**How To Study the Bible**

**Pastoral Epistles**

**2 Timothy 1:6-1**

**Do any of you have a special talent or ability?**

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**Verse 6. What does it mean to fan into the flame the gift of God? What is the lesson for us?**

*Although Paul was restricted, uncomfortable and lonely, he still remembered his duty to encourage Timothy in his work. This is why he reminds him to ‘fan into flame the gift of God’, which was in him (1:6). This does not mean that Timothy had grown listless in the work, or that he was weary of the responsibilities of the church at Ephesus. If that had been the case Paul would not have been so warm in his commendation in verse 5. But all fires die down unless they are regularly stoked up and have fresh fuel added to them. Timothy had been called to the Christian ministry (this was God’s gift to him). The body of elders had laid hands upon him. This was to symbolize their unity and also God’s blessing upon Timothy’s future work (1 Tim. 4:14). It seems that Paul had been one of that number because he laid his own hands upon Timothy as well (1:6). Each of us tends to grow weary, and sometimes disillusioned, in our work for God. One antidote to this is for us to remember what God has done for us, just as Jesus urged the church at Sardis to ‘Remember … what you have received and heard’ (Rev. 3:3). — Bentley, M. (1997). Passing on the Truth: 1 & 2 Timothy Simply Explained. Welwyn Commentary Series (204–205). Darlington, England: Evangelical Press.*

**Verse 6 reminds me of Romans 12.11. Someone read that for us. How do we live lives full of zeal for God?**

*How long would you keep an automobile that had to be pushed everywhere it went? How much would it be worth to you? How much pleasure would you find in it? You might keep an automobile that just had to be pushed occasionally, but you would not have one for long that just could not be depended on, that would not go whenever you wanted it to go. The Lord is no more pleased with one of His servants that continually has to be pushed than you would be with an automobile that continually has to be pushed. God wants men of initiative and fervency of spirit. Paul taught us to be diligent, not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord (Rom. 12:11). A man who has to be pushed continually in order to keep him in service and attending worship is not devoted to the cause. It is understandable that a newborn babe in Christ, a young convert, might need to be pushed or encouraged, but if one who has been a Christian for many years must still be pushed, he is not growing spiritually as he should. He is not spiritually mature. Do you have to be pushed? — AMG Bible Illustrations. 2000. Bible Illustrations Series. Chattanooga: AMG Publishers.*

**What benefits come to those who are full of zeal?**

*Bedtime is a bad time for kids. No child understands the logic of going to bed while there is energy left in the body or hours left in the day.*

*My children are no exception. A few years ago, after many objections and countless groans, the girls were finally in their gowns, in their beds, and on their pillows. I slipped into the room to give them a final kiss. Andrea, the five-year-old was still awake, just barely, but awake. After I kissed her, she lifted her eyelids on final time and said, “I can’t wait until I wake up.”*

*Oh, for the attitude of a five-year-old! That simple uncluttered passion for living that can’t wait for tomorrow. A philosophy of life that reads, “Play hard, laugh hard, and leave the worries to your father.” A bottomless well of optimism flooded by a perpetual spring of faith. — AND THE ANGELS WERE SILENT / Lucado, M. (2007). God’s promises® for you: Scripture selections from max lucado. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.*

**What is the gift referred to in verse 6?**

*The soil of Timothy’s life, watered by such love and faith, was ready to be planted with Paul’s appeal: “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. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (vv. 6, 7). At first reading it might appear that “the gift of God” that Timothy is to “fan into flame” is the giftedness for ministry that he received at his ordination (cf. 1 Timothy 4:14). And this is correct as far as it goes. But the following verse makes it clear that Paul wants Timothy to fan “the gift of God” by relying on the Holy Spirit, whom he received at his conversion.*

*Gordon Fee is right in establishing that “spirit” in verse 7 should have a capital S and is in fact referring to the Holy Spirit of God. Verse 7 is not speaking about the human spirit or an attitude that God has given us, but to the Holy Spirit. There are several reasons for concluding this, among which are: 1) The word “For” that begins verse 7 gives it the closest possible tie to verse 6. 2) The close tie between “gift” (v. 6) and “the Spirit” (v. 7) is characteristic of Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 12, esp. v. 4). 3) The words “power” and “love” in verse 7 are used especially for the work of the Holy Spirit in Paul’s writings. And 4) there are close ties between this text and 1 Timothy 4:14, where the gifting of Timothy is implicitly a work of the Holy Spirit. So for these and other reasons, Fee gives this paraphrase in verse 7: “For when God gave us his Spirit, it was not timidity that we received, but power, love, and self-discipline.” A number of translations convey a similar reading (for example, Today’s English Version and the Jerusalem Bible).*

*This fits perfectly with verse 6 and explains it. In that verse Paul urges Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God,” his giftedness for ministry. The basis for this appeal goes back to his original gift of the Spirit, given at conversion. He is therefore to exercise his Spirit-given gifts for ministry with the power, love, and self-discipline given him by the Holy Spirit from the very first. Martin Luther celebrated this reality in the hymn “A Mighty Fortress”: “The Spirit and the gifts are ours.” — Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To guard the deposit. Preaching the Word (173–174). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.*

