

PASSION: HOW TO GET IT BACK

John 10:10

Today we're going to begin a new series I'm calling "Energize". As you know, Thanksgiving and Christmas are just around the corner. Through this series I hope to impart to you some principles and teachings from the Bible with regards to keeping your energy at a level that is commensurate to the pressures and stresses you'll face in the weeks ahead. So, I'll start this series by talking about passion. I've entitled my message this morning, "Passion: How to Get it Back".

You see, passion is what energizes life. It turns the impossible into possible. In fact if you don't have any passion in your life you're boring. Your life is dull, routine, monotonous. I'll go so far as to say if you don't have passion in your life you are not living. You are just existing. The truth is, God made you to live a passionate life. God wants you to live with vitality, with vibrancy, with energy, with passion.

In John 10:10 Jesus says "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" Jesus says I want you to live a full life, a fulfilling life. A life with significance and vitality and energy. Folks, that's the kind of life God meant for us to live. Life is meant to be enjoyed, not merely endured. So why don't most people enjoy life? Why don't most people live a life of passion?

One time I picked up some balloons for a birthday party at home. As I was shoving them inside my car, one of them got loose and quickly rose to the sky. I looked up helplessly, following its ascent to the sky until it faded from view. I'd never recover that balloon, but I knew that the next day it would come down again somewhere. It would lose its air that's driving it up.

I thought that's a parable of life. A lot of people are like that. They start out so full of energy, so full of excitement. You probably remember the day you

graduated from high school. You thought, “Man! The world is before me. I’m ready to go. This is the apple and I’m taking a big bite out of it.” After a while the zip went out. You kind of lost it. All of a sudden, your dreams shrunk, your ambitions shrunk, your drive shrunk. A lot of things. Until you’re going, “What happened? Where’s the passion? Where’s the vitality?” Now, why do we lose our zest for life?

Today I’m going to give you a checklist of **seven passion killers** from the Bible, from God’s word.

You see, there are a lot of things that can kill your passion for life. There are physical causes. But I can’t do anything about that. You probably need to go see a doctor. Get a checkup. But there are also emotional causes. And there are relational causes. And there are spiritual causes that can cause you to lose your passion for life. We’re going to look at each of those in our service today and I’ll share principles on how to prevent these passion killers from ever ruining your life.

So, let’s start by looking at a couple of emotional passion killers. The first thing that kills passion in life is

1. **An unclear purpose.**

When you don’t know the purpose of your life that’s a sure-fire way of killing your passion. Because without a purpose for life, why bother? Why get up in the morning? When you forget or you don’t know God’s purpose for your life you’re going to drift toward apathy and lethargy. Rather than going through life by design you go through life by default. You have no purpose in life. You’re just kind of going through life. You end up like Isaiah felt in Isaiah 49:4 when he says **“I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing at all.”**

You see, passion and purpose go together. The more purpose driven you are, the more you know your purpose in life, the more passionate you become because purpose creates passion. Nothing matters more than knowing God’s purpose for

your life and nothing can compensate it. Not money, not fame, not sex, or all kinds of other things. If you don't know what on earth you're here for you're not going to have any passion because without a purpose, life is motion without meaning, it's activity without direction, it's trivial, it's petty and it's pointless. That's the first reason you lose passion – an unclear purpose. Then,

2. An unbalanced schedule will cause you to lose your passion.

If you're overworked, you're going to lose your passion. Vince Lombardi the great football coach said, "Fatigue makes cowards of all of us." When you get tired you lose your zip, you lose your passion. Fatigue drains your energy.

We all need a balance between rest and work, between input and between output. The Bible tells us that there is a rhythm to life, there is time and purpose for everything, a time to work and a time to rest; a time to strive, a time to have fun. If you have no fun in your life you're going to burn out. If you have no rest in your life you're going to burn out. If you have nothing but constant work from morning till night and you're a workaholic you're going to lose your passion very, very quickly.

Some of you you're always giving out. You're always serving, you're always sharing, you're always caring, and you never take time to recharge. That's a bad thing. You need fun time in your life, you need rest in your life in order to keep your passion maintained.

This is so important. You see, meaning and significance comes from service but if you don't have down time, you're going to get what's commonly called *compassion fatigue*. Compassion fatigue means you stop caring because you've cared so much. Pretty soon you don't care about God. You don't care about other people. You don't even care about you anymore.

So, you have to balance your schedule of work and play. Our missions team that goes to the Philippines every year knows that. That's why they have R&R

right after mission work. It's not to enjoy the sights in the Philippines but to maintain their sanity. Right, Kuya Elvin, Tita Nelly?

