

Stoke the Fire

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[0 : 0 0] me and turn to 2nd Timothy chapter 1. Take the Word of God with me and turn to 2nd Timothy chapter 1. Today, and today only really, we're going to be spending a little time in this chapter talking about stoking the fire. Stoking the fire. And that's why I showed you that video before we got started with this theme, because I think it helps prepare us for what Paul is challenging Timothy here in his second letter to Timothy. This was, for a little bit of background, the last letter that we have recorded that Paul wrote before he died and gave his life for his faith in Jesus. He was in prison in Rome facing certain death. The Emperor Nero had already announced his execution. He would be beheaded for Christ. And shortly before this happens, he writes his last letter to not his biological son, Timothy, but his son in ministry, his son in the faith, Timothy. So let's look here at 2nd Timothy chapter 1, and let's rise together if you are able to physically. And let's read verse 6 together. 2nd Timothy chapter 1 and verse 6. Therefore,

I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. Also, I want to read it to you from the NIV. This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. Let's pray together. God, we have all received this same gift, the gospel of Jesus Christ. I pray that we would fan it into flames, that we would rekindle that gift, that we would stoke that fire that you have placed within us. For your glory, it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. Thanks for standing. I want to back up now and begin in verse 1 as we read from Paul's letter to Timothy. He writes, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will for the sake of the promise of life in Christ Jesus. To Timothy, my dearly loved son, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God who I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day. Can we pause there for just a moment? Paul was able to say, I serve God with a clear conscience. Y'all, we could spend the rest of the morning talking about that topic. Can you and I wake up in the morning and look in the mirror and say,

I serve God with a clear conscience? Or is there something that you're holding back? Is there something that you have said no to? Is there something that you have been unwilling to hand over to God and His control? Because I promise you, whatever you refuse to hand over to God will not receive the blessings He so wants to give you in that area of your life. But sometimes we hold things back, don't we? Sometimes we guard things. Sometimes our own weakness gets in the way and we say, man, I can't handle that.

I don't want to talk to that person about Jesus. I don't want to make that hard decision and do the right thing as I know ought to be done. So can we say, I serve God with a clear conscience? Paul, despite his many faults, was able to say that. And he encouraged his son in the faith, Timothy, to do the same. And so he said, I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day. I remember your tears. Isn't that interesting? Verse 4, Paul writes, Timothy, I remember your tears. And I long to see you so that I can be filled with joy. Now we don't understand exactly why Timothy had tears the last time he and Paul were together. But clearly there was some kind of issue that Timothy was dealing with. We know from other parts of scripture that Timothy perhaps had some health problems, maybe some chronic stomach issues that he had to deal with. We know that there was probably some resistance that he was putting up with in the church in Ephesus. Y'all remember about a year ago, we were finishing up our series in Ephesians, which was Paul's letter to the church in this ancient city called Ephesus. We would know all these cities, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi. If we lived back then, they were major cities. And there were churches established in each of these. And Paul had left a pastor in charge of this church in Ephesus, and it was Timothy, kind of his protegee, his mini-me, so to speak. And Paul said, Timothy, I know that it's been hard. I know there's been sadness. I remember the last time we were together, you were in tears. Timothy might have been

getting worn down. He might have been struggling in the work that Paul asked him to do and God had laid out for him to do.

But then he continues on in verse 5. Timothy, I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice. And now I am convinced is in you also. Now before we go on to verse 6, let's stop there for just a moment. We get to see a little picture into Timothy's past, into his upbringing. You know who wasn't mentioned in that verse? They mentioned his grandmother, they mentioned his mother. You know who wasn't mentioned there? His father. Do you know why?

[6 : 05] Because we find out in Acts chapter 16 that Timothy's father was a Greek. He was an unbeliever. He wasn't a follower of Jesus. And the custom back then was that your faith would be passed down from your father.

Whatever your religion was going to be, it would be inherited from your father. You would continue on in the religious tradition of your father. It wasn't going to be like that with Timothy. Because his grandmother and his mother had been saved by Jesus and they had then chosen to raise young Timothy in that faith. And apparently he had gravitated toward that. He had listened. He had embraced it. But I'm sure there was difficulty growing up because his dad was not a follower of Jesus.

