INTRO
Imagine that we are at a marathon race. Many contestants are lined up at the starting point, but one especially catches your eye. He’s in his sixties, but he looks much older. You can tell that his body has endured many hardships. The thought flits through your mind that the old guy could die on the course. You wonder, “Why is he even in the race?”
But as the race gets underway, you’re amazed and perplexed that the old man holds his own. In fact, he even pulls in front of the pack. And to your utter astonishment, as you stand at the finish line, you see him sprinting far ahead of his competitors. As he approaches the finish line, you expect him to collapse in a heap. But, instead, he turns and trots back to an earlier point in the course where a younger man in his late thirties seems to be losing steam. The older man jogs alongside the younger man, saying, “Come on, you can make it! Hang in there! Don’t quit!”

[Pause and look at the crowd]
If that really happened, I would want to know, “What does this old guy have that I don’t?” If I heard that he was going to speak on his training secrets, I’d show up and take notes. Clearly, the old man knows something about endurance. He is an example of how to finish well.

I didn’t make up that story. It really happened, but in the spiritual race, not in an actual marathon. We read about it in Paul’s second letter to Timothy. The apostle was in his sixties, but his body bore the marks of much suffering. He was in a cold, damp dungeon in Rome, about A.D. 67, awaiting execution at the hands of the cruel madman, Nero.

There were numerous reasons that he could have been discouraged:

In 1:15, he writes, “all who are in Asia turned away from me.”
In 4:10, he mentions Demas, whom he had formerly called a “fellow worker” (Phil 24). But now he had deserted Paul, “having loved this present world.”

In 4:14, he warns Timothy about Alexander the coppersmith, who did Paul much harm. Perhaps he had been responsible for Paul’s arrest and imprisonment.

In 4:16, he pathetically writes, “At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me.” Only Luke was with him (4:11). Of course Luke had to be the only one! Not only that, but as the aged apostle awaited execution, he saw many serious errors infiltrating the churches.

Some had gone astray from the truth, teaching that the resurrection had already taken place, thus upsetting the faith of some (2:17-18).

Other ungodly false teachers were entering households and captivating weak women weighed down with sins (3:6). Paul knew that the day was soon coming when professing Christians would not endure sound doctrine, but would pile up teachers in accordance with their own desires to tickle their ears, turning from the truth to myths (4:3-4). It seemed like things were getting from bad to worse as far as the faith of the believers was concerned.

If there was ever a prime candidate for discouragement, Paul was it! Who could have blamed him if he had said, “I’ve had enough! I’ve given this thing more than my fair share of effort! I’m going to retire!” We would expect him to be a bitter, pessimistic, discouraged old man, his hopes and dreams shattered by overwhelming disappointments and setbacks. And yet we find him sprinting across the finish line and then jogging back to Timothy, saying, “Come on, Timothy, keep going! Be strong! You can make it! Don’t quit!” When this guy speaks about endurance in the Christian life, I want to listen!

Let me tell why I’d like to listen to such a person …..

We live in a culture where pastors are bailing out of the ministry in droves. A newsletter in 2003 reported that 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to:

- moral failure,
- spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches.

It said that 70 percent of pastors constantly fight depression.
Fifty percent are so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could, but they have no other way of making a living.

Not only pastors, but also many Christians, have burned out in serving the Lord. They have been wounded by criticism or conflict in the church. Some drop out of church entirely. Others attend occasionally, but that’s all that they do. They don’t want to risk getting hurt again. So they don’t get involved in serving the Lord. They have simply GIVEN UP THE RACE, so to speak.

I suggest that any discouraged pastors and Christians need a good dose of 2 Timothy. It’s a very personal letter, Paul’s last, written to his beloved son in the faith, who was timid by nature. He probably felt inadequate for the tasks facing him.

The problems were overwhelming. It looked as if Paul was about to be executed, and the mantle would fall on Timothy. In fact some commentators have equated this letter with the last word of a dying man. And indeed, it was the last letter Paul wrote before he was executed. Usually in life, people tend to take seriously the last words of a dying person. Why wouldn’t we? We can sum up each chapter as follows:

Chapter 1: Unashamed as a witness: Guard the gospel!
Chapter 2: Unashamed as a workman: Suffer in godliness for the gospel!
Chapter 3: Adequate as a workman: Continue in the gospel!
Chapter 4: Awarded as a workman: Preach the gospel!

