

## Thirsting for God

Why do some have lives \_\_\_\_\_ with hope and zeal, while others muddle through life empty? Today we're going to explore how to \_\_\_\_\_ our passion for life. We're here to search the Scriptures to find the Lord's way to be \_\_\_\_\_ and to live the Christian life. The Word of God has the \_\_\_\_\_ instructions for life here and the only instructions for life hereafter.

I love the inspired words of David in Psalm 42:1:2, "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 \_\_\_\_\_ with God?" David knew how much he \_\_\_\_\_ God and how lost and alone he felt without Him. Are there times in your life when you \_\_\_\_\_ empty and alone? Perhaps the reason for this emptiness is that you're not as \_\_\_\_\_ to God as you once were.

Some people live their Christian life with love and purpose, while others \_\_\_\_\_ aimlessly. Some are passionate about their \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ, while others just don't care. 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? Today we're exploring the Scriptures and asking, "How can I \_\_\_\_\_ my passion for God?"

Some folks have never been \_\_\_\_\_ to God, and they don't know what they've missed. There is simply no \_\_\_\_\_ in life as necessary and as fulfilling as being close to God. My friend, I pray you'll look deep into your soul and \_\_\_\_\_ yourself if you have a close, loving relationship with God? Would you like to have one?

### **Our reading today comes from the book of Philippians 4:4-7.**

Have you ever had that kind of thirst that \_\_\_\_\_ a drink of water now? I've been out hunting and walking through the forest loaded down with equipment and desperately needing a \_\_\_\_\_ of water. Or I've been mowing the lawn in the summer; and my face is red, and I'm so thirsty I could drink from a garden \_\_\_\_\_. Much of Judea in ancient times and in this day is still a \_\_\_\_\_ country. The people who live in dry areas \_\_\_\_\_ how essential it is to have water to drink and to be clean. They know what it's like when something so necessary is \_\_\_\_\_. The hills of Judea contain numerous cisterns that \_\_\_\_\_ rainwater for the dry seasons. They knew water is essential to \_\_\_\_\_, and they must have it.

Like water, a relationship with God and the Lord Jesus is essential to \_\_\_\_\_. Think! When was the last time you were \_\_\_\_\_ for God? When did you last \_\_\_\_\_ to be close to God? When did you last \_\_\_\_\_ to pray, to worship, to praise, and thank Him? When was the last time you \_\_\_\_\_ reading the Bible or hearing a sermon from God's holy word? It's so easy to \_\_\_\_\_ what you need to be healthy and right with God.

Some take for granted that God is always going to be there, that He always cares, and always makes Himself available whenever they \_\_\_\_\_ Him. Some have room in their lives for God when they \_\_\_\_\_ and they need Him, but they ignore God until some need arises. Their relationship with God is part-time.

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**Longer quotations may not appear in the Study Sheet, but can be read in the accompanying transcript.**

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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. They haven't taken up their \_\_\_\_\_ daily to follow Him.

Part-time Christians don't want to be \_\_\_\_\_ unless they want something from God. They have a \_\_\_\_\_ relationship. Would you like to be married to someone who only wanted you when he or she needed you but didn't \_\_\_\_\_ about being with you any other time? Close relationships are always two-ways. Christianity is a heartfelt, \_\_\_\_\_ relationship with the Lord. We must not let our \_\_\_\_\_ for God grow stale.

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, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every \_\_\_\_\_ that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). We need God daily just like we need food daily.

Many people \_\_\_\_\_ themselves out of real life by focusing on everything around 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 \_\_\_\_\_ a single book of the Bible in years. No wonder their lives are \_\_\_\_\_ with doubts and misunderstanding. By pushing the Bible away, they're pushing the Christian life and pushing God away.

The Bible is no ordinary book; it's God's book and God's way of teaching and training us how to \_\_\_\_\_. It teaches us how to love, how to forgive and how to be forgiven, how to react to suffering, how to grow on the inside, 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 lifts us up; it comforts; it corrects; it trains; and it makes us \_\_\_\_\_ people. The Word of God is what gives us new life and causes us to be \_\_\_\_\_ again.

Look what the apostle Peter says in the Bible about the Bible. This is an amazing \_\_\_\_\_! "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the \_\_\_\_\_ for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable \_\_\_\_\_ but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for 'All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains \_\_\_\_\_.' And this word is the good news that was \_\_\_\_\_ to you" (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'll know and be \_\_\_\_\_ to God. The more you read the Bible, the more you'll have the abundant \_\_\_\_\_ that's found in Christ Jesus!

