

1 A World on FIRE

- How to live in a world that is in chaos . . .

2 Scripture Text

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6 The Hunger Games

- The Hunger Games trilogy written by Suzanne Collins has become a huge hit with teens and young adults.
- The series has sold over 50 copies and has surpassed Harry Potter as the bestselling series, ever, on Amazon.com
- Not only this, but the first movie adaptation starring Academy Award winner Jennifer Lawrence has become a huge hit as well—grossing over 1 billion dollars.

7 Hunger Games – Sequel

- And now, the second film, entitled The Hunger Games: Catching Fire, is planned to be released next month.
- And according to one critic, there's no reason to believe that this film will do anything other than continue the trend of drawing in audiences, raking in cash and being a huge success as well.
- It is estimated that only 38 people in the United States haven't heard about this series.

8 The Plot

- “Hunger Games” is set in North America (now called Panem) in a dystopian future where the elite few live in The Capitol, a prosperous and advanced metropolitan area that holds power over a majority of the population, which is rural, poor, starving, and broken into 12 separate districts.
- Once upon a time there were 13 districts but after a rebellion against The Capitol, the 13th was destroyed and ever since, as ongoing punishment, one boy and one girl (between the ages of 12 and 18) from each district are annually chosen by lottery to participate in the Hunger Games—a televised fight to death where the winner is the sole survivor.

9 Plot Interpreted . . .

- The Hunger Games, though, are really just an excuse to entertain the grotesque elite and nothing more than Reality TV taken to the next level.
- Everything is televised, contestants are turned into celebrities, sponsors are solicited, and then the unlucky 24 are dropped into an arena and manipulated by The Capitol into killing one another.

- In Panem, the idea of “equality” has finally been achieved. There’s “them” and then there’s “us.”
- “They” are our know-betters, our elite overlords and media celebrities, living in wealthy decadence and devoted only to pleasure.
- “We,” on the other hand, are all equally poor, desperate, and starving.

10 The Plot

- In the first movie, the heroine, Katniss Everdeen, has become the hope of a demoralized people after winning the country’s prized “Hunger Games.”
- In the second installment, Katniss learns that she’s not only won the hearts of her fellow citizens but has inspired a national attitude of revolt against the elite powers of oppression.
- Katniss now finds that her country is on the verge of a fiery revolt ignited by the frustrations of an oppressed people scraping against the anger of an arrogant and evil government.

11 The World on Fire!

- Think for a moment about our Scripture Text.
- We have Jesus warning his disciples of a time to come when the world would catch fire with wars and upheaval, a time when people would be quick to say, “This is it! This must be the end!”
- Jesus paints a vivid picture of a time when creation is revolting through natural disasters, humans are terrorizing each other and even belief in God is under attack.
- Such “days will come,” says Jesus. And indeed they have.

12 Looking Forward . . .

- Jesus’ words were looking forward to two things.
- Most immediate was the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D.—an event so earth-shattering for the first-century Jew that indeed it would seem as though the end had come.

13 Looking Forward . . .

- But also in Jesus’ mind was the era we find ourselves in today.
 - It’s an age where, although we belong to God, we find ourselves in a world that’s groaning as it awaits the end, the return of Jesus.

- We wait amid hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, embassy raids in Benghazi, school shootings in suburbs and bombs at the Boston Marathon.
- Our Federal government is so polarized with an “us” against “them” mentality that some compare it to pre Civil War rhetoric.
- Moreover, it seems that the entire Middle East is so close to boil that with just a spark, the whole region, if not the world, could easily explode.

14 World on Fire

- We find ourselves in a world where we have much in common, at times, with Katniss Everdeen in the Hunger Games.
- So then, how are we, as followers of Christ, to navigate such a volatile landscape?
- And, while it may come as a surprise to some, Jesus’ instructions say nothing about living in a constant state of fear or building a bunker in the backyard.
- Jesus’ approach is more about dealing with our heart and mind than digging holes and stockpiling nonperishables.

