***August 12, 2018***

***Today’s Lesson: What If?***

 **From Mike:**

What in the world happened? Have you ever asked yourself that question after realizing that you’d become apathetic about your walk with God, cynical about His church, or simply realizing you’ve begun to distance yourself from folks you use to long to be with every time there was an opportunity to meet? A spiritual low doesn’t usually happen in one swift move. It’s usually a drifting away. A slow but gradual disconnecting that happens over time and may never include a conscious decision to change, but the change happens. There is no excitement about serving others, no thrill of anticipation about togetherness opportunities coming up, and saddest of all, the conversations with God get less and less, and gradually stop all together. Rather than look at your heart and your relationship with God, you simply blame others and rationalize that your church family pulled away from you—they don’t care and they don’t listen—and they...well, it really isn’t about THEY. It’s about ME!

 It’s not a twentieth century problem. It’s a struggle that the very first followers of Jesus had to confront. How do you keep the flame of the spirit burning in your heart? It’s got to be about more than external thrills and excitement! It has to be about an honest desire to grow a loving relationship with God and Jesus! Maybe that is why Paul’s language in 1 Thessalonians is so—almost over-the-top—with his call to “Be joyful ALWAYS, pray CONTINUALLY, give thanks in ALL circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” But then he said something truly wild, “DO NOT PUT OUT THE SPIRIT’S FIRE.”

 Back at the beginning of this article I called it a drift, but maybe I should have called it a drip! Is something dripping on the Spirit’s fire in your life today? What is it that’s putting out that flame—or maybe already put it out?

 This morning we are looking at the first Spirit quencher in the bucket of things that put out the Spirit’s flame in our heart.