

1. Passion for God's Purpose

Read John 2:13-17

What does it mean to be passionate about something?

To be acutely interested in it, willing to put substantial energy into promoting it, willing to sacrifice for it, and hardly able to keep from talking about it.

What are some other words that are similar in meaning to passionate?

Fervent, ardent, consumed, fiery, enthusiastic, zealous, all my heart, single minded, top priority, red hot. (Look some of these words up in a dictionary if necessary.)

What is the difference between human passion and divine passion?

Human passion tends to be inconsistent and temporary.

Divine passion is consistent, everlasting, and powerful.

Where does divine passion come from?

Directly from God. It is contained within His Spirit.

How do we obtain divine passion for ourselves?

God places His passion within us when He gives us the Holy Spirit. But it lies dormant unless we present our bodies to Him as a living sacrifice. In other words, God brings His passion to life in those who are willing to sacrifice. People who live for God

sacrificially are always passionate about spiritual things whereas those who are self-centered tend to be indifferent or apathetic about God. Many people are somewhere in between, the sacrifice a little and therefore have a little passion. But they are not really on fire.

When Paul told Timothy to “stir up the gift” that was within him, he was telling him to stop being timid and to do the will of God, even if it has a price tag. God's fire falls on a properly prepared sacrifice.

Godly passion (rather than human passion) is important in accomplishing the work of God, but what does it accomplish in us personally?

God is a consuming fire. Therefore, godly passion purifies us. When His fire falls upon us, it consumes the impurities of our hearts. People who are passionate about the work of God are so focused on the work that they don't have time for impure thoughts or activities. They are single-minded.

So the steps proceed this way:

We sacrifice →

God's fire operates within us to motivate us →

God's fire purifies us as we do His work.

No sacrifice = no fire.

Handout *A Portrait of Passion* and read with group.

A Portrait of Passion

A zealous man in religion is preeminently a man of ONE THING! It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, whole-hearted, fervent in spirit. He sees only one thing, he cares for one thing, he lives for one thing, he is swallowed up in one thing – and that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives or whether he dies – whether he is rich or whether he is poor – whether he pleases man or whether he gives offense – whether he is thought wise or whether he is thought a fool – whether he gets praise or whether he gets blame – whether he gets honor or whether he gets shame – for all this the zealous man cares nothing.

Instead he burns for one thing, and that one thing is to please God and to advance God's glory. If he is consumed in the very burning, he cares not for it – he is content. He feels that, like a lamp, he is made to burn; and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God appointed him.

Such an one will always find a sphere for his zeal. If he cannot preach and work and give money, he will cry and sigh and pray. Yes: if he is only a pauper on a perpetual bed of sickness, he will make the wheels of sin around him drive heavily by continually interceding against it. If he cannot fight in the valley with Joshua, he will do the work of Moses, Aaron, and Hur on the hill. If he is cut off from working himself, he will give the Lord no rest until help is raised up from another quarter and the work is done. This is what I mean when I speak of zeal in religion.

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2. Passion For Jesus

Read Romans 8:28-30

God's purpose is to call us through the gospel, to justify us through the new birth, and to glorify us by transforming us into the image of His Son. This is the predestination of everyone He calls who continues to love Him (to be loyal and committed to Him). By populating the earth with glorified believers, God will fulfill His ultimate purpose, which is to fill the earth with His glory (see Habakkuk 2:14).

There are five ways we glorify God:

1. Through our relationship with God (worship).
2. Through our godly character (holiness).
3. Through our godly relationships within the body (fellowship).
4. Through our works of service in the body (ministry).
5. Through our outreach to those who do not know God (evangelism).

God wants each of us to grow in all five of these areas. This is what it means to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

What is the connection between passion and spiritual growth?

We will grow the most in the areas we are passionate about. If we are indifferent about an area of growth, we will stagnate in that area.

God expects every believer to be passionate about knowing Him. This is the foundation for all spiritual growth. This includes learning about Him in the Word of God, seeking Him in prayer, and honoring Him in praise.

Read and discuss the following passages:

Psalms 42:1-2

Psalms 63:1-5

Philippians 3:7-14

Job 23:12

1 Peter 2:1-2 (“desire” means a strong and intense craving)

James 5:16 (“fervent” means hot, intense)

Let us all be passionate about prayer!

Let us all be passionate about praise!

Let us all be passionate about the Word!

Let us all be intensely passionate about knowing Jesus!

Hand out *The Words of an Atheist* and read with the group.

The Words of an Atheist:

If I firmly believed, as millions say they do, that the knowledge of Christ and the practice of Christianity in this life influences my destiny in the next, then Christ would mean to me everything. I would cast away earthly enjoyments as dross, earthly cares as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as vanity. Christ and His kingdom would be my first waking thought and my last image before sleep sank me into unconsciousness.

