Stir It Up

It’s amazing how much insightful inspiration God packs into two verses.

2 Timothy 1:6,7

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

In this context, “the gift of God” refers to a gift ministry, as Ephesians 4:11 details.

Ephesians 4:11

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

These are spiritual abilities energized by God to lead the Church. They are not the only spiritual abilities God gifts in the Church, as Romans 12 declares.

Romans 12: 4-8

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

These seven spiritual abilities (or “giftings” if you will) are not an exclusive list, but a representative sampling of all the diverse and multifaceted gifts God gives “according to the grace given to us”. Some of us have a musical gifting, some a wisdom gifting. Some have a business ability, and some have an art gifting. Some have been gifted with a new way to deliver a product and some God has shown some new products to make. Some have insight on software, some on hardware, and some on sportswear! Some of us God has given insight on a scripture verse for which millions in the world yearn. Some are prayer warriors, and some are heart counselors. Each of us is gifted by God through our past experiences, physical DNA and “spiritual DNA” to have contributions for the Church and world that are unique to us and critical to spiritual progress. Although 2 Tim. refers to a leadership gift ministry in the church, the basics principles of God’s gifting to all saints are similar. That’s why we’ll expand the discussion of gift ministry principles to include the gift abilities God gives us all.

One thing that can be misunderstood are the words “the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands”. This seems to say that God’s gift ability comes in someone from someone laying on hands. This is not the case although other scriptures seem to agree.

1 Timothy 4:14

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

Think about this: if a leadership gift ministry comes by laying on of hands of the presbytery (elders), then let me ask you a question, do you need an apostle where you live? Then just get your local elders to go lay hands on someone and make an apostle! Isn’t that idea silly? Of course! Laying hands on someone makes them an apostle as much as putting something in a garage makes it a car! It’s either a car or not regardless of where it is. Similarly, someone is an apostle whether hands are laid on them or not. How do we know this? Because it says so right there in the verse – it’s “a gift from God”. God makes someone an apostle, not a man or a group of elders. All laying on of hands does is confirm publicly what God has already done spiritually. This is also the reason for prophesy during ordination. It’s to publicly proclaim what God has done, is doing, and will be doing in that person’s life. Look at Jesus’ example.

Mark 3:16-17

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Here is Jesus’ dramatic ordination. Let me ask you a silly question to make a point. Did Jesus become God’s son that day? Of course not. He was God’s son decades before, starting with his conception in Mary. This was a public proclamation of what God had done, was doing and would continue doing in Jesus life. “Pay attention!” God was saying, “Follow his lead!” In a similar way, the laying on of hands and prophesy in ordination is God’s way of publicly announcing what He has done, is doing and will continue doing in a minister’s life. “Pay attention!” God says, “Follow his/her lead!”.

When the Bible says, “the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” it is not literally true, but a figurative expression to emphasize Paul’s personal involvement and knowledge of Timothy’s gifting. It could be expanded and translated “the gift of God, which is in thee [and made public knowledge] by the putting on of my hands”. The laying on of hands is seen in the Bible to publicly identify the one receiving prayer, healing and ordination with the one praying, healing or prophesying.

God’s gifting to a minister or any saint isn’t something “new”. It’s not an addition to what God has already given. It is already there when they are born again. It’s a part of the spirit God gives us when we are saved. What gifting abilities God gives each of us are part of the new birth package received at salvation and are gradually learned by us and exercised unto fruition.

This is true with every spiritual gifting and calling, as seen repeatedly in the Bible. At 17 years old Joseph knew that God called him to deliver his family and be honored by them. His brothers were so unhappy about this revelation that they tried to kill him and decided instead to sell him into slavery. More than twenty years later, after Joseph learned to walk with God in wisdom, he saved his family, Egypt and the world through his service, just as God showed him.

God showed Moses that he would be the one to deliver Israel out of Egypt. So immediately Moses started a one-man revolution against Egypt, killing an Egyptian who was oppressing an Israeli. The next day a similar situation developed and Moses, intimidated by a lack of results, fled the country, marking the quickest cancelled revolution ever! After 40 more years of seasoning, God led Moses back to his original calling and the rest is history.