**Why is it important that we know what gifts God has given us? What difference does it make?**

*When I was six years old, my father built us a house. Architectural Digest didn’t notice, but my mom sure did. Dad constructed it, board by board, every day after work. My youth didn’t deter him from giving me a job. He tied an empty nail apron around my waist, placed a magnet in my hands, and sent me on daily patrols around the building site, carrying my magnet only inches off the ground.*

*One look at my tools and you could guess my job. Stray-nail collector.*

*One look at yours and the same can be said. Brick by brick, life by life, God is creating a kingdom, a “spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2:5 CEV). He entrusted you with a key task in the project. Examine your tools and discover it. Your ability unveils your destiny. — Cure for the Common Life / Lucado, M. (2006). Grace for the moment® volume ii: More inspirational thoughts for each day of the year. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.*

**How can we discover the gifts God has given us?**

*At this very moment in another section of the church building in which I write, little kids explore their tools. Preschool classrooms may sound like a cacophony to you and me, but God hears a symphony.*

*A five-year-old sits at a crayon-strewn table. He seldom talks. Classmates have long since set aside their papers, but he ponders his. The colors compel him. He marvels at the gallery of kelly green and navy blue and royal purple. Masterpiece in hand, he’ll race to Mom and Dad, eager to show them his kindergarten Picasso.*

*His sister, however, forgets her drawing. She won’t consume the home commute with tales of painted pictures. She’ll tell tales of tales. “The teacher told us a new story today!” And the girl will need no prodding to repeat it.*

*Another boy cares less about the story and the drawings and more about the other kids. He spends the day wearing a “Hey, listen to me!” expression, lingering at the front of the class, testing the patience of the teacher. He relishes attention, evokes reactions. His theme seems to be “Do it this way. Come with me. Let’s try this.”*

*Meaningless activities at an insignificant age? Or subtle hints of hidden strengths? I opt for the latter. The quiet boy with the color fascination may someday brighten city walls with murals. His sister may pen a screenplay or teach literature to curious coeds. And the kid who recruits followers today might eventually do the same on behalf of a product, the poor, or even his church.*

*What about you? Our Maker gives assignments to people, “to each according to each one’s unique ability” (Matt. 25:15). As he calls, he equips. Look back over your life. What have you consistently done well? What have you loved to do? Stand at the intersection of your affections and successes and find your uniqueness.*

*You have one. A divine spark. An uncommon call to an uncommon life. “The Spirit has given each of us a special way of serving others” (1 Cor. 12:7 CEV). So much for the excuse “I don’t have anything to offer.” Did the apostle Paul say, “The Spirit has given some of us . . .”? Or, “The Spirit has given a few of us . . .”? No. “The Spirit has given each of us a special way of serving others.” Enough of this self-deprecating “I can’t do anything.”*

*And enough of its arrogant opposite: “I have to do everything.” No, you don’t! You’re not God’s solution to society, but a solution in society. Imitate Paul, who said, “Our goal is to stay within the boundaries of God’s plan for us” (2 Cor. 10:13 NLT). Clarify your contribution.*

*Don’t worry about skills you don’t have. Don’t covet strengths others do have. Just extract your uniqueness. “Kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you” (2 Tim. 1:6 NASB). And do so to . . . — Lucado, M. (2011). Life to the max - a Max Lucado digital sampler. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.*

**Verse 7. Read between the lines just a bit. How do you suppose Timothy is feeling here?**

*Understanding that it is the work of the Holy Spirit that is in view in verse 7, we read, “For God did not give us [the] Spirit of timidity.” The Holy Spirit simply does not give this fainting quality. Or as some renderings suggest, he did not give us “cowardice.” The Spirit does not give fear that makes us shrink from duty, as Timothy was tempted to do. Rather, the Spirit breathes “power” into the weak.*

*The marvelous fact is, the Timothies of this world make perfect receptacles for the Spirit’s power when they turn to him. As quoted earlier, Oswald Chambers wrote:*

*God can achieve his purpose either through the absence of human power and resources, or the abandonment of reliance on them. All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources.*

*Feeling weak, timid, inadequate even though you want to serve God? Feeling like Timothy? If so, you are an inviting prospect for the Holy Spirit. And if you call upon him, he will fill you with “power.” — Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To guard the deposit. Preaching the Word (174). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.*

**Verse 7 mentions love. How is biblical love different from the world’s concept of love?**

*Next, the Spirit gives “love.” In the New Testament love is much more than a feeling, because it eventuates in service for others in the power of the Holy Spirit. The love that the Spirit gives stands tall and perseveres. The graces of “power” and “love” are mutually complementary. Their qualities flow from one to the other and back again. — Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To guard the deposit. Preaching the Word (174–175). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.*

**Lastly, Paul mentions self-discipline. Why is self-discipline important to Christian living?**

*Finally, the Spirit gives “self-discipline,” in the sense of self-mastery. This has been defined as “the sanity of saintliness.” Philip Towner explains:*

