

What Passions Are In Your Heart?

Acts 4:19–20

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I want you to think about someone who is a hero to you. Somebody who has done something or lived their life in a way that you admire. This person is an inspiration to you, they help you stay motivated.

Now, think about someone in the Bible who is a hero for you. I have several. We share the same name: Joseph who had many brothers and Joseph is known as Barnabas, the encourager.

We aren't talking about them today, but two other people from the Bible whose lives were inspiring and motivational.

But Peter and John replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard." Acts 4:19–20 (NLT)

Peter and John had been arrested for being passionate about their faith in Jesus. Peter and John had gone to the Temple to pray. The Holy Spirit has already entered them on the day of Pentecost. They were grateful and ready to serve Jesus. The passion in their blood was running hot. The fire of the Holy Spirit was burning bright.

They encountered a man who had never walked. He's doing what every other person like him did, he's begging for money. That's his occupation, his career, his livelihood. Some people fish, others pound nails, some teach this man solicits others for money.

He's more than likely looking weary and ragged. Everything he receives is used for food. Clothing is secondary, along with bathing. Most people walk past him, some may even curse him, others offer a token amount of money.

Peter and John being passionate about serving Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and living upon His promises talk to the man. They tell him have no money (they haven't been working for a long time). But they have one thing, the only thing the man needs: Jesus. So, in the name of Jesus they call upon His power and the man is healed.

Now, he's so excited that he starts jumping up and down praising God. This type of behavior always draws attention. In the crowded Temple where sound reverberates throughout the building his praises are heard.

Peter being filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit and passionate about Jesus begins to speak. He speaks passionately about Jesus. Jesus who was foretold by the prophets. Jesus who died for the sins of the world. Jesus who was raised from the dead. Jesus who is alive today. Peter called upon the people to repent.

This would seem to be a good thing, in the house of God someone is healed, the person is given a new life, and that person is filled with overflowing joy. But, on this occasion it is a disturbance. Some of the priests of the Temple get the leader of the Temple Guard and they all go to investigate. Upon

arriving at the scene they arrest Peter and John and place them in jail. For point of reference this event started in the middle of the afternoon. The arrest took place after dark. This was no small event.

In due course of the law the full leadership of the Jewish faith including the High Priest, that's capitalized because of his position and importance, were gathered together. Peter and John explain in very clear language what happened. That is by the power of Jesus who was crucified and raised from the dead the man was healed.

So, what do you think, should this be a moment of passion and joy, or is it a moment of dismay and anger? If you said dismay and anger you would be right. The important, knowledgeable people of the faith were distraught, they didn't know what to think. They were equally or more angry, they had been accused of killing God's Son.

This resulted in a timeout. Do you like to take time outs? In the midst of a crisis I need a time out to regroup. The leaders got in a huddle and decided to tell Peter and John to shut up! They warned them and warned them to stop talking.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit and being passionate about Jesus they said, "***We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.***" ***Acts 4:20 NLT***

This is passion. It is a passion for Jesus. It is a passion for sharing His grace, mercy, and love. It is an inner motivation that cannot come from any clever words. It is an inspiration that only comes from the working of the Holy Spirit. God has given all of us a passion for His Kingdom.

We trust God and are faithful, but have we lost our passion? Passion, in my opinion, has highs and lows. Passion is more than emotion. It's not excitement followed by boredom. It's not a rollercoaster of emotions. It's not a switch between one feeling and another.

Passion is given to us through the Holy Spirit from Jesus by the Father. It is given for the purpose of doing work in the Kingdom of God. It fills us to bring about God's purposes. It is connected directly to our attitude about fulfilling God's plans.

Jesus was a man of passion. He had a passion for overcoming the destructive results of sin. He took away illnesses that had come upon people. He healed people who had suffered from birth. He calmed the seas, the wind, the rain. He raised people from the dead. He passionately spoke the truth, sharing about God's love. He explained the true meaning of the Law. He helped people learn how to live faithfully. He shared what it meant to be loved by God.

Jesus was passionate about following all of the Father's commands. His passion to do God's will allowed Him to be falsely accused. Which was followed by beatings. Ultimately He died on the cross.

Passion is built upon faith. Without faith in Jesus we can't have passion for doing Kingdom work. Without faith we can't accept the gift of salvation from Jesus. Through faith in Jesus we embrace God's calling to reveal and share His grace. This is how a seed of passion is planted within us and how it grows.

Life experiences, disappointments, setbacks can be like water on our passion. We know that Peter was a passionate person. His passion for Jesus started sooner than the other disciples. But there was one night that in the midst of uncertain circumstances, Peter's passion disappeared. That was

the night Peter denied Jesus three times. Extraordinary, right? His faith may have even slipped. Peter's faith in who he wanted Jesus to be failed. His faith in Jesus never disappeared.

Our faith in Jesus' gift of salvation is not in question. Neither is our trust in God to work out His plans and purposes. But, our life experiences may negatively impact our passion. We may become less passionate when we don't understand. We may have encountered a similar situation before that failed. Our passion may not rise to the occasion because of uncertainty. We have suffered setbacks in the past. Those failures haunt us, so now were more anxious. What is in question is whether we are still willing to take our gifts combine them with our resources and get active?

