

About a month ago September 13, we embarked on a mission together called “Fanning the Flames”. This terminology comes from the NIV version of II Timothy 1:6 where the Apostle Paul encourages Timothy to “fan into flame the gift that is within you “... The New American Standard Bible translates it to say “kindle afresh the gift of God that is within you... For you King Jimmers the Authorized Version says “that thou stir up the gift of God which is within thee” ...

For the first three weeks of this campaign we focused on how to discover or rediscover our gifts. How to identify our special God-given gifts. Many of you here already knew the areas that God has gifted you and you have faithfully served in your gifted area. Today we begin to talk about how to use those gifts. How to put some shoes on them and get them walking. Hence the title of my message 10 ½ EEE, my shoe size!

*I Corinthians 12:4-7 says, 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 **But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.***

Each one of you has gifts that are unique to you. How can that be you ask? For you Bible Scholars we know there are only 18-23 actual gifts mentioned in the scriptures. This number varies based on just how charismatic you choose to measure it. Let me show you what I mean. One of Melanie and mine favorite place to eat is right here in Waterford. The little place called Gerace’s. The owner is named Antonio and he is from Gerace Italy. He calls me Gregorio and Melanie is Carmelo. He loves to make Italian food homemade Mtsa balls / Linguini / Alfredo / the raviolis/ is so good!!! We love it. But ask him to make biscuits and gravy? Itsa not so good. Right next door at Joanna’s is terrific B&G by Bernardo. Both have a great culinary talent but obviously gifted in two different areas. Same goes for the church for example there are over one hundred of you in here now and there may be 20 of you with the gift of Hospitality. But each one is different for example some of you love to host in your home. Some of you have people stay with you long term like with exchange programs. Some of you are involved with different components of the Inter faith hospitality program. Each one of you has

gifts that no one else can possess. Verse seven states...*7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.* God has chosen you and your special DNA, Your past, your character, your experiences for the ‘Common Good’ There are Varieties of gifts, varieties of Ministries, varieties of effects but ONE Spirit, One Lord, One God

Today we begin to talk about what to do with those gifts / how to put them in action / How to put “Shoes and Socks” on them and get them in motion. That is what Paul is telling Timothy. Get your gift into motion / no longer let it be dormant. Your gift is unique to you and it is needed for the common good.

This “fan into flames” or “stir-up” picture from II Timothy is really interesting. Well I have two gifts. I love to cook and I love to eat. I am really good at one of them! A while back, I purchased some dehydrated potatoes. I thought they would be handy so one day I got them out and put them in a crockpot. It was not quite half full and I added a little water and plugged them in. Now I was planning on making some escaloped potatoes so the first thing I did was put in a little butter. My mom taught me many things... “Elbows off the table” / Always wear clean underwear / There is no such word as “Gooder”. Now for those of you that cook you know what I am going to say...”If a little bit of butter is good, a little more has to be GOODER!” My mom was wrong. Well anyway I then chopped up some onion and open the lid and put it in. Wow these potatoes were growing. Then I chopped up some Ham mmm good! I went to put it in but there was no room I looked at the potatoes then I looked at the ham / I looked at the potatoes and I looked at the ham / I scooped out some potatoes and added the ham! Next I went to cut up some cheese and when I got back to the pot the lid had blown right off! That is what Paul is saying, “Blow the lid off Timothy!” rekindle the fire / don’t let it go out / put some shoes and socks on you gift and get it into motion! The message is for us. Fan into flame the gift that is within you!!!

Jesus gives us a great teaching about the responsibility of gifts in the parable of the talents. In Matthew chapter 25, He tells of the man who is about to go on a journey but before doing so he call in his slaves. To one he gives five talents to another he gives two talents and to last one he give one talent. There is some

argument as to the value of what a talent was worth. For the sake of argument let's agree that it was a substantial sum for these slaves. When this parable is taught we sometimes forget that in Matthew 25:15 'HE GAVE...EACH ACCORDING TO HIS OWN ABILITY' I believe this supports what Paul said in I Corinthians 12 when he states TO ONE IS GIVEN THE WORD OF WISDOM... TO ANOTHER THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE...TO ANOTHER FAITH / and so on. In fact in verse 18 he says ..."GOD HAS PLACED THE MEMBERS EACH ONE OF THEM, IN THE BODY JUST AS HE DESIRED".

We do not Choose our gifts we discover our gifts

When the man returns he call in his slaves for an accounting. The one with five talents says "traded and worked with what you entrusted me...here is five more! The master says well done good and faithful slave. He then calls in the slave with two talents and the slave tells him that he had worked and traded and gained two more. Well done good and faithful slave. When he calls the last slave in the slaves says," I knew you were a hard man, reaping where you do not sew and gathering where you scattered no seed. I was afraid so I hid your talent in the ground so here it is! You wicked, lazy slave. You knew what kind of man I was..... Why didn't you put it in the bank so it would at least earn interest?

Every speaker or presenter hopes that everyone in their audience captures something from the message. Some little morsel. A tiny tidbit that they can take with them that has some meaning. Well brothers and sisters..... Here it comes. If you leave with nothing else, capture this...

The master says to take the talent from the one and give it to the slave that now has ten talents for. "For to everyone who has, *more* shall be given, and he will have abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away." Matthew 25:29 You see the sin / error / mistake wasn't wasting the talent or squandering the talent or embezzling the talent or stealing the talent IT WAS NOT **USING** THE TALENT! It was doing nothing. It was letting it remain in a dead / dormant state and not putting shoes and socks on it... Whatever analogy you want to use, but I think you get the picture.

Some of you are “Half Empty” people and some of you are “Half Full” people. I am going to serve it both ways and you can take your pick.

Half Empty There is a great danger to waste a talent. In this parable the wicked/lazy slave loses his talent and is cast into outer darkness enough about that

Half Full there is a reward for faithfulness When I took the Job of Coordinator of Ministry Gifts; I told Neil and the committee that I want to be about helping people to be using their gifts. I have experienced a deeper / richer / closer / oneness / bondier / I can't name it relationship with God You see this parable teaches that if you are faithful with your talent You get more! Heed the words of instruction that Paul had for Timothy. It is not about you / it is about the “common good”. Heed the teachings of Jesus. Put some Shoes and socks on it start moving

If you think it is good now? It will be GOODER!!!