

Group Prayer/Reflection: Fan into a Flame

Note for Leaders:

This is designed to be a short prayer/ reflection, perhaps to end a youth group session or as a lunchtime reflection in school. You can cut it down to make it even shorter, perhaps as an opening prayer for a session or a lesson, for instance. You might also want to use it during your first meeting after Flame (as mentioned in the 'Your First Meeting...' document in this pack)

Preparation:

You will need to prepare a comfortable, relaxed, focused, prayerful space. If you want some background music for the more quiet parts of the reflection, make sure it's ready to go beforehand!

Welcome and Opening Prayer:

Welcome them and try to make them feel relaxed and at peace.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son...

Lord, we come together in your sight with those we love to look back with joy and to look forward in hope. Bless us today and be with us in all that we say and do. Amen.

Main Input (Fanning the Flame):

We're going to begin by listening to a few verses from the beginning of St. Paul's second letter to Timothy. Timothy was young, but Paul saw great potential in him. This is how he greeted him at the beginning of the letter...(2 Tim 1: 2-11)

[N.B. You might want to ask somebody else to read the passage, so that there is a variety of voices]

"To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I am 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.

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 the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher."

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This is a really moving passage. Paul obviously has so much faith in Timothy, and he knows that Timothy is capable of so much. Paul probably also knows, though, that the gifts Timothy has will need nurturing and looking after so that they don't die out.

In New Testament times, teachers of the faith often used images that people would be able to connect with easily. That's why Jesus talked about sewing seeds and catching fish so often.

One thing that is universal and recognisable to people in all times and places is fire. Pretty much everybody knows that a fire can start with a tiny spark and turn into something tremendously powerful, and that's why Paul talks about the faith that Timothy has as a Flame. Or, at least, he tells him to fan it into a Flame.

If you want a fire to grow and spread then it needs oxygen. That's why fires are often fanned. Fanning flames helps them to grow and it helps them to move. Basically, it feeds them and encourages them. And that's what Paul was telling Timothy to make sure he did with his faith. In fact, it's what God is telling us all that we need to do with out faith.

If faith is going to grow, then it needs to be encouraged and fed. We need to give it time and space to grow and we need to keep it away from things which might weaken it, or even blow it out all together.

Space for personal reflection:

Invite the group to close their eyes and to make themselves as comfortable and relaxed as they can. Once they are all still and quiet give them a few things to think about. Below are some suggestions of what to say. Leave a pause between each to give them the time to reflect.

You might want to play some gentle background music during this time.

Let's spend a little bit of time thinking about our faith and about how it can grow...

Do we always give our faith the time and the space to be fed?

Do we take the time to pray? Do we talk to God, and try to listen to what he might be trying to say to us?

Do we think about the things that happen in our daily lives with our faith in mind? When we have important decisions to make, do we let God in? Do we think about what's really right?

Do we ever share our faith with others and tell them what it means to us?

Do we try to avoid the things which might put the flame out? There are so many things in life which can damage us and damage our faith? Do we take care to steer clear of them?

Are we happy about our faith? Does it bring us joy and make us smile, as we remember how much we are loved?

[At the end of this section, lower the music and explain that we are going to move in to a time of intercession]

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Intercessions:

Leave a pause of 10-15 seconds after each before saying 'Lord, in your mercy...'

Let us pray for all those who went to Flame Congress. Let us pray that their faith will always burn brightly and not be extinguished.

Lord, in your mercy... (hear our prayer)

Let us pray for all those who would have wanted to be at Flame, but who, for whatever reason, couldn't make it. Help us to share what we have learned with them.

Lord, in your mercy... (hear our prayer)

Let us pray for all those who worked hard to make Flame happen.

Lord, in your mercy... (hear our prayer)

Let us pray for everybody in our world who is suffering in any way at the moment, and especially for all those whose pain is known only to them.

Lord, in your mercy... (hear our prayer)

Let us pray for everybody currently preparing for the Olympics. May it be a time to celebrate what is best about God's people.

Lord, in your mercy... (hear our prayer)

Closing Prayer:

Lord, by your love for those you created, you have lit a spark in the heart of every single person. Help those sparks not to die out, but to become powerful Flames. Bless us as we move forward with our lives, and bless all those we care about. Amen.

[End with the Sign of the Cross]

In the name of the Father, and of the Son...

FAN THE FLAME