So, start paying \_\_\_\_\_ to God and to His Word. Our passion and our feelings for God \_\_\_\_\_ as we remove ourselves from God. People don't \_\_\_\_\_ to get away from God; they simply drift away unconsciously. The Bible says, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have \_\_\_\_\_, lest we drift 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 \_\_\_\_\_ so great a salvation?" (Hebrews 2:1-3). A person can slowly just \_\_\_\_\_ reading the Word of God, stop praying, stop worshipping at church. Before long he or she has drifted away from the God who loves them.

Desperate situations sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ us up and lead us back to God; and we finally realize that we have no one else and nowhere else to go. Abraham Lincoln once said, "I have been driven many times to my \_\_\_\_\_ by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." It's reassuring to remember God \_\_\_\_\_ do things that men cannot do. There is really only one \_\_\_\_\_ God who can hear and answer prayer; and that is the God of the Bible! 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 \_\_\_\_\_ God. When people listen to the world and \_\_\_\_\_ God, they end up ruining their lives. The world didn't die for your sins; did you hear that, the world didn't die for your sins, Jesus did. Every social \_\_\_\_\_ in this whole world comes from people who ignore the will 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 than the Lord's 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 study, not just \_\_\_\_\_ but study, and prayer. Don't simply read the Word of God, study it and meditate upon it and learn from it and \_\_\_\_\_ 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's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its \_\_\_\_\_ in its season, and its leaf doesn't wither. In all that he does, he \_\_\_\_\_." God wants to feed your spirit with his word and give you the very insights that you \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_ praying altogether. That's what God doesn't want.

Some folks think they're \_\_\_\_\_ God by praying, but God doesn't feel that way. In fact He \_\_\_\_\_ us to pray, to ask, to seek, and to knock. He's ready to answer, to give, and to help us \_\_\_\_\_ what we're seeking. Prayer was God's idea, so let's rid ourselves of the notion that God is too \_\_\_\_\_ for us or gets bothered by our prayers. God loves you and wants to \_\_\_\_\_ your prayers. He wants to hear what is on your heart.

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

Counting your blessings is so \_\_\_\_\_ for our spirits and attitudes. The Bible teaches us, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there's any excellence, anything worthy of praise, \_\_\_\_\_ about these things" (Philippians 4:8). Dwell on them, focus on them. Focusing on the negative will take our \_\_\_\_\_ off of God. But focusing on what God has done for us will \_\_\_\_\_ us to stay close to God. When we concentrate on the positive, we \_\_\_\_\_ more thankful to God. Every day we need to stop and say to God, "thank you, thank you, thank you for all You do for us."

There is one more thing about God's blessings that we must remember. God has lovingly prepared a \_\_\_\_\_ for us, one that gives us hope. The Bible says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he's caused us to be born again, born again to a living \_\_\_\_\_ through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in \_\_\_\_\_ for you, you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5). As Christians we have the true and living

hope in the true and living God. We have all the blessings of God in this life and we have heaven too! In Christ we are of all people most \_\_\_\_\_.

If there is anything keeping you from being close to God, get \_\_\_\_\_ of it. Is there anything in your life \_\_\_\_\_ you of your energy and time, so 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 \_\_\_\_\_ which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the \_\_\_\_\_ that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the \_\_\_\_\_ that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Many things in our lives can \_\_\_\_\_ us up. Some things are not sinful in and of themselves, but they so distract and rob us of our time with God, that we lose \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord who loves us. We also have to think about sin. Sin, ALL sin, \_\_\_\_\_ us from God. Isaiah 59:1-2 says, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot \_\_\_\_\_; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot \_\_\_\_\_. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your \_\_\_\_\_ have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." If you want to draw close to God, you have to \_\_\_\_\_ the sin out of your lives. I hope you'll do that today.

A middle school in Oregon faced a unique problem. A number of the girls began to use \_\_\_\_\_. Then they would put it on in the restroom and then press their lips against the mirrors, leaving dozens of little lip \_\_\_\_\_. This went on several days. Finally the principal decided she had to do something to stop this \_\_\_\_\_. So, she called the girls to the restroom with the custodian. She explained lip prints caused a major problem for the custodian, who had to \_\_\_\_\_ the mirrors every day. To demonstrate how difficult it was, she asked the custodian to clean one of the mirrors. He took out a long-handled brush, dipped it in the toilet, and scrubbed the mirror. Since that time there were no more lip prints on the mirrors. If we could see the \_\_\_\_\_ that's in sin, we wouldn't be so attracted to it. God hates sin. He calls it iniquity, because it twists and ruins lives.

God loves you and wants something better than sin provides. Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Our Father in heaven wants us to live with joy and purpose. We can live abundantly when we give our hearts and lives to the Lord. So put your trust in the Lord Jesus. Believe His Word. Turn away from sin. Sin may give you pleasure for a moment, but it will rob you of your soul. Now 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 that God forgives our sins. It's also the time that we enter a relationship with God. I hope that you'll do that today.