

A GREATER PASSION

Sermon Study

Small Group Study Guide

In a season where many aspects of our lives seem to be in flux, stalled out or significantly changed, it is easy to feel stuck or discouraged.

However, as followers of Christ we have every reason to move forward. We want to nurture and live out life with a GREATER passion, intentionally putting our energy into the pursuits that are most important and which will ultimately bring fulfillment and lasting impact.

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Session 1: The Power of Passion

BIG IDEA

Passion is the fuel of life and the greatest motivator. This week we will discover how to activate the power of passion in our lives.

KEY VERSE

“What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.” Philippians 3:8 NIV

MAIN SCRIPTURES

Galatians 1:14-18

WATCH VIDEO

ICEBREAKER

1. What is something you enjoy doing for hours at a time, something that makes you feel alive?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

2. Which of the following biblical examples would you say is the most passionate? Why?
 - *Barnabas* – a passion to encourage and to give
 - *Eve* – a passion for life
 - *Ezra* – a passion for God’s Word

- *Ruth* – a passion for her family
- *Paul* – a passion for people to know Christ
- *Joseph* – a passion for his family to be restored
- *David* – a passion for God

3. Passion is the God-given internal drive and desire to do all He has designed for us. What does passion look like in your personality?
4. How have you limited yourself and your passion due to circumstance or past experiences? (Such as family of origin, history, economic situation, role in society, expectations)
5. How are you freed up to live out your passion when living out of your identity in Christ?
6. If our destiny means being who God has called us to be, and doing what God wants us to do, what pieces of your destiny has God revealed to you? How have you discovered those pieces?
7. Read Galatians 1:14-18. How does Paul develop his passion before stepping into his destiny?
8. How does Paul's process in Galatians 1:14-18 of having initial but misguided zeal (v. 14), then an encounter with God (v. 15),

solidifying the truth (vv. 16–17), and living out his destiny (v. 18, and the book of Acts) help us in our journey to discover our destiny in Christ?

PRAYER/MINISTRY

LISTENING PRAYER

- Ask Jesus what is the next step for you in discovering your passion.

THIS WEEK

- A. This week, notice what God is already awakening in your spirit (what your passion might be)
 - Reflect on the season you're in with God (are you discovering your passion, encountering God, solidifying what you've learned, walking in your destiny?)

Session 2: The Passion Paradox

BIG IDEA

Passion is a two-edged sword—all passions are powerful, but not all passions are helpful. The greatest fulfillment comes when our passions are properly focused.

KEY VERSE

“Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart (passion) and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved. I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal [passion].” Romans 10:1-2 NLT

MAIN SCRIPTURES

Acts 5:1-11; 1 Samuel 15

WATCH VIDEO

ICEBREAKER

1. What was your dream job when you were a child/as a teen/and now?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

2. Think of some passionate people in the Bible. What were their specific passions – good, bad, or both?

3. Read Acts 5:1-11. Ananias & Sapphira and Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37) brought gifts to the church. What passion seemed to motivate each?

4. EXERCISE: Take some time with each member of your group and ask them some of these questions below, to help see patterns that would identify passions in their lives. (NOTE: we're not trying to be overly spiritual here)
 - What are things that you enjoy?
 - What are things that you hate?
 - Are there things about God or in the Bible that really jump out at you or reveal your passion? (stories or character traits that resonate)
 - What biblical character do you resonate with?
 - What will people say about you at your funeral?
 - What do you want written on your gravestone?
 - Where do you spend a lot of your time/money?
 - What are some things that you love OR what are some things that make you angry? (righteous anger)
 - If someone else was reviewing your life (e.g. your spouse or best friend), what would they say is your passion?

My answers/clues to my passions:

5. King Saul is a clear example of how passion can be misdirected. Saul started out well as King. He had 100% popularity with the people, he was full of the Spirit, he was physically imposing, and he was called by God (1 Samuel 10-11). Yet he lost his way and fed the wrong passions. In his life we see:
 - Fearing man over God (1 Samuel 13:1-5)
 - Worrying about what others think (1 Samuel 15:30)

- More passion for destroying his rival, David, than for following God (1 Samuel 18:7-11)

How have you seen passion misdirected in your life or in the lives of people around you?

6. Pick one or two of the positive or fulfilling passions you have identified in your own life so far... try to refine them a bit more.
 - a) How do you best feed that passion?

