

1. This morning we continue with our series, “Fan the Flame/Feed the fire.”
2. The basis for this series of messages is found in the second letter, written by Paul to his spiritual son Timothy. Let’s look at it together.
3. **2 Timothy 1:5-7** I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. **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. **7** For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.
4. The backdrop for this letter is that Paul is in prison, and as a result he and Timothy are separated, which is naturally causing some discouragement.
5. So, Paul reminds Timothy of the sincere faith that he possesses, and encourages him to fan into flame the gift of God.
6. One aspect of what Paul is referring to is the spiritual intensity, or vibrancy of Timothy’s faith.
7. And so, that begs the question. How can our faith be alive and vibrant and intense when we are going through hardships, or disappointments or difficulties? The answer is, it only can be as we cooperate with what the Holy Spirit is doing in our life.
8. Spiritual vibrancy or passion doesn’t occur naturally. It is something that has to be tended to.
9. What is natural is that as we live life we are drained and sapped of vibrancy and intensity.
10. And in this case, Paul uses the illustration of a flame. He says, fan into flame Timothy this gift of God inside you.
11. We spent an entire week talking about the fact that we are not the flame, neither are we the fuel.
12. Meaning, spiritual vibrancy is not something that we muster up on the inside of ourselves. It is more than just determination and will.
13. **Spiritual passion and vibrancy is a result of our cooperation with who God is, and what God desires to do in our lives.** (repeat)

14. And the result of our confusion about the fact that God is the fire and fuel and we are not is that it hinders our ability to...
- See God.
 - Understand God.
 - Obey God.
15. Last week we jumped back to the book of Isaiah chapter 6 and we saw in Isaiah's life the importance of viewing life through the right lens.
16. **Isaiah 6:1** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord
17. The significance of that statement is too good to miss.
18. For 39 years, the lens through which Isaiah viewed God, himself, and the world around him was a great, Godly king by the name of Uzziah.
19. I used the illustration of the lenses in a pair of glasses. If the lens of our eyes is not accurate, then everything we see around us is distorted. It can't be seen clearly.
20. So, it is necessary to get the right kind of lenses, so that what we see out there, registers properly in our mind. What is the spiritual application?
21. In every aspect of our life, it is imperative that we believe that the only perfect lens through which to view the world around us, as well as ourselves is God himself.
22. If we try and view the world, and ourselves through any other lens than God, what happens is that rather than fanning the flame or the vibrancy or the intensity of our spiritual life, we instead fan and stir up things like doubt, worry, stress, fear, misunderstanding, heartache & headache.
23. So. What I'd like to do this week is move in the next phase of Paul's encouragement to fan into flame the gift of God.

TEXT: **2 Timothy 1:6** For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you

TITLE: How to fan the flame.

1. What does our cooperation with who God is and what God desires to do in our life look like?
2. More importantly, what are the practical things we can and should engage in every single day so that our faith and our fire doesn't burn out?
3. What are the practical things we can and should engage in every single day so that our faith instead is fed and as a result is healthy?
4. I am only going to cover one activity this morning. And before I tell you what it is, I implore you to not shrug it off just because it is common and is absolutely nothing new.
5. I ask you to not zone out on me until we've had a chance to look at this truth in detail.
6. The first activity that we can and should engage in every day that will result in the fanning of the flame of our spiritual life is to...

Read God's Word, the Bible.

1. I would like to declare from this point forward that this is a guilt free zone.
2. The purpose of this message is not to make you feel guilty if you are not digesting a portion of God's word every day.
3. The purpose of this message is not to insinuate that you are a bad Christian if you don't read the Word enough.
4. The purpose of this message is to provide you with the right tool to allow positive, life giving change an opportunity to happen in your life every single day.
5. We want to feed the work that God is up to in our lives the proper fuel so that God can complete that work in us each and every day.
6. Again, that is absolutely nothing new to most of us.
7. Here are a few truths about reading God's word on a daily basis that I believe most, if not all believers in Jesus get.
8. Reading God's word is something we should do because it is healthy for us. It helps us grow spiritually.

