Last week we examined three things that can kill our passion for God. We talked about the importance of having a balanced life. We talked about the importance of using the talents that God has given to us. We talked about the importance of confessing our sins.

Today we are going to look at four more:

As we said last week the creative force behind all great art, drama, music, architecture, and writing is passion. Nothing great is ever accomplished in life without passion. Nothing great is ever sustained in life without passion. Passion is what energizes life. Passion is what makes the impossible possible. Passion is what gives you a reason to get up in the morning. Passion is what causes explorers to boldly go where no one’s gone before. Passion is what causes scientists to spend years trying to find the cure to a dreaded disease. Passion is what takes a good athlete and turns them into a great athlete. You’ve got to have passion in your life. Passion is what makes you say, "I’m going to do something with my life."

Without passion life becomes boring. Without passion life becomes monotonous. Without passion life becomes routine. Without passion life becomes dull. God created you with the emotions to have passion in your life. He wants you to live a passionate life.

One day a man walked up to Jesus and asked, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus said, "............you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

Nothing matters more than that. That’s the number one thing in life. God wants you to love Him passionately. God doesn’t want you to love Him half-heartedly. He wants you to love Him with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.
The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips then walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable. Following Jesus means believing in Jesus passionately.

C.S. Lewis said: “The only thing Christianity cannot be is moderately important.” That’s true. The only thing Christianity cannot be is moderately important.

Fuller Seminary in California asked 750 former Muslims to fill out an extensive questionnaire. They asked them how they came to decide to become a Christian. The respondents were from 30 countries and 50 different ethnic groups. They represented every major region of Islam. They were asked to rank the relative importance of the different influences that brought them to Christ. What they reported to have had the most influence on them to reject Islam and come to Christ was this: the lifestyle of Christians. They said it was people living out their faith. They said things like there was no gap between profession and practice. They treat women as equals. They love others rather than being unloving toward people who are different.

The most powerful witness to people entrenched in the Islamic way of life was a consistent Christian witness. What kills our witness & our passion for God? Here are 4 more passion killers:

1. An unresolved conflict. Conflict just drains the passion right out of you. Have you ever started a day just knowing it was going to be a great day? You jump out of bed. You’re awake from the moment you get up. You’re ready for the day. You’re on the way out the door. Then you have a fight with your spouse. Suddenly all of the zip goes right out of your doo-dah. It’s like the air going out of a tire. That’s what conflict does to us. It takes all the passion out of our lives. Our attitude all of a sudden just goes flat. Our enthusiasm just vanishes.

Some of you are in situations at home or at work right now where the conflict is constant. You’re doing all that you can to minimize it. But it’s coming from another person. How do you keep your passion alive in a situation like that? You can’t control the other person. But you can control your reactions. You can control the kind of emotion you have in the midst of the conflict. There are three emotions that can kill our passion in the midst of conflict. They are resentment,
jealously and prolonged anger. RESENTMENT. JEALOUSY. ANGER.

Job 5:2 says, "Resentment destroys the fool and jealousy kills the simple." Resentment and jealousy are passion killing emotions.

Job 18:4 says, "You’re only hurting yourself with your anger." Unjustified anger only hurts U. Irrational anger only hurts U. Overreacting to a situation only hurts you. Resentment, jealousy & anger only hurt us. They don’t hurt the person we’re harboring the feelings against. Most likely they don’t even know how we feel. They are blissfully unaware & we are consumed.

This is why forgiveness is so important. God who knows us, made us, and created us knows that we weren’t made to carry resentment. He didn’t build us that way. He made us to be like Him. He sent His Son into the world to model a life of forgiveness for us. He’s given us a way to let all that woundedness and hurt, all that frustration and resentment all that anger and hate go. It’s called forgiveness. If you want the passion to be restored in your heart, and in your life, then forgiveness is the way. You have to let it go.