 - b) What passions do you have to starve in order for your positive passions to flourish?

7. Share with the group about a passion you are going to either “starve or feed” this week. How are you going to help, support and encourage each other in feeding your positive passions and starving your distracting passions?

PRAYER/MINISTRY

Pray for each other to have insight and discernment as you each decide which passions to starve and which to feed. Ask for the help of the Holy Spirit in empowering each member where they need it.

THIS WEEK

Connect with a friend who has a positive passion that you would like to feed in your own life. Ask them what motivates them in that passion and how they avoid falling into wrong motives.

Session 3: The Passionate Partner

BIG IDEA

Scripture has a profoundly simple yet effective model for marriage based on the principles of love and respect. Today we examine the 4 C's of being a passionate partner:

- COMMUNICATION
- COMMON BONDS
- CONSIDERATION
- CHRIST

KEY VERSE

“So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” Ephesians 5:33 NLT

MAIN SCRIPTURES

Ephesians 5:21-33

WATCH VIDEO

ICEBREAKER

1. What initially attracted you to your spouse?

OR

What qualities would you look for in a future spouse?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

2. Who do you know that has a great marriage? What qualities do they seem to have?

3. COMMUNICATION – There are five distinct levels of communication in marriage. Below are some examples of each:
 - *Small Talk* – “How’s the weather?”
 - *Self Talk* – “You won’t believe what happened at work...” health, hobbies, headaches
 - *Serious Talk* – “Let’s break down our budget,” “Where should we send our kids to school?”
 - *Sweet Talk* – “Looking good, Honey Buns!” caring, intimate
 - *Soul Talk* (exclusive to really close friendship or spouse) – “I’ve been talking to God about this...” “I’ve been really struggling with...”
 - a) Which communication level do you naturally gravitate toward?

 - b) What are ways you can be intentional about developing the other areas?

4. COMMON BOND – Shared interests don’t just magically appear. Discuss as a group some ways in which you have developed common interests with your partner.
 - a) What value do you feel this has added to your relationship?

- b) Which of your interests could you invite your mate into?
Which of your mate’s interests could you try to get involved in?
5. CONSIDERATION is more than just being nice. What does it look like to be considerate of your partner?
6. CHRIST – Ephesians 5:21 “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” How has your relationship with Christ contributed to strengthening your marriage?
7. How can you work with your partner to intentionally grow closer to God in a way that works for both of you?

PRAYER/MINISTRY

Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal ways we can “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” in our closest relationships. Pray for courage to be intentional about the 4 Cs.

THIS WEEK

- A. Pick one of the C’s and make a plan to grow in that area this week.
- B. Love & Respect – Ask your partner (or significant person in your life) when they have felt loved or respected by you.
Discuss how you can move forward and do better in your part of loving and respecting.

Session 4: The Passionate Parent

BIG IDEA

In a world that pulls parents in every direction, it's vital to keep children a primary value. We're going to discuss how we can stoke the fires of passionate parenting.

KEY VERSE

“Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him.”
Psalm 127:3 NLT

MAIN SCRIPTURES

Deuteronomy 6:6–9

WATCH VIDEO

ICEBREAKER

1. What is your...
 - Funniest parenting moment / childhood experience?
 - Worst parenting advice you've ever received?
 - Worst parenting moment?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

2. What are the challenges of keeping your children (or future children) a primary value in your life?

3. Instilling your virtues will not happen by osmosis—it will require an ongoing relational connection with our kids at every age of their development. Read Deuteronomy 6:6–9. What are the contemporary applications of this verse?

4. Share a time when you feel you successfully instilled one of your virtues into your children.

5. Brainstorm with your group:
 - a) What are the most important virtues that you want to pass on to your children? Examples: praying, going to church, good citizen, work ethic, fruit of the Spirit, loving God, loving others, etc.

 - b) How can you be intentional about instilling these virtues?

6. Which age was/is the most difficult for you to parent?

7. What does being vigilant look like in the different seasons of parenting? (child/teen/adult)

8. What strategies can you employ to stay engaged when you no longer feel like it, or when it's too complicated to maintain?

9. We will be more effective as parents if we have the habit of listening to the Holy Spirit. How can you implement listening to the Holy Spirit into your parenting?
10. Developing a Family Vision – Nine times in the Old Testament, we see the Jewish people commanded to pass their faith, culture and material inheritance down to the next generations. Isaiah put it this way, “*Enlarge the place of your tent, And let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings*” (Isaiah 54:2), and in Proverbs 13:22, King Solomon opined, “*A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, But the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.*”

Does anyone have a family vision that you would like to share?

