

<b>Series:</b> 6:8@Six:Eight	<b>Reference:</b> Various Passages	<b>Title:</b> Passion	<b>Date:</b> 11.18.18
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Website Writeup:</b></p> <p>Our true passion drives all choice. Passion is synonymous with worship. To be driven by passionate worship of Jesus is to have all of life to become a sacrifice to him - to become childlike in trust but not childish in demeanor.</p>			

### Color changes in text indicate slide changes

This is the last sermon in our vision & values series, 6:8@Six:Eight. The value of Grace as it pertains to the values of Community & the Story of God, has shown through, as it will today. Grace saves once for all & transforms us daily. Purity & holiness in striving towards God's standard in the Law, are important. But purity/holiness (sanctification) is only transforming when it's grounded in God's love & his acceptance of us based on grace, not performance. Without Grace, Law becomes damaging; but obedience to God's Law under Grace becomes freeing. **Therefore, how do we go about living in response to the grace we receive daily as we pursue a life of holiness & purity; or better said, a life of passionate worship of Jesus? This is how the Value of Passion reads...**

### Passion Matters

*In response to the grace extended through Jesus, we value a lifestyle of holistic passionate worship. We seek to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to him in all areas of life: corporately & individually. One experience of this can be found in our weekly gathering in which we strive to create an open, relaxed, interactive & creative atmosphere. However, our worship extends into every aspect of our personal lives in what we believe, value, how we live, think & treat others. We avoid busyness, but work hard for the joy that's been set before us in Jesus. Our passion for worship extends to the holistic value of God's creation in its entirety.*

### Mature Christian Profile as it pertains to Passion

*The mature Christian in the issue of passion sees all of life as their spiritual act of worship. They have grown past the empty notion that worship is found only in song on Sunday mornings. They value creation, people, and all of life. Their decisions, inner thoughts, and heart life, are all a sacrifice to God. They have come to realize that consistent good treatment of others, and how they interact with the Holy Spirit are more profoundly worshipful experiences than occasional 'worship gatherings'. They make Kingdom Choices, which may seem illogical on a worldly standard, and are based on their calling and Scripture. However, these choices are not in isolation, they are based on God's Word, interaction with the Holy Spirit, and the faith community. Worship and passion for God, as reflected in Christ, is a lifestyle, not an event for them. Their passionate worship in all areas drives them outward to take the good news to their neighbors, family and friends.*

Passion Matters as we see ourselves linked to the continuing story of God with Grace like a river running through it. Looking forward we ask, where's our story headed? Because our story will be driven by passion. Passion reveals true desire & gives our story

direction. Your story moves towards what you love & desire most. Passion directs, revealing the object of our hope; it shows where we're headed & who we're becoming. To what does Jesus direct our passion?

*In Matthew 6:33-34 He says, <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

When the Kingdom of God & His Righteousness are our central passion, transformation occurs, with a natural outpouring of trust, purity & holiness; a life of passionate worship.

Children give themselves fully to the object of their passion. My son Aidan loved sticks, swords & Peter Pan. Maddie loved animals, dresses & flowers. Senah just loves life. Tanner loves a good joke & the drums. Whatever's your child's passion, you hear about it. **When parents pick up young children from school you see the central object of their passion, Mom & Dad.**

We intentionally used the word Passion when writing this value - passion's synonymous with worship. But worship's lost meaning. Worship's become just a weekly event, which doesn't begin to round out the idea of holistic worship. One pastor said, worship isn't just song, but sermon as well. Correct, but still limited. He also stated, missions exists because worship doesn't among all peoples of the world - worship's our end goal & mission will one day cease, but worship will continue forever - true. **Worship has an objective focus. It's what you give your life to; what you see as most important. Every decision stems from what you worship. Worship of God should be at the center of our worldview. The object of our worship guides all we do, choose, feel & think.**

**Charles Misner a scientist in General Relativity Theory, spoke of Albert Einsteins skepticism of the church & how shallow it is in the realm of worship, saying...**  
*"The design of the universe...is very magnificent & shouldn't be taken for granted. In fact, I believe that is why Einstein had so little use for organized religion, although he strikes me as a basically very religious man. He must have looked at what the preachers said about God & felt they were blaspheming. He had seen much more majesty than they had ever imagined, and they were just not talking about the real thing. My guess is that he simply felt that religions he'd run across did not have proper respect...for the author of the universe."<sup>1</sup>*

That's part of the answer; stop & take notice of the beauty which surrounds us - but even that's limited. **Our statement says, we value a lifestyle of holistic passionate worship, which is synonymous with pursuing first His kingdom & His righteousness. His kingdom being the reign of God & His righteousness being that we're rightly related to God by Grace through faith alone. In seeking these two things first, everything else falls**

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<sup>1</sup> *Let the Nations Be Glad.* 2003, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. p18.

into place. But there are two things which happen to us which hinder this pursuit & worship of God.

