



A GUIDED
JOURNEY
TO PURSUING
A FAITH ON
FIRE FOR
GOD

THE
ignited
WORKBOOK

JONNI NICOLE PARSONS

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A Tyndale nonfiction imprint

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The Ignited Workbook: A Guided Journey to Pursuing a Faith on Fire for God

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Designed by Libby Dykstra

Published in association with the literary agency of The Blythe Daniel Agency, Inc. P.O. Box 64197, Colorado Springs, CO 80962.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4964-6114-8

Printed in the United States of America

28 27 26 25 24 23 22
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Introduction

Do you pray for a passion for God? Do you hope to miraculously develop the traits of consistency and faithfulness? Do you wish that God would hand you a blueprint on how to stay in right relationship with Him? Do you often question, *If God is truly good, why isn't He good enough to fulfill this sincere desire that I have . . . to stay head over heels in love with Him?*

I've been there.

I've been praying a desperate prayer for years. I've begged God for one thing time and time again: that I would learn how to stay on fire and remain in communion with Him, all the time. Not just when things were going the way I want them to go, but during hard seasons as well. I so badly wanted to be consistent. But it seemed as if consistency never wanted me.

Out of all the thirty-day challenges I started, I never completed one. Every time I began a "read the Bible in a year" plan, I never kept up. The only thing consistent about me was failure. I would always give up on day four or five and feel paralyzed by shame.

One day, I decided I'd had enough. I didn't want to be led by my emotions anymore. I didn't want to be defined by my circumstances any longer. I didn't want to be lukewarm.

But somehow, I couldn't break the cycle.

On my good days, when I'd start my day with quiet time and a worship song, I felt like I was rocking my Christian identity like a pro. But on my less-than-good days? When a snarky remark would slip out of my mouth to my husband? I would crumble and literally doubt if I was saved in the first place.

Are you lukewarm like I was? Here's a list of lukewarm traits that described me back in the day:

Lukewarm Christians tend to choose what is popular rather than what's right. They care more about what people think than what God thinks.

Lukewarm Christians do not really want to stop sinning. They want only to be saved from the penalty of their sins.

Lukewarm Christians do not believe that new life in Christ is better than their old sinful life.

Lukewarm Christians say they love Jesus and that Jesus is a part of their lives. But only a part. They give Him a portion of their time, their money, and their thoughts, but they don't want Him to control their lives.

Lukewarm Christians love God, but they do not love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. They reassure themselves by thinking total devotion is not possible for the average person—it's only possible for radicals.

If you relate to anything on this list, you may in fact be lukewarm. But don't hang your head in despair just yet. You're in good hands—His hands. God's got you. If you can recognize your spiritual state as less than ideal, God is proud of you. If you have the desire to be better, God is proud of you. If you are in a place of desperation for His presence, God is proud of you.

INTRODUCTION

You're in a perfect place for God to show off just how powerful He really is.

The apostle Paul warned the church against spiritual apathy. In Romans 12:11, he wrote, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord." Jesus echoed this sentiment in Revelation 3:15-16, 19: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. . . . As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent" (NKJV).

My accompanying book, *Ignited*, and this workbook study are deeply personal to me. I didn't write them as guides on how to make us feel better about ourselves, but on how to get water into our parched souls. They are guides to a whole new way of life. There comes a time when conviction just isn't enough. It's about time we had a heart change.

And I'm so glad you're here to study with me.

Each time you finish reading a chapter from *Ignited*, you can open this workbook and go through the section that corresponds to that chapter. My deepest desire is that the Word of God will come alive to you and that you will learn how to have an ignited faith for God—but most importantly, how to *stay* ignited for God.

As you journey through this workbook, recognize that the tension you may begin to feel between your flesh and spirit is actually a good thing. God is bringing you into a new season. As you get further outside your comfort zone, just remember that God is at work in your life.

You will be investing time in this workbook, so know that long-term relationships are all about endurance. The more you invest, the

closer you get to a person. That's how you must treat your relationship with the Lord, which is the most important relationship you will ever invest in. Most things that give us immediate gratification are short-lived and temporary. A relationship with the Father is much more valuable than anything else on this earth.

God's will for us is to enter into an everlasting relationship with Him, and that requires a level of commitment that, unfortunately, a lot of people are not willing to make. I don't know about you, but I'm excited about this intimate relationship with Jesus. I am excited about what God is doing in my life. And I'm on the edge of my seat just thinking about what He is going to do in your life too. As true believers, we need to learn to live with a kind of passion for God that doesn't waver from season to season. We can't be passionate about God only when things are going right. I mean, if you think about it—God made four seasons, and only *one* of them is spring.

