

Thirsting for God Philippians 4:4-7

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Why do some people pursue life with hope and zeal, while others muddle through life _____? Today, we're going to explore how to _____ our passion for life. The Word of God has the _____ instructions for life here and the _____ instructions for life hereafter.

I love the inspired words of David, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my _____ pants for you, O God. My soul _____ for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" (Psalm 42:1-2). David knew how much he _____ God and how lost and alone he felt without God. Are there times in your life when you feel empty and alone? Perhaps the _____ for this emptiness is that you're not as close to God as you once were.

Some people live their Christian life to the _____, while others just drift aimlessly. Some are passionate about their _____, while others are apathetic. Some come out of church _____ of hope and zeal, while others who were in the same worship service come out _____. Why the difference? Could it be that many have _____ their passion for God? Some folks have never been _____ to God; they don't know what they've missed. My friend, I pray that you'll look _____ into your soul and ask yourself if you have a close and loving relationship with God? Would you like one?

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Philippians 4:4-7.

Have you ever been thirsty, really thirsty? Have you ever had the kind of thirst that _____ a drink of water now? I've been out hunting and walking through the forest loaded down and desperately needing a drink of water. Or, I've been out mowing the lawn in the summer, and my face is red, and I'm so thirsty I could drink from a garden hose. The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are those who _____ and _____ for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6). Jesus used two familiar things, hunger and thirst, to teach us how God looks at righteousness. God _____ the person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, and God will give him satisfaction.

Much of Judea is a _____ country. The people who live there know what it's like to have _____ water available. The hills of Judea contain numerous cisterns to _____ rain water for the times when the dry seasons come along. They knew water was essential to _____, and they must have it. God, too, my friend, is essential to your life.

When was the last time you were _____ thirsty for God? When did you last _____ to be close to God? When did you last hunger to _____, to praise Him, and to thank Him? When was the last time reading the _____ or hearing a _____ from God's Word was an immediate demand? It's so easy to _____ what you need to be healthy and right with God.

Some people take for _____ that God is always there, always cares, and is always available when they need Him. They have _____ in their lives for God when they hurt and they

need Him, but they _____ God until some real need arises. Their relationship with God is really part-time. Their lives say to God, "I want you when you can _____ me, but don't get used to being a part of my life." They aren't really close to God.

Part-time Christians don't want to be close unless they want something from God. They have a _____ relationship. Let me ask you, would you like to be _____ to someone who only wanted you when he or she needed you but didn't care other times? Christianity is a heartfelt, daily relationship with the Lord. We must not let our love for God grow _____.

If you want a relationship with God that is vibrant and living and full of love and joy, you must _____ beyond having God around only when you need Him. The Lord Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 when he was _____ by the devil. He said in Matthew 4:4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every _____ that comes from the mouth of God."

Many people _____ themselves out of a real life by focusing on everything that is around them, but God. They listen to the talk shows; they go to the movies; they know their soap operas; they read newspapers and magazines; they know every sports figure; but they haven't read a single book of the Bible in years. No wonder their lives are _____ with doubts and confusion and misunderstanding. When they push the Bible away, they're pushing _____ and _____ away.

The Bible is no ordinary book; it is God's book and God's way of teaching and training us how to _____. It teaches us how to _____, how to forgive and to be forgiven, how to react to suffering, how to _____ on the inside in spirit, how to discipline ourselves, how to live without hurting other people, and how to make the _____ of our lives. The Bible gives us hope and promise; it gives us joy and peace; it uplifts; it comforts; it corrects; it trains; and it makes us _____. The Word of God is what gives us new life and causes us to be born again.

Read an amazing promise in 1 Peter 1:22-25. God's Word is the _____ to being "born again." No other book can _____ your past and give you the promise and hope of living forever! The more you read the Bible, the more you will come to _____ and to be _____ to God. The more you read the Bible, the more you will come to have the abundant life found in Christ Jesus!

So, start paying attention to God and to His Word. Our passion and feelings for God _____ when we remove ourselves from God. People don't _____ to get away from God; they simply _____ away unconsciously. The Bible says, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we _____ away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we _____ such a great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:1-3). A person can slowly stop _____ the Word of God, stop _____, and stop going to _____. Before long, he's drifted away from the God who loves him.