This may shock some of us, but a twelve-year-old boy once decided that God’s gifting to him was sufficient, so he launched God’s calling pre-emptively, leaving his parents and family during a religious pilgrimage. His parents soon realized that he was missing from the family entourage and returned to the religious center, finding their twelve-year-old prodigy conversing with world class experts. “Why did you do this to us?” they asked him. He responded, “Don’t you know that I must be about my Father’s business?” “Yes”, they might have responded, “but can’t you wait until at least you’re out of middle school?”

The Bible teaches that God’s people consistently get God’s calling, gifting and desires early on. It usually takes a while for them to recognize God’s calling and grow in wisdom and desire to serve what God has entrusted them with. Remember, it took Jesus at least another 15 years + to grow in wisdom enough to successfully begin to give away what God had gifted him. And he was… Jesus! That it took Joseph only 20+ years and Moses 40 years is impressive when you think about it. It’s not enough for God to give us ability, or ideas, but we must also learn to walk with God to find out the details of what we’ve been gifted in order to share it effectively.

Let me ask some more silly questions (of which I seem to excel). When Jesus was born, was he the savior of the world? Sure, but was he ready to save the world? Not really. His mom had to change his diapers. Not quite ready for saving the world yet, huh? How about when he was 12 years old, wowing the experts and raring to go? Not quite ready for prime time yet, huh? How about when he was about thirty years old? Yep.

Luke 2:40, 52

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Although Jesus started out as the son of God, the savior of the world, he still had to “grow into it”. It took a while for him to learn wisdom, grace, and spiritual trust, among so many other things. This is a great lesson for us all.

God gifts each of us special abilities in the new birth. It takes a while to discover and develop the unique way God works in us to bless others and the world. Let me pose another question: Why do we sometimes see saints doing and contributing little spiritually? It could be that they’re still in the early stages of learning or they’re afraid. This reason is stated in the context – the spirit of fear. Now, most times in the Bible the English word “fear” is translated from the Greek word phobos, from which we get today’s word “phobia”, which is defined as “a persistent, irrational fear of a specific object, activity, or situation that leads to a compelling desire to avoid it.” For years I read this scripture assuming that “fear” was phobos until it was pointed out that it was another word, deilia, translated in many versions “timid” or “timidity” and in a couple “cowardice”. Wow! Now that makes sense.

Why don’t we exercise our unique gifts? Does it happen because we are phobos afraid, or deilia timid (or it could be said, intimidated)? Most of the saints I know put off phobos fear early in their Christian life. On the other hand, deilia timidity can linger longer, stifling the development and maturity of our gifts. How does this sly, nasty spirit operate? Like this: for example, it says,

“People are going to think you’re crazy (if you say what God put on your heart)”.

“You’re going to go broke (if you do this divinely inspired business idea)”.

“Your spouse (or friends) will leave you (if you go into the ministry)”.

“Did you just make up this idea (or ability, or process, or song, or career, or…?)?”

“You’d better not do or say what is on your heart because of the consequences. Better to be thought a fool than to open your mouth (or do what is inspired) and remove all doubt!”

If we give in to these ideas, we do and say little, therefore no desire of our heart is accomplished, and we lack sweetness for our soul.

Prov. 13:19a

The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul.

Far too many Christians have little “spice” in their life. They are bitter “at what life has handed them”. They are regrettably miserable at the tedium of their existence. The reason is simple and answer obvious. They have been intimidated from their gifting and calling from God. He called them to be a dancer or choreographer and they are “sitting on the sidelines”. Or perhaps He has called them to have insight on a phone app that makes commerce easier and safer, and instead they are playing the “safe” route, working for someone else only and not spending any

time building their vision. Or perhaps they have forgotten the song God put in their heart, only remembering it from time to time. Or perhaps, they’ve buried the insight God gave them on scripture because of others’ potential ridicule. I could go on, but you get the point. The spirit of deilia intimidates a prophet from prophesying, a dancer from dancing, an artist from expressing God’s heart, a counselor from counseling, a Christian comedian from giving the church joy, or a poor kid from the ghetto becoming a pediatric neurosurgeon like Ben Carson. As we accomplish the desires God gave us, it is sweet to the soul. When we aren’t achieving them, or are at least in the process of achieving them, life can be empty and meaningless.

