

## Fueling Your Passion for the Lord.

**Thesis:** We are a people who respond to the invitation of the Lord to draw near and to get close to our living God. God wants us to experience a deep, passionate relationship with himself.

**Text:** Matthew 3:11; John 17:26; Psalm 27:4, 63:1-4, 84:1-2; Romans 8:31-39; Hebrews 12:28-29; 1 John 4:9-16

Our God is a jealous, zealous, passionate God. As God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, God loves you with a fire that is unquenchable and unrelenting. Jesus embodies the love of God so powerfully that he came to personally bring us into the loving embrace of the Father and into God's family. And, the Spirit of God pours out the love of God in our hearts.

Again, consider this reality: God is love, God loves you, and God is passionate for you.

So, we want to be a people who respond to the invitation of the Lord to draw near and to get close to our living God. God wants us to experience a deep, passionate relationship with himself.

*He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11).*

- **John the Baptist prophesied that Jesus would come and baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with his fiery passion.**
- Augustine testified that "the entire life of a good Christian is nothing less than holy desire."
- What is holy desire? Holy desire is that longing which draws us near to God and to his purposes.
- One of the primary focuses of holy desire is the desire for intimacy with God. This one desire, the desire for intimacy with God, gives birth to all other holy desires. As Augustine said, "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you."
- So, we cry out, "Baptize us with fire, your holy desire, Lord Jesus" (Matthew 3:11).

*Jesus prayed: I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them (John 17:26).*

David testified: *One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell [abide; make your home] in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon [behold] the beauty of the LORD and to seek [pursue passionately] him in his temple (Psalm 27:4).*

*Psalm 63:1 O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. 2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. 3 Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. 4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands (Psalms 63:1-4).*

*How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! 2 My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God (Psalm 84:1-2).*

*What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:*

*“For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

*37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:31-39).*

*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our “God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28–29).*

**It needs to be said again. God is love, God loves you, and God is passionate for you.**

So, we want to be a people who respond to the invitation of the Lord to draw near and to get close to our living God. God wants us to experience a deep, passionate relationship with himself.

For us, passion in relationships ebbs and flows; it flourishes and wanes. We carry passion differently during the honeymoon stage or during first love than we carry passion as our relationship matures over time.

Without attention and intentionality, our love falters, grows weak, and dissipates. That is the nature of relationships. Regarding our relationship with the Lord, our tendency is to drift, neglect, or walk away from our first love.

How is your passion for the Lord in this season? Is it a fire that has gone out? Gone cold? An ember? Fully ablaze? Getting hotter? Burning brightly? Dwindling and needs more fuel?

**Today, let's consider how we fuel our passion for the Lord now and for a lifetime.**

**What helps to fuel our passion for the Lord?**

1. **I remind myself that I am responding to the invitation of the Lord to draw near and get close to the God who loves me.**
  - a. My God is jealous, zealous, and passionate for me (Exodus 34:14; Isaiah 42:13).
  - b. My God pursues me (Psalm 23:6).
  - c. God loves me with a fire that is unquenchable and unrelenting (Song of Solomon 8:6-7).
  - d. I wouldn't know God unless he drew me to himself (Matthew 11:27).
  - e. I wouldn't know love unless the God of love awakened love in me.
2. **How do I know that God loves me and takes the initiative to reach me with his love?**
  - a. God's passionate and pursuing love is the testimony of the Scriptures.
  - b. That is the testimony of God himself: God loves me with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3).
  - c. And, Jesus and the Spirit bear witness of agreement to the passionate love of God for you and me (1 John 4:9, 16; Romans 5:8).
  - d. God demonstrates his love to me in that while I was without God and dead in sin, Jesus died for me (Romans 5:8).
  - e. And, nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-39).
3. **What voice(s) are you listening to?**
  - a. Your shame voice will lie to you and say that you are fundamentally flawed, broken, and unlovable.

- b. Unconfessed sin hinders your ability to feel loved by God, so keep on walking in the light (1 John 1:7-9).
- c. The accuser will tell you that you are unworthy of love and that you can never measure up.
- d. Broken people will hurt you, wound you, and tell you that you are unworthy of love.
- e. And, a broken world will batter and bruise you to the point of questioning how God can love you and let such things happen to you.
- f. In the midst of all the voices, learn to listen for The Voice of the One who says: "I have loved you with an everlasting love." "No thing and no one can separate you from my love."

### **What helps to fuel our passion for the Lord?**

1. Get next to God who is fire, and you will catch fire.
2. Get next to people who are on fire with passion for God, and you will catch fire.
3. Get in step with Jesus who is on mission in your spheres of influence, and you will catch fire.

