

# Stronger Passion for Jesus

Message 1 of 5 in the series: "Stronger"

## A. The new year gives us the perfect opportunity to make a fresh start/set goals/recommit to growing stronger in our relationship with God and others.

"So take a **new grip** with your tired hands and **strengthen** your weak knees. **Mark out a straight path** for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong." Hebrews 12:12-13 (NLT)

1. Jesus said loving God and loving others were the most important things we can do.

"'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:37-40 (NLT)

2. The Christian life is like a marathon, not a sprint.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And **let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus**, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith." Hebrews 12:1-2a (NLT)

## B. This year we want to grow stronger in our passion for Jesus.

"Passion" = a strong, intense, **overwhelming desire** for someone or something.

"Yes, **everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.** For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and **become one** with him." Philippians 3:8-9a (NLT)

1. Striving to know Jesus personally is completely different from trying to be smart enough/good enough/religious enough to win the approval of God or others.

"Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith. Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. **We put no confidence in human effort**, though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done." Philippians 3:1-7 (NLT)

2. Passionately seeking to become one with Christ means desiring to spend time with Him and His people, growing in my dependence upon Him, following His guidance, and yielding to His will for better and for worse.

"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and **participation in his sufferings**, becoming like him in his death..." Philippians 3:10 (NIV)

"In fact, **everyone** who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted..."

2 Timothy 3:12 (NIV)

## C. Three things we can do in 2023 to grow stronger in our passion for Christ:

1. We can focus on who we're becoming, NOT who we were.

"I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: **Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on** to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us." Philippians 3:12-14 (NLT)

"For **God is working in you**, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."

Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

2. We can **devote** time each day to being alone with God, reading His Word, and spending time in prayer.

"Your word is a lamp to **guide my feet** and a light for my path." Psalm 119:105 (NLT)

**"I love the Lord because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy.** Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!" Psalm 116:1-2 (NLT)

"My heart has heard you say, '**Come and talk with me.**' And my heart responds, 'Lord, I am coming.'" Psalm 27:8 (NLT)

3. We can hang around brothers and sisters in Christ who are passionate about knowing Him better.

"Dear brothers and sisters, **pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example.** For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth." Philippians 3:17-19 (NLT)

"And **let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,** 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." Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

John Schmidt • 01-01-2023 • [john@centeringlives.com](mailto:john@centeringlives.com)

### Some helpful quotations:

"My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Paul in Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

"Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves." Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:5a (NLT)

"Knowing the Bible is one thing. Knowing the author is another." Unknown

"Following Christ isn't something that can be done halfheartedly or on the side. It is not a label we can display when it is useful. It must be central to everything we do and are." Francis Chan

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" Psalm 42:1-2 (NIV)

### Some helpful resources:

- **Free Bible App for your phone, tablet, and computer:** [www.bible.com](http://www.bible.com)
- **Bible Reading Plans:** On the Bible App, hundreds of plans are available on almost every conceivable topic for free. Download the App, sign in, search plans, and pick one to try.
- **Daily Devotional Guides:**
  - My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers. [www.utmost.org](http://www.utmost.org)
  - Streams in the Desert* by Mrs. Charles Cowman. [www.crosswalk.com/devotionals/desert](http://www.crosswalk.com/devotionals/desert)
  - Our Daily Bread* by Our Daily Bread Ministries. [www.odb.org](http://www.odb.org)
- **Next Steps Class with Shane Segars:** Next class will be held on January 29<sup>th</sup>.