There’s no good reason for us to be in this tough situation. God gives us the way to deal with the spirit of intimidation, deilia.

2 Timothy 1:6,7

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

God wants us to “stir up the gift”. What does that mean? When I think of “stir up? I think of a cup of coffee and cream, dispersed by a stirring spoon, but that is not the picture that the Greek words paint. The texts have the word anazopureo, comprised of three root words – ana, meaning “up”, zoe, meaning “life”, and pur, meaning “fire”. The original word means to “up the life of the fire”, which is mildly puzzling until you remember the time it was written. You see, there was no electricity, central heating or “stove top cooking” then. Fire pits and fire places were the only source of cooking and heat for the first century home. The first chore upon awakening each day was to tend to the fire. The diligent homemaker would stir up the hearth and see what was there. As anyone knows who has tended a camp fire, even hours after it has seemingly burnt out, there are still embers within that if stirred and nourished, can roar back to life. That is the picture painted here with anazopureo, “up the life of the fire”. God’s gift is figuratively referred to as the embers of a fire to “stir up”. How do we do that?



Once again, the answer is provided.

2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Instead of the spirit of timidity or intimidation which suppresses and tries to snuff out the fire of God’s gift, the spirit God gave us is described three ways: “power, love, and a sound mind”. The Greek word for “power” is dunamis, from which “dynamite” came. It is potential power and was spoken of by Jesus right before Pentecost.

Acts 1:8

But ye shall receive power [dunamis], after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

On Pentecost the disciples received dunamis and spoke in tongues. They were not intimidated by the throngs attending the feast, the temple guards, nor the religious leaders. Why not? They realized that there was something in them bigger than just them. It was more powerful than just everyday body and soul humanity. It was body, soul and spirit! They were no longer just natural, but supernatural. They could speak in a language they didn’t know. They could interpret and prophesy. They could know things outside their natural ability. They could also do supernatural acts with that knowledge. They were no longer just homo sapiens, but Holy Sapiens! Christ was in them! They had been given eternal life! Man’s greatest fear – the fear of death – no longer had a stranglehold on them, because death no longer held them in slavery! Death had been the black abyss horror, but now became a speed bump! They were now new creations, with nothing in this world able to separate them from God’s love. These spiritual realities melted intimidation and rekindled God’s gift and calling in their lives, as it does ours also. When we realize what God has given us and we what have, timidity gets booted!

The next way God describes His spirit is “love”. Why did Jesus die on the cross? Did he just have an open afternoon Wednesday April 9th 27 AD and wanted to try something new? Hardly.

John 15:13

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus knew from scripture the horror that the messiah would endure to redeem man. Ps. 22 and Is. 53 is hard to read about Jesus. I can’t imagine reading it (as Jesus did) about yourself and what you are being asked to suffer. Why would someone go through that? Perhaps because they deserved it, but Jesus deserved the opposite of what he endured. Hundreds of years before, Isaiah wrote:

Is. 53:4-6

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He took our sin and failure on himself because God showed him what it would accomplish for us.

Heb. 12:2

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

God gave him special gifts and callings, unique in all creation and history to only him and Adam. Jesus had every right as a sinless perfect man to turn down the role God offered him in carrying out man’s redemption. Man had earned all the pain, brokenness and consequences, not Jesus. Jesus had earned praise and glory for his life and ministry, yet he accepted shame in man’s place. Why? Because of love. He knew God’s love for him and mirrored that toward man.

Was Jesus intimidated by the throngs, temple guards or religious leaders? No. he had a job to do and would not be deterred because he loved. He even ministered to individuals of the throng and a soldier in the midst of defamation. You and I have what we have today because Jesus loved us and would not be deterred by his own self-interest.

