

1. We are continuing our series this morning called "Fan the Flame/Feed the Fire."
2. If you will turn with me to the New Testament book of 2 Timothy chapter 1. That has been our home base if you will for these messages.
3. A man by the name of Paul is writing to his spiritual son Timothy to encourage him.
4. And a part of that encouragement is reminding him of this sincere faith that lives inside him. A faith that has adopted as his own from his grandmother and mother.
5. Then in chapter 1 verse 6, Paul tells young Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God that is in him.
6. We have said all along that a part of what Paul is referring to is the spiritual intensity or vibrancy of Timothy's faith.
7. Paul's desire is that his faith be stirred up to burn hot. To burn passionately for the Lord.
8. And it wasn't a rebuke that the flame had kind of died down and needed to be fanned, because Paul understood that in life stuff happens.
9. Difficulties happen. Hardships happen. Sickness happens. Disappointments happen. Misunderstandings happen.
10. Paul just wants to encourage him that in the midst of all those things, his faith can continue to burn intensely, just as long as Timothy will cooperate with that which God has placed in him.
11. Then last week I spent a whole message reminding us that **we are not the flame, and we are not the fuel.**
12. We are called a lot of things in the bible as believers, but fire is not one of them. Fire is exclusively reserved as a description of who God is and what God is like.
13. So, we are not the fire. We are not the focus.
14. And neither are we the fuel. A vibrant, passionate, relationship with Jesus Christ is not fueled by our effort.

15. Thought we are to cooperate with God, though we are to be active in our relationship with Him, passionate Christianity is not something that we muster up from down inside of us somewhere.
16. The source of that drive and passion is the Lord.
17. I closed last week with the illustration of the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 15.
18. As was the custom when a covenant was instituted, Abraham cuts several animals in half, and arranges them opposite one another.
19. The custom was that both parties would pass between the animals. And the meaning was this. May what I have be cut in two and destroyed if I don't keep my word and honor this covenant.
20. But in this case, only the smoking, burning fire pot, which represented God himself passed between the animals.
21. God was saying to Abraham. Son, what I have promised you, you can't make happen.
22. You are not going to pass between the halves of the animals because you haven't promised anything, and it is not within your ability to bring it to pass.
23. Only I am able to do that.
24. You see, passionate Christianity is not based on what we do, though we are to do and cooperate. Passionate Christianity is based on what God and only God has done and will do.
25. **He is the flame and He is the fuel.**
26. And when we miss that, we enter into a life of misery, rather than a life of Joy.
27. In preparation for this series of messages, I must confess that I questioned why God would have me spend a whole week; an entire message on something that I know we already know.
28. We are not the flame or fuel; God is the flame or fuel.
29. And as I went along it became clear why that was so important.
30. When we mistakenly believe we are the flame or the fuel, it severely hinders our ability to understand and cooperate with God in our spiritual life and our spiritual walk.

31. Again, it is not what we do that drives our passion and intensity, but what we do and how we cooperate matters.
32. Because our cooperation is an act of obedience to what the Lord is doing.

**TEXT:** **2 Timothy 1:6** 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.

**TITLE:** **Focus**

**INTRO:**

1. In this passage, Timothy's cooperation was to fan into flame. And in the weeks to come we will uncover what that cooperation looks like and how it is carried out. And that surely is important.
2. But if we misunderstand that God is the flame and the fuel, and mistakenly believe that somehow, we, or what we do, is the flame and fuel, then it greatly hinders our ability to do several things.
3. It hinders our ability to...
  - See God.
  - Understand God.
  - Obey God.
4. And the inability to see God, understand God, and obey God brings misery rather than joy.
5. Keep in mind. All throughout these messages. We are not talking about backsliding, or sinning necessarily, or being cut off from God.
6. We are not talking about spiraling back down to a place of separation from the Lord.
7. We are talking about the inability to experience the full, wonderful, powerful life God has intended for us.
8. Let's go back to the life of Abraham for just a moment, and the covenant God made with him.
9. All of the promises God had made Abraham could only be carried through the birth of a son.
10. Without the birth of a son there could not be fulfillment of the promise.

11. And I believe without a doubt, that the significance of only God passing between the halves of the animals was not lost on Abraham.
12. He understood fairly clearly what that meant.
13. But year, after year, after decade of no son. Abraham and Sarah fell into the temptation that all of us are susceptible to. Well, God isn't making it happen, so maybe I need to make it happen.
14. God isn't doing anything, so maybe it us up to me to do something.
15. Remember. We are to cooperate with what God is doing. But at the end of the day it is not our doing that brings about hope and life and passion. It is only what God has done.
16. But in the very next chapter of the book of Genesis (16). We see Sarah and Abraham trying to make happen what only God can make happen.
17. Sarah says to Abraham. I don't have any children. In fact, it must be God who is keeping me from having children.
18. So here is my servant girl. I want you to have a child with her, and I will build a family through her.
19. Not, here is my servant girl, let's see if God will build a family through her. Instead it was here is the servant girl. I will build a family through her.
20. And the result of them trying to do what only God was capable of doing is that the relationship between the three of them was strained for the rest of their lives.
21. Abraham did have a son. But he also had a whole lot of misery because of how they went about having that son.
22. So, how did Abraham drift from, I know only God can do this to, I think I will try and do this? The same way all of us do.
23. When we lose sight of the fact that God is the fire and the fuel.
24. When we lose sight of the fact that God and only God is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, all understanding, and all over the place. It hinders or ability to see God, understand God, and obey God.
25. Our cooperation is only powerful and meaningful if we keep Jesus in his proper place as Lord of our lives.

