

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

April 30, 2023 Elemental: Fire.

I Intro.

We're close to the end of the school year and eventually summer. It's amazing how fast time flies. The staff and elders are working to bring some new and innovative ideas in all areas of our church life. We have seen an increased activity in our children's ministry, and we're working on new ideas for both our children and our students. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Recap.

Yup...we're still in the "**Elemental**" series. Finding and encountering God in the ordinary things all around us. The first two elements were encouraging and strengthened us. **Earth** is the assurance of God's faithful presence in everything around you. We can find comfort and hope when we see God all around us. **Wind** is the promise of God to bring order out of chaos, to bring life out of lifelessness, and to bring courage out of fear. Wind, spirit, breath moves all around us, and everytime we breathe, feel the breeze, the unseen force, we can be reminded of what God does for us.

But **Fire**...let's just get into it first.

III Sunday.

Yeah...we said fire. Our third element in our series "**Elemental**". So, let's talk about fire. Fire can be comforting, provide warmth and a soft cozy flickering light. However, it can be devastating and so destructive. And is used in so many types of manufacturing as a method of purifying and strengthening. So, as we always do...let's just talk about fire.

Have you had any past good or bad experiences with fire? What were they?

What spiritual truths or applications do you see in fire?

We used two scriptures referencing fire and pulled some spiritual truths out of them. We'll hit them one at a time. Read **Isaiah 6:1-7**.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What did the burning coal represent? Why was it necessary?

We don't need to do a lot of unpacking with this passage. It pretty much speaks for itself. There is an honesty in this story in which the author writes he has "*filthy lips*". He has a sense of self-awareness, and understands his own shadow side. His tendency to let emotions and feelings get the best of him. There is some work to be done. And the coal represents fire, that does the work of purifying and forming him into the person God has called him to be. Which leads to the question.

Where has God stepped in your life, you went through fire to prepare you for a bigger work?

This passage addresses the actual work of fire much more specifically. Read **1 Corinthians 3:11-15**.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What did the fire represent?

What was the purpose of the fire?

This passage is fairly self-explanatory. Fire has a refining and separating function. It helps determine if what we put our time, energy, attention, and resources towards are actually the work of God.

What do you have in place now, habits and practices that help do this work of separating important things from frivolous things?

IV Challenge.

The challenge isn't going to be so much what fire is, but how to handle it when we're in it. These are simple truths to help frame and understand those difficult moments in our lives.

How to handle being in the fire. Since fire is inevitable. We cannot avoid it. And we know the work fire does. Let's get a few pointers on how to survive being in the middle of the fire. I'm not going to tell you anything you don't already know. These are just reminders that are good to know for all of life.

1. No one likes fire. That's okay ... and admit it. When you're in the middle of the fire, all you can feel is your feelings. And the pain of the fire. So, say out loud, even better to another person, everything you're feeling in the fire. There's no shame in admitting it's difficult, even beyond your limits. It's in that honest admission we can begin to find understanding and potential when we can put real words to what we're experiencing.

2. Find support. A lot of times you cannot or will not be saved from the fire. The best thing you can do is find people who will sit in the fire with you. If you have friends, find ones to talk to. If you need something more, talk to a professional. And a side note. If you are a friend, some helpful advice. Listen, listen, listen. Don't give advice, don't story top. Just be with them.

3. Take one day at a time. When you're in the middle of the fire, you can't see out past it. It doesn't matter if the end is 100' away or only 1'. You're still in the middle of it. When you're in the middle of it you're going to want to guess or try to figure out what it all means and where it all is going to go, trying to race past being in the middle of the fire. Fight that urge. This isn't about trusting in your plan or your understanding. **It's just trusting in God.** And that there will be an 'other side'.

4. Look for positives and what you can learn. This can be really difficult. And a lot of the time, not possible in the middle of the fire. Some of you are really good at seeing real opportunities, feeling hope, when you're in the middle of a struggle. Honestly, that's a sign of spiritual maturity. But for many of us, we can only do the first three. And this work can't be done, until you can look back after we're out of the fire. The writer admitted; ***"I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips."*** You know this is true, and past experiences will remind you it's true, but your circuits are overloaded, and you don't have the bandwidth to devote brain power or emotional energy to doing this when you're in the middle of it. This will come from honest reflection on the fire you went through.

No one likes or enjoys being in the fire. Of all of the 'elements' that represent God, this one is the most difficult. But probably points to the presence of God and his desires for us more than any of the other ones.

The final question. **How can you build a life that makes the most use of the element of fire?**