

Fan the FLAME

Justin Morton

Something To Think About

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FAN THE FLAME

Week 1: When Your Fire Starts To Burn Out

Introduction:

- A. Have you ever had a fire burning deep within your heart for something? Maybe it was some type of hobby, activity or even just some cause.
- B. For Christian young people, the summer can be one of those times in their lives when a fire begins to burn in their hearts. After all the camps, service opportunities, Bible studies and devotionals, a fire can burn in our hearts for the Jesus. By the time summer is over, most Christian young people are coming off of a spiritual high.
- C. The key for our spiritual fire is not getting it started, it's figuring out how to keep it burning.

A Burning Fire (I Kings 18:36-46)

- A. Fires begin to burn within us when we have experiences that happen to us.
 - 1. For Elijah it was a great victory over the false god Baal. Not only was he proven to be right about the drought He had prophesied to Ahab (I Kgs. 17:1) but he ultimately proved Baal was a false god and up ended a false religion. This was Elijah's shining moment; he was VICTORIOUS!
 - 2. **QUESTION:** What was it for you that might have caused a fire to start burning within?
- B. When a fire is burning within us, we are more willing to do things that we might not normally do.
 - 1. Elijah had the prophets of Baal killed in the presence of the evil king Ahab.
 - 2. Elijah outran Ahab back to Jezreel (a distance of about 16 miles).
 - 3. Elijah may have gone to Jezreel because he was expecting a big revival; Baal had been defeated.

4. **QUESTION:** What have you been doing differently since the fire was lite in your heart this summer (reading your Bible more often, praying on a regular schedule, talking about Jesus)?

Fires Won't Burn Forever (I Kings 19:1-5)

- A. Every fire I have ever seen built has gone out. Why? I did nothing; I stopped fanning the flames.
- B. Notices some reasons why Elijah went from a burning fire for God to asking God to take his life.
 1. He feared what might happen. Fear can cause us to want to run and hid. When we start hiding because of our faith, our fire begins to burn out.
 2. He focused on a problem. His problem came in the form of a threat from Jezebel while ours might come in many different forms. When we focus on our problems, we lose focus of God.
 3. He forgot about his experiences. When we forget about all we have seen and experienced when it comes to our faith and God, our fire starts burning out. Remember those precious and sincere moments where you experienced God, His love, His care, etc.
 4. He failed when it came to getting Ahab and Jezebel to change their ways. Instead of repenting of her sins, she wants to kill Elijah.
Question: What kind of spiritual failure might cause our fire to burn out?

Keeping Your Fire Burning (I Kings 19:5-18)

- A. Take time to rest and refresh (vs. 5-9). It could be that you are busy doing too many OTHER THINGS.
- B. Spend time doing the work of the Lord (v. 10).
- C. Remember God is always with you (vs. 11-12).
- D. Spend time with God. If we desire any relationship to grow, it requires spending time with another (vs. 11-12).

- E. Realize you are not alone; there are others who are striving to live for God as well (vs. 13-18).

Conclusion:

- A. The summer is always a great experience when it comes to getting a fire started in our hearts. The key is for us to keep that fire burning throughout this school year.
- B. What good is a fire if it only dies out soon thereafter?
- C. Think of all God can accomplish through you this year, if you can keep your spiritual fire burning.

**Fan the FLAME:
Week 2: Recognize God's Grace In Your Life**

Introduction: Is there evidence of God's grace in your life? Do you recognize it?

Paul Remembered the Past - Who He Use To Be (1 Tim. 1:12-15)

- A. Paul believed himself to be the worst of sinners and knew that God had extended him grace.
- B. Saul had a bad reputation among those who were followers of Jesus and for good reason (Acts 9:10-14). **QUESTION: Why did Paul have such a bad reputation?**
1. Stood - Acts 7:57-58 -First introduced to Saul at the stoning of Stephen.
 2. Approved - Acts 8:1 - Saul approved of the execution of Stephen.
 3. Participated - Acts 8:3 - Saul ravaged (destroyed) the church
 4. Consumed - Acts 9:1-2 - Saul is still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. This is the very air he breathes.
- C. Who were you before you became a Christian? Who were you before a fire began to burn deep with your heart? **QUESTION: What is it that you look back on and are ashamed of?**
1. Some may have been habitual liars who couldn't tell the truth.
 2. Some may have been bullies who were unkind to other people.
 3. Some may have been stuck in an overwhelming addiction.
- D. When we reflect on who we use to be, it's a means of fanning the flame. **QUESTION: How?**

Paul Understood the Present - Knew Who He Now Was (I Tim. 1:16-17)

- A. Paul understood that God was using him as an example for future believers (Acts 9:15).
- B. Paul understood the Lord chose him long before he ever chose the Lord (Acts 9:4-6; Gal. 1:15).
- C. We can fan the spiritual flame in our lives when we begin to understand that God is using us in the present moment for His glory in spite of who we use to be.