### **What helps to fuel our passion for the Lord?**

1. **Engage in spiritual practices in an intentional, relational, and wholehearted way.**
  - a. Spiritual practices help remove the illusion that God is absent.
  - b. Spiritual practices help me to position myself so that I can know the One who knows me.
  - c. Jesus had a way of life that deeply and regularly engaged spiritual practices (Luke 5:16; Luke 4:16 *"he went into the synagogue, as was his custom"*).
  - d. The disciples did what Jesus did and said what Jesus said, so much so that others *"recognized them as having been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13).
  - e. Followers of Jesus were first known as people of *"the Way"* before they were called Christians (Act 9:2). What way? The way of Jesus. They looked, sounded, and acted like their Lord and Master.
2. **Engage spiritual practices on a daily, weekly, and occasional basis.**
  - a. We need a regular routine of spiritual practices.
  - b. Some spiritual practices are daily.
  - c. Some spiritual practices are several days a week.
  - d. Some spiritual practices are weekly.
  - e. Some spiritual practices are monthly, quarterly, or annually.

- f. Some spiritual practices are done individually or alone with God.
- 3. **Engage spiritual practices on both an individual and corporate basis.**
  - a. Some spiritual practices are done individually with God alone.
  - b. Some spiritual practices are done corporately or together with others.
- 4. **What is your rhythm of spiritual practices?**
  - a. Have you written down your rhythm of spiritual practices? Are they accessible to you?
  - b. What spiritual practices are life giving to you in this season?
  - c. What new spiritual practice is the Lord asking you to take on?
  - d. Where are you stuck or stopped in your spiritual practices?
    - i. Get prayer.
    - ii. Get coaching.
    - iii. Get help.

**What helps you to engage your spiritual practices with expectation rather than just going through the motions?**

1. Sometimes, it is necessary for me to stir up faith in God before I engage in spiritual disciplines.
  - a. *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror [dimly] the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).*
  - b. *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6).*
2. Sometimes, I picture myself joining others around the throne of God as in Revelation chapters 4 and 5.
3. Sometimes, I draw near to the God who is on the throne of my life, who has made his home in my inner person.
4. Sometimes, I picture myself in the story of the Scripture I am reading and enter personally into the story.
5. Sometimes, I sit in stillness with the Lord.
6. Sometimes, I get up and walk with the Lord: walking, listening, worshiping, and/or praying.

**What are some individual spiritual practices which help us fuel our passion for the Lord?**

**Note:** We believe that spiritual practices are crucial to following the way of Jesus and for encountering God. We also believe that our practices should be life giving, liberating, and empowering.

**1. Devotional Scripture reading.**

- a. Listen for “The Voice” of your Shepherd.
- b. Read until something catches your attention or focus, and then talk with God about it.
- c. Turn the Scriptures into prayer and dialogue with the Lord.
- d. By the way, we live in an auditory culture. Some people prefer listening to the Scriptures. You can find apps that read the Scriptures to you, or you can get recordings of the Bible in audio formats.

**2. Prayer.**

- a. Prayer involves listening to God and talking with the Lord.
- b. The Bible is a great prayer book. Pray your way through your time in God’s word.
- c. Let your affections arise to God.
- d. Give thanks to the Lord.
- e. Pour out your concerns or anxieties to God.
- f. We are commanded to pray without ceasing. How is that possible?
  - i. One way it is possible is to stay attuned to God throughout the day.
  - ii. Pay attention to God with a listening heart.
- g. Turn your affections to the Lord throughout the hours of your day.

**3. Practice the discipline of awareness.**

- a. Become attuned to the God who is with you.
- b. Turn your attention, ear, and affections to the Lord throughout the day.
- c. Speak words of blessing, thanks, and love to the Lord throughout the day.
- d. Practice *60forSixty*.
  - i. Set your watch or alarm to go off every 60 minutes.
  - ii. How often did you turn your attention to God during those 60 minutes?
  - iii. If not before, at least acknowledge the Lord and turn your attention to God when the alarm goes off, even if it is just for a moment or for a few minutes.

**4. Reflection.**

- a. Take time throughout the day to reflect with God.
- b. What is God doing in you or through you?
- c. What is God saying to you?
- d. What is God teaching you, showing you, or helping you to become aware of in yourself or around you?

- e. Where are you stuck or stopped, cynical or resigned?
  - f. What are you celebrating?
  - g. What are you learning?
  - h. What challenge(s) are you facing?
  - i. What transformation are you working on?
5. **Journaling:**
- a. Find a way to record your thoughts that works for you.
  - b. Journaling will aid your progress in the Lord.
  - c. Journaling also helps you in the discipline of reflection.
6. **Personal worship.**
- a. Let songs arise to God throughout your day or in concert with your spiritual practices.
  - b. Use worship songs that help you connect with God.
  - c. Sing new songs to the Lord.
  - d. Pray and sing in the spirit to God.
7. **Silence and Solitude.**
- a. *Be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10).*
  - b. The thought of silence and solitude scares many of us.
  - c. Be courageous and try it.
  - d. Try for short periods through the day and week, like 2 minutes, 5 minutes, or longer.
8. **Rest.**
- a. Some people are completely burned out or worn out.
  - b. View rest as a spiritual practice.
  - c. What might you take on or give up that will help you?
9. **Walking in the light / transformation conversations.**
- a. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:7).*
  - b. Regarding transformation conversations: we want to share our stories effectively, so we seek to be clear, authentic, and passionate. This skill is called vision casting.
  - c. We want to share current stories, not just what God has done in the distant past.
  - d. We want to practice regularly and intentionally sharing our stories with others.
    - i. **Clarity:** Our stories will get clearer the more we share them and get feedback from others.
    - ii. **Regularly:** We recommend that you have 3 or more transformation conversations a week.
    - iii. **Intentionally:** We recommend that you have your transformation conversations with more than one person.

