybody is going to think I am a liar." He said "Don't worry son, I always reserve the best for the last. You

remember that I reserved the best wine for the last at the wedding in Cana of Galilee?" I replied "Please Lord, reserve something for the beginning too. If we continue like this, nobody but you and I will be here at the last."

I told the Pastor that the choir would sing just three more songs and that would be it for the night. At that time, everybody was already in despair.

I summoned up courage and climbed the stage, took the microphone and announced to the remaining crowd who could barely see me through the dim light that the power of God will hit the place just now. I remember that I quoted from **Ecclesiastes 11:3** that when the clouds are full, they will empty themselves on the earth. I told the people to get ready to be hit by the power of God.

I handed over the microphone to the lead singer and that was it. The choir struggled to sing the first song, we went to the second; the power of God hit the lead singer and she fell on her face and like a pack of cards the over 300 choristers were falling one by one on the stage

The manifest glory of God had come into the auditorium.

The people who left the hall started running back, the power of God hit the audience and the people started falling.

There were some senior ministers who thought they had to control what was going on. One of the sisters walked up to me and asked if they could take over and helped those falling on the stage and I told them to go ahead but anybody who neared the stage fell off, the instrumentalists fell off the instruments.

I would never forget how Gift Ese the guitarist was strumming the guitar so roughly that I ordered someone to collect the guitar from him and even after the guitar was collected, he still didn't stop strumming through the air; he was already in the Spirit.

The cloud of the glory of God fell on that hall like I have never seen anywhere.

People were slain and couldn't open their eyes for over 12 hours.

The lead singer was under the power of God and was still dancing in the Spirit in the morning of the third day.

The drummer was thrown away off the drum set.

One of the friends of the choristers who had come for the concert started laughing at us for falling off the stage and praying uncontrollably in tongues, he got hit by the power of God, fell on the floor, got baptised in the Holy Ghost and started praying in tongues immediately.

My younger brother, Kanmi was there at the back of the auditorium, he told me some four young men were laughing at what was happening and suddenly as fast as a thunderbolt, a force came on them and threw the four of them apart. He quickly went on his knees and reassured the Lord that he was on His side (Laughs).

Oh how sweet it is to see God come into a meeting with the fullness of His majesty.

The Choristers who obviously couldn't sing anymore dragged themselves, carrying one another off the stage and we managed to end the meeting because everything was going out of

control. There are people who are always afraid of meetings like this because they think things are going to get out of hand and yes, **it is high time things got out of the hands of man into the hands of God.**

The choir staggered off the stage and many had to be carried off.

Chima, one of the tenor singers fell and became as stiff as stone. He wouldn't open his eyes. He was carried to me; I slapped him severally and pleaded with him not to die in the presence of God as he wasn't Ananias or Sapphira.

For over one hour after the meeting ended, the ushers had to carry people to their rooms as a lot were either slain or couldn't walk at all. A lot fell on the road as they walked back to their hostel rooms.

For over three days, you could still feel the tangible glory of God hovering over the university campus.

Words will fail to describe the intensity of that night. My eyes were filled with tears. I remember looking up and said "Lord you came" and I could

sense the smile in His voice, when He replied "Yes son, I told you I will."

Some people who were at the concert were 'slain' in dark places and because of the poor lighting couldn't be found. Several hours after the meeting had ended and the hall locked, they started banging the door from inside to be let out of the place.

This was the beginning of the revival that absolutely revolutionized the worship and music ministry on our campus and this fire has been transferred from generation to generation.

CHAPTER FIVE

HOW TO PRESERVE YOUR ENCOUNTERS

The Scriptures are filled with stories of encounters men had with God; from Abraham to Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the children of Israel, Saul of Tarsus, the list is endless. But you would observe that no encounter with God lasts forever. Every time God reached out to His people to reveal Himself to them, it will always be in a moment and soon, the light will be out and everything will be back to how it was.

Every encounter a man has with God is a spark and it will immediately place a responsibility on the man to make it a fire, if not he would not benefit anything from that encounter.

Just like our natural fire lighters, they in themselves cannot do anything much if we do not quickly ignite something with them.

You must take personal responsibility to fan this spark of fire into a flame, if you do not want to return to where you were before the encounter.

The Patriarchs of Faith were known to build altars around their encounters and revelations of God

throughout their journey with Him. They made sure they never forgot this God who had appeared to them. Some of them even named their cities after their encounters with and revelations of God to ensure they never forgot.

There is no encounter with God that will last forever. Some may last for hours, some maybe days, but it will always come to an end. The good news however is that you can get permanent results from temporary encounters.

Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus must have lasted for about one hour. The light that shone on him that day went out but it already lit a light that shone through Paul's heart for the rest of his life. We see him making reference to this experience through his life. Acts 22:6-11, Acts 26: 13-19

For instance, Moses' encounter at the burning bush lasted for maybe an hour. That burning bush did not burn forever but it ignited a fire that burnt forever in the heart of Moses.