26. But if we begin to mistakenly think that we are the fire or the fuel, we can set ourselves, or others, or things up in our lives as idols that hinder our ability to relate to God in a way that brings hope.
27. Let me illustrate that with a passage from the New Testament, and then a passage from the Old Testament.
28. The notes are on our website. Get them.

## Confusion

1. In Mark chapter 4, Jesus tells a crowd of people the parable of the sower.
2. The farmer sows seed, which represents the word of God. But some of that seed or word lands on the hard path and is easily lost. Some of the seed lands among rocks and doesn't take root. Some of the seed lands among thorns that choke out the life.
3. But some of the seed lands on good soil or good hearts that hear it, accept it, and the result is that their lives are fruitful.
4. Rather than living a fruitless life, they live a fruitful life.
5. So, the crowd goes away, and the disciples asked Jesus to explain the parables to them.
6. And this was Jesus response. **Mark 4:11-13** He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables **12** so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" **13** Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?"
7. Let me rephrase what Jesus said. The secrets of the kingdom have been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables.
8. And the result is that they see, but they never comprehend.
9. They hear, but they never understand.
10. For years I struggled with why in the world Jesus would speak in a way that was confusing to people, through parables, when the whole purpose of his coming to earth was to seek and save the lost.
11. Wouldn't speaking in parables go against mission? And I came to realize that the answer is no. The parables were in no way a hinderance to that mission.

12. When Jesus said in verse 11 that the secret of the kingdom of God had been given to the disciples, but to those on the outside everything is said in parables; he was not stating his desire, or how he wanted things to be.
13. Jesus was not identifying his method of conveying truth and life.
14. What Jesus was doing was explaining how things were. He was explaining the reality of the day they were living in.
15. The people saw but didn't comprehend, and they heard but didn't understand, not because that was the way Jesus wanted it. Rather because those were the results that occurred in their lives as a result of their not placing the right value in who God was.
16. Many of the people of Jesus day. People who were trying to be followers of God, placed more value on what they did. (kept the traditions, prayed a certain way a certain number of times a day. Said a certain thing or wore a certain thing) over the years they had shifted from a focus on who God was and what God did to who they were and what they did.
17. In fact. About 700 years before, God had predicted through a prophet by the name of Isaiah that this would occur.
18. Jesus actually quoted Isaiah in his response to the disciples.
19. This is what God told Isaiah to say in Isaiah 6:9 He said, "Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving."
20. Again, this was not God saying, tell the people this is how I want things to be. Rather prophecy to them that this is how things will be.
21. And that prophecy came true.
22. In the case of the children of Israel, they had substituted a worship of God for a worship of idols.
23. They had substituted a trust in God and his ability, for trust in some piece of wood or stone that they made with their own hands.
24. Do I need to point out that still today, some 2,700 years later, that people still tend to worship and idolize their stuff? What they can make or do or achieve? I think you get the point.
25. But notice something about the life of the Prophet Isaiah.

26. Isaiah's calling to be a prophet for God followed a life changing experience. And we see the beginning of that life changing experience in Isaiah 6:1.

### Conclusion:

1. Isaiah 6:1-5 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."
2. What we find is that before this experience, Isaiah wasn't seeing or understanding very clearly either.
3. I am not saying he was a terrible, unrepentant sinner who was as far away from God as you can be.
4. No. Isaiah loved God very much. But he comes to realize that he himself has not been seeing or understanding very clearly.
5. He hasn't really seen or understood the greatness of God. Nor has he seen or understood the depth of his need for this great God.
6. But at this experience, his eyes are opened, and he becomes aware of several things.
  - the God I serve is amazing.
  - Like none other. He is Holy.
  - He is a king. He has a throne, and his train, his beauty fills the temple.
  - Angels attend him and praise him. And at the sound of their voices, things happen.
7. But that wasn't all he saw.
8. When he got a good glimpse of God, he also began to get a picture of who he was in comparison to God.
9. In comparison to God he saw himself as unclean. The worst of the worst in the presence of the best of the best. And it was sobering to him.

10. But what is so wonderful about this experience in Isaiah's life was that it didn't end with, God is good, and I am bad.
11. God is holy and I am sinful. God is great and I am worthless.
12. The result of his eyes being opened and his seeing clearly was that he was touched. He was changed. He was forgiven.
13. Isaiah 6:6-7 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."
14. The great joy of putting God in the proper place in our lives. Making him and allowing him to be Lord. To call the shots. To give us direction.
15. The great joy of living as if he is the fire and he is the fuel and we are just cooperating with who God is that our lives are changed for the better.
16. When we allow God to be Lord. We see more clearly. We understand more clearly. And as a result, we are better able to obey.
17. Which in turn serves to ignite a passion in our relationship Him.
18. As we close today, I again am asking you to do something with this message.
19. If you haven't yet. Make Him Lord of your life.
20. Many of you already have. Re-affirm that he is Lord of your life.
21. Accept that in comparison to Him, I am a sinner in need of a savior.
22. Accept the forgiveness. Accept His offer to change you.
23. Accept his offer to cleanse you of your sins.
24. Accept his offer to lift the load of guilt off your life.
25. Salvation call.
26. Believers, set free by the power of God.