So I'm sure there were times along the way when it felt like mom and grandma were fighting a losing battle. I'm sure there were difficulties. Unless Timothy was a completely different kid than everybody else growing up and through his teenage years, I'm sure there was some resistance sometimes to what Lois and Eunice were teaching him. But I can imagine that his mother and his grandmother spent many hours on their knees begging God to save their son, grandson, and do something powerful in his life.

To use him for God's glory. Well, apparently they kept at it. Apparently they were faithful. To teach him. Despite less than ideal circumstances in that home. I can tell you, and any of you who have a mother and dad, who both try to follow Jesus and try to teach your kids to do the same, you know how difficult that can be. You know that sometimes there's resistance there. Can you imagine, and some of you in this room might resonate with this, can you imagine if it was just one of you? Maybe a grandparent. But you weren't united in teaching your child to follow the Lord. So I can imagine how difficult that was for them.

[8 : 29] But I heard a song on the radio, Christian radio, that said, don't stop praying. Don't stop calling on Jesus' name. Keep on pounding on heaven's door. Let your knees wear out the floor. Don't stop believing.

Mountains move with just a little faith. The Father has heard every single word you're saying, so don't stop praying. And I can imagine that that was the attitude of Lois and Eunice growing up, raising Timothy to be what God wanted him to be. And you know what happened? He did. It came true. The prayer was answered. And Timothy, boy those things are everywhere right now, aren't they? That's all right. We leave them alone, they'll leave us alone. Timothy was called by God. A great path was laid out for him to walk. He was connected with this mentor in the faith, Paul, and God used him in powerful ways. But I can imagine that it wasn't always easy. So I encourage you, encourage you parents, grandparents, don't stop praying. Keep calling on Jesus on behalf of your children, your grandchildren, for them to walk the Jesus walk, follow his path. So let's move on now to verse 6. Therefore, I remind you, because of all this I know about you, Timothy, I now remind you to rekindle or fan into flames the spiritual gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you. Because God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment. And this is where we're going to really focus our time today. It's on fanning into flames or rekindling or stoking the fire of

God's gift. So what does he mean by that? Well, I've got my nine, almost 10-year-old son down here, Austin. And he's looking at me like, where are you going with this, Dad?

One of Austin's favorite things to do, especially when we have weather like we've had, and we're apparently about to get again this week, is building what? Building a fire. That's right. He loves it.

[10 : 59] It's his favorite thing to do, building a fire in the fireplace. And here he is in front of one of his fires around Christmas time, looking all proud. I will say that this kid does not let anybody else in our house build a fire. Holly can build a fire. I can build an amazing fire, let me tell you.

But I never get to because it's Austin's thing. He loves it, and he will do the dirty work and go out to the shed and get a big load of firewood and bring it in. So I just let him do it. It's his thing.

And he does a great job. He builds some incredible fires, let me tell you. Now, the truth is, this kid would keep the fire going 24 hours if we let him. I mean, it can be getting bedtime, and he's like, hey, Dad, can I go stoke the fire again? And what do I say? Right. Yeah. It needs to die out, man. We're going to bed. We're not going to sit here all night and tend this fire, you know? But the truth is, fires will die if they're not stoked. If you don't tend the fire, they will die. Why is that? Because they need oxygen. There needs to be a fuel, which is the firewood. There needs to be heat. That's why you got to light that initial flame, and then once the fire is roaring, that heat that's built up allows it to continue burning, but it must have oxygen. If it doesn't get oxygen, it will die out. Might take a long time to die out, but it will die out. So that's why you go take a fireplace poker. I got him in the little black bucket right behind his head. You can see him sticking out. You go take a poker, and you stick it around in there, and kind of stir up those coals, and get it going again. [12:55] Got to breathe oxygen back into that fire. How many of y'all watch Bear Grylls on the outdoor TV stuff? Anybody? Thank you. We got some in the back. Good job, boys. You know, you see him or some other survivalists out there building fires, and what do they do? They get down, they breathe oxygen into those flames, and it lights up. Well, Paul is telling Timothy, fan the flames. Get oxygen back into your fire.