As a preacher of the Gospel, my responsibility is not just to create that atmosphere for a spark of fire in your heart but to teach you how to fan it

into flames and preserve your encounter with God. If not, my very labour would have been a waste. My instruction from God is to bring forth fruits that will abide.

I have been in meetings where the manifest presence of God fills the place and you see people slain in the Spirit, many weeping and crying. You know that God had begun to stir a new fire for Him in their hearts and then you come back few months afterward and you will not see any trace that these people were ever touched by God.

The question now is: How do I ensure I stay in the fire of my encounter with God and never return to the coldness or lukewarmness I walked in before He touched me?

BUILD AN ALTAR AROUND YOUR ENCOUNTERS

Abraham

Gen 12:6-8

6: Abram travelled through the land to the site of the oak of Moreh at Shechem. And at that time the Canaanites were in the land.

7: Then the LORD appeared to Abraham and said, "I will give this land to your offspring." So Abram built an altar there to the LORD, who appeared to him.

8: From there Abram moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built an altar to the LORD, and he called on the name of the LORD.

Isaac

Gen 26:24-25

24: And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

25: And he built an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

Jacob

Gen 28:18-19

18: And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

19: And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

Joshua

Joshua 4:8-9

8: And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.

9: And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the Ark of the Covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

1. An Altar of Remembrance

We must understand that we have the Bible today because people were diligent to build altars around their encounters with God. They erected altars, some planted oak trees where they had the encounter so that they never forget what God did or said and they could pass it on to their children. No matter how far they go, the moment they get to that point where they planted the tree or erected the altar, they will remember what God said or did to them.

In the Old Testament, people named cities and places after the dealings of God in their lives. Abraham named the place where God provided a ram to replace Isaac, Jehovah Jireh. For him, that was a place where he had an encounter with God and God proved Himself to be a God that provides.

Jacob named the place God met with him when he was running from his brother Bethel. He had a dream there and God met with him so he called the place the house of God (Bethel) although the place was called Luz before then. When Jacob

woke up, he did something to mark the very place where God met with him.

He built an altar with the stone he slept on and named the place Bethel so that he would not forget his encounter with God

Anytime God does something new in your life or reveals himself in a way that is new to you, do something that will make sure you never forget the experience. Do something around it that will make you always remember.

This they did consistently so they never forget what God did. The Patriarchs were so serious with what God did in their lives that a dream that Jacob had was handled so delicately and seriously that even Moses who wasn't born when it happened was able to document it several years after. So even if they forgot, anytime they came back to that point, they will remember how God came through for them.

20 years after that encounter that Jacob had and when his life was beginning to lose meaning in Laban's house where he was living with four women and he had begun to forget where he came from, God appeared to him and introduced

himself as the God of Bethel. You must understand that though God had never been called God of Bethel before or introduced Himself like that before, at that time, that was the only way to connect with Jacob's personal experience with Him. (Genesis 31: 13).

He is the God of our journey.

Though He had never introduced Himself as the God of Bethel to anyone before then, to Jacob, He was the God of Bethel.

Every time I drive pass Redemption Camp till now, a chill will go through my spine. I will remember how God led me through the darkness in a forest to meet with His son. Anytime I go back to Obafemi Awolowo University, I still go back to that point where the fire fell on me. I can remember vividly how I felt and it always reminds me of what God did for me. It is a memorial forever in my heart that He will never leave me.

You must never be casual with what God does in your life. At our meetings, a lot of people will usually come out before the altar with tears in their eyes and hunger in their hearts for more of

God than they have ever know before. My insistence is that they must never allow that to die as a spark.

In Genesis 35:1, God came to Jacob and told him to go back to Bethel. There is always a place to go back to. The big difficulty with many of us is that our sparks never become a mark strong enough to be a place to go back to.

We have no reference points in our journey with the Lord.

So when I say we should build an altar around our encounters with God, does that mean all of us should come out and look for stones and build something with it? Definitely not!

We have come to find out that this was the culture of the Old Testament saints starting from Noah and they passed it on to their children but how then will a New Testament believer erect an altar?

Men who have maintained their fire with God for years are men who note down all God does with them. They have journals of what He had said to them.

Men who do not write always forget... always forget. Some may argue that they didn't forget but they have simply forgotten that they forgot.

People who are diligent to write down the dealings of God in their lives are far more likely to remain on fire for Him than people who do not write it.

Many years ago, I missed out on the things God wanted me to do and I was so down I wasn't sure what God felt about me but He showed me His love and restored me to Himself. I remember laying on my Bible and I mistakenly tore a portion of a page in it. As casual as that looks and though I don't use the Bible anymore because it is worn out, every now and then when I see that page, my heart is moved because it was that day that God showed me His love in spite of my failings.