Desperate situations sometimes _____ us up and _____ us back to God; and we finally realize that we have no one else. Abraham Lincoln once said, "I've been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." It's reassuring to _____ that God can do things that men cannot do. There is really only one _____ God

who can hear and answer prayer; and that's the God of the Bible! Oh, I know it's not politically correct to say things like that, but political correctness is not the measure of _____. Political correctness is often the world's way of putting God to _____. When people _____ to the world and _____ God, they end up ruining their lives. Every social ill in America comes from people ignoring the _____ of God. We need God. We need His hope, His promises, and His laws to live good and peaceful lives. There is simply no other way.

We can draw close to God by making Him a _____ in our lives every single day. Every day make _____ for God. Spend time in Bible _____ and _____. Don't simply read the Word of God; _____ it and meditate upon it. Psalm 1:1-3 says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his _____ is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by the streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers." God wants to _____ your spirit with his Word, the Bible, and to give you the very insights you need to prosper in every area of your life.

God also wants you to draw close to Him by opening your _____ to Him in prayer. First Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing." God is not saying pray 24 hours a day, seven days a week. No one could do that. Instead, God is telling us to stop quitting on prayer. Some folks stop praying altogether. That's what God doesn't want you to do.

Some folks think they're _____ God by praying, but God doesn't feel that way. He _____ us to pray, to ask, to seek, and to knock. He's ready to _____, to give, and to help us find what we're seeking. Prayer was God's _____, so let's rid ourselves of the notion that God is too busy for us or gets bothered by prayer. God loves you so much that He wants to hear your prayers. He wants to hear your _____.

If you want to be closer to God, let me suggest that you do this one, simple _____ every day. "What is it?" It's this: _____ your blessings. Remember the _____ blessings that God has given to you. Remember, God saved you from _____, delivered you from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son. Remember the _____, the love that Jesus showed by suffering for you and me. Remember how God has _____ your prayers. Remember how the Scriptures gave you _____ and _____. Remember the _____ that God has given you to deal with the challenges of life. He's been blessing you through the years. Just look how God has helped you and is helping you now.

Count your blessings, and when you do it's so _____ for your spirit and your attitude. The Bible teaches, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Philippians 4:8).

When we concentrate only on the _____, we lose sight of God. When we concentrate on the _____, we grow more thankful to God. Every day we need to _____ and _____ to God, "thank you, thank you, thank you for all that You do for us."

There's one more thing about God's blessings that we must remember. God has lovingly

prepared a _____ for us, one that gives us hope. **Read 1 Peter 1:3-5.** As Christians, we have the true and living _____ in the true and living _____. We have all the blessings of God in this life and we have _____, too! In Christ, we are of all people most blessed.

Is there anything in your life that _____ you from being close to God? Is there anything in your life that _____ you of energy and time so that you're so overly tired that you don't have time for God? Some people day after day shut the Lord out of their lives. Hebrews 12:1-2 says: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which so closely clings to us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

There may be many things in our lives that _____ us up. Some things are not sinful in and of themselves, but they so distract and rob us of _____ with God that we lose sight of the Lord who loves us. We also have to think about sin. Yes, sin, ALL sin _____ us from God. The Bible says, "Behold, the LORD's _____ is not so short that it cannot save; nor His _____ so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid *His* _____ from you so that He does not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). If you want to draw close to God, you have to _____ the sin out of your lives.

Several years ago, a middle school in Oregon faced a unique problem. A number of the girls began to use lipstick. They'd put it on in the restroom and then press their lips against the mirrors, leaving dozens of little lip prints. This went on for several days. Finally, the principal decided that she had to do something to stop this problem. So, she called the girls to the restroom with the custodian. She explained that lip prints caused a major problem for the custodian who had to clean the mirrors every single day. To demonstrate how difficult it was, she asked the custodian to clean one of the mirrors. He took out a long-handled brush; he dipped it in the toilet; and then he scrubbed the mirror. Since that time, there weren't any more lip prints on the mirrors. If we could see the _____ in sin, we wouldn't be so attracted to it. God _____ sin. He calls it iniquity because it twists and ruins lives.

God loves you and wants something _____ than sin will give you. Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Our Father in heaven wants us to _____ with joy and purpose.

We can live abundantly when we give our hearts and our lives to the Lord. So put your trust in the Lord Jesus. Believe His Word. Turn away from the ugliness of sin. Sin may give you pleasure for a moment, but it will rob you of your soul. Out of love and faith, with a penitent heart, confess Christ as your Lord and the Son of God and be baptized or immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ. Baptism is the time God forgives our sins. It's also the time that we enter into a relationship with God and He adds us to the church. I hope you'll do that today, that you'll obey the gospel and be baptized.