What's he talking about? God placed a fire within you. Number one, if you are a child of God, we had our very first starting point class of this new cycle of this morning up in room 201. If you're not doing anything on Sunday mornings, come up there, room 201, and join us at 9:30. We'd love to have you up there.

But we talked about the Holy Spirit, and how only God's children have the Holy Spirit. How many of you ever heard somebody say, well, we're all God's children? Anybody? I've heard that my whole life.

You go out talking to people about God, well, we're all God's children. Like, no, we're not, man. Trust me. We're not all God's children. Some of us are. Some of us aren't. We're all God's. We're all God's creation. But we're not all His children. He lays out a very specific path for how you can become God's child. If we were all God's children, then Jesus never would have had to die on the cross. But unfortunately, sin came into this world, and it ruins the relationship between God and His greatest creation, mankind. So in order for us to be His children, our sin debt had to be paid. And so Jesus died a cruel death on the cross. But then He rose back to dead and showed all of us that He is God, and He is worthy of our faith, and He will take it, and He will guard it, and we will not be ashamed if we place our faith in Jesus. And so if you do that, then you're God's child. Then He's your Father. And then you have His presence with you called the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is likened in Scripture sometimes to fire.

water. And He's likened in Scripture sometimes to wind or the breath of God. Sometimes He's likened in Scriptures to water. He is a force that cannot be stopped, but He can be ignored. He can be ignored.

[15:41] And oftentimes, though God's children have this powerful force within us, we ignore it. We let it die out.

And Paul says, stoke that fire. Bring that fire back to life. God placed within us the gospel, the saving message of Jesus. We just talked about it, how you can repent of your sins and receive the payment that Jesus made on the cross for you and place your faith in Him as someone who loves you enough and is able to forgive you of your sin. That's the gospel. And you have this wonderful gift from God within you. Don't let that gift die out. Don't let that gift go to waste. I would hate to see Austin's beautiful fire die out before its time and not provide heat to everybody else in the house. Not provide that warmth for all of us to enjoy.

But so much more damaging is when God's people let the fire that He placed within them die out and we don't fan the flame. So, fire needs oxygen and we must breathe life back into our fire. God has breathed life there.

We have that fire within us. It is our job to tend it, to stoke it. John chapter 20 and verse 22 says, I'm sorry, that's the one we just read. 2 Timothy 1.6. Let's read it again all together. Ready?

This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. Now we go to John 20:22.

[17:29] Then He breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. This is what happens when God breathed His Holy Spirit onto men.

What a powerful thing it is. We receive this gift. We receive this breath. And God can breathe life back into this gift that He gave us.

But it can lie dormant. The fire can die out and not provide heat in our life anymore. And how many times have you felt like, you don't have to raise your hand on this one, but how many times have you felt like that fire for God isn't burning in me anymore?

I've been there. Apparently Timothy was there too. That's why Paul said, Timothy, rekindle that fire, man. Fan those flames back into action.

1 Thessalonians 5, verse 19. Do not extinguish or quench the Holy Spirit. Isn't that interesting?

[18:38] So that means you can quench the Holy Spirit? What does quench mean? Anybody? Yell it out. What does quench mean? Huh?

Put the fire out, right? What are our wonderful, brave, volunteer firefighters going out to do when they fight these fires? Quench the flames.

So apparently, you can quench the fire of the Holy Spirit within you. Because Paul tells the church at Thessalonica, don't do this. Too many are doing this.

Don't extinguish these flames. Life will hand you a fire extinguisher called brokenness, called despair, called anger, called bitterness.

Distractions. Time and time again, life will hand you different fire extinguishers to quench the flames of the Holy Spirit in your life. Throw them down.

[19:47] Hand them back to God. Say, God, I don't want to put the fire out. I recognize this has the capacity to place, to pour water on the flames of your Spirit, and I can't do that.

You mean too much to me. So, we quench the Spirit when we ignore what God is doing.