All I do sometimes when the enemy makes it look like I wouldn't get through is take back some of the things God has told me and read it all over or look back at all the things He has done for me and it wouldn't take time before joy is bubbling in my heart again.

God has wrought miracles through my hands, I have seen blind eyes open, dumb tongue speaking again, fractured bones restored including a fractured skull, I have seen terminal illnesses like cancer, high blood pressure, blood sugar conditions get healed supernaturally.

I keep records of all these testimonies and there is no way Satan can convince me God is going to abandon me. Why would He have wasted all that time equipping me, teaching me and using me if He was going to abandon me?

2. An Altar of Responsibility

2 Timothy 1:5-6

5: when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

6: Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

Proverbs 26:20

Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out.

Paul while writing to Timothy referred to the fact that his mother and grandmother walked in faith and how that the gift of God had come into him because he laid his hands on him, yet he immediately charged him to take personal responsibility for the growth of what came into him in that encounter.

Fire, by nature can burn forever **(Proverbs 30:15, 16)** in as much as there is something to burn. Fire is fuelled by what it feeds on. A fire that has nothing to burn will die out.

Some years ago, the Lord was telling me about the things He wanted me to do for Him in ministry and honestly in my heart, I thought they were not as popular as the things I would have loved to do or what I saw some of my mentors doing for Him so I told Him I would have preferred to do what Pastor so so and so was doing. He smiled and replied "Son, there is no fire that cannot burn down a nation and if you see

anybody's fire burning high, it is because they took personal responsibility to fan it into flames. Even if you start a fire in the deepest obscurity, you can fan it right into notoriety." **Every big fire starts as a spark but not all sparks become a big fire.**

What will become a worldwide move of God touching and changing the nations will always start as a spark but many sparks that have the capacity to touch the world ended and died as a spark because the people to whom God gave it or committed it were not diligent to fan or feed it into a flame.

Today, I can take you to places where I had attended some church meetings where God touched and changed my life in ways that left indelible marks but I also know I wasn't the only one there. We were many; we all wept and came to the altar to show God we were serious about living our lives for Him but years after nothing has changed in the lives of many of us who came out. A lot of people remained the same and can't even remember they had such encounters. The spark never became a flame.

A lot of people may quickly explain that away by saying we are differently graced. The truth however is that the grace of God has appeared unto us all (Titus 2:11). What you become is solely dependent on what you do with the grace that God has made available to everyone.

We are not saved by grace alone. We are saved by grace through faith. Grace is God's offer to us and faith is our response to it. There is no such thing as grace that doesn't put a responsibility on you. (Ephesians 2:8)

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.(KJV)

But God treated me with undeserved grace! He made me what I am, and his grace wasn't wasted. I worked much harder than any of the other apostles, although it was really God's grace at work and not me. (CEV)

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been in vain. In fact, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God with me. (NET)

Paul makes it clear that it was possible for the grace of God to be wasted or be in vain in us if we do not work with it. The grace or fire or gift you receive from God in an encounter or as you stayed with His Word must be worked with otherwise it will be a waste. But God is kind; He is never tired of us. He is willing to reveal Himself over and over, reach out to us over and over. However, our lives which is the sum total of the opportunities we have to make a difference is ticking away and so we don't have the time to keep wasting our encounters with God without trapping it and making something tangible and life changing from it.

Because every fire has to continually burn something to keep burning, you must decide that you will take personal responsibility to keep putting the wood in your fire.

The question however will be: What do I need to keep doing to keep my fire burning?

The answer is simple. You have to keep doing the things you did to start it. If you got the fire in your prayer place, you will need to stay there to keep it. If you got it because of the kind of friends you kept, you will need to keep the same kind of friends. The fire of God can never survive out of the atmosphere where it was created.

The three major types of wood to keep your fire for God burning:

1. The word of God

2. Prayer

3. Right Company

You must never subject these three to your feelings. You must keep putting them whether you feel like or not. Sometimes, you may even start as a routine before it grows into a sweet relationship.

One day the Lord asked me "Son, do you think I am in support of routines or just 'as the Spirit leads'"? When the Lord asks you questions like

that, it is always wiser to say "Lord, I may be wrong in my answer but I am willing to learn from Your wisdom." He said "Look around you, son, nature works in a routine. There is nothing haphazard. The sun rises every morning and sets every night, each season comes after the other, the earth revolves as scheduled. If these things decide to do 'as the Spirit leads', there will be chaos."

Now there is nothing wrong with living as the Spirit leads but the Lord was trying to deal with a habit in my life which was to pray or study my Bible when I claim the Spirit led me. The problem was that I was beginning not to feel led for many days in a row.

If you stop putting the wood in your fire, no matter how high it is burning, it will die.

FINAL THOUGHTS

My deep prayers for you is that after reading this your life will never remain the same. That indeed you will fall deeply in love with god and your heart will pant after him all the time. That you will not derive satisfaction or fulfilment more in any other thing or person other than God.

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Thank you.