I therefore want to kick off this journey through this letter under the theme, FAN INTO FLAME, by looking at the first seven verses of chapter one.

In fact, we will be looking at each and every verse of this book so I hope you will carry a pen and note book for future reference.

Today’s message
I have entitled today’s message as … REMEMBER YOUR ROOTS (2 Tim 1:1-7)

Follow with me ….

Vv 1-2

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,
2 To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord

I. Greeting 1:1, 2
Vs.1 Paul opens this letter by identifying his POSITION and PURPOSE as a chosen vessel of the Lord.

Position: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God"
Paul had not sought for this position of leadership but neither had he run from it. One of the problems that has always plagued the church is the reversal of this order. Too often it is the unqualified who seek positions of spiritual leadership while the qualified have run from these same roles. Our response should ever be that of Paul's, "Lord what will You have me to do?" Acts 9:6 Service For the Lord will be significant only to the degree that we can say with Paul that it is "by the will of God."

Purpose: "According to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus."
Paul had separated himself from all competing ambitions and desires to concentrate preeminently upon the furtherance of the gospel. The preposition "according to" defines the aim and purpose of Paul's apostleship (Kelly), to further "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." Immediately we see the single-mindedness of Paul and his passion for the progress of the gospel.

One commentator writes,

"God chose him (Paul) because He wanted to do something with him. He wished to make him the instrument by which the tidings of new life went out to men. No Christian is ever chosen entirely for his own sake, but for what he can do for others. A Christian is a man lost in wonder, love, and praise at what God has done for him; and aflame with eagerness to tell others what God can do for them."

God desires all believers to see themselves in this light, as "set apart to the gospel of God." May we cultivate the spirit of David Brainerd, the earliest missionary to the American Indians of New England. He wrote in his journal, "I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I endured so that I could but gain souls for Christ. While I was asleep I dreamt of such things and when I woke the first thing I thought of was winning souls to Christ."
The phrase "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" is synonymous with the gospel. We ought to note a few things about this significant phrase.

**First**, it is a promise from God to man. Therefore, it can be counted upon with absolute certainty. Promises from men to men are often broken, but not so with the living God.

"God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent. Has He said and will He not do it or has He spoken and will He not make it good." Num. 23:19. Thus, we can present the gospel with absolute certainty and conviction, for it is the "good news" of God's unchanging love and faithfulness for mankind.

**This promise is one which contains "life."** The term "life" in Scripture speaks not of mere existence but of the QUALITY of our existence. John 1:4,10:10; God promises man a quality of life which is superior to anything this temporal world can offer. This life can only be found "in Christ Jesus" for He alone offers the living water which eternally quenches our spiritual thirst.

So we have seen in this first verse the intense single-mindedness of Paul. He was consumed with a holy fire which brought the light and warmth of the gospel to all he came in contact with. And it is this same fire which he desires to see blazing brightly in the life of Timothy, his disciple. And it is this same fire God desires to ignite within our lives so that we too bring the light and warmth of the gospel to all God brings our way.

And it is because of this that I want to remind you of the roots of your spiritual journey. Some of you had such a fire for the Lord that nothing could move you or change your convictions. How about now?

**Vs. 2:** Paul calls Timothy his "beloved son." In the midst of being deserted by many he thought he could count on (1:15,4:16), Paul finds great consolation and joy in Timothy (1:3-5). This letter flows forth from the heart of a man who never had a son to a man who never really had a father (that is, spiritually). Thus, Paul and Timothy had a very special bond between them which only death could separate.

And Paul goes ahead to remind Timothy of the benefits of the gospel namely grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus:
God’s grace is His undeserved favor to those who deserve His wrath.
His mercy is His compassion to those who are in misery because of their sin.
His peace is the result of being reconciled to Him because of His grace and mercy.
These blessings come to us freely from God the Father who sent His Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, to die for our sins.
Ask yourself, “Have I experienced new life in Christ according to God’s promise? Do I know personally God’s grace, mercy, and peace? Because of God’s sovereign will, do I now personally have sincere faith in Christ Jesus?” If you can answer yes, then you have a ROOTS for serving Him, no matter what trials it may bring into your life.