15 Live with Readiness

- First, Jesus—by outlining in broad strokes what will happen—is telling his people to live with readiness and awareness.
- Denial is a common coping mechanism in us humans.
- It’s common to scan the headlines as you check the news on your phone each morning and think, “Nope -- that’s not going to happen here.”

16 Live with Readiness

- Followers of Jesus are to realize that it -- the tragedy, the evil, the persecution -- can happen here, where we are.
- Again, Jesus is not calling us to live in a state of paranoia, fear or hyper-vigilance.
- He’s simply asking his people to be honest; to realize that this world is groaning and churning under the weight of sin and despair, and that such groans will only get louder until Christ returns to quiet them.
- If we do so, we won’t be surprised or have the rug pulled out from under our faith when we feel the effect of them.

17 Live with Readiness

- Jesus is not, with these words, giving us permission to spend our days wringing our hands and wondering when the next apocalyptic shoe will drop.
- If anything, he’s telling us the opposite.
 - In verse 14, he says, “Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer” when trouble arrives.

- Instead, live with your eyes wide open but your heart at peace—confident that God will give you what you need to tackle the troubles of a deteriorating world when it comes knocking at your door.

18 Look for Opportunities

- Second, the Hunger Games movie -- and Jesus -- reminds us that adversity often creates a platform, a platform upon which some will emerge and stand as a force for good.
- Part of the attraction of The Hunger Games is that its heroine was so unlikely as in most people's eyes she was a heavy underdog.
- Katniss transforms from an awkward girl with a knack for hunting into a woman of incredible skill and character who everyone puts their hope in.

19 Look for Opportunities

- Jesus challenges us to remember that our struggles in this broken world are platforms.
- This will result in your being witnesses to them. (Luke 21:13 NIV).
- We can better navigate a world that's on fire when we realize that each time we're touched by its flames we have an opportunity to show those without hope that despite our circumstances there is always a reason to hope.
- In other words, there is a mission and a purpose behind every evil we experience in this world.

20 Look for Opportunities

- Just as Katniss had an audience that was inspired by her uncharacteristic creativity, compassion and skill as she fought for her survival,
- . . . there in our own world . . .
- a child, an unbelieving friend, a coworker who is watching, and potentially benefiting from, the faith-filled, God-glorifying way in which we fight our battles.

21 Focus on the Ending

- Finally, Jesus urges us to live with a constant focus on how this story will end.
- He calls us to live with our hearts and minds anchored in the fact that in the end, no matter what happens, we will be okay.
- Sure, the storyline might get scary, but when the last page turns his people win the battle.
- Jesus promises that, "not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives" (Luke 21:18-19).

22 Assurance of Victory

- What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?
- What would you try if you knew for a fact that it would turn out just fine?

- How would you walk through life if you had assurance, a deep, abiding assurance, that when all's said and done you'll be safe and satisfied?
- Sure, the world around us is insane, but in the middle of it all, Jesus is inviting us to ask this question: "How should you live in light of the fact that we are guaranteed survival?"

23 World on Fire

- One way to stay sane in a world that is on fire is to keep flipping back to the "end of the book!"
- Focus on God's promises in the Word and God's proof in our history, such as the empty tomb, in order to slow your heart rate and recalibrate your mind when you find yourself in a truly intense chapter, or a really crazy scene in your life.
- If you go see the movie and get all worked up as Katniss is fighting for her life, just remember this: she lives in the end. And so will we.

24 God is in Control

- Sure, the world is on fire.
- But through it all God is utilizing and developing us, his people.
- Let us be satisfied with that and let us clamor for the final installment, upon Christ's return.
- No, not because we are readers held in suspense, but because we are blessed to know the great and wonderful things that are in store.

25 Final Word & Prayer

- May we be ready and aware, but not be obsessed and afraid.
- May we make the most of our platform when our time of trouble comes.
- And may we keep our hearts tied to the promises of tomorrow so that we are not overwhelmed with the temporary troubles of today.
- That's how we live when the world catches fire.
- Amen!

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