

## Our Mission: Revealing a loving God by serving others.

1. We are going to continue today with our series titled "Fan the Flame/Feed the Fire."
2. Our home base for these messages is in **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.**
3. This direction from Paul to his spiritual son Timothy, had to do with the intensity of his faith or his relationship with God.
4. In other words, Paul is saying to young Timothy, I want you to flourish. I want your faith to be vibrant. I want you to be on fire (not all the time which is impossible) for the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. So, fan into flame that gift that is in you.
6. Two weeks ago, we spent an entire message on the truth that in our relationship with the Lord, we are not the flame and we are not the fuel.
7. While it is necessary for us to cooperate with who God is and what God is doing, (in this case fanning the flame) it is God who is the fire and fuel.
8. God is the heat, and the hope, and the horsepower that is necessary for us to live a victorious life.
9. We are reminded in **Titus 3:5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, (underline mine)**
10. Then last week we began to investigate why it matters so much that we not confuse the truth that God is the fuel and the fire, and we are not.
11. **When we mistakenly believe that we are the fire and the fuel, it hinders our ability to...**
  - **See God.**
  - **Understand God.**
  - **Obey God.**
12. In Mark chapter 4, Jesus told the parable of the sower. And afterward, when the crowds had gone and Jesus was alone with his disciples, they asked him.
13. Why do you use parables or stories? And Jesus responded by saying in **Mark 4:11-13 "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?"**
14. Verse 13 indicates that Jesus thinks these parables are not too difficult to understand.
15. But the disciples, as well as the others who heard the parables didn't understand. Jesus says they see but don't perceive, and they hear but they don't understand.
16. Keep in mind we clarified that Jesus was not indicating his desire, that only a select few understand him and his words.

17. Instead, he was explaining the way things were. I'm speaking these parables, these stories that are not too difficult to understand, but to some it is hidden, and to others it is clear.
18. And we see this theme in the history of the Children of Israel when about 700 years before Jesus spoke these words, a prophet by the name of Isaiah spoke them.
19. **Isaiah 6:9** He said, "Go and tell this people: "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving."
20. Again, we are reminded that this is not God telling Isaiah what his desire is for his people, rather it is a description of the condition the people were in.
21. They hear but they don't understand, they see but they never perceive.
22. Isaiah understood what it was like to hear but not understand and to see but to not perceive, because an event in his life uncovered that truth.
23. Let's look up a few verses in Isaiah chapter 6.

**TEXT:** **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."

That last verse is telling. My eyes have seen the king, the Lord almighty. When Isaiah said this, he was already a believer and a follower of God. But this event exposes that prior to this, he was not seeing as clearly as he needed to be. And when he began to see clearly, he became aware of the greatness of God, but at the same time the wretchedness of his life without God.

And the event that transpired was that Isaiah began to see God through a new lens.

**TITLE:** **The Right Lens**

**INTRO:**

1. In order for us to experience a passionate, vibrant, life-giving, on fire relationship with Jesus Christ, we must be viewing him through the right lens.
2. So first, let's uncover the lens Isaiah had been seeing God through. **Isaiah 6:1** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw
3. The lens through which Isaiah had been viewing God through was a great king by the name of Uzziah.
4. Now, as is the case with every illustration I am going to share this morning, we need to know that the lens I am describing are not bad. In fact, all of them are good. Very good.
5. And Uzziah fits into that category.

6. Israel had a history of having a good king for a while (a king who followed God wholeheartedly). And then a so, so king (a king who followed the Lord in some areas but not in others). And terrible kings (kings who were evil and anti-God).
7. And of all the kings in the history of Israel, Uzziah may have been at the top of the list as one of the greatest kings ever.
8. Listen to this description of Uzziah in **2 Chronicles 26:3-5** Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother's name was Jekoliah; she was from Jerusalem. **4** He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. **5** He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success.
9. So, for 52 years, Uzziah set the bar high. He loved God wholeheartedly, he sought God earnestly, and he obeyed God faithfully. And the result was that God gave him success.
10. Again, I remind you. Those are all good qualities.
11. And on top of that, he had a positive impact on a future prophet by the name of Isaiah.
12. Isaiah was born in about the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Uzziah. So, for the first 39 years of Isaiah's life, he saw and experienced what it was like to live under the rule of this great king.
13. And what he saw and experienced caused him to want to become a follower of God. Again. All good things.
14. But the significance of this event that occurred in Isaiah chapter 6 was that king Uzziah died. And as great and wonderful a king and influencer as Uzziah was, it wasn't until Uzziah was no longer there that Isaiah began to see God and himself more clearly.
15. Why is that? Because **for 39 years, Uzziah had been the lens through which Isaiah viewed God.**
16. Now, lenses are very important to me. (illustrate)
17. Back here, hopefully, is my brain, and one of the ways my brain comprehends things is that the images of the world around me pass through the lens that are my eyes. (how many are still with me?)
18. But in my case, there is a problem with the lens of my eyes. I do not understand one single solitary thing about how the eyes work, what I do know is that since my mid-teens, the lens which are my eyes have been progressively getting worse.
19. To the point that if I try to see with just my eyes, I see nothing but a blurry mess.
20. I literally cannot even see humans in front of me. It's just all a jumbled mess.
21. So, in order to help me see clearly, the doctor has prescribed these lenses, these glasses, and as I look through them, my vision becomes nearly 20/20.
22. Without the proper lens, I can't see anything clearly, but with the proper lenses I can see many things clearly.
23. Now, let's go back to Isaiah. For 39 years, Uzziah was the lens through which Isaiah saw God. (illustrate with three objects)