**10. Sabbath.**

- a. Sabbath is both a day and a way of life.
- b. Are you learning to take time to reflect, renew, refresh, and recreate in the Lord?
- c. Or, do you fill every minute of every day with activity, busyness, and work?
- d. Sabbath is learning that "I am enough. I have enough. I will have enough. I have done enough. God is enough."

**11. Service.**

- a. Jesus went about doing good (Acts 10:38).
- b. A cup of cold water given in the name of Jesus will not lose its reward (Matthew 10:42).

**12. Mission.**

- a. We are a people who join Jesus on his mission in our spheres of influence together with others.
- b. Spheres of influence: where we live, work, and play.

**13. Fasting.**

- a. *Jesus assumed that we would fast. "When you fast..." (Matthew 6:16).*
- b. You can fast as the Lord leads: weekly, monthly, short periods of fasting (days or weeks), or longer fasts (21-day, 30-day, or 40-day fasts).
- c. There are different types of fasts: absolute, water only, modified fasts like the Daniel fast, etc.

**14. Contemplation or passive prayer.**

- a. *Be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10).*
- b. Contemplative or passive prayer is a spiritual practice that helps us to focus on God first, above all else, to seek God first. God himself is our great reward.
- c. We come and just "be" with the Lord.
- d. You can use a phrase internally to help you center in the Lord, like "I love you, Lord." Or, "Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."
- e. Get comfortable and still.

**15. Tithing.**

- a. The word tithe means "ten percent." To tithe is to give ten percent of all your income to the Lord through his local church.
  - i. In Genesis 4:4 and 14:20, the tithe was commanded by God before the law was ever given to Moses.
  - ii. Then, in Leviticus 3:8-11, the tithe is commanded by God in his law that he gave to Moses.
  - iii. The prophet Malachi prophesied that to not tithe the tithe is to rob God and to be under a curse (3:8-11). This, of course, was a continued affirmation by God that he is serious about our obeying his commands concerning the tithe.

- iv. Finally, even Jesus commanded us not to neglect the tithe in Matthew 23:23.
  - b. The tithe belongs to the Lord.
    - i. *“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD” (Leviticus 27:30).*
    - ii. The tithe belongs to the Lord. It does not belong to us. It is devoted or holy unto the Lord.
    - iii. We don't give the tithe. We bring to God what belongs to God. We return it to its rightful owner, which is God.
16. **Giving.**
- a. The principle of generosity. We give because we want to be like the Lord. Our God is generous and gives freely (2 Corinthians 8:1-9).
  - b. The principle of sowing and reaping (2 Corinthians 9:6-15). We don't give to get, but we give because we believe that God wants us to get in on the law of the harvest and generosity that results in thanksgiving to God.
  - c. We give to the poor, we give for kingdom purposes and special offerings, we give to other believers, and we give as God leads.

**What are some corporate spiritual practices which help us fuel our passion for the Lord?**

*And let us consider how we may spur [provoke] one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24-25).*

1. Corporate worship.
2. Corporate prayer services.
3. Corporate gatherings as a whole congregation for special training, conferences, learnings, warfare, etc.
4. Corporate gatherings as a team (Elders, Deacons, Student Ministry Teams, Children's Team, etc.)
5. Corporate acts of kindness and service.
6. Corporate mission excursions both locally and globally.
7. Corporate fasting with prayer.
8. Corporate solemn assemblies, where we respond to the Spirit to humble ourselves, repent, and seek the face of God together. (See Joel 2:12fl.)
9. Corporate and public reading of Scripture.
10. Corporate ministry or team ministry.

11. Corporate studies or emphases, like Bible Study Classes or [GriefShare](#).
12. Corporate small group gatherings, like our Journey Groups.
13. Corporate celebrations, like our Family Christmas Parties with IPUL.
14. Corporate meals, like our potluck events or our youth mission trip fund raiser.
15. Corporate warfare, like we have done in the past as the Lord leads.

### **Summary:**

#### **Fueling your passion for the Lord**

Our God is a jealous, zealous, passionate God. As God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, God loves you with a fire that is unquenchable and unrelenting. Jesus embodies the love of God so powerfully that he came to personally bring us into the loving embrace of the Father and into God's family. And, the Spirit of God pours out the love of God in our hearts.

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2. Get next to people who are on fire with passion for God, and you will catch fire.
3. Get in step with Jesus who is on mission in your spheres of influence, and you will catch fire.
4. Ask Jesus to baptize you with his Holy Spirit and his holy fire (passion and desire).
5. Engage in spiritual practices in an intentional, relational, and wholehearted way.