What does it look like to extinguish the flames? Well, we quench the Spirit of God within us when we ignore what God is doing. God is working in our church.

So, He's alive and well. You can look at all kinds of different things that are happening in the life of our church. Just look at the last six months, look at the last year, look at the last year and a half.

I can't speak to much more beyond that because, well, we've only been here two years in May. So, I can't speak to a whole lot of what was happening before that. But I know God has used this church for many, many years.

[20:57] Founded in 1876. We're coming up on our 150th pretty soon. It's incredible. God has used this church for a long time.

But I can speak from personal experience what He's been doing in this church since we got here. I've seen that in action. I've seen it happen. Many of you can speak for many more years beyond that and say, yeah, I've seen God working in this church.

When we ignore that, when that doesn't make a profound impact on us emotionally, mentally, and practically, then we quench the Spirit within us.

And if enough of us in the church quench the Spirit in our own lives, guess what happens? The Spirit is quenched in our church.

That's what we don't want to see happen. But you know who does want to see that happen? Satan, the enemy, Satan. That's what he's out to do.

[22:10] He's out to stop Rosemary from getting baptized. He's out to stop the Sudols from getting baptized. He's out to stop the next three baptisms that we already have on the calendar for people who have come forward and said, I want to make my faith public.

I want to follow the Lord in baptism. He wants to stop the new families that have been coming into our church. He wants to increase the disunity, the strife, the discord that pops up and starts to spread.

That's what Satan's goal is. He wants to quench that fire. And we play right into his hands when we ignore what God is doing.

Can I tell you, the adults already know this, but let me tell you the kids, life is never going to be perfect.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry to burst that bubble for you. We're not going to get into Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny right now, but let me just tell you, Santa, don't worry, shouldn't have even said anything.

[23:23] Life is not perfect. And it's never going to be. So what does that mean? There's always going to be things that are wrong. There's always going to be things that you wish were different.

What you can control is what you decide to do about the things that you wish were different. and then what you decide to do about the things that God is doing despite the bad.

You understand what I'm saying? There's always going to be good things happening and there's always going to be bad things happening. You determine which one you're going to focus on. Which one you're going to give your attention to.

And if you thank God and focus on what he's doing and you don't worry so much about the things that you wish were different can I tell you that often times God will either fix the things that you wish were different or he'll change you to where you realize oh maybe it wasn't the worst after all.

It's true. But you never get to experience that. You never get to see that God can do that and does do that if you ignore the good things he's doing over here and you obsess and focus on the things that you wish were different.

[24 : 54] I'm talking about in your life. I'm talking about in the life of our church. Talk about in our community. We should not be a people who are obsessed with all the bad things we wish were different about our town about our community.

we should be a people seeing what God can do and is doing in our town in our county and focus on that and run with that and make sure that we're a part of that and not worry so much about all the things we wish were different because you know what God has the ability to fix it or God has the ability to fix us.

Sometimes we obsess over problems if we don't realize we might be part of the problem. So we quench the spirit when we ignore what God is doing but we stoke the fire when we passionately participate.

At first I said we stoke the fire when we participate in what God is doing and then I realized no that's not always true. We really stoke the fire when we participate with passion.

When we really get excited about it. I don't know what that was. It was getting excited alright the sound system was passionately participating there.

[26 : 28] We get excited and we lean into it and we say you know what I love this. I see these people getting baptized in church. I'm going to start talking to whoever in my life or my circle you know have you ever been baptized?

Have you ever given your faith to Jesus? Have you ever placed your faith in Jesus? Have you ever given your life to Jesus? Because there's a whole lot of people at First Baptist Church who are doing that and I think maybe you could also do that.

Maybe you start a conversation and plant a seed in somebody's mind that then God uses to grow a mighty tree full of spiritual fruit.

When you passionately participate in what God is doing and you're not just a sideline critic or you're not just a sideline fan but you say forget this man I'm going to get in the game.

I'm going to get involved in what God is doing. I want to be a part of it. We see new believers coming through our church. How can I speaking for you as the church how can you start participating in their discipleship in their spiritual growth?

[27 : 41] How can you become a passionate active participant in what God is doing here? Or you can sit back and take two attitudes.

