

## THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF SMELLING THE PRESENCE OF GOD (JOHN 21)

Recall how significant a simple charcoal fire became to these disciples.

Peter denied Jesus three times by a charcoal fire (John 18:18, 25).

Peter affirmed his love to Jesus three times by a charcoal fire (John 21:9).

*"...if [a smell] were connected with a particularly emotional moment, for example — it can file the information and store it indefinitely. Even decades later, the same scent can bring the memory and emotional salience of the moment flooding back...odor-evoked memories tend to be more emotional and more likely to extend back earlier in one's life." The Connections Between Smell, Memory, and Health, Harvard Medicine, Molly McDonough, Spring 2024.*

*"God never butt-dials. No revelation is every accidentally given. Every act of revelation is intentional." (A.J. Swoboda/ Nijay Gupta, Slow Theology, p94)*

*"But you," he asked them, "who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus responded, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven. Matthew 16:16-17*

- Are we out-categorizing the Spirit from our lives so that we do not see the Spirit's work for what it is?

Goodness is not something to be presumed. It is a gift to be attentive to.

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1:17*

*"Simon, Simon, look out. Satan has asked to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." "Lord," he told him, "I'm ready to go with you both to prison and to death." "I tell you, Peter," he said, "the rooster will not crow today until you deny three times that you know me." Luke 22:31-34*

Satan desired to ruin Peter. But Jesus prayed and encouraged him.

When Peter is restored by the charcoal fire, Jesus reminds him to strengthen his brothers and feed the sheep in the power of that restoration.

*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you. Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world. The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. To him be dominion forever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:6-11*

He truly loved his disciples to the end (John 13:1) and loves us still.

- Do you remember how Jesus been kind to you?

Remembering is more than mere nostalgia. It is a commitment to live in light of a reality whose grip on us can fade.

*"Do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19 1 Corinthians 11:23-25). Remember that at one time you were...(Ephesians 2:11-13;) Remember how kind he's been to you? (Titus 3:1-7) Embody his kindness.*

- What are the charcoal fires that God has placed in your life for your continued renewal?
- What is one specific moment of Jesus' kindness you want to carry with you this week?
- What is one practice that will help you remember?