I would labor in His cause alone. I would take thought for the morrow of eternity alone. I would esteem one soul gained for heaven worth a life of suffering. Earthly consequences would never stay my hand or seal my lips. Earth, with its joys and griefs, would occupy no moment of my thoughts. I would strive to look on eternity alone and on the human souls around me, soon to be everlastingly happy or everlastingly destroyed. I would go forth to the world and preach to it in season and out of season, and my text would be – Matthew 16:26 - “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”

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3. Passion For Holiness

Let us all be passionate about holiness!

Read Romans 6:20-22

Holiness pertains to the attributes of God being revealed in a human being. This passage tells us that holiness is the fruit (the natural result) of living in submission to God (as a slave of God). The Holy Spirit produces holiness as we yield ourselves to the Word of God. In this context, the word “holiness” encompasses all of the moral attributes of God.

Hand out *The Words of a Committed Communist* and read with the group.

What are some of the moral attributes of God?

Humility, honesty, kindness, faithfulness, self-control, compassion, modesty (there are more).

Our holiness is designed to be a reflection of God’s holiness and to point people toward God. To be a holy person, we must know enough of the Word of God to know what God’s character is like and what He expects of us.

Read and discuss the following passages:

Hebrews 12:14-16 (“pursue” means to seek after with great intensity)

2 Thessalonians 4:3-8 (“sanctification” is the same word usually translated “holines”)

2 Corinthians 7:1 (“perfecting” means finishing or completing)

1 Peter 1:13-15

The Words of a Committed Communist

We communists have a high casualty rate. We're the ones who get shot and hung and lynched and tarred and feathered and slandered and ridiculed and fired from our jobs, and in every other way made as uncomfortable as possible. A certain percentage of us get killed or imprisoned. We live in virtual poverty. We turn back to the party every penny we make above what is absolutely necessary to keep us alive.

We communists don't have the time or money for many movies or concerts or T-bone steaks or decent homes and new cars. We've been described as fanatics and I suppose we are fanatics. Our lives are dominated by one great overshadowing factor: the struggle for world communism.

We communists have a philosophy of life which no amount of money could buy. We have a cause to fight for, a definite purpose in life. We subordinate our petty, personal selves into a great movement of humanity, and if our personal lives seem hard, or our egos appear to suffer through subordination to the party, then we are adequately compensated by the thought that each of us in his small way is contributing to something new and true and better for mankind.

There is one thing in which I am in dead earnest and that is the communist cause. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife, my mistress, my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night. Its hold on me grows, not lessens, as time goes on. Therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating it to this force which both drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, books, ideas and actions according to how they affect the communist cause and by their attitude toward it. I've already been in jail because of my ideas and if necessary, I'm ready to go before a firing squad.

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4. Passion For Fellowship

Read Mark 12:29-31

The first and the second commandments are inseparably united with one another. We are to be passionate about loving God and modeling His holiness, but we are also to be passionate about loving other people. In fact, holiness without love is not really holiness at all. It is only an outward form.

John wrote in his first epistle, “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21). Notice the word “must.” This means that loving our brothers and sisters in the Lord is not optional; it is required.

The connectedness we have as fellow believers is called *fellowship*. In the Bible, fellowship means God’s people sharing their lives with one another, helping one another to grow spiritually, and helping one another to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Fellowship refers to all of the relationships between the members of the body of Christ which hold the body together.

But sometimes people don’t treat us the way they ought to. When this happens, the depth of our passion for fellowship is put to the test. In order to keep the body together, even when some members don’t treat others properly, the Bible has provided three things: confrontation, correction, and forgiveness. Those who are truly passionate about the unity of the body will not retreat and hide, but will confront in love. They will do their best to correct whatever was wrong. And they will eagerly and quickly offer forgiveness. These are the marks of a true passion for fellowship.

Read and discuss the following passages:

John 15:13 (We are to love our friends.)

1 Peter 3:8-9 (We are to love our brothers and sisters, even if they are not our friends.)

Matthew 5:43-48 (We are even to love our enemies. Those who do are considered by God to be perfect in love, in the same way that God is perfect in love.)

Is loving your enemies an unreasonable expectation of those who have received the Spirit?

Romans 5:5 (If we don’t we have the love of God in our hearts, then we don’t really have the Holy Spirit.)

1 John 3:16-18 (Discuss what the love of God looks like in practical application.)

1 Peter 1:22 and 4:8-9 (Discuss how our fervent love for one another is what keeps the body of Christ together in unity. Is it important that the body be together in unity?)

Hand out and read the story of *The Gold Box* and the statements that follow.

