

# OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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<b>SERMON TITLE</b>	Fan the Flame
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<b>SERIES</b>	
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<b>DATE</b>	5/28/2023
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<b>KEY SCRIPTURE</b>	2 Timothy 1:5-7
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<b>SYNOPSIS</b>	We have a responsibility to stir up the fire of God in our hearts and minds. How do we do that?
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<b>HIGHLIGHTS</b>	
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## ☛ Fan the Flame

*One dark night a fire started inside a large chemical plant. Because an explosion was likely, an alarm went out to fire departments all around. Many began arriving, but they stayed outside the plant, only spraying water over the fence.*

*The chemical plant president said, "All our secret formulas are in the admin building in the center of the plant. They must be saved! I'll give \$50,000 to the fire department that goes in and brings them out safely!"*

*Since all the fire fighters were afraid an explosion was imminent, none volunteered. The president of the company offered \$100,000 to save the company's secret files; then \$200,000. No takers.*

*Suddenly a siren was heard and another fire truck came barreling toward the plant. To everyone's amazement, it crashed right through the gates and hurtled to the middle of the plant. It plowed into a row of cars near the admin building, and began spraying water around. One of them activated the plant's sprinkler system, which extinguished the fire.*

*Joyous, the chemical plant president gave them the reward of \$200,000 and asked what they intended to do with the reward money. White as a sheet, the fire truck driver looked him in the eye and said, "The first thing we're going to do is get the brakes fixed on that fire truck!"*

We've been talking about the fire of God the last couple of weeks. Elijah showed us how to catch fire when he challenged the prophets of Baal. We need to repair the altar of our hearts, and arrange the firewood of our minds to align with God. We need to cut the bull and get serious in our walk with the Lord. And, we need to step up and sacrifice our time and energy in pursuing the Lord. Last week we heard Jesus say "I have come to bring fire on the earth." He wants to consume us so that he has priority over everything else in our lives. He wants to refine us until only he is reflected in us. And, he wants the light of his fire to shine through us into this cold, dark world.

### ☛ 2 Timothy 1:5-7

5 I have been 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 God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Hopefully, you already have a sincere faith and aren't just "playing church" or "playing Christian." Hopefully, your walk with the Lord really matters to you. If not, then that's where you need to begin today. Do you really believe in Jesus? Do you really trust him with your life? Is he really the priority in your world? You need a sincere faith – one that is more than just words and pretense. One that affects every aspect of your life.

Now, presuming your faith is real and sincere, then you need to examine the intensity of your commitment to the Lord. Are you as committed as you should be? Are you as fired up as you can be? Are your gifts and talents dedicated to the Lord's use or are you overly self-focused? Is your



love for the Lord still “red-hot?” When’s the last time you experienced the power of God working in and through you? These are important questions.

Every one of us tends to cool off spiritually over time. We often let the pressures of this world and the temptations of the enemy pull us away from the fire of God. We easily become timid in our faith and allow the fire to dwindle. But God wants us to be “on fire” for him. This world is too cold and dark for us to let the fire go out. We have to diligently work to keep the flame burning. We have to fan the flame.

Did you know that you have a gift or several from the Lord? It’s not just the preachers or the singers, but every believer is gifted of the Lord. How is your gift doing? Is it waxing or waning? The gift in you is from God and needs to be developed. Some tend to passively wait for God to use them with their gift, but God is expecting you to fan that gift to flame. And, you need to understand that **your gifts aren’t just for you**, but for the whole body of Christ. **If you have allowed your gifts to cool off, you are robbing other believers of God’s blessing through you.**

If you’re not careful, you can despise the gifts of God. **Don’t despise the gifts.** Paul warns Christians in the Thessalonian church not to despise prophesying. We can become critical of the gifts that other people exercise – they might drone on and on with a prophetic word; they might fumble their words; they might be overly dramatic when praying, etc. Be careful that you don’t despise and reject God’s gifts just because people are imperfect.

☞ **Don’t quench the Spirit.** Quench = extinguish. There’s a warning about that in 1 Thessalonians. Maybe the Lord has been stirring something in you, but you’ve allowed fear to prevent you from using your gift. You know, “what will others think?” or, “what if I mess up?” Maybe the calling of God in your life seems intimidating, so you just turn a deaf ear to the Lord. There could be a multitude of reasons, but ultimately you extinguish the gift, you reject the responsibility and you stifle the Spirit. Don’t quench the Spirit.