II. CHERISH HOW YOU CAME TO FAITH (VV 3-5)

3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.
4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.
5 I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

Vs. 3 As Paul frequently does, he begins with thanksgiving to God. Important to note that even in the darkest of circumstances Paul was able to find things to thank God for. He practiced what he preached! 1 Thess. 5:18.
The word translated "serve" is very significant. It is a word which is frequently used in connection with priestly service (Heb. 8:5; 9:9,14; 10:2; 12:28; 13:10; Rev. 7:15). "Locked up in prison, cut off in a final way from active ministry, he nonetheless finds the joy of the priestly ministry of prayer both in praise (the sacrifice of praise) and in intercession."(Hodges).
One of our primary tasks as believer-priests is that of going to God on behalf of men, i.e., intercession. Paul certainly took this priestly service very seriously, "... without ceasing (constantly) I remember you in my prayers night and day." It is also important to note that the word can be translated either as "worship" or "service" and frequently appears to mean both. This is very significant because it shows that "service" cannot be separated from "worship." Many Christians desire to "worship" the Lord on Sunday but
are too busy to "serve" Him at other times. The New Testament knows nothing of this dichotomy. Any true worshipper of God is also a servant, ready to do his Master's bidding.

So, how many of you are in the “Worship Team” in this church? Well, I expect all of you who serve in one form or another to put up their hands. Why? Because you are serving and as such you are worshipping the Master. We are therefore in the worship team.

The manner of Paul’s service is also given—"with a pure/clear conscience". A "clear conscience" consists in being able to say that there is no one (God or man) whom I have knowingly offended and not tried to make it right (either by asking forgiveness or restoration or both). Christ spoke of this very issue in the Sermon on the Mount where He made it clear that our priestly service must be done with a clear conscience to be acceptable before God.

"Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.” Mt. 5:23-25. We are being told here that a clear conscience must precede priestly service.

**Why does Paul mention serving God with a clear conscience the way his forefathers did?**

Paul was about to be killed for the faith. At such times it’s important to remember that you’re dying for the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Elijah, and all of the other faithful men of God in history. You’ve been handed the torch and you’ve got to carry it faithfully and hand it off to those who come after you.

Also, both Nero and the Jews were persecuting Christianity as a new cult. Paul is saying, in effect, “This is not a new cult. This is the culmination and fulfillment of God’s promises to the Jewish fathers. They looked forward to the promised Messiah. Christ Jesus is the promised Messiah, in whom we also believe.” So Paul was making the point that he was in the mainstream of the history of God’s purposes as revealed in the Old Testament, but now fulfilled in Christ.

One commentator said:
In any one generation, the number of the faithful may not be that great, but Paul looks beyond his own generation for a moment and considers his suffering in the context of the history of the faithful, from the beginning of time until the present. Paul is a man who is about to die, a man who has been forsaken by many of his friends and associates (2 Timothy 4:5-18). In the midst of his adversity, Paul sees himself as a part of the community of the faithful and regards himself as being in good company. Paul stands in a long line of faithful men and women. This “cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1) now cheers him on, urging him to finish his race.

If you’re feeling like dropping out of the race, read about the heritage of godly men in the Bible and in church history. They have persevered through incredible trials, disappointments, loss of loved ones, persecution, and martyrdom. Don’t give up…

**Longing to see Timothy (v4)**

Vs. 4  Paul expresses here his intense longing for Timothy and his keen desire for a personal visit. There is a direct correlation here between the amount of time Paul spent praying for Timothy (3b) and the amount of affection he felt for him (4). One of the best ways to increase our heartfelt love for other believers is to pray for them frequently and intensely.

The "tears" Paul speaks of may well have been ones which Timothy shed at their parting in 1 Tim. 1:3. Apparently Timothy wanted to go on with Paul to Macedonia but Paul urged him to stay in Ephesus and continue ministering. To do the will of God may well bring us to tears time and again. Like Timothy, we may have to be separated from our closest companions on earth in order to "completely fulfill" the ministry which has been entrusted to us.

