

LOVE LETTERS

ser4010 Keep the Fire Burning, Pt 1

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Today we start our new series, “Keep the Fire Burning”, where we will look at how we can intentionally keep our passion for God and our relationship with Him alive and growing.

Regardless of your age, how many of you love to get love letters?

I do!

Early in our marriage, Gina would make my lunch each day and write a love note for me on a napkin. Every day I looked forward to lunch to read the napkin to see what she wrote! It was always a note of love and encouragement and sometimes it was passionate or funny.

One day I was having lunch with a coworker in the lunchroom. She was sharing about how she was struggling with some challenges in her family and about how to trust God with them. She began to cry, and not thinking, I immediately handed her one of my folded napkins. She unfolded the napkin and noticed the note written on it. She quickly read it and said, “Oh my, I don’t think I was supposed to read that!” Gina’s love note said, “Last night was

wonderful. I love you.” That stopped her tears, she began laughing, and I blushed!

That love letter changed the focus in that moment. It became funny. Yet, if I had been eating my lunch alone and read the note, as I did on many days, it would have changed my focus at that moment from whatever I was thinking about and would have encouraged me and reminded me that I was loved.

Here are some truths about love letters. They strengthen your personal relationships. People respond to affirmation. By telling someone why you love them, you also reinforce their love for you. At their core... love letters are specific and intimate to both the writer and to the recipient, serving as a reminder of what was, and what is.” Let me repeat that last line...at their core, love letters are specific and intimate to both the writer and to the recipient, serving as a reminder of what was, and what is.”

This truth is the heart behind God’s love letter to us, His Word, the Bible. It reveals to us His heart. It tells us why He loves us and what He has done, is doing, and will do for us because of His love.

Let’s pray.

Today we are going to take a look at some truths about God’s word as His love letter to us.

Let's take a look at **Psalms 119**.

This Psalm is actually written as an acrostic poem. It is the longest chapter in the entire Bible. Each stanza begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 stanzas or sections, equal to 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, with 8 verses each, for a total of 176 verses. Out of those 176 verses, the word "scripture" or some form of its reference is mentioned in 171 of them. This Psalm is believed to have been written by David over an extended period of time.

Let's take a look at some of these truths of God's word through a filter of three common themes about love letters:

1. They are therapeutic
2. They are authentic
3. Letters last forever

If something is therapeutic, it causes someone to feel happier and more relaxed or to become healthier.

Psalms 119:50 says *"My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life."*

Psalms 119: 76-77 says *"May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant. ⁷⁷ Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight."*

To be authentic means to be genuine and real.

Psalms 119:140 tells us *“Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.”*

If something lasts forever it has absolutely no end.

Psalms 119:89 says *“Your word Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.”*

Psalms 119:96 says *“To all perfection I see a limit, but your commands are boundless.”*

Now that we’ve talked about these truths through the perspective of these common themes of love letters and the truth about God’s love found in Psalms 119, how do you view God’s word and how do you feel about spending time reading it?

Earlier, I spoke about a truth related to when I read love notes or letters from Gina. What is written in a love letter will change our focus at that very moment. It will change our focus from whatever we are thinking about, to the heart of the author.

Some of you may say, “I struggle with reading and am not very disciplined.” If that’s your struggle, then I ask you this. “How quickly would you open and read a love letter addressed personally to you?”

Changing your perspective changes your experience.

Let's take a look at a question asked of Billy Graham and his reply to the question. This was printed was in a newspaper column on Sep. 6, 2007:

DEAR DR. GRAHAM: I know I ought to read my Bible, but every time I try to read it, I just end up getting confused. I never was a very good student, and all those strange names and places in the Old Testament get me lost. Is the Bible really that important? What am I doing wrong? -- Mrs. L.Y.

DEAR MRS. L.Y.: I notice you are married; did you ever get a letter from your husband-to-be and decide you wouldn't bother reading it because his handwriting was poor, or you were too busy or for some other reason? I doubt it. And yet that's what many of us do with the Bible. The Bible is God's "love letter" to us, telling us not only that He loves us, but showing us what He has done to demonstrate His love. It also tells us how we should live, because God knows what is best for us and He wants us to experience it.