Love is the great motivator. When I was single I would occasionally struggle to have rent and all the other expenses of living. When I got married and started a family, love motivated me to make more money, more often, for more things, than I ever knew was possible. Suddenly, I wouldn’t take “no” or lack for an answer. My baby needed food. She was going to get food. Whether I slept or ate was irrelevant. What was relevant was the baby eating, having a warm dry place to lay and clothes to wear. Love made me a tireless worker and a bolder negotiator with the boss. Love doesn’t get intimidated because…

1 Cor. 13:4-5 Net Bible

Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up.

It is not rude, it is not self-serving, it is not easily angered or resentful.

Love is not “self-serving”. If Jesus was self-serving, we would be unsaved. If our parents were self-serving, we might have been auctioned off to the highest bidder! Love transcends the challenges of learning our gift so that we can help others as Christ helped us. We don’t get intimidated because of “the joy set before us” God shows us what can happen as we give what he gave us. We see people blessed, hearts healed, smiles of joy, and families reconciled. We see our gifts received by others as we obey God and are on “His team”, as Jesus was. We must take our eyes off ourselves and see the vision God has of us serving others in what ever category God has prompted us. Life is sweet when we make a difference in peoples’ lives and it’s empty when it’s… just us. That spirit in us is … love.

God’s spirit is also referred to as “sound mind”, or it could be translated “sound thinking”. Where does that come from? The Bible, of course. For all the decades of thought and analysis I’ve given it, I still don’t understand how reading the Bible helps us. I just know that it does.

John 6:63

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

If I read the Bible I have more spiritual life and sound thinking, if I don’t, I have less. I’ve seen this proved in my life and others’ countless times. God’s word gives us spiritual life in our physical lives. It also gives us the ability to have sound thinking on so many levels – spiritually, logically, emotionally, professionally, morally, and in other critical areas. This world in which we live, flows in the currents of unsound thinking constantly. (And technology seems to be promoting unsound thinking, not lessening it.) We must feed our mind a steady diet of Bible, especially the church epistles, so that God can strengthen us, inspire us and embolden us.

The God who gave you the gifting (whenever that was), is the same God with us today. It’s not like He gave you the dream of counseling, teaching, inventing, or leading a home fellowship, and then said “Figure it out. I’ll be back in a few decades to see how you did!”

Phil 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

God gives us the dream and helps us fulfill it. It’s not something we do apart from Him to impress Him. It’s something we do in fellowship with Him. It’s done “together”. He gives us wisdom to tell us what to do and when to do it. This info goes into our minds and becomes “sound thinking”. We get this info during prayer time, long walks with God, when waking up, in dreams, bathroom breaks, conversations with others, etc. If we ask, He’ll tell us.

James 1:5

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Doesn’t it make sense that if God gives us the “destination”, then he will also give us the guidance on how to get there? Of course. Now the wisdom may not come the next second after we request it, but it will come. How? Don’t know. Read about how God guided His people in the Bible. Sometimes it was all laid out and sometimes there’s long periods of patient faithfulness and learning until God gives the next instruction. The key is to walk with Him faithfully so as to be near the Wisdom Giver “when the wisdom gets given”.

God made life to be a walk with Him, not a formula. With formulas, all you need to do is the proscribed steps to achieve the desired result. This is not how Christianity works because God is not a “step”. Want a formula? Here it is. Walk with God in love. Worship, pray and talk to Him. Stick the Bible in your head regularly. Remember what He told you about your gifting. Keep working on it and doing it and asking Him how to get where He showed you.

Stirring up a fire in biblical times meant exposing the embers to the air and adding some kindling and wood. We do the same with our gifting. We expose the gift to the spirit (from the same word translated “wind” elsewhere). We put some Bible and direct guidance on it to fuel it back to a blaze.

Do you know when the best time to plant a tree is? Ten years ago! Do you know when the next best time to plant a tree is? Today! Ten years from now will happen if the Lord tarries. The only question is, will there be a tree growing and prospering?

Do you know when the best time to launch your gifting is? Right after God shows it to you. Do you know when the next best time to stir up your gifting journey? Today. What will your life be like ten years from now, if the Lord tarries? Will you be doing what God put in your heart? It’s always a good time and never too late to stir up the gift God gave you to share.

Prov. 13:19a

The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul.

Let’s fire up God’s calling in our life, which is our heart’s desires, making everyone’s life sweet!