

Enthusiasm Pt. 4

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, June 24, 2018

Main Theme – Considering enthusiasm (i.e., spiritual passion) in relation to our Christian walks.

WORSHIP & PRAYER

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Upcoming Events (REGULAR)**
 - Potluck – TODAY, Immediately After Service
 - WM – Tuesday Evening, July 10 (6:30–8:30pm)
 - Men's Breakfast – Saturday, July 14 (9–10:15am)

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work
 -Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

MEMBERSHIP SUNDAY

This morning is a very SPECIAL morning. Today we welcome new members into this local body of believers! We hold church membership to be both a privilege AND a responsibility. It is something to be entered into soberly, prayerfully and with great joy! Allow me to share a few WORDS regarding church membership:

-It is BIBLICAL – It was the norm for believers of the Early Church era to identify themselves with a local branch of the Church universal, wherein they functioned as committed and connected parts of a local church body. We do well to consider and comply with biblical precedent!

-It Promotes Spiritual HEALTH – Show me a person committed/connected to a local church and I will show you a person who is likely making great strides in the walk with Christ. Show me a believer who attends nominally—who's essentially going it alone—and the inverse is likely true.

-It Promotes Kingdom ADVANCEMENT – The only way that we are going to reach this world for Christ and make disciples is together. As we collectively work under a common vision, embrace biblical principles and pool our resources, time and talents, we can change the world.

This morning I want to present to you several candidates who have SUCCESSFULLY completed our membership PROCESS. As I call your name, please COME TO THE FRONT and FACE the Pastor:

-Tracey White
-Katie Jefferson
-Frank Marshall

Allow me to speak to the CANDIDATES: As we gather today, I COMMEND you. Thank you for engaging our process and deciding to become a formally recognized part of our body. But let me offer you this CHALLENGE:

-Serve the Lord (Make Him First In EVERYTHING)
-Connect with the Body (Build Relationship & Fellowship)
-Be Committed to the Church (Participate, Attend, Give & Serve)

PRAY OVER THE NEW MEMBERS

As each of you who stand before me today have satisfactorily completed the requirements for membership as outlined in Scripture and in our governing Bylaws—and upon the full recommendation and approval of the Board of Deacons and the Executive Board—it is my privilege to WELCOME you into the membership of this body. May this be the beginning of a long and wonderful partnership in the work of Christ!

Please TURN and FACE the audience (APPLAUSE)

CYC SUNDAY

Before we dismiss the children, allow me to note that today is CYC Sunday. i.e., Our Christian Youth Club has completed another school year of service and ministry, and the children have JOINED us to celebrate. Moreover, the children have PREPARED a special song for you all. At this time, allow me to WELCOME Kristie Barry (Leader) to share a few words and direct the children. (APPLAUSE)

SPECIAL SONG – We Believe by the Newsboys

• DISMISSAL OF CHILDREN FOR CHILDREN’S CHURCH

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OPENING REMARKS

As always, it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these weekly moments of worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what God has for you today! Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

This morning we will conclude our multi-segment series on the topic of spiritual ENTHUSIASM. Enthusiasm—as we have DEFINED it—is a sense of ‘passion, zeal and eagerness’ that results from divine connection: as one is inspired by; moved by; stirred by; and energized by the Lord.

NOTE – Consider the following text (PRIMARY text of the series):

Romans 12:11 (NIV)

11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

NOTE – Noteworthy Items:

- 1) Zeal is something that we are to PRIORITIZE (hence Paul’s commandment)
- 2) Zeal CAN wane, fade, decrease and diminish (can’t be taken—but forfeited)
- 3) Zeal is something we are told to KEEP (maintain, retain, sustain & preserve)

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

NOTE – Since WE are told to keep our sense of spiritual enthusiasm, there must be PRACTICAL STEPS that we can take to obey this commandment. Moreover, it also follows that there are practical steps that we can take IF & WHEN our passion begins to wane.

