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There is nothing I love more than to be out camping and waking up early in the morning to get the fire going.

You get two sticks exactly the same – then you have a match.

Usually I go camping with men – white-fellas.

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White-fella fires are nice to look at and they keep you warm – but they are totally useless for cooking and putting the billy – they're just too hot.

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If you don’t fan the fire of faith – does it go out – do you lose your faith – we all know people who seem to have lost their faith.

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2 Timothy 1:6-7 – For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and of love and self-control.

There is nothing I love more than to be out camping and waking up early in the morning to get the fire going.

You get two sticks exactly the same – then you have a match.

Usually I go camping with men – white-fellas.

White-fellas love to make big fires – I don't know why.

White-fella fires are nice to look at and they keep you warm – but they are totally useless for cooking and putting the billy – they're just too hot.

You get a pile of Mulga wood and you can't get anywhere near it.

You don't want to be sleeping like a log around white fellas making a fire.

The good thing is that the next morning, you have a beautiful bed of coals to cook breakfast –to make damper – but??

What happens?

Somebody get's up and put's wood on the coals and starts another nice big white-fella fire – making it totally useless again – all those beautiful damper making coals are gone and you can't get anywhere near the fire.

So when I take groups away I train the fellas to make 2 fires – a white-fella fire – big and hot just for sitting around and a black-fella fire – a small cooking fire.

In the morning things swap around – the white-fella fire from the night before is a nice big pile of red hot coals – perfect for cooking breakfast – and the black-fella fire which is almost out is rekindled into a white-fella fire to sit around and keep warm.

It's a good system you always have a good cooking fire and the white-fellas are satisfied with their great big useless fire – you can't get anywhere near.

Anyway, I love to get up early and fan the little blackfella fire back into life. I like to get it burning nicely so that when the others get up they have some warmth – and I cook a damper on the beautiful bed of coals left from the old white-fella fire.

It's a simple camping pleasure to fan a fire into life.

Paul says to Timothy fan the fire of faith in you – keep it going – keep it hot.

*“It only takes a spark to get a fire going
And soon all those around Can warm up in its glowing
That's how it is with God's love...”*

So, Paul says fan the fire of faith in you.

Paul also says in Thessalonians (5:19) "Quench not the Holy Spirit in you".

“Fan” – “quench”, can you see a problem here?

The problem for me is one of logics.

Paul says “fan the fire of faith” – what if you don’t?

If you don’t fan the fire of faith – does it go out – do you lose your faith – we all know people who seem to have lost their faith.

The logic here is that it seems that our faith depends on us fanning it.

The same with Pauls other command – “quench not the Holy Spirit in you” – what if you do quench it – does it go out – do you lose your faith?

Again it seems our faith depends on us either fanning it to flame or us chucking water on it – putting it out.

That’s the logic.

So does our faith depend on our efforts?

Do we make or break our own faith?

We know too well our faith is a gift – nothing to do with our efforts:

Ephesians 2: we are saved by grace through faith and this is a gift from God just in case we boast that we created our faith.

There is nothing we can do to earn faith or forgiveness or eternal life it is all, given to us – that’s God’s grace – that’s God’s love.

I hope I’m not making a mountain out of a mole hill.

I just want us to be sure faith comes from hearing the Gospel;

Rom 10:17 very simply says: Faith comes from hearing the Gospel of Jesus.

When Paul says – fan the fire of your faith – he’s not saying, “Timothy you make your own faith grow”.

He’s saying when you hear me – you are hearing Jesus encouraging you.

If you are hearing Jesus in any way – your faith is growing.

Fan the fire of your faith – is to hear Jesus – then it’s clear it is the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit making your faith grow.

As Luther’s meaning to the 3rd article of the Creed says:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

I believe I can’t grow my faith??

I believe the Holy Spirit can grow my faith through the Gospel.

The Gospel is an unusual thing.

In the 3 main ways we receive it – in Confession and Absolution, in Baptism, and in Holy Communion – it is as narrow – and defined as can be. Here it is strictly confined to the word of forgiveness: “Take and drink the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of all your sins”.

That’s the Gospel in the purest and narrowest sense.

Like the prophet Nathan said to King David’s confession: Your sins are forgiven – in four words, contempt, adultery, and murder were forever forgiven.

But we also receive the gospel in other ways – in love from friends and relative.

The gospel is also so broad and “Loose” that a hug from a person who cares for you or loves you in a Christian way is the Gospel – it is Jesus embracing, loving, forgiving you in the same way he does in the bread and wine of the sacrament.

Timothy is reminded that the gospel came to him from His grandmother Eunice and his mother Lois. That form of the gospel would probably have been simple teaching, stories, prayers, love and hugs.

Maybe many of you received the gospel in this way.

Just remember faith comes, grows, is rekindled, by hearing or receiving the Gospel.

Fan the fire of faith Timothy – a gentle encouragement – a gospel from Paul – now an old man in prison – facing death.

Fan the fire – don’t quench it.

Who helped you grow in faith?

Who did the Holy Spirit use to help you grow in faith?

It’s a privilege of God that in most times and in most places he uses people like you and me to grow his people into faith.

BTW, Scripturally, the job of teaching and growing, is meant to be mainly by men.

These days the job of teaching the faith is done mainly by women – thankfully.

But where is the teaching and mentoring and growing of children by men these days – in my experience it is few and far between.

Come on men.

In the Long-Riders we have a member called Robbie. He went to jail for 5 years – he says it was for something he didn’t do – it was a mistaken identity according to Robbie.

When he got out of jail he got half of his face tattooed so that they would never mistake him again.

Anyway Robbie was in that cell by himself and he found a Gideon’s bible. He read it and read it – and one day he became a Christian.

Today he is the strongest Christian you’ll come across.

The point is his faith was grown – in the same way as everybody – by hearing the Gospel – as he read his bible

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