**Firstly, we lose our childlikeness.** If raised by a loving, gentle & directive parent, children easily trust & obey - they run freely within safety of limits. They give themselves completely to that gracious parental authority & in doing so, they play freely enjoying all the pleasures of life. **Children want & respond well to boundaries - without them they become unruly & unpleasant. A parent does a child damage if they do not discipline & provide boundaries well.**

We once lived next to a park. In spring, with windows open, you heard the laughter of children. Kids give themselves over to joy; it's pure, innocent & good. Parental rules & direction have their place; you don't want joy destroyed by the trauma of a kid running into oncoming traffic, so healthy boundaries are erected. Likewise, God's standards set boundaries to keep us from running into the proverbial traffic - laws not to limit freedom & joy, rather to foster. Keeping us free from the bondage of things which would rob us of life. God's moral Law brings life when lived under grace; there to keep us running & playing with God. We understand all too easily, good laws in society keep neighborhoods safe & foster freedom. You pursue your dreams without worry of getting robbed or killed because the rule of law's in place. It's the same with God's standards which lead us to freedom in Him.

But for every child at play, the damaging fear & evil of the world seeps in. Other rules come into play, overly controlling rules which hamper joy & choke the life out of living. **Rules not of a good parent, but the bad overbearing parent. Sin in ourselves & others, corrode joyful freedom we were meant to have. Fear & control from others get impressed on a child's psyche. "Stop that." "Grow up." "Don't do that, you're embarrassing me!" "You don't deserve it." "You're worthless," and worse, have all been said to many children. As a child grows, they may become jaded & cynical. Lies are whispered in their ear. Anxiety enters the playground & attention is diverted away from the parent. Worry takes root.** Cynicism grows, of which it's hard to break free; blinding us to the presence of God & his reign all around us. And with every negative statement & experience, life gets sucked out of that little soul; we lose our childlikeness.

My wife has a childlikeness. Looking at pictures of her you can tell when it's springtime just by her face. In winter, when she's been held up in the house, her eyes grow dim. But in springtime, her eyes sparkle & become bluer. Take her on a trip, away from the pressures of being mom & pastors wife, give her a Margarita, overlooking a beautiful mountain range on a sunny day after a good hike & this is what you get! **Kim has a very clear & natural sense of the Godly limits she lives within, which gives her a profound freedom to enjoy God & his creation - the limits of His moral standards aren't confining, rather they produce a purity which keeps cynicism at bay & as a result she's light & joyous; unencumbered by sin & worry. Childlike, not childish.**

Jesus said, don't worry. Worry kills joy, diverts our eyes from the parent, crowds out light & lets cynicism seep into the cracks of our soul. Worry doesn't account for the

provision of God & makes us blind to all the wonders placed before us. This is why Romans 12:1-2 says, *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers & sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God - this is your true & proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test & approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing & perfect will.”* Understanding & transformation come by proximity to God the Father where healthy passion’s born.

Curt Thompson, author, psychiatrist & former discipler of mine, came out with a book, *Anatomy of the Soul*. In it he states, when we apply ourselves to something long enough, new synapses are formed in our brains; new neural connections. Let’s listen to what he says, (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67wRjiUN-Rc&feature=related>) Something physically becomes habit & habit happens naturally. Normally we think of habit as bad, but we can form positive habits; spiritual habits; passionate, worshipful habits. Scripture urges us to form Jesus-Focused habits. By choosing to believe God’s mercy & grace in humble obedience, we are transformed. We pursue purity & holiness in fully offering ourselves, resulting in inner transformation, outward change & joy - Colossians 3:10, *the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator*.

Giving ourselves over BEFORE we understand; understanding doesn’t just come from more knowledge. It’s not just information about God which satisfies - it’s also His presence. What you put in, you get out. To those who ask, more will be given. Being in his presence satisfies as a parent satisfies a child. Jesus said he’s the Way, Truth & Life - the Living Word. But most of us think, if we get more information disconnected from the Source, we’ll be satisfied. As if God had to apply for the role of father in our life, but father’s don’t apply, they just are, and children don’t question their word (at least young obedient ones). As if we could stand off to the side, gathering data before trusting Him, as if judging for ourselves if Jesus is worth our trust *before* we give it. Relationships don’t work that way; we need to trust & recline on the chest of our father as a child would.

It may sound conspiratorial to say there are people in society using their influence & power in whatever form it takes to eat away at Christian belief. But there are. Everyone’s got their agenda. There are also simply others who lead or teach out of a secular worldview contrary to a biblical worldview, inadvertently & unintentionally chipping away at Christian belief - we live in a world simply contrary to the Gospel sometimes in a hostile way, sometimes with only indifference. It’s why Proverbs 4:23 says, *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it*. And 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, *We demolish arguments & every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*.

Some attended schools which have tainted our view of certain groups of people, or have assimilated the cultural narrative so much that our view of certain others is askew. To their detriment, we can’t believe any good about them as a result. Notice - if you’ve set your mind against believing good about someone, or something, no matter how good of an argument another puts forth to the contrary, you won’t receive the information. It’s

called *Confirmation Bias* - when someone forms an opinion, they tend to embrace information which only supports it & reject or ignore information which doesn't. Ending up in a bubble of our own assumptions, it's next to impossible to change minds, even when presented with clear facts to the contrary.