9. Reading God's word every day is not as time consuming as it might seem.
10. I have for years been an advocate of a daily bible reading plan that by following, allows you to read through the entire bible once each year.
11. In fact, try most of those plans out, and what you will discover is that in as little as 15 minutes each day, you can read through the entire bible in a year.
12. So, we all know we should read God's word.
13. We also know that reading God's word every day is not a monumental task. Surely, we can cut 15 minutes of something, somewhere so as to make time for this flame fanning activity.
14. And yet, here is another truth. **For many believers, spending time reading God's word every day is a challenge and struggle.**
15. Not because they don't want to. And not because there isn't time. More often than not, the reason I hear for why it is such a struggle to read God's word is this.
16. The bible is hard to understand. Sometimes. Many times. It just doesn't make sense.
17. Can we take just a moment for honesty? Everyone be honest with the people around you.
18. How many by a show of hands have ever thought or said out loud, the bible is sometimes hard to understand?
19. So, how can something that is hard to understand be a tool for fanning the flame of intensity in my spiritual walk?
20. Because, **the goal of reading the word is not to understand. The goal of reading the word is to know.**
21. Now, please hang on before you write me off as having lost my mind.
22. I am not trying to convince you that understanding is wrong or bad. In fact, I like very much to understand things.
23. I am not trying to convince you that as believers we should check our brain at the door, and just believe and go along with whatever. That's what we call a cult.

24. What I'm saying is this. If our goal for reading the Word is to understand the Word, more times than not we will be confused and discouraged. And the result will be that our flame dies down.
25. But if our goal for reading the Word is to know, the act of knowing will fan and feed the flame of our relationship with Jesus.
26. I don't want you to take my word for it. I want you to take God's word for it.
27. There is a theme all throughout the bible. And when you recognize that theme, you begin to see it everywhere, from the front to the back.
28. God invites us to come to Him. But he doesn't invite us to come so we will understand. He invites us to come so we will know.
29. I quoted this verse last week, and it is probably familiar to many. I'm going to read it from the KJV. Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.
30. In verse number five there is something very powerful. Trust and understanding are on opposite ends of the spectrum.
31. We are told to not lean on our own understanding, to lay it aside, and to instead trust. How do we trust? We trust not when we understand, we trust when according to verse 6 we acknowledge him.
32. Other translations and versions of the bible use the word submit, seek his will, listen for God's voice, let him lead you.
33. We trust not when we understand him, we trust when we seek to know him and surrender to his will.
34. Knowing fans the flame of faith, understanding usually kills the flame of faith.
35. When a person accepts Jesus for the very first time Jesus called that being born again. And we call that newborn believer a baby Christian.
36. Baby Christians are like balls of fire. They are excited and on fire and everybody they come into contact with knows it.
37. But baby Christians understand almost nothing about what has happened to them or the God who has done it. (pause)

38. The thing that feeds this fire inside of them is not what they understand, its what they know.
39. Listen to a new believer and you will probably hear this.
40. All I know is that I was a sinner. I was miserable and my life was going down hill fast. But then I met Jesus and everything in my life is different. I am not the same person. I know something amazing has happened in my life.
41. You ask them to explain to you what has happened, and they may not have a clue. They just know something good has happened.
42. Is it possible that one of the reasons why when we are first saved we are on fire in our faith, and the longer we serve Him the more possible it is for that flame to die down, because we have shifted from knowing God to trying to understand God?
43. Is it possible we have shifted from knowing truth, to an emphasis on understanding truth?
44. So, let's talk about those two aspects of our faith this morning.

Knowing truth, not understanding truth.

1. In the bible, God does not invite us to understand the truth, he invites us to know truth. Let's apply that to reading the bible as a means of fanning the flame of our faith.
2. One of the things the bible is called is the word of truth.
3. Jesus had this to say in **John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.**
4. Paul had this to say in **2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (KJV)**
5. Generally, we associate studying with understanding. Study so you will understand. But that is not what Paul told Timothy.
6. In the KJV is says study so you can rightly divide the word of truth. In this, or no translation can I find any evidence that what Paul means is to study so you can understand. He says, study Timothy so you can rightly divide, declare, handle, or teach the word of truth.
7. My interpretation would be, study Timothy, so you can accurately point to the truth. Know truth, not understand truth.

8. To illustrate that, in the Gospel of John, Jesus responded to a group of people who did not understand what he had said. John 8:27. And this was a part of Jesus response to them in **John 8:32** *You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*
9. Jesus made it perfectly clear that what sets us free is knowing the truth, not understanding the truth.
10. Jesus didn't even try to help them understand, instead he tried to help them know the truth.
11. **You say, well can you know the truth but not understand the truth? Absolutely.**
12. I do not understand the law of gravity, but I know it is real. One of the reasons why I don't understand the law of gravity is because of my experience as a kid.
13. Scientists tell us that the earth rotates or spins about 1,000 mph at the equator.
14. When I was a kid, we would take turns on the merry go round, and we would spin that thing as fast as we could. The faster you spun, the more likely it was that you would be thrown off.
15. So how can the earth be spinning 1,000 mph and everyone and everything not be flung off the planet? Instead everything is sucked down to earth.
16. I do not understand. But I do not have to understand to know that gravity is real. I know, If I jump off this stage, I'm going down not up.
17. I know, If I fall off a ladder, I'm not going to fall up, I'm going to fall down.
18. God invites us to know truth, not understand truth. And in the same way, God invites us to

Know Him, not understand Him.