You can say man that's great I'm glad all those new folks are coming I'm glad those folks are getting baptized glad those things are happening that's good. What are we having for lunch today? Or you can say yeah I see all that stuff happening but I didn't like that choir song they did last time.

Wasn't my jam. You notice that spot on the carpet up front? That thing drives me nuts. Can't believe they haven't fixed it by now. I'm not calling out building and grounds by the way.

They're actually working on the carpet okay so just hang tight. I'm saying there's different attitudes you could find yourself taking.

When you ignore what God is doing you quench the spirit. Do you want to be a spirit quencher in First Baptist Church? Some of us find ourselves in that role and we've got to stop.

[28 : 47] Do you want to be a fire stoker in First Baptist Church? Then jump in. Passionately participate in what God is doing. How do we do that?

Well glad you asked. Or glad I asked on your behalf. Children's ministry. Here's how you can passionately participate. You know where we need passionate participants?

Children's ministry. Sunday morning nursery workers. Sunday school teachers and workers.

Preschool children's church teachers and workers. Wednesday night nursery workers. Wednesday

night children's workers.

VBS kids camps. Other events volunteers. That's where we need passionate participants. So if you would like to passionately participate in what God is doing here, start there.

Start there. Tied for first place is youth ministry. We need passionate participants in youth ministry. [29 : 46] Sunday school teachers and workers. Wednesday night teachers and workers. D-NOW volunteers. Camp volunteers. Other events that Jared is regularly doing with the teens. We need passionate participants in those.

Guess what? You hire a youth pastor, that doesn't mean he can handle 40, 50 kids on his own. We need y'all. This church is fantastic.

When there's no paid staff member over a ministry, they'll rise up and they will take the reins and run. But I'm telling you, it's easy once you get that youth pastor in place for those volunteers to vanish.

I'm not calling out anybody specifically. I'm just saying it can happen and it's happened time and time again. And we need sometimes, sometimes those people have served their time.

Sometimes they're burned out with all the demand that's been placed on them to carry the load when nobody else was. Sometimes we need a new crop of passionate participants to jump in and say, okay, I'll help.

[30 : 45] It's my turn now. I understand these people put in 10, 15, 20 years into serving in this area. Maybe I can try for six months. Maybe I can try for two months.

Maybe I can try it out and see if that's where God wants me to serve. This is how you can passionately participate and stoke the fire of what God is doing in this church.

Welcome team. You know who our welcome team is? It's three people. Don and Diana Shipley and Billy Carlton. And they are well suited for the welcome team.

They are friendly people. They greet people. The Shipleys send cards to visitors after they come. It's awesome. They're great at it. Billy is the smiling face that you want to see and he's got some kind of joke up his sleeve for you when you walk into the doors on Sunday morning as he hands you a bulletin.

But y'all, they can't carry it all alone. We need parking lot greeters. We need people who can park the car for older people that are physically challenged.

[31 : 53] Not necessarily even just older people. Sometimes younger people can be physically challenged. That would be a big blessing for them. We need door openers. Y'all, we've got two sets of double doors right here. Nobody opens the door for anybody.

How great would it be if we had some people standing at the door opening the door for somebody and saying welcome to church. That's it. You don't have to do anything else.

Put a smile on your face and say welcome and open the door. That is a right away need that you could fill and actively participate, passionately participate in what God is doing here.

Lobby greeters, ushers, there are places that you can jump in all around. But you know what happens? The same 30 people wind up doing everything because they're the passionate participants.

Don't let it be that way. You be a passionate participant. You jump in and say I want to be a part of it. I want to stoke the fire. Clearly there's a fire burning in Henrietta, Texas that God has started.

[33 : 07] I want to be somebody that stokes that fire, not just watches it burn and heaven forbid, somebody who tries to quench it. Music ministry, prayer ministry, kindness ministry.

Randy Jones is sitting back there all throughout the year. She's got plans for ways to go out and serve in our community. From Pioneer Union, handing out Dr.

Peppers when school drops out, lets out for the summer. Evangelism ministry. We've been doing very little of actively going out and sharing the gospel with people in our community.