An unclear purpose and an unbalanced schedule will sap the passion out of your life. After emotional passion killers, there are also relational passion killers. The first biggie is this

3. An unresolved conflict.

When you've got a conflict with somebody, and it's not settled it just steals the passion out of you. It can do it immediately. Have you ever had one of those days you get up, you're heading out the door and everything in you feels like "This is going to be a great day!" And on the way out the door you have a fight with your spouse. It's like suddenly having a flat tire on the road. Your attitude immediately goes flat when you have a conflict with somebody in your life.

And some of you, you're in constant conflict right now. Maybe somebody at home or maybe at work, maybe at school, or even at church. Because of that conflict, passion is just steadily leaking out of your life. You're losing passion because of the conflict that's in your life. No wonder. It's obviously going to happen to any of our lives. If you want to keep your passion alive you've got to keep your relationships healthy.

Job 5:2 says "*Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple.*" Resentment and envy are two passion killers. Resentment is allowing somebody to continue to hurt you over something that's long in your past. They may be out of the picture. They may even be dead. But they're still hurting you because you're still resenting it. You're still thinking about it again and again and again. The Bible says in Job 18:4 (GNT), "*You are only hurting yourself with your anger.*" They don't even know that you're angry at them. They don't know that you're staying up nights still replaying it again and again in your mind.

If you're going to keep your relationships healthy then you and I, when there's a conflict, have to go to the person and try to resolve the conflict. That's the first step. But what do you do if they won't let you resolve it? What do you do if they won't let go? What do you do if they're gone and you can't go to them and resolve that relational conflict?

You forgive. This is why we have to make the step of saying, "God, I put it in Your hands and take it out of my hands." Forgiveness is not saying they were right. Forgiveness is not saying that God's not going to judge them for what they did that was wrong. It's saying, "I'm taking it out of my hands, God. I forgive them. It's in Your hands. I can't hold it in my heart because if I do that resentment is going to destroy me and steal passion from me every single day of my life. You have to forgive. Ask God's strength to let it go. Some of you right now, God brought you here today to give you the opportunity right now to say, "God, give me the strength. I forgive them." You're going to have to say that, if you're like me, a hundred times during this week. Mind you, it's going to come to your mind again and again. But continue to forgive until and then you'll feel the passion begin to be strengthened in your life. Because an unresolved conflict always kills our passion.

Another relational passion killers is

4. An unsupported lifestyle.

"No man is an island," a saying goes. We were made to need others. That's why one of the most cruel imprisonments is solitary confinement. You put somebody all by themselves, they think of it as a torture. Why? Because we were made to live with other people. We've all seen what happens to a spouse when the other spouse dies and they all of a sudden begin to feel like, why should I even go on? What is there worth living for? There's plenty worth living for. God still has

a purpose for your life. But you begin to feel, because that person isn't there, that life isn't worth living. The passion has gone from life.

Sometimes you lose passion because you're not getting any fellowship with other believers. You might be at a lot of entertainment events. But you're not getting any relationship time that increases and restores passion.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up."* That's very practical! If you fall down it's really good to have somebody there to help you up. Some of you there's nobody around to help you up. So when you fall down you have to struggle up all by yourself all the time. The Bible is saying get somebody around you who can help you.

Hebrews 10:24-25 *"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another."* Who do you need to encourage and who needs to encourage you? If we're going to sustain passion we need other people in our lives. That's why time and again I say, "Get plugged into a small group. You need other people in your life."

Now, let me talk about some spiritual passion killers that we face. I want us to look at the first one.

5. An unexamined life.

Socrates said, *"The unexamined life is not worth living."* Before Socrates said that there were words that came from the Bible. In Lamentations 3:40, it says *"Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord."* It's a good practice regularly in your life to pull aside, to stop long enough, to be still long enough to ask yourself the question, how am I doing? Where am I going? Is my life on track of where I think God wants me to go?

In the Indianapolis 500, cars go round and round the track over 200 miles an hour. But three or four times during the race those cars will pull in and come to a complete stop and take a pit stop.

You need the same thing. You need a time in your life when you pull back from the pace and the speed of life to just let God speak to you and be open to what God wants to say to you. When you do that, one of the things that's going to happen is God's going to replenish your soul. But something else is going to happen. God is going to pinpoint areas in your life that need to be dealt with. He's going to reveal areas in your life that need to be resolved and sin that needs to be confessed. When sin is undealt with in your life it will destroy the spiritual passion of your life. It's not something to be dismissed or rationalized away or ignored. Because it will destroy your passion.

Psalm 38:4, 6a says, *"My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear... I am bowed down and brought very low...."* You cannot feel passion and guilt at the same time. They will not co-exist. But here's the good news. You don't have to live with unconfessed sin in your life. God says "If you just confess your sins, if you will just come before me honestly, admit it and acknowledge it I'll forgive you. Not only will I forgive you but I'll clean you up from the inside out." That's what happens when we take the time to examine our lives and confess sin that God reveals to us.