11. Workshop some ideas for what a strong family vision statement might include.

PRAYER/MINISTRY

Pray for one another regarding a parenting challenge you are now facing.

THIS WEEK

A Family Vision is about more than just a “pretty biblical statement.” Your family vision should include things that are core/central to who you are and things that you feel are worth living out. Take it home, refine it, and think through how to implement it.

Session 5: The Passionate Plumber

BIG IDEA

Work can, at times, feel like you're "grinding it out." A renewed perspective can allow you to have passion, joy, and fulfillment in what you do.

KEY VERSE

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord..." Colossians 3:23 GNT

MAIN SCRIPTURES

Colossians 3:23–24

WATCH VIDEO

ICEBREAKER

1. What is a hobby that you enjoy doing? How much time do you spend doing it?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

2. There are many characters in the Bible who give us great examples of pursuing excellence in their passion:
 - Mary choosing what is best and sitting at the feet of Jesus
 - Joseph and Daniel excelled at administration so much they rose to second in command in the nations they were in

- Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego excelled at learning Babylonian culture and language far above their peers in Daniel 1:20
- In Philippians 2:19–30, Timothy and Epaphroditus are commended for giving everything for the sake of the gospel
- In 2 Corinthians 8:7, Paul commends the Corinthian Church: “Since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.”

What are some common characteristics we notice in these people?

PURSUING YOUR PASSION

3. Passion is about more than just having a hobby that you love. What are the differences between hobbies and life-passions that are in line with God’s purposes?
4. What life-passions do you want to intentionally pursue?

PURSUING EXCELLENCE

5. We cannot only work hard at what our passion is, we also have to develop excellence in other areas of our lives. Review Colossians 3:23–24. What mindset do we need to have in order to be excellent?
6. How do you develop excellence in the things you are naturally passionate about, and how do you develop excellence in the things that are more of a “daily grind”? (e.g. in work, school, family life, chores, finances)

7. How do you face everyday challenges with the perspective of “working for the Lord”? (Colossians 3:23)

PRAYER/MINISTRY

- A. LISTENING PRAYER: Ask Jesus to reveal your next step toward pursuing excellence in your work and/or your life-passion.

- B. Pray for each other to have the right passion perspective for their work.

THIS WEEK

- A. Further investigate a life-passion you want to intentionally pursue. Research online, find a book, or talk to someone already pursuing it. Remember to allow God to guide you in this explorative step.
AND/OR

- B. Brainstorm and implement ideas how to foster excellence in your “daily grind.” Do you need an organizational system, day planner, coffee, devotional, or daily encouraging word that would help produce excellence?

Session 6: The Passionate Prevailer

BIG IDEA

Every one of us has been placed on earth with a God-given destiny, and He desires to fuel that purpose with a God-given passion. How can we live a life that is a “win” in God’s eyes?

KEY VERSE

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”
2 Timothy 4:7 NKJV

MAIN SCRIPTURES

Hebrews 12:1-10

WATCH VIDEO

ICEBREAKER

1. What do you want people to remember most about you after you’re gone?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

2. Think of someone whom you feel has “finished well.” What paths did they pursue that led them there?

3. Defining the win – Choose a few of the Scriptures below and use them to define what a “win” is in God’s eyes.

- Hebrews 12:1-10
- Philippians 3:13-14
- Joshua 24:15
- Mark 12:30-31
- Philippians 2:2-3
- John 13:2
- John 13:35
- 1 Corinthians 10:31
- 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

4. Pick at least two areas from the list below and discuss together what a win would look like in that area.

- a) Marriage
- b) Children and grandchildren
- c) Finances
- d) Accomplishments
- e) Servant Leadership
- f) Finishing Well

5. What are some of the distractions that could keep you from “winning” in some of the areas we discussed? How can you keep relationships of primary value?

6. What “greater passion” has God been speaking to you about in these past 5 weeks? How will you continue to live intentionally with passion in this area of your life?

PRAYER/MINISTRY

Take time to pray over each group member to encourage them as they pursue a greater passion.

THIS WEEK

Take time to further brainstorm a “win” that would be significant in your life from question 4. Come up with a plan to take a step in the right direction, bringing God and any other important persons into it.