☞ **Don’t neglect your gift.** In his earlier letter to Timothy, Paul urges him not to neglect the gift that was in him. We sometimes imagine that God’s gift to us is going to look after itself. You wouldn’t think like that if someone gave you a potted plant, but you never watered it or gave it any sunlight. It would be no surprise if it started to die. It’s the same with God’s gifts. They are not self-perpetuating. If we don’t look after it, and nourish it, and train it, and discipline it, then it will die. Fanning a flame is a deliberate action. Neglecting the fire of God in you is dangerous. Don’t neglect your gift.

☞ You start by **doing a self-evaluation.** 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.” Galatians 6:4 says, “Each one should test his own actions.” What does a personal evaluation say about you? Is your gift from God growing and developing? Are you on fire for God? Even if you can honestly say that you are on fire, this Scripture is still for you. Paul says to fan it to flame.



The idea is to stir up the fire to keep it burning. A fire left to itself will eventually burn itself out, but God wants us to kindle the fire he put in us. He wants us to keep it in full flame. So, this word applies to everyone. Either you need to rekindle God's fire in you, or you need to keep the fire burning. So, how do you do that?

In a natural wood-burning fire, you need to stir the embers from time to time. There are some ashes that need to fall to the bottom so that the fire can get air.

☞ **Maybe there's some junk in your life that has been suffocating the fire of God. Stir the embers of your heart so that the ashes fall away and fresh air can rekindle the fire.**

A campfire needs a continual supply of wood to keep the fire going. God's Word and your relationship with the Lord are great sources of fuel for the fire.

☞ **Feed the fire with the Bible and prayer.**

Also, Romans 12:1 says that we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God. The original readers knew firsthand what sacrifices were all about. They were accustomed to the temple sacrificial system of burning a dead animal on the altar. The thought of a living sacrifice was profound. It conveys the idea of offering your entire self to the Lord. Then, he consumes with fire. So, give yourself completely to the Lord. This means obey him no matter what. This means trust him no matter what. It means following him wherever and however he leads. The "living" sacrifice means you live your life for the Lord rather than for your own desires. And this "living sacrifice" means that it is ongoing – you **keep on giving yourself to the Lord.**

Part of giving yourself to God is also giving of yourself to others. The Great Commandment from Jesus is to love God fully and to love your neighbor as yourself. Loving God and loving others go hand in hand. You can't separate them. And, as I mentioned earlier, your gift from God is not just ☞ for you, but for the benefit of others. So, **use your gifts to serve others.**

We need to keep on encouraging and serving each other with the gifts God has given. It's too easy to become apathetic and lethargic, causing the fire of God to dwindle down to nothing. We need to fan those gifts into flame and actively bless those around us. Too often, we are waiting for God to do something, when he is actually waiting for us to use that which he has already given us. Use your gift! Give it all you've got to serve others.

The gifts are something like a muscle which needs to be exercised, otherwise it will atrophy and become useless over time. So, use your gifts. Put them to work. Build that spiritual muscle. And, don't think you've completely mastered your gift either. Even the best athletes keep on developing their strengths. Tiger Woods might be the best golfer out there, but he keeps working ☞ on his game. **Keep developing your gifts.**

Paul continues by saying that God has not given us a spirit of timidity (fear), but rather a Spirit of power, love and self-discipline (sound mind). So, don't let fear and timidity keep you from using your gifts and diminishing the fire of the Lord in you. When you are feeling timid or afraid, the first thing you need to do is remind yourself that that is not from God.



☞ **God's gift in you is powerful**, so step out and use it. When you do what he has gifted you to do, you have all his power backing you. So, trust in his strength.

☞ **God's gift in you is a spirit of love**. Love is expressed not only in words, but in action. So, use your gift to lovingly serve others. That's what Jesus did.

☞ **God's gift in you is self-discipline and a sound mind**. So, remember that there's no need for anxiety or panic as you step out in faith with your gift. God has given you a calm, self-controlled mind, so lay hold of it.

☞ **Fan into flame the gift of God which is in you!** What are you doing with your gift? Are you fanning it into flame? Are you stirring it up into new life? Are you giving yourself wholly to it? Here is a command, and it is as much a command as any of the ten commandments. 'Fan into flame the gift of God.'

We fan the flame by using the gift we've been given. We stir it up through godly discipline. We keep it ablaze by not letting our spiritual selves grow cold. We fan the flames of faith by "keeping in step with the Spirit," following his direction in every part of our lives. We stir up the gift by allowing Him to thrive in us like a living, blazing fire.

☞ **(start music)** Today, take some time to check the condition of the fire of God within your life. And, understand that the fire will not improve until you stoke it and fan it into flame. It is when you are burning bright with the fire of the Holy Spirit that you are the most effective, and you accomplish so much more to the glory of God. Fan the flame!