There is absolutely no way to calculate the range of impact that an act of sacrificial service may have on other people. **It is only the service which truly costs that will truly count!!**

**Apply**

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for the sacrificial service you people have demonstrated in this church. The leadership team wants to take this opportunity to thank each of you for two major contributions in the growth of this church:

1. A clear sacrificial service in giving. For instance, last month, you gave a total of Ksh 2.6M. What a sacrifice. It may mean that some of you have just begun to
faithfully tithe and give offerings. May the Lord bless you. In fact, we even received some money towards the relocation vision (the 1st one). We praise the Lord for that. Isn’t that an act of sacrifice? Let’s praise the Lord for that!

2. We have witnessed a high degree of commitment in service to God’s people by you people. Our ministries are running and we are now even bold enough to start new ones. I wish we had time to mention all of you by name. In the spirit of labor day, I want to also announce an increase in wages for each of the tasks you perform here. The only difference is that you will receive these wages more appropriately in HEAVEN. But even then, may the Lord reward you here on earth for the kind of work you are doing.

**Sincere Faith is commended (V 5)**

*Vs. 5a* Paul now describes the object of his thanksgiving—Timothy’s "sincere faith."

The word for "genuine (sincere)" literally means "without playing the part". In the midst of many who were simply "playing the part" of discipleship (1:15), Timothy is a source of great joy and thanksgiving for the aged apostle. Paul earlier described Timothy’s sincere faith in Phil. 2:19-22:

“For I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.”

Three prominent characteristics of sincere faith emerge from these verses:

- **GENUINELY CONCERNED** "... who will sincerely care for your state". He manifested genuine concern for believers.
- **THOROUGHLY CONSECRATED** "for all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus." While others were concerned about their interests, Timothy was committed to Christ’s cause.
- **INTENSELY COMMITTED** (to Paul and the Gospel) "But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father, he served with me in the gospel."

Would Paul be able to say to us that he thanks God for our "sincere faith?"

**Origin of the sincere faith (5b)**
Vs5b: Paul notes that this "sincere faith" was passed down to Timothy from his mother and grandmother. Surely these two women, Lois and Eunice, are two of the great heroines of the N.T. They brought up this godly young man in spite of opposing ungodly influences. His father was a Greek (Acts 16:3) and did not share his wife's Jewish beliefs. According to Alfred Edersheim, Lystra (Timothy’s home) did not have a Jewish synagogue. Thus Timothy was brought up without any synagogue training. Yet in spite of all this, they infected him with a sincere faith which stayed with him the rest of his life. And perhaps Paul mentions these two powerful influences on Timothy’s life to motivate him in continuing down the path that they had set him on.

These two women did a great job! The word of God holds out the occupation of being a faithful wife and mother as a high and sacred calling! (Titus 2:4,5)

"The woman’s duty is to give to a child a home of faith and to faith a home in the child. " (Hodges)

Apply

But also, this can be a real encouragement to those of us who are bringing up their children as single mothers. Please do it faithfully knowing that you are not just surviving the experience but rather passing on the faith to the next generation

Brothers & sisters, allow me to encourage women in this congregation who may find themselves in marital situations where the man is not a believer as yet. Take heart as you learn from Timothy’s grandmother Lois and Mother Eunice that if you nurture the faith of your children even if singlehandedly, you will be rewarded by the Lord. He sees your labor of love and he will not forget. Amen.

III CHAMPION THE CAUSE OF GOSPEL RESPONSIBLY (VV 6-7)

6 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. 7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Vs. 6 Having encouraged Timothy, he now begins to exhort him. In view of his sincere faith, Timothy is to maintain its quality by diligent use. Faith never remains stagnant; it is either growing or dying by its diet of good works. (James 2:14-26)
Paul is "again" bringing to mind that Timothy should "again" fan into flame the gift God had entrusted to him.

Apparently Timothy was growing fainthearted in the fight for the faith. Slowly the holy fire, which the Holy Spirit had ignited in and through his life, was dying out (sounds familiar?). And if it continued to die, the day would come when Timothy's life and ministry would be but smoldering remains of a once vibrant faith.