It's how many approach God, sometimes even in our Christianity concerning certain issues. We could read the Bible cover to cover & listen to preachers all day long, but we do so with a crooked eye & preformed conclusions & it doesn't make a difference. If we choose to believe the cultural secular worldview narrative over & above Jesus, we'll never find peace in God's Word - it'll always cause angst - we've refused to listen to the true Source of life. We must approach the Scriptures with open heart, as if we're meeting Jesus, because we are. Even when we don't understand why the Scriptures define something in certain ways, we choose to trust Jesus first, allowing Him to clarify issues over time.

In relationship, trust eradicates worry. We're incrementally transformed - new synapses form, new habits, childlike joy returns. We can smile again even in hardship; no longer the victim; it's no longer everyone else's fault; no longer trapped & confined. In Him, we're free & joyful.

**Losing childlikeness leads to the second thing, our deception.** After a child's gaze is taken off the parent, negative influence is all too easy. Our sinful nature at some point dupes us into the pursuit of pleasure as an answer to our deep longing for joy. Whether we know it or not, all of us long for an Eden-like whole relationship with God once more. However, we're deceived into thinking pleasures placate, make us whole, or at the least, stave off the emptiness we feel. When in reality they fill the well of emptiness with more despair. Pleasures are good when they produce gratitude to God, but they slowly become our gods when used in unhealthy ways. An alcoholic doesn't set out to train their body to need alcohol like water, or destroy their liver & relationships. But one drink to relieve stress leads to two & eventually like George Carlin says, one tequila, two tequila, three tequila, floor! I've turned my pain off for a time - but only added to my overall despair.

No one sets out to be an addict, an angry old cynic, a know-it-all, or an eccentric recluse. We set out to fill that Eden-like void which only Jesus can fill. Whatever it is in our lives, which we hold onto as our security blanket, is knitted one link at a time over many years. First comes the loss of joy & freedom, then cynicism, then bondage in a self-made prison of a false god. Negative habits, synapses are formed & you find yourself in a hole with no way out - a little light at the top & smooth walls; a caterpillar back in the ring of fire once again in need of rescue above. It's like knitting chain mail together which we think will protect us from the pain of life - but it becomes our prison.

Maybe it's why Jesus used a child as an example with his disciples in Mt 18:2-4, *"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*

Because, as it says in Jn 1:11–13, *“to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—<sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God”* Born of grace - children, not cynical adults. Kids who openly need, trust & obey their Father without shame; looking to him for direction & joy in total abandon. By grace, becoming who they are, by grace. The Psalmist sensed this when he said in Ps 131:1–3, *“Surely I have composed & quieted my soul; like a weaned child rests against his mother, My soul is like a weaned child within me. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth & forever.”*

His soul is quieted & composed by hope in his heavenly parent & as a result, he enjoys a sense of being a child leaning against his mother’s chest. I remember Tanner when he was young, leaning against his mother; safe, his world in order, content - the Eden-like state we long for, but fill in all the wrong ways in adulthood.

There’s an interesting passage in Mark 4 just after Jesus told the parable of the sower of the seeds. At the end of that passage he says, <sup>9</sup>...*“Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”* Which is always a confusing statement, since we’ve all got ears. It gets worse, <sup>10</sup> *When he was alone, the Twelve & the others around him asked him about the parables. <sup>11</sup> He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables <sup>12</sup> so that, “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn & be forgiven!”*

But I thought Jesus’ desire is that all people would hear & be forgiven? Is he intentionally being vague so others might not receive forgiveness? But when you think about who he’s talking to, it’s more easily understood. These are the 12 disciples & a few others. The crowd has dissipated, they went home confused. He’s left with only a handful of people & they ask, “What the heck does this parable mean?”

It’s like sitting in a philosophy class of 50 students. The professor’s just said something confusing, no one understands. Bell rings, everyone leaves, not caring they don’t understand. They just want to get back to their girlfriend, TV, or whatever makes them stop thinking. Only a handful stick around to ask the professor, “What did you mean?” They don’t give up, latching onto the source. Those who have ears to hear are those who don’t just go away & give up when they don’t understand, allow Satan to divert them, get caught in the worries of life, or just say that’s great & walk away - they pursue Jesus even in confusion. They come to the end of themselves & call up from the ring of fire & say **I need you Jesus!** Because transformation doesn’t come from just knowledge, but rather proximity to Jesus.

Seek first His Kingdom (his reign) & His righteousness (grace). Become childlike, not childish. Because when a child’s in the company of a parent, everything falls into place, even when you don’t know the answers. The object of a child’s passion is the parent. When Jesus becomes our passion, we’re freed, content & joyful. His desires become ours

& we give ourselves holistically in passionate worship to Him. His standards then become life-giving & foster abundant life. Purity & holiness develop naturally into a lifestyle of holistic passionate worship; we're transformed & renewed in the presence of Jesus.