So one of the most important practices that we develop is regularly taking an inventory of our own hearts and lives.

Another of the spiritual passion killers in your life is

6. An undernourished soul.

When your soul doesn't get the strength that it needs. Jesus says quoting from Deuteronomy, *"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."* (Matt. 4:4) A lot of people are starving spiritually they're

not nourishing their soul. Our soul needs to be nourished because every day of our lives there are circumstances that conspire against every one of us to shrink our spirit and shrivel our soul. Every day you're facing distractions and disappointments. Every day you've got problems and pressures, conflicts and confusion. That's just the reality of life.

What do you feed your soul with? How do you counter all those circumstances that come your way? You feed your soul with God's word. This is the bread the Bible's talking about. God's word feeds our soul.

You can spend five or ten minutes at the beginning of every day reading five or ten verses in the Bible. Start with a book like Philippians and just read through it five or ten verses at a time. It's a book all about joy. That's not a bad place to start. You'd be amazed at how God would feed your souls through that experience. Honestly some of you came here today and the truth is you're worn out. If I asked you to raise your hand this morning you'd say "I don't have the strength to raise my hand! That's how worn out I am."

The Bible says in Romans 12:11 (MSG), *"Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame."* See the words "keep yourselves." This is an intentional decision. It's not going to happen automatically. I have to decide to feed my soul. How do you do that? Again, "by every word that comes from the mouth of God". In short, I decide to read my Bible every day.

The seventh spiritual passion killer is

7. An unshared faith.

An unshared faith will cause you to lose your vitality, your passion, your energy for life. Philemon 1:6 says, *"I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ."* God expects us to share our faith. He has a message that He wants to say to the world through you. It is a unique message that only you can share

because it's through you. It's called your life message. If you're alive and your heart is beating God has a life message He wants to say through you to the entire world. If you don't share that message, if you don't express it, two very sad things happen.

One, the world gets cheated. Because if you don't share your life message nobody else is going to share it. Only you can. It's what God wants to say to the world through you. The world gets cheated. It's our loss because your message isn't shared.

Two, you will lose your passion. Because you were made for more than just taking in. God made you to give out. God made you to express.

It goes back to that old illustration of the two famous lakes in Israel. In the nation of Israel there are two large lakes. One is in the northern part of Israel called the Sea of Galilee and there's one in the southern part of Israel called the Dead Sea. They are as different as night and day. The Sea of Galilee is a fully alive lake. It literally is teeming with life. They still do commercial fishing there. It's a gorgeous lake and there's lots of life and it's alive.

Then you go to the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea in the southern part of Israel is literally dead. Nothing can live there. There are no fish in it. It's full of salt and brine and chemicals. It's so thick that if you try to swim in it, you float on top. When you get out your skin is crusted with this very bitter kind of stuff. It's an ugly, ugly desert dead sea.

What is the difference between the living Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea? The Sea of Galilee takes in many, many different tributaries from Lebanon and around. The water flows in, giving it input. But it also gives out. There's a famous river that comes out of the Sea of Galilee called the Jordan River. The Jordan River drains out of the Sea of Galilee comes all the way south and empties

into the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea takes in but it does not give out. So it's stagnant. It stinks. It is dead.

That is a parallel of life. If you want to be alive you have to take in and you have to give out. If all you do is take in, take in, take in, you're going to be a Dead Sea person. Your life is going to go stagnant. You were made for more than taking in. You were made to give out.

If you want to stay fresh, if you want to stay vital, let me give you a little habit to develop. Psalm 96:2a *"Proclaim his salvation day after day."* That's it. Tell somebody about God. The happiest most joyful people I know are always talking about God, what a difference He's made in their lives. They're sharing with other people. They're sharing the love of God with others. They're inviting people to church. They're talking with people. Mind you, they're not hammering people with the Bible. They're just saying, this is what God is doing in my life. They share, they express their faith.

Let me ask you a very important question. How long has it been since you talked with anybody about Jesus Christ? How long has it been since you told anybody about what God has done for you? Have you *ever* done that? Have you ever expressed it to anybody else? If not, you're just taking in and you're not giving out. You're going to go stagnant. The happiest people I know are always sharing their love of God with other people. Bringing friends to Christ, telling them about the Lord, inviting them to church.

The Bible says this in 1 Peter 2:9 *"But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted!"* You don't have to be a theologian. You don't have to be a Bible expert. You say, here's the difference God has done for me.

As we start this series together on re-energizing your life I need to remind you that the starting point to restoring your passion is to remember what God thinks about you. Did you know that God is passionate about you? Did you know that God passionately wants a relationship with you? How do I know that? Look at Jesus on the cross. The Bible says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” That’s the real full life God wants you to have.