Changing your perspective changes your experience.

What do you want in your time with God and reading His word? How do you keep the fire burning and enhance your time with Him and His word?

Perhaps, changing your perspective will change your experience.

Keeping passion alive means doing something different to keep the fire burning. For me, in my relationship with my wife Gina, what moves her and gets her all googly-eyed is when I do something different to communicate my love for her. We have been married for 29 years and I can tell you that for our anniversary, it's hard to come up with 29 different ideas to communicate my love. This is where my relationship with God kicks in. He tells me in **John 15:5** that *"Apart from Me you can do nothing."* That also includes anything new to communicate my love for Gina. So, what I do when I want to communicate my love in a new, different way and I can't come up with an idea, I pray and ask Him to show me or give me an idea and He has every time I ask Him.

Share Example

How my time looks with God and reading His word over the past 30 years has changed, just as has my time with Gina in deepening our intimacy.

What does my time look like now with God and His word?

I can best describe it through a real life story which perfectly illustrates it. I was recently speaking with the father of one of my piano students about this sermon. We talked about the power in a love letter, of what we learn about each other, of our love for another person, and how it relates to God, His character and His love for us. He shared with me something he and wife did when they were engaged. He had just graduated from college and was living in Georgia, where he

was a news reporter for CBS. She, unfortunately, was still in the Virginia area because she was finishing school. While they were separated, they would journal or write extensive love letters to one another. They had a marble-covered notebook. One of them would write in it and then mail it to the other one who would then journal in response to what the other wrote. He shared how they have a trunk filled with these journals and from time to time they go back and read them, celebrating how their love grew for one another during that time and how much they learned about one another.

Last year, I had shared with most of you that I began journaling with God. It is something I was led to do in learning to be more still with Him. It was a great experience and still is. As I began to journal my prayers, thoughts, feelings, and everything going on within me with God, I also began to journal how God was answering my questions through His word or how He was showing me His heart or mind on any matter. This undertaking is like the one this couple I described has experienced.

I share this with you to not duplicate but to perhaps spur you on to trust God in new ways to change your perspective on how to read His word and perhaps, change your experience with Him.

As we close, let me share this powerful, truthful blog that I recently read. It was written by Maria Wolf.

“There’s nothing more special than a love letter--words that gift us with the knowledge that someone cares just for us. That someone loves us just the way we are, with our accomplishments, our failures, our hopes, our dreams, our highs, our lows. We looked through the Bible to share God’s love letters to you. There were so many passages that we couldn’t include all of them.

Here are a few we selected. As you read the Scripture passage take a few moments to revel in the words that embrace you with love.

“I will always love you; You are precious to me.”

Jeremiah, 31:3-4 (CEV)

“I can’t let you go. I can’t give you up. ... My feelings for you are much too strong.”

Hosea 11:8 (CEV)

“You have rejected me, but my anger is gone; I will heal you and love you without limit. I will be like the dew—then you will blossom like lilies and have roots like a tree.”

Hosea 14:4-5 (CEV)

“If you love me and truly know who I am, I will rescue you and keep you safe. When you are in trouble, call out to me. I will answer and be there to protect and honor you.”

Psalms 91:14-15 (CEV)

“Could a mother forget a child who nurses at her breast? Could she fail to love an infant who came from her own body? Even if a mother could forget, I will never forget you.”

Isaiah 49:15 (CEV)

WOW. . . He loves you and me deeply and has so much He wants to tell us about us and His love for us.

Changing your perspective will change your experience.

How do you need to change our perspective in how you read His love letter to you and to keep your fire and passion burning for Him?

Ask Him – He will show you!

There may be some of you today who are saying you want to be in a relationship with a God who loves you that much. It’s as easy as ABC.

A - Admit you are a sinner and you need a savior.

B - Believe God sent you a savior in His only son, Jesus, who died on a cross for your sins and for my sins. He still has the nail scars in His hands.

C - Commit your life to Him.