The Gold Box

It had been some time since Jack had seen the old man. College, career, and life itself got in the way. In fact, Jack moved clear across the country in pursuit of his dreams. In the rush of his busy life, Jack had little time to think about the past and often no time to spend with his wife and son. He was working on his future, and nothing would stop him.

Over the phone, his mother told him, “Mr. Belser died last night. The funeral is Wednesday.” Memories flashed through his mind like an old newsreel as he sat quietly remembering his childhood days.

“Jack, did you hear me?” “Oh, sorry, Mom. Yes, I heard you. It’s been so long since I thought of him. I’m sorry, but I honestly thought he died years ago,” Jack said. “Well, he didn’t forget you,” his mom told him. “Every time I saw him he’d ask how you were doing. He would reminisce about the many days you spent over ‘his side of the fence’ as he put it.”

“I loved that old house he lived in,” Jack reflected. “You know, Jack, after your father died, Mr Belser stepped in to make sure you had a man’s influence in your life,” she said

“He’s the one who taught me carpentry,” he said. “I wouldn’t be in this business if it weren’t for him. He spent a lot of time teaching me things he thought were important...Mom, I’ll be there for the funeral,” Jack promised.

As busy as he was, Jack kept his word, catching the next flight to his hometown. Mr. Belser’s funeral was small and uneventful. He had no children of his own, and most of his relatives had passed away. The night before he had to return home, Jack and his mom stopped by to see the old house next door one more time. Standing in the doorway, Jack paused for a moment. It was like crossing over into another dimension, a leap through space and time.

The house was exactly as he remembered. Every step held memories. Every picture, every piece of furniture....Jack stopped suddenly. “What’s wrong, Jack?” his mom asked. “The box is gone,” he said. “What box?” Mom asked. “There was a small gold box that he kept locked on top of his desk. I must have asked him a thousand times what was inside. All he’d ever tell me was ‘the thing I value most,’” Jack said.

It was gone. Everything about the house was exactly how Jack remembered it, except for the box. He figured someone from the Belser family had taken it. “Now I’ll never know what was so valuable to him,” Jack said. “I better get some sleep. I have an early flight home, Mom.”

It had been about two weeks since Mr. Belser died. Returning home from work one day Jack discovered a note in his mailbox. “Signature required on a package. No one at home. Please stop by the main post office within the next three days,” the note read. Early the next day Jack retrieved the package. It looked like it had been mailed a hundred years ago. The handwriting was difficult to read, but the return address caught his attention. “Mr. Harold Belser” it read.

Jack took the box out to his car and ripped open the package. There inside was the gold box and an envelope. Jack’s hands shook as he read the note inside. “Upon my death, please forward this box and its contents to Jack Bennett. It’s the thing I valued most in my life.” A small key was taped to the letter. Jack’s heart racing. As tears began to fill his eyes, Jack carefully unlocked the box. There inside he found a beautiful gold pocket watch.

Running his fingers slowly over the finely etched casing, he unlatched the cover. Inside he found these words engraved: “Jack, Thanks for your time! Harold Belser.” “The thing he valued most...was...my time.”

Jack held the watch for a few minutes, then called his office and cleared his appointments for the next two days. “Why?” asked Janet, his assistant. “I need to spend some time with my son,” he explained. “Oh, by the way, Janet...thanks for your time!”

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take but by the moments that take our breath away.

Think about this. You may not realize it, but it is 100% true.

1. At least 2 people in this world love you so much they would die for you.
2. At least 15 people in this world love you in some way.
- 3 A smile from you can bring happiness to anyone, even if they don’t like you.
- 4 Every night, someone thinks about you before they go to sleep.
5. You mean the world to someone.
6. If not for you, someone may not be living.
7. When you make the biggest mistake ever, something good can still come from it.
8. When you think the world has turned its back on you, take a look: you most likely turned your back on the world.
9. Someone that you don’t even know exists loves you.
10. Always remember the compliments you receive and forget about the rude remarks.
11. If you have a great friend, take the time to let him know that he is a great friend.

5. Passion For Ministry

Read 1 Peter 4:10-11 and Romans 12:4-8

Every Spirit-filled believer has been given certain gifts of grace by Jesus Christ Himself. He decides who gets which gifts. The purpose of these gifts is to enable us to minister to others in some capacity. It is vitally important that every member of the body identify what gifts they have and put these gifts to work.

One of the purposes of leadership in the church is to help each member identify their gifts and to make sure that each member is properly equipped to do their work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11). But even when leaders are doing their job, the work of ministry will not happen unless the members are passionate about ministry.

Jesus modeled this passion for ministry. In Mark 10:45 He told His disciples, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." The Bible says that when the time had come for Jesus to be crucified, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). No one had to beg and plead with Jesus to get involved in the work of God, even at the age of twelve He told His parents, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). Jesus was truly passionate about ministry.

