

Having a Passion for Jesus

By Dave Batty

What are you passionate about?

Hockey fans still talk about the “Miracle on Ice” in 1980 at the Olympic games in Lake Placid when the American hockey team comprised of college students and amateurs defeated the heavily favored and much more experienced team from the Soviet Union. The USA hockey team brought home the gold medal that year, and the memories that young people can be passionate about hockey and beat the odds stacked against them.

Every four years the Olympic games inspire new stories of young people passionate about their sport who aspire to win the gold, and let nothing deter them.

Many of us know it is foolish to dream about winning a gold medal at the Olympics—all the passion in the world won’t be enough for us! But we find passion in other areas of our

- ❖ **What does it mean to have a passion for Jesus?**
- ❖ **What can rob you of a passion for Jesus?**
- ❖ **If passion for Jesus is not enough, what else do I need in my life?**

lives. Many at one time or another have been passionately in love. We thought happiness in life would only be found in being with the one we love.

Others are passionate about their hobbies—fishing, sailing, or music.

Others are passionate about their work, making money, or being

*Being passionate
for Jesus is more than
words and emotions.*

famous. They pour all their energy and time into being successful and reaching their goal.

At Teen Challenge we see young men and women who have been passionate about their drug addiction. It may have started as casual, recreational use, but eventually it escalated to a life-controlling obsession. Their passion to get drugs drove them to all kinds of compromises, including stealing from their own family, or selling their bodies for the next fix.

So what are you passionate about? More important—what does God want you to be passionate about?

It seems like a no-brainer to say, “I’m passionate about Jesus.” But

words come easy. What does it really mean to live out that statement 24-7?

Examples of those with a passion for Jesus

So who is providing a clear example of what it means to be passionate about Jesus? Billy Graham is a good example. But how do you know he is a good example? Because he became a world famous preacher and evangelist? Because he avoided any moral failures, and stayed true to his wife?

Perhaps Billy Graham is a good example, but the truth is most of us have never met him personally nor lived with him on a daily basis to see how he lives out his personal relationship with Jesus.

So who are the examples you live with—up close and personal—who are really passionate for Jesus?

What would others say about you? Would they list you as a clear example of someone they admire who is passionate about Jesus?

What does passion for Jesus look like?

What does it take for a person to be passionate about Jesus? It takes more than words. What does God see when He looks into your heart? The greatest commandment in

2, Having a passion for Jesus

the Bible gives a good description of what it means to be passionate about Jesus. You are to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

(Mark 12:30 NIV)

That’s passion directed in a positive way. But there is a war

very attractive to follow “the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature.” (Ephesians 2:3 New Living Translation) How often does it happen that a young person has a desire to live for Jesus and then falls in love with another person. Their love affair soon dominates their life and their decisions. They abandon what God has for them.

from becoming passionate about things that will take us away from God?

Avoiding passion is not the solution. A person with no passion is simply letting apathy rule in his or her life. Who is directing your passions?

God’s help in developing a passion for Jesus

Jesus “offered himself as a sacrifice to free us from a dark, rebellious life into this good, pure life, making us a people he can be proud of, energetic in goodness.” (Titus 2:14, The Message) The help Jesus offers is real, filled with power, more than enough to face every temptation that comes your way.

“The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” (2 Chronicles 16:9 New Living Translation) You’ve got to

Our passions in life are the results of our choices. Left unchecked, our passions can take us farther down a path than we ever intended to go.

“You don’t understand,” they say. “I’m so in love with this person, I can’t help it.”

We must face the truth that our passions in life are the results of our choices. Left unchecked, our passions can take us farther down a path than we ever intended

to go. How many young people have ended up in bed together before marriage.

So how do we guard ourselves

many of us experience on a daily basis. Our emotions pull us in many different directions, and our desires and passions can lock our attention on other people and things. After all—it’s hard to see God, to feel God, and to hear God.

What hinders our passion for Jesus?

We can easily establish emotional ties that become passionate and crowd everything else out. Jesus talked about how easily things in this world can take our focus off our relationship with him. “The cares and anxieties of the world and distractions of the age, and the pleasure and delight and false glamour and deceitfulness of riches, and the craving and passionate desire for other things creep in and choke and suffocate the Word, and it becomes fruitless.” (Mark 4:19 Amplified Bible)

We can get in trouble with our passions if we simply let our emotions direct us. We all find it

Great potential for the worse people

We can often be very skeptical of people who are the worst trouble-makers in society.

Many drug addicts who have come to Teen Challenge were labeled as beyond help—“lock them up and throw away the keys.” Their lifestyle of crime and violence showed little reason to have any hope for change.

But God loves to do miracles in the lives of those who are the worst of sinners. Those who have been passionate about their life of crime and sin were demonstrating that they were people of passion—just needing God’s help to transform that destructive lifestyle into something good.

Those who were 100% sold out to their life of crime and violence often become sold out 100% to serving Jesus.

We need to take heart when we see the worst of sinners, realizing the great potential they have if they will allow God to redirect that into a passion for Jesus.

Nicky Cruz was an angry, violent gang member when he encountered the love of Jesus 49 years ago. Since then he has been an evangelist, preaching to millions around the world. God sees great potential for good in the lives of the worst of sinners!

start with making a commitment to put Jesus first. It's got to be a commitment that comes from the heart. And then we have to put legs to the commitment. No one ever won a gold medal at the Olympics by waking up in the morning, saying, "I think I'll enter the Olympic races today," and win a gold medal that afternoon.