I know what some of you are thinking. "Let them off the hook? How can I do that?" I’m not telling you to let them off the hook. I’m telling you to put them on God’s hook. Let them off your hook. Just put them in God’s hands. Just say, "God, I can’t handle this. You can. I forgive them and I leave it to you." If you don’t do that then that lack of forgiveness on your part is going to kill the passion in your life. If you don’t do that then the resentment that you have for that person will end up controlling you. So you forgive & you let it go. Not just 4 their sake but 4 yours. That’s very difficult. It doesn’t come naturally to us. But it is the way of God. It is the way into His presence. The truth is that the Spirit of the living God is guaranteed to ask you to go somewhere or do something you wouldn’t normally want or choose to do. The Spirit will lead you to the way of the cross, as He led Jesus to the cross. That is definitely not a safe or pretty or comfortable place to be. But it’s just where you need to be. The Holy Spirit of God will mold you into the person God made you to be. This often incredibly painful process will strip you of selfishness, pride, and fear. It will drive you to your knees to say, "Lord, forgive me a sinner. Enable me to forgive in return. Lord, make me a disciple and enable me to walk in the path of righteousness."
Dallas Willard in his book "Divine Conspiracy" states: "....discipleship is real-life apprenticeship to Jesus." If we are students of Jesus then we must be with him. If we are an apprentice, we must be with him to learn from him, how to be like him.

Rick Warren states: "You were created to be like Jesus. This is your destiny. From the very beginning, God's plan was to create human beings to reflect His image. God announced his intention at Creation: "Then God said, "let us make mankind in our image and likeness."

2. An unsupported lifestyle. Sometimes you lose passion for God because you’re not spending time around other people who have a passion for God. You’re not getting any fellowship.

Eccl. 4:9-10 reads, "Two are better than one... because if one falls down his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!"

We need each other. We all fall down. We all stumble at times. We all lose our way. We all get off track. Our love for God can grow cold. So we all need people to help us to get up in our lives. This is important not only for the difficult times. It’s also important for the good times. We were made for relationships. In prison if they want to punish someone what do they do? They put them in solitary confinement. Why? Because we were made to be around other people. All of us need others who are trying to live with passion for God in their lives. You need that to keep that passion for God real in your life.

Heb 10:24-25, says "Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love & good deeds. Let’s not give up meeting together and let us encourage one another." There was a man once who was the owner of a local business and a highly intentional Christian. His wife was the most annoying person anyone had ever met. She was chronically ill. Her sickness had embittered her spirit. She demanded almost all of her husband’s time and energy. She was never grateful for a single thing he did for her. She complained about life, and she complained about him. For his part he remained gentle and serene. He had the utmost patience with her. He never spoke ill of her. He never sighed under the burden of her criticism.
He was truly a man of God. He had an intimacy with God. It wasn’t showy but it was real. Life had not rewarded him with outward happiness, but he was deeply and inwardly joyful. He had God and he was satisfied. How could he be so patient and kind and committed to the welfare of his wife despite her ingratitude? I’ll tell you: he was in covenant with his wife, but he was also in covenant with God. This man partnered with God in his own process of sanctification. His highest interest was not in being happy in some conventional way. Instead, the longing of his heart was to be the kind of person God wanted him to be. God has to work on a person to make them like He wants them to be. This man yielded to God’s program of overhaul in his life. That’s what this man wanted. He wanted his unloving tendencies to be burned in the fire of affliction if need be. He wanted his gold refined. He wanted his character refashioned to be like that of his Lord, who "loved the church and gave himself up for her." HE KNEW THAT LOVING GOD WAS SERVING PEOPLE. He knew that discipleship meant being like Christ.

Too many Christians of our day seem to be totally unconcerned with the need to be conformed to the image of Christ. Rather, they seem to think that they can live pretty much as they please, as long as they admit it to God. This could not be farther from the truth. Somewhere along the line we have lost our fear of God. We are to love and fear God so that we might follow Him.

3. An unclear purpose. When you forget the purpose of your life that is a sure way to kill your passion for life and for God. If you don’t know the purpose for life, why bother? Why get up in the morning? Why put forth the effort? Why get out of bed? Life without purpose is activity without direction. It’s motion without meaning. Life without purpose is trivial, petty, and pointless. Whenever you forget why God put you on earth you’re going to drift toward apathy and lethargy. Maybe you’ve felt like Isaiah who said in Isaiah 49 "I’ve labored to no purpose and I’ve spent my strength in vain and for nothing."

Passion and purpose go together. When you have a clear purpose it’s going to give you a lot of passion. But it’s got to be God’s purposes for your life. If you’re only living for yourself, that’s a pretty small purpose. That isn’t going to make you very passionate. In fact it’s pathetic. How
powerful is it to say, "I’m living for me." How’s that going to give you a lot of energy to get out of bed in the morning? You need a cause greater than yourself. That’s what gives life significance & meaning. The more you understand God’s purposes for your life, and live it out, the more passionate you’re going to be. Thomas Hobbs wrote: "Passion is waking up in the morning wherever you are and bounding out of bed because you know there’s something out there that you love to do, that you believe in, that God made you for and you’re good at, something that’s bigger than you are and you can hardly wait to get at it again. It’s something that you’d rather be doing than anything else and you wouldn’t give it up for money because it means more to you than money."