God is calling us to do what He says. That means we discard any other notions, ideas, or commands. Under the threat of ridicule, beatings, or jail we do what God commands. Even when it means rejecting all that is in the past and once believed, and we obey God.

The emotional word for obedience is not fear, but passion. Spiritually we trust God, we have faith. Trust and faith can either be standing firm or taking action. Passion results in action. Peter and John said, "***We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.***" ***Acts 4:20 NLT***

Christians who are faithful and passionate impact others for Jesus. From my own experience, when I am passionate about Jesus I have done more than when I'm passionate about myself. This is a result of Jesus being at work. This isn't Joe, but it is Jesus through His Holy Spirit showing me that I'm being selfish, thinking about me, focusing on my circumstances, and not calling upon Jesus. When the Holy Spirit gets my attention through a quiet whisper or a powerful wind His passion grows within me. His inspiration ignites a fire. His motivation burns hot.

In my experience this is when I have been most effective for His Kingdom. From my perspective this is when I have been most useful in His Kingdom. What I'm saying is this is when I have seen lives changed. When I surrender to the Holy Spirit and am filled with His passion there is an impact in the lives of other people.

Our passion for Jesus is what the world sees, and God knows when the world needs to see Jesus. I've talked about passion coming and going. I've given reasons for the ups and downs. But, people always need Jesus. Saints and sinners alike need Jesus. The passion given to us is always available. How do I say this correctly, it is always within us. It is waiting to be released.

My passions throughout life have risen and fallen. The one passion that has stayed steadfast is the passion to preach. This matches some of my spiritual giftedness. The passion for people to know Jesus has remained steadfast. I've given my time and energy seeking for people to know Him. The passion to help people through life has remained steadfast. By the power of the Holy Spirit I've been sustained.

Every one of us is passionate about something in the Kingdom of God. The problem is we may have kept that passion from coming to blossom. I've already talked about that. What I'm saying is when you take your giftedness and skills, surrendering them to God, your passion will impact others. The impact will help others transform their lives. Some of the impact will be with Christians. But you will also have an impact on sinners, the unsaved.

Passion, as I study it, results from prayer, trust, and taking a step of faith. I'm talking about praying specifically for an awareness of your gifts and skills, what you need to surrender, and for the passion

to take action. That sounds like a tall order. I've shared this past week four individuals from scripture who had a passion for the Lord: Joshua, Nehemiah, Peter, and John. There are so many more people in the Bible who had a passion for the Lord: Noah, Moses, Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, and all of the prophets. Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Luke, Mark are just a few who lived after the resurrection. I haven't even mentioned women like Mary, Lydia, Mary Magdalene, the unclean woman, the woman caught in adultery, and Martha and Mary.

The reason for sharing them is to help each of us have Jesus and another Biblical hero. Jesus better be your Biblical hero. These other Biblical heroes were filled with a passion for the Lord. Though their circumstances changed they remained faithful, they trusted in the Lord, they leaned into the Lord when they needed the passion to act. In their own way they said, "***We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.***" ***Acts 4:20 NLT***

Take your resources, gifts, and pray to passionately serve Jesus! This is a moment of decision, do we fade away or do we find a new way to make disciples? I believe that fading away is not an option. I believe God wants us to find a new way of making disciples. I am part of the generation of pastors that choose to be trained in the bigger and better church: bigger ideas, bigger visions, bigger programs, more people, and more activities. I read all the books by the pastors who had the bigger and better mentality. What they wrote worked for ten percent of the churches in America. They pastored mega churches and sold more books.

But for the ninety percent of churches in America they didn't work long-term. That ninety percent of churches is made of congregations with seventy or fifty or twenty people in attendance every week. For over fifty years there has been this bigger and better mentality and now they are starting to admit that they missed something. They were very good at the go, baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit remembering that Jesus was with them always. Many people were saved. Some of the people came from smaller churches to join what is bigger and better.

I'm not bashing the bigger and better pastors and their churches. What they are starting to realize is that forgot about making disciples, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded.

God doesn't want us to fade away. God wants us to make disciples. God wants to teach people to obey everything Jesus commanded. So, here we are a small church. We are people who show up on Sunday morning because we don't want to miss one week without being with other believers. We're not here for the bigger and better. We're together because we love the Lord, Jesus Christ. I don't believe that you want to fade away. I think you want to find a new way to make disciples. You are ready to surrender your resources. You are ready to use your gifts, talents, and abilities.

You don't have to be the preacher, teacher, evangelist. You can be the person gifted in hospitality, serving, giving, administration, discernment, or faith. Making disciples may start with people who don't even know Jesus. Jesus was making disciples for three years. Three years before He was crucified. Three years before He rose from the dead. Three years before He sent His Holy Spirit. Some people require lots of discipleship before they choose Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

We are God's people who are not fading away but who are praying for the passion to make disciples. All around us are people who don't know Jesus. They're people who need to be discipled. They need the overwhelming blessings of coming to Jesus. They need help in growing in their faith. By faith in Jesus Christ, as people who are filled with the Holy Spirit we can with His passion make disciples.