So there are all kinds of ways for you to jump in and serve God. That's how we do it. Now, before we leave, I want to share this final thought with you.

How many of y'all would say there's a roaring fire on the screen? How many of you would say that fire's out? Yes. But you know what?

[34 : 12] Is it really out? Because even dying embers still have life in them. Dying embers still have life within them.

That's why they need to be stoked. That's why they need to be stoked. Romans 12 verse 11 says this, never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord.

You know what that word fervor means? Well, in the International Standard Version, it says this, never be lazy and showing devotion. Be on fire with the Spirit.

That's what that fervor word evokes. That's what it means. It means being on fire. Smith's literal translation of the Bible says boiling in spirit, serving the Lord.

The God be New Testament says boiling over in spirit, serving the Lord. You get the idea? You get the picture of what this is? This fervor? It means being on fire for God.

[35 : 20] Y'all, we've got people in this church that have been Christians for decades. Multiple decades. It's hard to keep the fire burning year after year, decade after decade.

Some of you have been Christians 50 years or more. It's hard to keep the fire burning all that time. That's why Paul told Timothy, stoke it.

Stoke that fire because it's only natural that it's going to start to die out. And the Holy Spirit's fire in your life is going to look like that.

But that's not what our God is. Exodus and Hebrews both describe our God as a consuming fire. God wants to roar.

He wants to blaze. He wants to burn brightly. So don't be ashamed. Stoke that fire.

[36 : 24] Get involved. Dying embers still have life within them. You know, Paul told Timothy, don't be ashamed.

It means he must have been ashamed. And it's easy to get ashamed. We don't live in a world that is particularly friendly to followers of Jesus.

You know, we have that in common with just about every other Christian throughout history. Very rarely in this world have there been governments or nations that were very friendly toward followers of Jesus.

America might be one of, if not the most, friendly toward Christians. And we still have it rough, don't we? But can I promise you this?

The harder the enemy tries to put out the fire, the more the fire rages, the more it spreads. And that's what happened in the early days of the church.

[37 : 30] It spread like wildfire around this world. It wasn't even legal in most of the known world to be a Christian. But they couldn't stop people.

The fire kept spreading. Why isn't our fire like that? The fire is still there. Dying embers still have life within them.

It's just got to be stoked. It's got to be stoked. So our takeaway is what step will you take to stoke it? The Holy Spirit's fire is alive and well in all of his children. But it's got to be stoked. Would you bow your head with me?

God, I pray that you would show us how to stoke our fire. Show me how to stoke my fire. It's easy for me to let the cold water that this life seems to throw on me every day put out my fire.

[38 : 33] But God, you have given me everything I need. Service is not everything. Service is not why we have a relationship with you. You didn't save us so we could do things for you and you just won an army of workers.

you saved us because you love us. You want to have a relationship with us because you love us. Our relationship with you is not hinging on how much we do for you but God doing for you is what stokes the fire.

Serving you is what stokes the fire. And when we go for days and weeks and months and years and decades without really serving you actively, passionately, our fire can die out.

It's how you designed it. Doing your work is what fulfills us. It's what stokes that fire. So show every woman, every wife, every mother, every sister, every daughter how to stoke that fire.

Show the men, the husbands, the brothers, the sons, the grandfathers, how to stoke the fire in their life.

[39 : 51] If our fire isn't burning, we can't stoke the fire anybody else. God, I pray that you would teach us what we need to do right now.

in this moment with our heads bowed. With our heads bowed, God, right now, the enemy wants to distract us.

He doesn't want to, he doesn't want God's people to passionately pursue him. Amen. Quiet the noise.

Let your still, small voice be the one thing that comes through. It says, yeah, you're the next children's ministry volunteer. You're the next youth volunteer.

You're the next choir member. You're the next usher. You're the next greeter. You're the next one going out kindness ministry and serving our community doing what Jesus did.

[40 : 59] You're the next one I'm going to call to lead a church, to lead a class, to lead a committee, to preach the good news.

Raise up passionate participants from our midst, God. We'll give you the glory for it.