*Paul has in mind a measure of control over one’s thinking and actions that allows a balanced outlook on any situation. When everything is coming unglued, this quality of “levelheadedness” will keep the Christian focused calmly on the power and love that the Spirit provides, and so it makes perseverance in life and ministry possible.*

*This concern will be expressed again in 4:5 when Paul commands Timothy, “But you, keep your head in all situations.” The Spirit gives the self-mastery that enables us to lead because we have been mastered for Christ. — Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To guard the deposit. Preaching the Word (175). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.*

**How would you define self-discipline? Does it mean getting up early?**

*The Bible does not, however, give a precise definition of what it means by self-control. We tend to move quickly from the phrase self-discipline to the type A picture above. I want to suggest there are some problems with the popular definition of discipline.*

*For example, why is it that one seems disciplined if he gets up early, but one seems to lack discipline if he stays up late? We respect a person who gets up at five; we wonder about the person who stays up ’till two. The popular definition shows preference to morning people. We get Benjamin Franklin confused with the Bible: “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.” Spoken like a true type A morning person. And besides, there was no electricity in those days.*

*It seems disciplined to be highly organized, to keep careful records, to have elaborate filing systems and thick personal organizers. But there is a trade-off. It takes time to maintain all those systems. Type A personalities will argue that it saves time in the long run. A more plausible explanation for why they do it is that they like being organized. It makes them feel good about themselves. It makes them feel their life is in control. And this is all well and good, until we confuse this with spiritual maturity or enjoying God.*

*These are just two examples of popular definitions of self-control that may or may not fit in the definition of self-control in the verses above. The Bible tells us to be self-controlled, not to be early-to-bed, early-to-rise.*

*For example, when I was in college, I found my mind was fried when I got home following lunch after a morning of lectures. So, I slept all afternoon. I usually spent the evenings relaxing and fellowshipping with friends. Then, I would study from about 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. Sleeping four hours every afternoon does not fit the popular definition of discipline, nor does staying up ’till two in the morning. But there were few other students that studied as consistently as I did, or, for that matter, rested as well as I did. I call that discipline.*

*Perhaps this would be a good time to offer a definition of discipline: Getting done what needs to get done. It has nothing to do with how we get things done; it has everything to do with that we get them done. It has nothing to do with alarm clocks or notebooks, it has to do with results. It is not having an alphabetized to-do list, or a to-do list sorted according to priority, or type of task, it is having a “to-done” list that matters. — Josh Hunt. Enjoying God Makes All The Difference.*

**Does following God require courage? How so? Can you give an example?**

*Peace doesn’t come from finding a lake with no storms. It comes from having Jesus in the boat.*

*God does not want us to live in worry or fear. He wants us to live with bold confidence in his power. “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” In the Bible, we see a pattern in which God rarely sends people into situations where their comfort level is high. Rather He promises to be with them in their fear. It is God’s presence — not comfortable circumstances — that brings people to the best version of themselves.*

*God told Abraham to leave everything familiar and go to a land he did not know, and he told him that God himself would give birth to a new nation that would change the world. Abraham went, and a nation was born.*

*God told Moses to confront Pharaoh — the most powerful man on earth — and that God himself would use Moses’ faithfulness to deliver his people. Moses confronted, and God delivered.*

*God told Joshua that if he would be a strong and courageous leader when everyone wanted to return to slavery, God would go with them and give them the land. Joshua was strong and courageous, and God himself gave them the land.*

*Over and over we see this pattern repeated. David faced the giant Goliath, Elijah faced seven hundred prophets of Baal, and Daniel faced a den of lions — and always there was God in the midst of their fear. — Ortberg, J. (2010). The me i want to be. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.*

**Verse 12 is the basis of an old hymn. What exactly does it mean, “What I have entrusted him”?**

*A stranger approaches you at the bus stop one morning and asks you to invest $5,000 in his new business venture. Your swift response is negative, for you are unaware of the individual’s identity or integrity. You will not place your trust in someone you do not know.*

*The same principle is at work in the spiritual realm. The more you know about Jesus, the more you will entrust into His care. How well are you acquainted with Jesus Christ? Do you know as much about Him as one knows about mountain climbing by reading books on the subject? Or do you know Jesus intimately as one who knows mountain climbing by ascending the summit of Mount Everest?*

*You can know Jesus for yourself by investigating the Word of God regularly, praying habitually about small and common needs, and obeying in the trifles of life. A vital faith in Christ is forged in the tiny corners of the home and heart. You see answers to prayers and observe Him at work in your life.*

*If you want great faith in Christ, set your heart to know and obey Him in the little tasks. Your faith will increase because you will “know whom [you] have believed” (2 Tim. 1:12).*

*Father, examine every aspect of my home life, my work, and my relationships. Shine Your light into the deepest recesses of my heart, for there a vital faith in You is forged. — Stanley, C. F. (1998). Enter His gates: A daily devotional. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.*