Look . . . I know that all of us have a lot of responsibilities. We have full-time jobs, kids, classes, and a plethora of other commitments in our lives. And for some reason, God is usually at the bottom of our priority list. We say, "Once I get done with this homework, I'm going to read the Bible." That quickly turns into "After I make dinner, I'll finally have time." The excuses continue until finally the day is over and we're too tired to focus on the words on the page or to put together a coherent-enough sentence to pray. We get so worried that putting something off will make us fall behind. We create these master to-do lists that most of the time we cannot realistically complete, and we rush around trying to finish every task. Then we're stressed, overwhelmed, and tired because we're trying to do too much. But here's the thing . . . the Bible says to put God first, and everything else will fall into place. Can you imagine the peace and rest we could have if we just followed His simple instructions?

Sister, repeat this truth with me: Spending time with God is not a *threat* to our success. It's *essential* to our success.

INTRODUCTION

We need a mindset shift. And Jesus has a way of entering our hearts and doing just that. He can change our perspective. He has a way of softening us to see the world and our situations from a different point of view. Life can be so much better when we allow our Father to work within us and through us.

As Christians, we need God to show us how we can keep hold of our joy throughout anything we face on this side of heaven. When we lose our joy, we should take note. We don't want to skim over what Paul said in Philippians 3:1: "Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord" (ESV). Paul reminded the believers to rejoice no matter *what*. Joy is one of the vital gauges on the dashboard of the Christian life. We need to pay attention to the amount of joy we experience in our walk with God. Here's why: When I get up from the table after breakfast on Christmas morning—overnight French toast, a tradition in the Parsons household—the last thing I want is more food. You couldn't tempt me with another bite. In the same way, it's hard for Satan to tempt a joyful believer with the empty pleasures of this world. A joyful believer is already more than satisfied in Christ. What more could she possibly want?

Now, it is possible to be a spiritually apathetic person. The word *apathy* means "a state of indifference, or the suppression of emotions." I'm sure you've met some apathetic people before. Maybe you've been like this in a few seasons as well: you just don't have any enthusiasm, joy, or passion.

If you are unclear how to change your apathetic ways to a deep, ignited faith, don't worry—there is an abundance of hope for you. James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him" (ESV).

Paul's instruction of Timothy is a good example for us. He desired for Timothy to follow Jesus purposefully and passionately. On top of teaching Timothy and giving him an example to follow, Paul also

prayed for him continually. In Paul's letters to Timothy, this verse specifically stands out to me: "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6, ESV).

Timothy already had his salvation and his spiritual gifts, but that did not mean he could sit back and relax. Timothy needed to fan into flame the gift God had given him. It would require tending and effort to keep his zeal for God alive.

So lean in with me. Let's see what Jesus wants to say to us.

While you are saved by faith, the Christian walk requires you to pick up your cross and follow Jesus! Don't settle for a lukewarm faith. The reflection questions, prayers, and readings in this workbook will encourage and challenge you to pursue a deep, passionate faith in Jesus. Once you've ignited this kind of faith, I know you will see a change in your life. God is going to reveal Himself to you like never before.

Let's get started!



A Genuine Connection

So that means an ordinary life may actually be the extraordinary life we so desperately want God to call us to. Maybe when God tells us to go live radical lives, He really just means read our Bibles daily, love our neighbors well, and share the Good News with others.

Ignited, CHAPTER 1, PAGE 22

**READ THE INTRODUCTION
AND CHAPTER 1 OF *IGNITED*.**

The daily grind of living in this fallen world has a way of dulling our spiritual senses. Rather than seeking a closer relationship with Christ, many believers try to find joy and contentment in the things of this world. As a result, we go from day to day, week to week, deprived of the joy and fulfillment that come from a genuine connection with the Lord.

Unfortunately, many people are content to have a distant relationship with God. From their perspective, Jesus is in heaven, while they are stuck on earth. They might say a prayer now and then, but they have no idea how to establish the kind of relationship they always imagined. They don't know how to go back to what their relationship with the Lord was when they first gave their life to Him. What they don't comprehend is that God has much higher expectations for their relationship with Him than a lukewarm faith. And He wants more for you as well.

If you're feeling far from the Lord, you truly don't have to stay that way. He wants to be close to you, but you must draw near to Him. The time to begin seeking Him is now. You shouldn't wait until you desperately need to hear from Him.

Although Jesus' sacrifice was the greatest act in human history, we often fail to recognize the depth of its significance. We've heard about it and we've sung about it, but have we ever wept in appreciation for it? Something is wrong if the thought of God's Son hanging on a cross doesn't continually move us. If it doesn't, what we need is a fresh encounter with God. A fresh encounter with Him reawakens our love and gratitude for the immensity of His sacrifice when familiarity has made our hearts grow cold.

RETURN AND REPENT

Consider the state of your relationship with Christ right now. What three adjectives would you use to describe it?

Are these the same adjectives that you want to use to describe your relationship with Christ? If not, what needs to change?

A GENUINE CONNECTION

Recall the last time you were passionate and on fire for Jesus. When was it, and when did your passion fade?

Let's take a look at Isaiah 6:1-8. According to this passage of Scripture, what does a fresh encounter with God look like?

What stands out to me in Isaiah 6 is the need to return and repent. When that happens, it will bring us back into a love relationship with God, which is what He created us for from the very beginning. But sin entered the picture and separated us from God. It is sin that still separates us from that intimate relationship with Him, and it's sin that keeps us from that fresh encounter.