Thus Timothy is exhorted to "bring to full blaze" his spiritual gift. The imagery of fire is a common one throughout scripture. "Who makes . . . His ministers a flame of fire." (Heb. 1:7; Jer. 20:8,9).

Listen to the words of, **J. Oswald Sanders** in this regard.

"The wick exists only to be consumed. If it survives, it has failed of its purpose. There is no such thing as costless spiritual service. As we minister to others, virtue will go out of us. Ours is the privilege of offering ourselves as fuel for the flame of God."

**Illustration**

I don’t know if you are like me, but when I became a believer, I can recall that I was on fire for the Lord. There was always “fire in my belly” for the Lord. Some of the songs that I’d sing to SPARK me up would go like:

i. **The things I used to do I don’t do them any more:** This was especially a crucial and relevant song whenever my friends tried to lure me into the old lifestyle

ii. **I’ve found a new life:**
   
   I’ve found a new life. I’ve found a new life
   
   If anybody asks me, what’s the matter with you my friend
   
   I’d tell them, I’ve been saved, water baptized, Holy Ghost filled, demons cast aside, Jesus on my mind,
   
   I’ve found a new life

I needed this song anytime the enemy tried to speak lies into my mind to derail me

iii. **I pledge allegiance to the Lamb:** This song in particular would give me hope and courage to face the daunting task of remaining sober whenever everybody around me was chickening from the faith. I needed it so badly.

iv. **On Christ the solid rock I stand:** And because disappointments are not few on this journey, I needed this old and tested hymn like daily.
Friends, I’m sure you feel me on these issues we’re talking about. It is significant to note the way in which Paul phrases **Timothy's responsibility**. He does not tell Timothy to "fire up," but rather tells him to fire up **THE GIFT OF GOD** which is in him. This is probably done to remind Timothy of his grave responsibility as a steward of God. He was urging him to champion the cause of the gospel responsibly. The gift (**charisma**) almost certainly refers to Timothy's spiritual gift. (I Tim. 4:14). This spiritual gift does not belong to Timothy; however, it belongs to God! And God had entrusted this spiritual gift to Timothy in order that Timothy's life might make an eternal contribution to the kingdom of God.

For residing within him (and us) was a God-given ability which, when ignited by the Holy Spirit, could burst forth in a holy blaze, kindling other lives around him with the same holy fire. And Paul wanted Timothy (and us) to never recover from the force of this great truth. This gift was given through the laying on of Paul's hands.

**Vs 7** Paul now gives an overwhelming reason that Timothy should continue in the good fight. Not only has Timothy been given a spiritual gift from God BUT he has also been given a portion of God Himself which indwells Timothy’s mortal body. "Spirit" (**pneuma**) is clearly in reference to the Holy Spirit, not the human spirit.

There are some basic principles from these 2 verses that I’d like us to nail down for our daily use as champions for the cause of the gospel:

**Because you are saved you must serve Christ.**

Paul is saying, “Because I know that you have a sincere faith in Jesus Christ, you must kindle afresh (or, keep in full flame) your spiritual gift by actively using it in serving the Lord.”

**1. Make sure that you are saved before you try to serve**

Salvation is the foundation for any genuine service that we can offer to the Lord. It is a huge mistake to think that you can offer God anything before you first receive His gift of salvation. For example, people fall into this error by thinking that if they give financially to
a church or a Christian organization, they are doing something that will commend them to God on judgment day.

But God will not be indebted to anyone. He will not let you into heaven as a payment for anything that you do for Him. Salvation is a free gift. If you can do anything to earn it or deserve it, then it is no longer a gift of God’s grace, but a wage or a reward that is due. Good works follow salvation, but they cannot in any way earn it (Eph. 2:8-10). So, before you get involved in any way to serve the Lord, make sure that you’re saved.

2. God gifts every saved person for service

Maybe you’re thinking, “I already know this.” Timothy knew it, too, but Paul reminded him of it again (1:6): “For this reason [because you are saved], I remind you to kindle afresh (fan into flame) the gift of God which is in you....” There are two ways in which God gifts every saved person:

A. God’s main gift is the Holy Spirit Himself

Every Christian receives the Holy Spirit to indwell him or her at the moment of salvation. In Romans 8:9, Paul asserts, “But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him”. In the context of spiritual gifts, Paul writes (1 Cor. 12:13), “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” God’s main gift to every believer is the indwelling Holy Spirit, who empowers us to serve Him.