God does not require anything from us that He does not first supply. When He gives us the ability to do certain things, this is called a gift of grace. God's grace is more than just God showing us His favor; it is God empowering us to do His will. His grace is always attached to His purpose in ministry.

It is important that we accept both the expectations and the limitations of our individual ministries. We cannot minister except by the gifts of grace given to us. In this respect our ministry is

limited by the characteristics of the grace we have received. But we must not limit the working of this grace by our unwillingness to serve. Whatever grace we have been given we are expected to willingly put to work. This is why we need to be passionate about ministry.

Read and discuss the following passages:

Acts 14:26 (Notice that the purpose of God grace was to complete certain work.)

Romans 12:3 (Paul spoke by means of the grace he had received. If he had not been given this grace, he would not have been able to speak as he did.)

Romans 15:15-16

1 Corinthians 3:10

1 Corinthians 15:10 (Notice that Paul worked "more abundantly" than the others. This shows how passionate he was about ministry.)

2 Corinthians 9:8 (We have no excuses for not getting involved. God has given us everything we need to be able to minister in some way.)

Titus 2:11-14 (The only question is whether we will be zealous for good works, which simply means passionate about ministry.)

Discuss the consequences of failing to be passionate about ministry. Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30).

Hand out and read together the *Description of Paul*.

A Description of Paul

He is a man without the care of making friends, without the hope or desire of worldly goods, without the apprehension of worldly loss, without the care of life, without the fear of death. He is a man of no rank, no country, no condition. A man of one thought and one thought alone – the gospel of Jesus Christ. A man of one purpose – the glory of God.

He is a fool and content to be reckoned a fool for Christ. Let him be called enthusiast, fanatic, babbler, or any other outlandish title by which the godless world may choose to denominate him. But as soon as they call him householder, citizen, man of wealth, man of position, man of learning, or even man of common sense, it is all over with his character. He must speak or he must die – and though he should die; yet will he speak!

He has no rest, but hastens over land and sea, over rocks and trackless deserts. He cries aloud and spares not, and will not be hindered. In the prisons he lifts up his voice, and in the tempests of the ocean he is not silent. Before awful councils and throned kings he witnesses in behalf of the truth.

Nothing can quench his voice but death, and even in the article of death, before the knife has severed his head from his body, he speaks, he prays, he testifies, he confesses, he beseeches, he wars, and at length he blesses the cruel executioner.

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6. Passion For Evangelism

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Paul was clearly passionate about evangelism. He was willing to do whatever it took to win another person to the Lord. The questions today is, what are we willing to do?

Let's review what is necessary to win a person to the Lord.

1. The first thing we must do is form a connection with the person. This means that we must reach out to people we don't know in order to establish a relationship. This part requires an investment of our time and energy. It may mean doing things that are uncomfortable or inconvenient. Building meaningful relationships does not come cheap.

2. The next thing we must do is teach the person a Bible study. This means that each of us must be equipped to teach a Bible study. If you feel that you have not been fully equipped, then you should take whatever steps are necessary to become prepared. There are plenty of people available who can help you, starting with your home group leader.

3. The third thing we must do is invite the person to either home group or an evangelistic church service. In many cases it may be best to wait until the person is nearing the end of the Bible study. The most effective approach to soul-winning is usually teaching the Word *before* inviting to church. This is not a hard and fast rule, but is often the best approach.

The Bible says, "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion

for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest'" (Matthew 9:35-38).

The problem today is that not many of God's people are really passionate about forming new relationships with people they don't know. They prefer to spend most of their time with people they have known for many years. Not many people are passionate about teaching Bible studies either.

But Jesus "went about" teaching and preaching the gospel. He stepped out of His comfort zone. He was constantly meeting new people. In addition He was "moved with compassion" by the spiritual emptiness of the people. He didn't just talk about 'winning the lost,' He was "moved"; that is, He actually rolled up His sleeves and got to work.

Jesus indicated that the problem is never that there is a lack of people to be won, only that there is a lack of laborers...people who are passionate about evangelism. His instruction was that we pray!

Listen to the prayer of missionary Jim Elliot, who was killed by Indians in Ecuador:

Am I ignitable? God deliver me from the dread asbestos of "other things." Saturate me with the oil of the Spirit that I may be a flame. But a flame is transient, often short-lived. Canst thou bear this, my soul – short life? In me there dwells the Spirit of the Great Short-Lived, whose zeal for God's house consumed Him. Make me Thy fuel, O Flame of God.

Lead your group in prayer for God to give each of them a genuine passion for all the things of God: We need passion for prayer, for praise, for the Word, for holiness, for fellowship, for ministry, and for evangelism. The only question is, are we ignitable? Are we willing to sacrifice?