So how does God get us to return and repent? How does He let us know when we've strayed away from that love relationship with Him? He does this through His Word. That's why it's so important to stay in your Bible.

Describe how often you spend time in the Bible below. What does reading the Word look like in your life right now?

HOW TO BE IGNITED

We have to redefine our expectations when it comes to being passionate for God. Many people picture that as traveling the world, evangelizing to thousands, or leading worship onstage. But in reality, that's not at all what being ignited for God means. God's idea of being ignited is living with abandon. It looks like waking up every day, reading your Bible regardless of what you're feeling, being filled up with the Holy Spirit, and relying on Him every minute. An extraordinary life in God's eyes is an ordinary one filled with love for Christ and love for others.

It never ceases to amaze me that God used so many ordinary people in the Bible. From cover to cover, the Bible features the stories of ordinary men and women who were flawed, weak, and lowly. But they were able to meet the needs of others, were instruments of His peace, and shared His Good News. God uses ordinary people in the most extraordinary ways!

Read through Galatians 5:22-23. What qualities please God's heart the most?

Notice that the fruit of the Spirit doesn't include boldness, self-reliance, fortitude, valor, or feeling on fire for God.

Which fruit of the Spirit do you need to focus on the most in this current season of your life?

What does John 15:1-7 say about being able to produce this good fruit? What is the only way to do so?

Self-control is one of the most important fruits of the Spirit when it comes to maintaining an ignited faith in Christ. We don't experience an intense emotional connection with Him all the time, but that's not what matters.

When a person first realizes that Jesus is God and that He paid the punishment for sin by dying on the Cross, it is a very overwhelming moment.

But this emotional experience is not all there is to Christianity.

Emotions might feel like the wind—gentle and comforting at times, dangerous at others, and seemingly beyond our control. But we don't have to be helpless slaves to our feelings. Understanding why God provided them and how they function can help us connect with them in a healthy way rather than be governed by them.

Today's churches have become so reliant on the emotional pull of preaching, worship, and faith that it's starting to backfire. Emotions are fleeting. You may feel a certain way one day and the complete opposite the next. There's nothing wrong with having feelings, but using them to fuel everything in your life—especially your faith—is a recipe for disaster.

Surrender the idol of your emotions right now.

THE IGNITED WORKBOOK

Write a prayer, taking the power your emotions have over you and laying them at the cross.

Slowly write down 2 Peter 1:5-8 (NASB), and circle what stands out to you.

A GENUINE CONNECTION

Verses 1:5-7 list several qualities for Christ followers to add to their faith. Write the progression below.

in _____ supply _____

in _____, (supply) _____

in _____, (supply) _____

in _____, (supply) _____

in _____, (supply) _____

in _____, (supply) _____

in _____, (supply) _____.

The quality of self-control is important and written about frequently in the Bible because our feelings cannot always be trusted.

The Bible is quick to tell us that our feelings (or hearts, more accurately) can't be our only guide. *Read the following passages.*

Proverbs 3:5

Proverbs 28:26

Jeremiah 17:9

While our emotions and intuition are God-given, and they do serve a purpose in our lives, it is easy to be led astray by them. *How can we detect when our emotions are taking too much precedence over our decision-making?*

In the end, God and His Word should inform our feelings, not the other way around.

When you are tempted to listen to your feelings or your feelings are overwhelming you, stop and look to God's Word. Compare what you are feeling to what He says.

Describe the role that your feelings/emotions usually play in your day-to-day relationships.

Describe the role that your feelings/emotions usually play in your relationship with God.

How would you describe what it means to be ignited for God?

VERSE MEMORIZATION

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name”
(John 1:12, NKJV).

A GENUINE CONNECTION

But as many as _____ Him, to them He gave the right to become _____ of God, to those who believe in His name.

But as _____ as received Him, to them He gave the _____ to become children of God, to those who believe in His _____.

_____ as many as received Him, to them He _____ the right to become children of God, to those who _____ in His name.

Now write the verse down a few times on your own.

■ Check the box when you've memorized the verse.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord,

Please help me in cultivating my commitment to You. I want You to be my life's primary focus. I long to gaze upon Your magnificence and live in Your house for the rest of my days. Even in busy and difficult times, let seeking Your heart be my only goal. Please help me to be drawn to Your majesty and beauty. Help me to discover what Your will is. I want to be a child who yearns for You on a daily basis.

Teach me how to align my heart with Yours. I recommit myself as a child after Your heart. I choose today to seek Your face.

In Jesus' name, amen.

One thing I ask of the LORD,

this is what I seek:

that I may dwell in the house of the LORD

all the days of my life,

to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD

and to seek him in his temple.

For in the day of trouble

he will keep me safe in his dwelling;

he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle

and set me high upon a rock. . . .

I am still confident of this:

I will see the goodness of the LORD

in the land of the living.

Wait for the LORD;

be strong and take heart

and wait for the LORD.

PSALM 27:4-5, 13-14