1. In fact, we are told plainly in the bible that understanding God is basically impossible. **Isaiah 55:8-9** *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*
2. God does not think like us and he does not act like us. They are not the same. So, trying to understand him is pretty pointless.

3. Instead he invites us to know him. Psalm 46:10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
4. Not be still and understand that I am God. But to know that I am God.
5. We see an example of that in the story of Moses and the burning bush. In Exodus chapter 3, God appears to Moses in the form of a burning bush.
6. The bush is burning, but it is not being consumed. (talk about not understanding) Then, God speaks to Moses from that bush, and tells him to return to Egypt to lead his people to freedom. You talk about hard to understand.
7. And what follows is verse after verse, spilling over into the next chapter of Moses trying to understand and make sense of what God was telling him to do.
8. Moses' repeated attempts to understand actually made God mad in Exodus 4:14.
9. God did not need Moses to understand. What he needed Moses to know was that God was speaking to him, and God was commanding him to do something.

Conclusion:

1. And in reality, if most of us will be honest. That kind of rubs us the wrong way. What kind of God wants to keep us in the dark all the time?
2. My answer is that God does not want us to be in the dark all the time. The problem is we think understanding is the light that will make everything clear, when in reality it is knowing that makes things clear and brings them to the light.
3. Knowing fans the flame of faith. Understanding kills the flame of faith.
4. In the book of Matthew chapter 13 we find an extremely bizarre account of Jesus interaction with a group of people. In fact, they were the people of the town in which he grew up.
5. To set the stage. Jesus had been traveling everywhere, teaching, performing miracles, raising the dead and so on.

6. And word reaches back to the people of his town, and more specifically the people in the church he grew up in, that there are these amazing, awe inspiring things happening as a result of Jesus ministry.
7. So, Jesus comes back to town for a visit, and on the next Sunday he attends church (the synagogue) where he is invited to teach a lesson.
8. When Jesus gets done speaking, they are amazed. Now, here is what the people know.
9. They know that everywhere Jesus goes, miracles are taking place.
10. Then upon hearing him teach, they are amazed at the wisdom that flows from him. They cannot deny that something powerful is happening through the life of Jesus.
11. It would appear that revival fires are about to break out in the town of Nazareth.
12. But not so fast. In one single verse, almost so fast it would make your head spin, they went from on the verge of a revival, to being offended at Jesus and rejecting him.
13. **Matthew 13:54-55** Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. **55** "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?"
14. They knew Jesus was doing all these great things, and they witnessed his great wisdom. But what killed their faith was an attempt to understand.
15. Allow me to use my imagination. Jesus get's done teaching and everyone is in awe. And then in the back of the building someone speaks up and this is what they say.
16. "I don't understand this. Where Did Jesus get this wisdom? We know him. He is Mary and Joseph's son, and Joseph was just a lowly carpenter. And we know his brothers and sisters, and they are just ordinary people as well".
17. And in a flash, the amazement and excitement of the crowd was changed into offense. They went from being amazed, to being offended at him and by him.

18. What happened? I can find no evidence that during the transformation from amazement to offense that Jesus said or did one single thing. Nothing Jesus said or did changed the circumstances.
19. What changed their mindset was their shift from being content to know, and rather pursue the need to understand.
20. Knowing ignited their faith, and trying to understand killed their faith.
21. If we go back to this action of reading the word of God so as to fan the flame of our faith, we have to apply this truth.
22. Reading God's Word to know Him, and to know truth will ignite our faith.
23. But reading God's word to understand him and to understand truth will kill our faith. Because every day there will be something we don't understand.
24. Commit today to allowing a shift to take place in your life.
25. Shift your focus from understanding God and truth, to knowing God and truth, and see if the flame doesn't start burning hotter.
26. Prayer.
27. Do you know Jesus as savior? Salvation call.
28. Lead people in a time of commitment to know God and know truth.
29. Commitment to read the bible to know God and know truth, not understand.