

Stir The Pot

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Winter. So many people see winter as a season to bide time until the signs of spring burst forth. One Canadian from the Yukon Territory said, "In winter, the trees appear black, even the evergreen trees. Then the rest is white; white snow on the ground, on the branches, on the roads. Even a white sky indicates more snow is to come. Winter is only black and white. It's really quite boring."

What people experience in the physical with shorter days and longer nights, along with the drab environment can affect their emotional and spiritual mood. We can be bored spiritually, feeling like we are going nowhere until something bursts forth in some kind of spiritual spring.

God is not using the winter to have us hibernate spiritually or slumber past opportunities that are ready and waiting for us to make a difference. The Lord beckons us to stir up our spirits, our emotions, our minds, as well as our bodies so they are ready for use.

An example of this kind of stirring came among the Israelites when they were in their 40-year wilderness experience. God gave Moses a design for a tabernacle, or mobile church facility where the nation could worship. The people needed to give some of their possessions to create the sanctuary. Exodus 35:21 tells us the people grabbed hold of the vision, "And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, [and] they brought the LORD'S offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments." What if they had decided to wait until they came into the Promised Land? It would have meant that there would not have been a Levitical priesthood, forgiveness through sacrifices, and many other acts of love and obedience between God and His people.

When I make custard from scratch, the recipe says to stir the pot continuously while the milk and other ingredients heat slowly over the stove. If I don't keep stirring, the custard will burn and the good ingredients will be useless. It can be tiring to continue to stir, but the results are well worth it. Sometimes we need to press past the discomfort we feel in order to create the results that we desire.

To stir up in Greek and Hebrew indicates an inner, concentrated movement. In Song of Solomon 2:7 it means to "awake." In 2 Timothy 1:6, the word stir speaks of reigniting a flame that once existed. In 2 Peter 1:13; 3:1, to stir is "to awaken from sleep or stupor." In Acts 13:50, to stir means "to urge on" while in Acts 17:13, to stir is "to shake to and fro." Do you need to awake from a mental sleep

or an emotional stupor? Do you need to restart a flame you once had for the things of God? Maybe you need to shake up your world just a bit.

The New Testament gives us specific encouragement to understand the results of stirring our spiritual pot. First, we must be faithful to the gifts that God has given to us. 2 Timothy 1:6 says, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." What gifts are you currently using to further the kingdom of God? What gifts might you have laid aside for a time that you need to start working with again?

Stirring our pot does not just help us, but it affects those around us. Hebrews 10:24 tells us, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." A contagious spirit can create life out of contention and joy during stress. Helping others stir their pots can pay it forward again and again to a multitude of people.

To stir our spiritual gifts can become a sign for those we love who still have not responded to the Gospel. Matthew 5:16 declares, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." You are being watched, even though you may not realize it. What do people see in you? Is your life a testimony without any words?

Don't let your wonderful ingredients (gifts) become useless. From now until the first signs of spring, make it a practice to daily stir your pot with all the good things God has given to you. If you do, you may find a beautiful "spring" in the middle of winter.