24. Which would have been ok except for one major issue. Uzziah was not a perfect lens.
25. As great a king as he was, he was also still human and as a human he was flawed.
26. So, Isaiah is trying to see God, which is a very good thing, and his purpose for trying to see God was to know what God was like and therefore know how to live and relate to him. (are you still with me?)
27. But because Isaiah was trying to view God through the imperfect lens, which was Uzziah, Isaiah couldn't see clearly how great and awesome God was, and neither could he see how wretched he was without God.
28. But in Isaiah 6:1 that changed. Look back there with me.
29. **Isaiah 6:1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord**
30. Allow me to put into my own words what actually happened.
31. Isaiah reports, in the year that king Uzziah died, I was no longer seeing God through the lens of my king, now I am clearly seeing the real king. Who is exalted, lifted up, sitting on a throne, and his kingly robe fills the entire throne room.
32. And he is so great that angels fly around him proclaiming, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.
33. But then (verse 5) I also saw how sinful and unclean and in need of a savior I really am.
34. So, Uzziah, the imperfect lens is removed. And now the lens I am seeing through is none other than God himself. The perfect lens. The lens who magnifies and clarifies everything perfectly.
35. And as a result of now seeing clearly, I see the world differently, and myself differently.
36. So, what does that mean for us? How does that apply to us? I'm so glad you asked.
37. We too are susceptible mistakenly seeing God through not only people, but things, or circumstances, or situations.
38. And if I am here, and I am trying to see God through the people and the stuff of life, my picture of God will be very distorted. And as a result, so will my picture of who I am in relation to God.
39. But if I am here, and I purpose to see everything and everyone through God, then I will see clearly where to go and what to do and how to live.
40. Let me give you three illustrations. There could be thousands of illustrations, but I will pick three.
41. Keep in mind that none of these illustrations are bad. Having them in our life is not bad or wrong. But trying to experience these things without seeing them through God opens up the door for a very painful and frustrating life.

## Money

1. Money is not bad. Say it with me. Money is not bad. Paul told young Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:10 that it is the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil.
2. An unhealthy love of money is bad, not the money itself. In fact, I like money.
3. But if you and I try to view God and the world through the lens of money, rather than viewing money and the world through God, headache and heartache are sure to follow.
4. How can we tell which is the lens? Money or God? Let me give you a few examples.
5. If we view God and the world through money, we will tend to see ourselves and what we do as the source of our money.
6. But if God is our lens, then the source of our money is what God does for us.
7. If money is the lens, then one of several things can happen.
  - The drive to work harder to make more money. Don't misunderstand. Hard work is good. We are told in the bible not to be lazy. The pressure is on us and not on God.
  - The drive to cling to money. In other words, the fear that if I don't hold on tightly to money, then I will lose it all. The problem is that the bible says give and it shall be given. And if I am clinging too tightly, I might miss God's direction to give where He wants.
  - The drive to spend money for happiness. If I can just get that then I will be happy. But the bible teaches us to be good stewards of God's money, which makes God happy.
8. On the other hand. If God is the lens through which we view money, then these things happen.
  - Yes God. I know I am to work hard. But Lord, you are my provider. You are my source. My trust is in what you can do, not in what I can do.
  - Yes God. I can invest and give where you say without worry, because it's all yours in the first place.
  - Yes God. You are the one who brings me joy. The stuff is ok, but what really fulfills me is you. The stuff is just icing on the cake.

## Health

1. When I was younger, I took health, energy, and drive for granted.
2. I burned through life like there was no tomorrow.
3. But I've learned the hard way that health, energy, and drive changes.
4. When I was younger, I would power my way through whatever came my way. I don't think I consciously depended on myself, I think I just through that because I was strong and full of energy, I could take on anything.
5. I lived by the mantra, I can do all these things through the strength and energy I have. The lens is the health. I saw everything through the lens of health.
6. My life has changed. I began learning several years ago that health is fleeting.

7. I can't burn through emotional, physical, and spiritual energy like I used to.
8. Now I look at the world and all the things I have to do, and I think, oh no. I can't do all that. And that reality is pretty sobering.
9. So, I find myself many mornings praying before I get out of bed. Oh God you have to help me. I'm not going to be able to get any of it done today if you don't help me.
10. And normally when I pray that prayer, the scripture that pops in my mind is Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.
11. The lens is God. (not that I'm good at it all the time)

## Understanding

1. When the lens I use to view God and the world is my own understanding, then everything has to make sense to me. And whatever I don't understand I tend to reject.
2. And that means I reject most of what God wants to do in my life.
3. I am saying more and more to people, if we are going to make a list of all the things I don't understand, it's going to be a long list.
4. But when God is the lens through which I view the world, I don't necessarily have to understand. I can trust. And when I trust, it only has to make sense to God.
5. That's why it says in Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.
6. When you and I view life through God, then it's up to God to tell us where to turn, and our job to simply obey.

## Conclusion:

1. And when we view the world and everything in it through God. If we will surrender to see it through His eyes, and let him be the lens, then that view fans the flame of our faith.
2. When we trust God as the provider of our finances, our health, our understanding, and everything else that we need, and whatever we face must pass through him, our faith grows and flourishes.
3. But when we try and see God through the lens of everyone and everything in this world, it's like dumping a bucket of water on our spiritual flame.
4. And in return we wind up feeding doubt, worry, stress, fear, misunderstanding, heartache & headache.
5. Money. Health. Understanding. And thousands of other things. They are all wonderful. But none of those qualify to be the lens through which I view God and the world. Because they will distort my view of reality.
6. Only Jesus is worthy to be the lens. When we view everything through him, it changes our perspective.
7. If you need to change lens today. Admit it. Confess it.

8. Ask the Lord to help you view everything through him, and not the other way around.
9. Give yourself grace. It takes practice. Each day. Each circumstance. Each situation. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you put the correct lens into place.
10. Lord. I seem to be focusing on the thing. Help me to focus on you.