The commitment is only the first step. The steps that follow must focus on the goal. We must "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ²Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." (Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV)

King David in the Psalms showed the passion he had for God, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." (Psalm 57:7 KJV) He goes on to say "My heart will not be moved, O God." (Psalm 108:1 New Life Bible) David says he has no need to be afraid because "his heart is firmly fixed, trusting in the Lord." (Psalm 112:7 Amplified Bible)

My part in developing a passion for Jesus

Many people struggle with their passions. These promises in the Bible all seem hollow, because their passions seem to run right over the commitment they made to put Jesus first. "Why does this have to be so hard?" asked one new Christian.

Part of the answer comes in choosing a new thought pattern toward the old sinful passions of our lives. Job provides a good example—he "was totally devoted to God and hated evil with a passion." (Job 1:1 The Message) God tells us to turn our backs on the sinful passions of the world. The temptations to sin may

still seem every attractive and appealing, but we have to make a decision to call it what it is—evil—and then make a decision to hate it with a passion. Easier said than done! We've got to take our thoughts captive and make them

Passion alone is not enough. We must have passion that is directed by knowledge of what God wants us to do.

obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5) Having a passion for Jesus means that we have declared war on the temptations to sin that come our way.

A second part of the answer comes in developing our strength for a passion for Jesus. The greatest command of God tells us to love Him with "all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30 NIV) This must be what consumes your thoughts throughout the day—not just for 5 minutes a day.

As you are going through your daily routine, having a passion for Jesus means that you are constantly bringing Jesus into your thoughts. We need to develop the strength to make godly choices—to walk in obedience to His word.

Zeal without knowledge = trouble

Another word for passion is zeal. God makes it clear that passion alone is not enough. It needs to be directed. "It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way." (Proverbs 19:2 NIV) Paul talks about some people who

were "zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge." (Romans 10:2 NIV) They had misdirected zeal.

Jesus criticized the Pharisees of His day for the same issue. "Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things." (Matthew 23:23 New Living Translation)

Passion alone is not enough. We must have passion that is directed and channeled by knowledge of what God wants us to do. We need to keep the main thing the main thing—from God's point of view. We need to run with passion and perseverance the race marked out for us by Jesus.

A passion for excellence

Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods have in common their passion for excellence. They did not achieve their greatness through luck—it was hard work and a deep commitment to be the best at their sport.

You can make the same choice to have a passion for excellence in your life. But are you willing to do the hard work to live out that passion day after day?

Having a passion for excellence is not the same as having a passion for perfection. Babe Ruth was the home run king of baseball for many years, but he also had the most strikeouts. However, he didn't let his failures stop him from striving for excellence.

Misdirected passion

Satan can greatly reduce our effectiveness by misdirecting us to have passion for minor issues instead of the major issues. A person can have a passion for God and still not be in right relationship with God. Paul talks of his years before his conversion: “I was carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honor God in everything I did, just like all of you today. ⁴And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison.” (Acts 22:3-4 NLT)

Paul provides solid instruction on the balance we need. “It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you.” (Galatians 4: 18 NIV) Some have a passion for Jesus when they are in a crisis. Their passionate cry for help comes from deep within their heart—absolutely sincere. But when the crisis is past—does their passion for Jesus fade?

Having a passion for Jesus that is deep rooted

Having a passion for Jesus needs to be rooted in a deep commitment to keep this as your top priority for the rest of your life. This focused passion for Jesus is what will keep your priorities on what really counts in life.

We can easily be distracted by what others say or do—especially when it hurts us. But God has told us to stay focused on Him. The greatest commandment tells it all—we need to love him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. If we focus on that, we won’t have anything left for other distractions. If we focus our passion on Jesus, we will achieve a reward far better than any Olympic gold medal—we will have eternity with Him!

Having a passion for Jesus Discussion Guide

The following questions can be used for your personal reflection on this topic, or it can be used as a guide for a group discussion. If this is used in a group setting, please understand that you are not required to disclose the specific details of past sins, failures, or personal experiences.

1. As you look at your life, what are some of the things you have been passionate about?
2. Who have you seen that is a good example of having a passion for Jesus? What illustrates their passion for Jesus?
3. Read Mark 12:30.
 - A. What are some of the practical ways you have been able to live this verse out in your life?
 - B. What are some of the questions or struggles you face in trying to develop a passion for Jesus?
4. Read Mark 4:19. Are there issues or problems you face in your life that distract you from your relationship with Jesus? Describe.
5. Read 2 Chronicles 16:9. How can this promise impact your life? What are some areas where you need more of God’s strength?
6. Having a passion for excellence is not the same as having a passion for perfection. How have these 2 passions been an issue in your life? How has a passion for perfection hindered your life?
7. Read Proverbs 19:2 and Romans 10:2. How big a struggle do you have with understanding how to use God’s word to channel your passions?



Global Teen Challenge
P.O. Box 511
Columbus, GA 31902 USA
Phone: 706-576-6555
E-mail: gtc@Globaltc.org
Website: www.Globaltc.org

If you would like extra copies of this newsletter, or if you have questions or comments, please contact Teen Challenge at this address. This resource and others are available in the “Resources” section of the website www.iTeenChallenge.org

First edition 6/2007