KEY – The point I am making is that YOU determine your level of passion!

- If you HAVE spiritual fervor – there are steps you must take to PRESERVE it
- If you have LOST your fervor – there are steps you can take to REKINDLE it

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3

NOTE – In recent weeks we have noted a variety of practical, biblically-sound STEPS:

- 1) Care for your physical being (rest, food, etc.) [Your physical being affects your sp. being]
- 2) Be vigilant against sin & deal with any pet sin(s) [Sin saps enthusiasm – they can't coexist]
- 3) Remember your first love [go back to your sp point of origin – when you 1st began to love]
- 4) Maintain &/or Rediscover the wonder of long-held beliefs [allow God to soften your heart]
- 5) Project yourself forward to the Judgment [think often of the reward & favor ahead of you]
- 6) Be willing to ask yourself 'tough' questions [examine yourself to see if you're in the faith]

KEY – This morning, allow me to CONCLUDE this series with some FINAL CONSIDERATIONS.

PRINCIPLE #1

PRINCIPLE #1 – Cultivate an Active Prayer Life

KEY – One of the best ways to PRESERVE or REKINDLE your spiritual passion is through an active prayer life. There is simply NO substitute for the transformative work that God does in and through us when we pray.

Q. Have you ever been STIRRED in the place of PRAYER? (AG District Prayer Meeting)

NOTE – Consider for a moment the EARTHLY MINISTRY of Jesus Christ. Consider all that He accomplished in a span of a few short years. REMEMBER – His earthly, public ministry lasted only about three or so years! During that time, Jesus would have to...

- Be on the move nearly constantly
- Experience earthly deprivation/lack
- Minister to "masses" who were needy
- Travel with 'disciples' who were needy
- Contend w/ people slow to 'give thanks'
- Contend w/ people slow to understand
- Contend w/ people SO slow to believe
- Deal with earthly, natural opposition
- Deal with supernatural opposition
- Know the 'destiny' of the Cross

Q. How could Jesus maintain ANY SENSE of spiritual passion and vigor dealing with SO much?

Luke 5:16 (NIV, Emp. Mine)

16 But Jesus *often* withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Mark 1:35 (NIV, Emphasis Mine) [CONSIDER – A Day in the Life of Jesus]

21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. 23 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, 24 “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

25 “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” 26 The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.” 28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

38 Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

KEY – The Lord made continual time for the practice of prayer AND the cultivation of this practice. These times were used to seek His Father, obtain divine directive, give thanks, offer worship, and RECEIVE much needed refreshing and renewal. The Lord NEVER lost sight of the fact that His very life was connected to an abiding relationship with His God and Father, and PRAYER was the mechanism that connected Him to heaven.

Q. If Jesus knew and practiced such things, HOW MUCH MORE should we?

Q. If God the Son made time to pray, how is it that we are FAR TOO BUSY?

KEY(s) – Maybe it is time to MIX THINGS UP a bit when it comes to your PRAYER life:

- Perhaps that means “establishing” a prayer life
- Perhaps it means finding a consistent time to pray
- Perhaps it means finding a consistent place to pray
- Perhaps it means changing your con. place to pray
- Perhaps it means opening your mouth/speaking
- Perhaps it means incorporating more listening
- Perhaps it means changing up your ‘pattern’

Q. Are you zealous for your walk with the Lord right now? If so, CONTINUE to pray/seek Him

Q. Has your passion for God waned or diminished? If so, BEGIN to seek Him afresh and anew

PRINCIPLE #2

PRINCIPLE #2 – Delve Deeply into the Word

KEY – One of the best ways to PRESERVE or REKINDLE your spiritual passion is through an ongoing life in the Word. There is simply NO substitute for the transformative work that God does in and through us when we seek Him in His Word.

