

## Discussion Guide: Passion

*Let us examine the Scriptures like the Bereans who "received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." Acts 17:11 (NIV)*

**August 24, 2003:** "Passion" by Joe Bartemus, Pastor of Adult Education at College Park Church. Pastor Joe introduced his sermon from Philippians 3:7-14 with several illustrations of some of the passions of life. Some passions such as family, sports, money, boat, or house can be acceptable when kept in balance, while other extreme passions such as lust are not acceptable. However, not even one of the "acceptable" passions is worthy to be compared to what should be the believer's great passion of life—to know Christ and to live for Him.

After his dramatic conversion on the way to Damascus Paul acknowledged a complete reversal in what he regarded as the failures of his life (3:7-8) that he had previously valued as his highest achievement (3:4-6). Further, what Paul formerly regarded as worthless heresy to be stamped out by all means, he now values as the only accomplishment worth pursuing—growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Redeemer, Sanctifier, and the One who will eventually glorify him. Pastor Joe made the application to us in three steps:

Step #1 – **C**ount the cost of passion (3:7-11)

Step #2 – **B**e realistic (the entire goal of our spiritual journey will not be realized in this life, 3:12)

Step #3 – **A**ccelerate forward (3:13-14)

### Discussion and Application Questions

As you begin your discussion, pray for the Holy Spirit to illumine the hearts and minds of you and your Flock and to unite you to one another and to God as you study and apply God's Word. Then, open your Bibles and read together Philippians 3:7-14.

**Begin** with several content-related questions to stimulate your flock to recall points from the sermon.

1. Does anyone have some thought or illustration from Joe's sermon that especially stood out in your mind that you will share with us?
2. Name and discuss some generally acceptable passions in our society today. Which ones are frequently found even in Christians and how do they impact the effectiveness of our spiritual life, either for good or ill?
3. How can you determine that a passion is out of balance? That is, what evidence should clue you in to the need for a change? What steps might a Christian take when some passion goes ballistic in order to bring it back into balance?
4. Describe from your personal experience (in your own life or as seen in someone else) the cost that has arisen from some out-of-balance passion. In like manner, what rewards have come when a passion is in proper balance?

## ***Continuing the Group Discussion***

Return the focus to the application of Philippians 3:7-14 with the following questions.

1. In Philippians 3:7-8 Paul is willing to collect all his former privileges (described in 3:5-6) and write them off as loss. He is not just indifferent to his past privileges but now treats them as liabilities that hinder spiritual growth. Discuss some things you formerly looked upon favorably but put off in order to grow in your walk with Christ. Are there some things today that get in your way of a closer walk with the Lord?
2. Relate some trial that you experienced that tempted you to rely on things or people other than Christ. Can status, money, religion, and popularity, etc. tempt us away from Christ? In what way?
3. Discuss how you, do or do not, consider “Knowing Christ Jesus [as] my Lord,” (3:7) to be your “surpassing greatness.” (NIV)
4. Those who know Christ do not have “a righteousness that is my own” but have “the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith,” (3:9). Did you ever have a time when you felt you had a right standing with God apart from faith in Christ? Whether or not you did, tell us how you now feel knowing that your salvation is now grounded in what Christ did for you on the cross, rather than what you could present to God from your own works.
5. Paul put forth great effort daily into pressing “on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus,” (3:14). Ralph P. Martin (*Philippians*, 157) says, “Paul clearly has in mind here the events of the last day, the resurrection, and the judgment which will also hold the distribution of rewards to the faithful believers (1 Cor. 3:14; 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8). Assuming this is correct, what effect might your present dedication have upon your future rewards at the judgment Seat of Christ? Discuss why you do or do not view your present life as God’s earthly school to prepare you for future eternal responsibilities and joys, in much the same way as school might train students for their future vocation.

## ***Helping your Flock Members Apply and Act***

1. Meditate upon, “But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind,” (3:13). Can you think of some trials or hurts from the past that you need to let go of? Is there anyone in your life that you need to confess this to? Can you do so? Will you? Is this something that you can share with the group as a prayer request?
2. Paul suggests that there is a close affinity between our Lord’s sufferings on the cross and some of the sufferings believers endure while living the life to which God calls them (3:10). Relate how knowing that Christ first suffered for you helps you to endure the hurts, bruises and bumps of life you often must endure for Him (unsympathetic relatives or co-workers, working long hours at your vocation and then striving mightily for God in your service for Him, etc).
3. Comfort a friend who is presently enduring a great trial of affliction, as they courageously live out the life God has for them.