B. The Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts to every believer.

It is significant that in each of the four main biblical references to spiritual gifts, it specifies that every Christian has a gift as we learned sometime last year:

Romans 12:3: “For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.” Paul goes on to discuss spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:7: “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” Again, Paul goes on to discuss spiritual gifts.
Ephesians 4:7: “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” In verse 16, he mentions “the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part.”

1 Peter 4:10: “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

God doesn’t want us to miss the point! If you are a Christian, you have been given a spiritual gift that you are to use in service (or, ministry) for the Lord. The term, “inactive church member” is a contradiction in terms. If you’re a believer, you’re in the ministry and you will someday give an account to the Lord of how you fulfilled the ministry that He entrusted to you.

If you’re thinking, “But I lack the gifts to serve the Lord,” remember, God never calls you to a ministry where He doesn’t also give you the gifts to fulfill. This is not to say that it will be effortless or easy.

So if you’re saved, God has graciously imparted at least one spiritual gift to you to use in serving Him.

3. God sovereignly gifts us, but we must take responsibility

In 1 Corinthians 12:11, Paul says, “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.” God is sovereign in how He bestows spiritual gifts. We need to remember that whether it is a natural ability or a spiritual gift, everything that we have is a gift of God’s grace. Thus none of us can boast in our gifts. All we can do is use them to glorify God. We would be nothing without Him!

A common question is, how can I discover my spiritual gift? What must we do?

A. You must discover your gifts

There are several spiritual gifts inventory tools you may use including the one in Plug In material. But allow me to summarize it this way:

(1). We discover our gifts by our desires and abilities.

Ask yourself, what are my desires and abilities? What do you like to do and are reasonably good at doing? I like to sing, but I can’t carry a tune in a bucket, so that is clearly not my gift! There are other things that I can do, but I dislike doing them. If God wanted me to
focus on them, I think He would give me satisfaction in doing them. Some things, by the way, we all need to do, even if they are not our specific gift. There are commands for just about every spiritual gift in the Bible. Knowing your gift shows you where to focus your time and effort.

(2). We discover our gifts by serving.
Some sit around trying to discover their gift before they get involved in serving. That’s backwards. You will discover your gifts as you try various ministries.

(3). We discover our gifts by recognition from others.
Other Christians, especially mature church leaders, will recognize and affirm your gift.

(4). We discover our gifts by effectiveness.
Do you see results when you exercise your gift? The more results you see the more it is a confirmation as a gift.

B. We have to develop our gifts
God graciously imparts spiritual gifts, but we are responsible to develop them. No gift comes fully developed, and the process of developing them is not automatic or effortless.

(1). We develop our gifts by training and learning.
Obviously, if God has gifted you to teach, you must spend time studying and learning the Bible, plus learning how to teach well. If you are gifted in evangelism, you still need training in various methods. You need to learn the content of the gospel. By the way, we all can benefit from the training offered by others in areas like evangelism, even if it isn’t our gift.

(2). We develop our gifts by the experience of serving with evaluation.
This is a lifelong process. You should not only get involved in serving, but also, search the Bible to make sure that you are serving in accordance with biblical methods, evaluate your methods, and refine your approach as needed.

C. We must fan into flame our gifts
Paul tells Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God which is in you.” The picture is of a fire and as you know, most fires will die out unless you tend them and add more fuel.

There are several applications:

(1). We may need to kindle afresh our first love for the Lord Jesus.
It’s easy to drift into spiritual apathy or distance from Christ. The world crowds in, pressures keep us from spending time alone with Christ, and before we know it, we are in the spiritual doldrums. Don’t let your love for Jesus Christ grow cold!

(2). **We may need to kindle afresh our gifts because of disuse.**

Maybe you burned out by doing too much or you got burned in serving through criticism, so you quit. Maybe you’ve been on the sidelines so long that you feel rusty. Get back in the game!