Q. Have you ever been STIRRED when in God’s Holy Word? (**Proverbs 3 Recently**)

NOTE #1 – We just spent five or so minutes considering the prayer life of Jesus—a prayer life that was vital in the preservation and cultivation of His passion for God. But what about the life of Jesus Christ in the WORD? Connections between the Word of God AND He who is the Word?

Let’s take a moment to NOTE a scene from Luke 4 (i.e., beginnings of Christ’s earthly ministry):

Luke 4:14–20 (NIV)

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. 16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
 because he has anointed me
 to proclaim good news to the poor.
 He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
 and recovery of sight for the blind,
 to set the oppressed free,
 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Q. NOTEWORTHY ITEMS:

- Jesus' MINISTRY was one of preaching and teaching the Word (v. 15)
- Jesus' CUSTOM was to be in the Word of God (on the Sabbath) (v. 16)
- Jesus' LIFE was governed and informed by the Word of God (v. 18–21)

NOTE – This reminds me of a STATEMENT from Christ recorded in Matt. 4...

Matthew 4b (NIV)

4 . . . 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

- Q.** If Jesus knew the value of the Word and made time for it, how much more should we?
- Q.** If God the Son made time to study Holy Scripture, how is it that we are FAR TOO BUSY?
- Q.** If Christ lived His life governed by the Holy Bible, how can we do ANYTHING BUT THAT?

KEY(s) – Maybe it is time to MIX THINGS UP a bit when it comes to your DEVOTIONAL life:

- Perhaps that means "establishing" a devotional life
- Perhaps it means finding a consistent time to study
- Perhaps it means finding a consistent place to read
- Perhaps it means changing your con. place to read
- Perhaps it means incorporating more reflection
- Perhaps it means incorporating more listening
- Perhaps it means changing up your 'pattern'

- Q.** Are you zealous for your walk with the Lord right now? If so, CONTINUE to be in the Word
- Q.** Has your passion for God waned or diminished? If so, BEGIN to read Him afresh and anew

PRINCIPLE #3

PRINCIPLE #3 – Connect Deeply w/ People of Faith

KEY – One of the best ways to PRESERVE or REKINDLE your spiritual passion is through interactions with the people of God. There is simply NO substitute for the transformative work that God does in and through us when we make time for His people.

Q. Have you ever been STIRRED in the place of FELLOWSHIP? (Weekly Sunday School)

NOTE – It is true that people can be incredibly DIFFICULT (even in the house of God). It is the nature of people—at times—to disappoint and wound. If you open yourself up to people and to the influence of others, this will—at times—COST you in painful ways.

YET it is also true that people are a MAJOR MEANS by which God operates in our lives. It is THROUGH PEOPLE He directs, leads, challenges, encourages and STIRS us in the faith! As an old friend of mine said years ago: “The Lord speaks to me all the time, and it’s amazing how much he sounds like my wife!”

APP – I cannot tell you how often I have been truly blessed, encouraged, renewed, refreshed, etc. by the kindness/service of a brother or sister in Christ. Yes, I have been hurt and let down, BUT the benefits I have received from the Body of Christ FAR OUTWEIGHS any hurts along the way!

-I believe this is WHY the Bible COMMANDS the following...

Hebrews 10:23–25 (NIV)

23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

KEY – Show me a believer genuinely engaged with other believers, and I will show you a believer making great STRIDES in their faith. Show me a believer who is going it alone, and I will show you a believer likely SUCCUMBING to the deadening ways of this world and our enemy!

-Remember, it’s the animal that gets separated from the pack that gets DEVoured.

-Remember, it’s the banana removed from the bunch that gets PEELED (Crabtree).

APP – Several weeks ago, Byron Aulick (Deacon) shared a message. Though he had many good points, I want to touch upon one thing that he stated: “If you pull an EMBER from a fire, it will begin to cool and die out. But if you put it back, what happens? It is rekindled!” We do well to consider the profound nature of this principle and its application in our lives!