D. **QUESTION: How is God using you right now as His instrument to the world around you?**

Paul Longed for the Future - Knew Where He Was Going (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

- A. Paul poured out his life as an offering to the Lord.
- B. Paul understood because of God's grace, if he continued to fight the good fight of faith, there would be a great reward awaiting him in the end (Phil. 1:21-24). He knew there was something to look forward to.
- C. When we know there is a reward at stake, we are more willing to press on and fight (EX: sports).
- D. **QUESTION: Do you know where you are going?** If you do, that should cause your fire to burn.

Conclusion: The grace of God changes everything! Let's open our eyes and recognize the grace of God in our lives. If we do this, our spiritual fire will continue to burn bright.

Fan the FLAME
Week 3: Fan the Spiritual Flame of Others

Introduction:

- A. We have spent the last several weeks looking at how we can keep our spiritual fires burning. We've looked at how we all will experience weak moments where we feel as though our fire is almost exhausted and what we can do to combat that feeling. Tonight we will conclude this series of lessons by looking at how we can fan the spiritual flame of others.
- B. Do you recall a time where you helped someone who was going through a difficult time? How did it make you feel to help them? Did helping someone else who was struggling help you? How does helping someone who is struggling have the potential to help us?
- C. When we help others who are struggling in their faith, we in turn help ourselves. When I help you to fan your spiritual flame, I in turn help to fan my own spiritual flame.
- D. Tonight, let's look at one man who used his life to fan the spiritual flame of others.

Barnabas is described as a good man of faith (*Acts 11:22-24*). When we are first introduced to Barnabas, he is selling his field and laying the money at the apostles' feet so they can distribute to those who had a need (*Acts 4:36-37*). From the very beginning, we see Barnabas is a good man of faith who has a caring spirit toward others. What's interesting about him though, is how he uses his life to help fan the spiritual flame of others; even men like Paul and John Mark.

Barnabas and Paul (*Acts 9:26-28*)

- A. After Paul/Saul was converted and escaped to Jerusalem, it was Barnabas who vouched for him when the other disciples were afraid of him joining their company.

- B. **QUESTION:** Have you ever had someone have to vouch for you in order for you to be a part of a certain group? Why did they have to vouch for you? How did it make you feel knowing someone would go to such an extent, maybe even trouble, to vouch for you?
- C. Barnabas stood up for Paul. While others were afraid and not wanting to give him a chance, it was Barnabas who stood up for him.
- D. By standing up for Paul, Barnabas helped in giving us the second greatest preacher the world has ever known. He helped to fan the spiritual flame of Paul and look what all he went on to do for the Lord. We can help fan the spiritual flame of others by simply standing up for them in there times of need (EX: someone in the youth group).

Barnabas and the Gentile Believers (*Acts 11:22-26*)

- A. Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch to check on these new Gentile Christians located in Antioch.
- B. When he arrived and saw what God was doing among even the Gentiles, he encouraged them to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.
- C. Barnabas was so encouraged by what he saw, that he went to find Paul in Tarsus and bring in back to Antioch. **QUESTION:** When someone or something encourages you, what does it cause you to want to do?
- D. Paul and Barnabas worked with the church in Antioch for a year and help to fan their spiritual flames. Imagine the impact this had on these new Christians; Christians who were not Jews on top of that.

Barnabas and John Mark (*Acts 15:36-43*)

- A. John Mark had turned back and bailed on Paul and Barnabas during their first missionary journey (*Acts 13:13*). No reason is given as to why he did this.
- B. Two to three years later, Barnabas had forgiven John Mark and tried to persuade Paul to take John Mark with them. He hadn't given up on John Mark just yet.

QUESTION: Have you ever had someone stick with you when others thought you were a lost cause?

- C. Interestingly, Paul would later accept John Mark. During Paul's first imprisonment, John Mark is mentioned in Paul's group of greeters. The Colossians are even told to be receptive to John Mark (*Col. 4:10; Philemon. 24*).
- D. Then, near the end of his life, in his last letter, Paul says that John Mark is useful to him (*2 Tim. 4:11*).
- E. Perhaps the bold move by Barnabas paid off in the end. We can see the impact Barnabas had on John Mark. He would go on to write the New Testament book of Mark. See what can happen when you take time to fan the flame of others...you can make a difference.

Conclusion:

- A. We don't know for sure what happened to Barnabas, but tradition says he was martyred in 61 AD.
- B. It seems Barnabas kept his spiritual fire burning until the end of his life. Perhaps that is partly due to the fact that he was willing to fan the spiritual flames of others.
- C. One of our responsibilities as Christians is to use our lives in order to help or impact the lives of others (*Matt. 5:13-16*). Our you using your life to fan the spiritual flames of others?
- D. What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others lives on even after we die. Spend time in your life helping to fan the spiritual flames of others.