(3). **We may need to kindle afresh our gifts especially when it is difficult and costly to do so.**

Paul was in prison, with people attacking him. False teachers were perverting the gospel. If Timothy got involved, he would undoubtedly catch flak. Because of his timid nature, it was easier not to use his gifts. But if you only serve when it is convenient or when you feel like it or when you think it’s safe, you really aren’t serving God at all. We are bondslaves of Christ, and slaves serve when their master calls them to serve, not when it’s convenient.

As we grow, God develops the fruit of the Spirit in us, but He puts that fruit into our various personalities. You’ve got to know and accept who you are as God made you, and be aware of your strengths and weaknesses. Often your greatest strengths are at the same time the areas of your greatest weaknesses. Timothy was a sensitive man, which is a strength. But if you’re easily hurt, it’s a weakness.

Quite often, to serve God effectively, you’ve got to step out of your natural comfort zone and trust God to do something that is difficult.

**D. God’s gifts must be exercised in God’s way.**

Paul mentions four qualities, one negative and three positive, which were specifically geared to Timothy’s disposition. But, of course, they apply to us all:

(1). **Exercise your gifts without timidity**

Timothy was not naturally bold. He shied away from conflict or confrontation. But the fact is, we’re engaged in spiritual warfare and you don’t win wars by being passive or cowardly. People will not grow in Christ and the church will not stand against the forces of evil if we do not overcome the fear of opposition and conflict.
Timothy’s timidity was beginning to douse his spiritual fire. And it is crucial to note how Paul tells Timothy to deal with his natural fearfulness. He doesn’t tell him to "guts it up" or "to stop being afraid." Rather he reminds Timothy that God has given him a resource which will supernaturally overcome these fears. As he plugs into the resurrection power which indwells his body, then he can become a God-intoxicated (Eph. 5:18) individual through whom spiritual life can be diffused to those around him.

(2). Exercise your gifts with power

This is not the power of the flesh as seen in worldly assertiveness training. This is the power of the Holy Spirit, resting on the truth of God’s authoritative Word. The aim of this power is not so that you can control others, but so that you can help them come under God’s control, to conquer sin and heal broken relationships. And sometimes people give the excuse of not serving as:

"I can’t do it, it's too hard" - God has given to us a Spirit which is characterized by POWER (dunamis). The ministry is too hard for any of us to handle by ourselves, for we are utterly inadequate. But the same power which raised Christ from the dead is also available to us so that we can say with Paul, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." (II Cor. 3:5)

(3). Exercise your gifts in love

Love balances power. It also is opposed to fear, because fear stems from self-love or self-concern or self-protection. Biblical love is concerned for the spiritual well-being of others. Love for others will give you the boldness to overcome your fears so that you can speak to them about their need for Christ or their need to obey His Word. Love for God and others should be your motivation whenever you exercise your spiritual gifts. There is another excuse people tend to give for not serving:

"Someone else can do it, I don't have time." This kind of attitude is exactly the opposite of the second quality mentioned here--LOVE (agape). True love can’t wait to get involved in helping transform the lives of people. If a person is too busy to be involved in changing other’s lives, then he is too busy. If the love of Christ constrains us (II Cor 5:14) then we will long for the same things Christ longs for, "Who desires all men to be saved and come to the full knowledge of the truth." (I Tim. 2:4)
(4). Exercise your gifts with discipline.

This word occurs only here in the New Testament, but a similar concept, self-control, is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). The nuance of the word used here is of a sound mind controlling your life so that you don’t react in a sinful emotional outburst and so that you do not yield to impulses of the flesh. It means that you use the gifts that God has given you in a sensible, controlled manner, in line with God’s purposes in each situation. One last excuse people give for not taking responsibility:

God can’t use me, I’m not qualified." This excuse is canceled out by the third quality - SOUND MIND/DISCIPLINE. This word speaks of being "balance" or "thinking properly" (Mark 5:15). It was used of the manager of a household who had an "accurate assessment" of the articles and their value in the house. Thus we also are to have an "accurate assessment" of what God has granted to us. Interestingly, this same word is used in Romans 12:3 in regards to our spiritual gift. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift and therefore can be used of God significantly. There are no "little people" or "second class citizens" in God's kingdom!

CONCLUSION