

Fires on the Prairies

On the prairies of the Midwest, a grass fire can be a good thing. “To ask whether a prairie needs a fire is to wonder whether it needs water,” said writer Cindy Schreuder in an article in the *Chicago Tribune*.



“Burns stimulate the growth of grasses and forbs, return nutrients to the soil, expose seed beds to the sun, and suppress invading trees and shrubs,” she said.

During the 1960s, as people in the prairie restoration movement saw the benefits of a regular prairie fire, the practice of intentionally setting such fires became widespread. Schreuder describes one such fire:

Pushed forward by the wind, the flames raced across the prairie. Thick, dead grass stalks wavered for just a moment before buckling and falling into flames.

Nineteenth-century settlers spoke of the violence of the burns, their noise, heat, power and attraction. They are reactions modern-day scientists share. “A prairie burning is something like a great thunderstorm – you experience the raw power of nature,” said Stephen Packard, science director for the Nature Conservancy in Illinois. “After you’ve burned it off, nothing is left. It’s so pure. Every leaf that emerges is new and shiny and wet. Every flower petal is perfect. It reminds you of being young.”

In the same way, God’s consuming fire – His power, His grace, His mercy – brings new life when we willingly let Him burn the fields of our hearts. That happens when, by repentance of our sins and by faith in the Christ of Christmas, we invite the Lord into our lives.

There is no better way to celebrate this holiday than to establish that relationship.

– Beecher Hunter