KEY(s) – Maybe it is time to MIX THINGS UP a bit when it comes to your FELLOWSHIP

- Perhaps it means sticking around after service is over
- Perhaps it means attending a weekly/monthly ministry
- Perhaps it means inviting someone over to YOUR house
- Perhaps it means making a 'phone call or writing a letter'
- Perhaps it means asking for advice if in difficulty/dilemma
- Perhaps it means being there for someone else's difficulty

Q. Are you zealous for your walk with the Lord right now? If so, CONNECT w/ God's People

Q. Has your passion for God waned or diminished? If so, BEGIN to Connect Deeply & Richly

PRINCIPLE #4

PRINCIPLE #4 – Get Active in Your Christian Service/Outreach

KEY – One of the best ways to PRESERVE or REKINDLE your spiritual passion is through practical service and outreach. There is simply NO substitute for the transformative work that God does in and through us when we put the needs of others above our own.

Q. Have you ever been stirred by a time of SERVICE/OUTREACH? **(Haiti)**

KEY #1 – Christians DECLINE when they take in more than they give out. Let's borrow from the NATURAL world for a moment. The Sea of Galilee is a thriving ecosystem because it GIVES out water/feeds other bodies. The Dead Sea is dead in terms of its ecosystem because it ONLY TAKES. See, you can even learn from the maps in the Bible!

KEY #2 – Christians DECLINE when everything becomes ALL ABOUT THEM. When we operate in a spirit of pride, consumed with only our own needs and desires, spiritual passion will be just about the FURTHEST thing from us. Because this is just NOT what God/life in Him is about!

Note – CONSIDER that Jesus was all about SACRIFICIAL, SELFLESS SERVICE

Matthew 20:28 (NIV)

28 . . . the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[cf. Philippians 2:3–11 on your own time]

NOTE – Jesus KNEW the ENERGIZING nature of serving the Lord by serving others!

John 4:3–8 (NIV)

3 . . . he [Jesus] left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

4 Now he had to go through Samaria. 5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. 6 Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?”
8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

NOTE – What follows is a long/wonderful DIALOGUE wherein a weary Lord serves and reaches out! Herein, He exposes this woman to her sinfulness, lost condition AND points to Himself as the Christ who can redeem her! This would lead to her salvation of that of an ENTIRE VILLAGE!

John 4:27–34a (NIV)

27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

32 But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

33 Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

34 “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

KEY – Jesus KNEW the energizing nature of service and outreach! In the midst of His weariness, He ministered out to one in need and brought about eternal transformation. This ‘FOOD’ was FAR MORE NOURISHING to Him than any meal He could have eaten!

Q. If Jesus knew/demonstrated such things, why are WE—His people—slow to follow His ways?

Q. If the Lord found both renewal/refreshing from service, could it still be found there by us? Y!

KEY(s) – Maybe it is time to MIX THINGS UP a bit when it comes to your SERVICE

- Perhaps it means doing a short-term missions trip
- Perhaps it means serving within a church ministry
- Perhaps it means serving within your community
- Perhaps it means serving within your family

Q. Are you zealous for your walk with the Lord right now? If so, Stay Active in Service/Outreach

Q. Has your passion for God waned or diminished? If so, BEGIN to Serve Others & Reach Out...

CONCLUSION

Throughout this series, we have put forth a number of practical, biblical STEPS to PRESERVE and/or REKINDLE your spiritual PASSION:

- 1) Care for your physical being (rest, food, etc.)
- 2) Be vigilant against sin & deal with any pet sin(s)
- 3) Remember your first love [go back to your origin]
- 4) Maintain/Renew your wonder of long-held beliefs
- 5) Project yourself forward to your time of Judgment
- 6) Be willing to ask—before God—some tough Q's
- 7) Maintain &/or Cultivate an active life of prayer
- 8) Maintain &/or Cultivate a life in God's Word
- 9) Connect deeply with the church/ppl of God
- 10) Get busy in your life of service/outreach