Nothing matters more than knowing and living out the purposes that God put you on earth to fulfill. Nothing else can compensate for not living them out. Not fame. Not wealth. Not success. Not pleasure. Nothing can compensate for a life without meaning. Whenever your purpose gets unclear and you forget why you’re here in the first place you’re going to lose your passion.

Most of us don’t mind Jesus making some minor changes in our lives. But Jesus wants to turn our lives upside down. We don’t mind him doing a little touch up work, but Jesus wants a complete renovation. We come to Jesus thinking of a tune up, but Jesus is thinking of an overhaul. We think a little makeup is fine, but Jesus is thinking of a complete makeover. We think a little decorating is required, but Jesus wants to do a complete remodel. We want Jesus to inspire us, but Jesus wants to transform us.

Deep in every true Christian, there is an awareness that we are on this planet for a purpose greater than having a career. Greater than paying the bills. Greater than loving our families. Greater than fulfilling our role as upstanding citizens. God wants us to become contagious Christians. He want us to catch His love and then offer it to others.

Jonathan Edwards wrote: “The Obligation of every Generation is to understand what God is doing & then to do it together with Him!” Find out what He’s doing & then do it with Him.
4. An undernourished spirit will kill your passion. Every day you face all kinds of circumstances that conspire to shrink your spirit & shrivel your heart. You’re going to get up tomorrow morning. You’re going to have distractions and disappointments. You’re going to have conflicts. You’re going to have changes and challenges. You’re going to have problems and pressures. You’re going to have frustrations and fears and failures and fatigue. All of these things fall in on us to shrivel our hearts and shrink our spirits. So we must intentionally nourish our spirits. If you don’t take the time and trouble to do it, your spirit is going to shrivel up.

So how do we do it? How do we plug into God? How do we have this living, vital, daily relationship with God that keeps our spirit nourished? The starting point is to remember how God feels about us. God is hopelessly in love with you! The reason that you’re not passionate about God is you have forgotten how passionate God is about you.

Exodus 31:14 reads, "You must worship only the Lord, for He is a God who is passionate about His relationship with you."

Did you know that? Did you know that God is passionate about you? He made you to love you. You were created as an object of His love. The more you understand how passionate God is about you, the more passionate you’re going to get about God. How do we know that God is passionate about us? The proof is the cross. Jesus stretched out His hands & they nailed Him to the cross. He was in essence saying, "I’d rather die than live without you. That’s how passionate I am about My creation. I made you. I love you. And I’d rather die than live without you."

Acts 1:3 says this "Jesus showed Himself alive to them after His passion by many demonstrations: for forty days He continued to appear to them and tell them all about the kingdom of God."

The Bible says in Psalm 107:33 says, "Whoever is wise will remember these things and will think about the deep love of the Lord."

If there’s an unresolved conflict, as best as you can resolve it right now in your heart, and strive to resolve it with the other person.
Maybe the cause of passion dying in your life is an unsupported lifestyle. You’ve been trying to go it alone. If so then pray, "God bring some other people into my life."

Maybe it’s an unclear purpose. You’ve been living for yourself. Or you’ve been living for nothing. God reminded you today of His purpose for your life. Thank Him.

Maybe the cause of passion dying is an under nourished spirit. Focus your heart on the strength that only God can give. Draw up nourishment from Him.

Thank You, God. Thank You for being passionate about me even when I was distracted by other things. Jesus, thank You so much for enduring all that suffering for me so I could be forgiven. I’ve never been loved by anybody that much. Thank You for creating me. I wouldn’t be alive if it weren’t for You. Thank You for having a purpose for my life. Forgive me for my lukewarm attitude toward You. Jesus, I want to have a passion for You. I want to get up in the morning looking forward to the day that You’ve planned for me and I want to love You passionately. I want to love others passionately. I want to use the talents that You’ve given to me for Your sake. Help me to take time to nourish my spirit and grow every day through worship, fellowship with other believers, using my talents for you, sharing the good news with others. AMEN!!!