

"Thirsting for God"

Why do some have lives filled with hope and zeal, while others muddle through life empty? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is In Search of the Lord's Way, a Bible study. Today we're going to explore how to renew our passion for life.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way, we're here to search the Scriptures to find the Lord's way to be saved and to live the Christian life. The Word of God has the best instructions for life here and the only instructions for life hereafter. Thanks so very much for letting us into your busy life. We appreciate hearing from you that you're watching or listening. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

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

Some people live their Christian life with love and purpose, while others drift aimlessly. Some are passionate about their faith in Christ, while others just don't care. Some come out of church full of hope and zeal, while others who were in the same worship service come out empty. Why the difference? Could it be that many have lost their passion for God? Today we're exploring the Scriptures and asking, "How can I renew my passion for God?"

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

We do care about you and want to be a blessing to you, so we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. We'll pay for the call. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

We'll worship in song, we'll read from Philippians 4:4 to 7, and explore how we can fill our thirst for the living God.

Our reading today comes from the book of Philippians, chapter 4, verses 4 through 7, and encourages us to rejoice in the Lord and to pray. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Oh what a wonderful message.

Let's pray together. "Father we're thankful for all the blessings that You give us in this life, and we pray Father that we may always turn our anxieties and our struggles over to You, and rejoice in the good that You have done for us. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus Amen."

Have you ever had that kind of thirst that demands a drink of water now? Well I've been out hunting and walking through the forest loaded down with equipment and desperately needing a drink 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 hose. Much of Judea in ancient times and in this day is still a dry country. The

people who live in dry areas know how essential it is to have water to drink and to be clean. They know what it's like when something so necessary is scarce. The hills of Judea contain numerous cisterns that collect rainwater for the dry seasons. They knew water is essential to life, and they must have it.

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

Some take for granted that God's always going to there, that He always cares, and always makes Himself available whenever they need Him. Some have room in their lives for God when they hurt and they need Him, but they ignore God until some need arises. Their relationship with God is part-time. Their lives say to God, "I want you when you can benefit 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 cross daily to follow Him.

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

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

And many people cheat 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 read a single book of the Bible in years. No wonder their lives are filled with doubts and misunderstanding. By pushing the Bible away, they're pushing the Christian life and pushing God away.

You see, the Bible is no ordinary book; it's God's book and God's way of teaching and training us how to live. 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 most 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 new people. The Word of God is what gives us new life and causes us to be born again.

Look what the apostle Peter says in the Bible about the Bible. This is an amazing promise! 1 Peter 1:22 to 25 says: "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed 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 forever.' And this word is the good news that was preached to you." God's Word is the key to being "born again." And no other book can forgive 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 close to God. The more you read the Bible, the more you'll have the abundant life that's found in Christ Jesus!

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

Desperate situations sometimes wake 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 knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." It's reassuring to remember God can do things that men cannot do. My friend, there is really only one true 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 truth. Political correctness is often the world's way of silencing God. When people listen to the world and forget 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. And every social ill 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 priority in our lives every single day. Every day make time for God. Spend time in Bible study, not just reading but study, and prayer. Don't simply read the word of God, study it and meditate upon it and learn from it and practice it. Psalm 1:1 to 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 delight 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 fruit in its season, and its leaf doesn't wither. In all that he does, he prospers." God wants to feed your spirit with his word and give you the very insights that you need to prosper in every area of your life.

God also wants you to draw close to Him by opening your heart to Him in prayer. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing." Now 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.

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

Now if you want to be closer to God, let me suggest a simple exercise every single day. "What is it?" It's this: count your blessings. Remember the good blessings that God has given to you. Remember God saved you from sin, delivered you from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son. Remember the cross, the love that Jesus showed by His suffering for you and me. Remember how God has answered your prayers. Remember how the Scriptures gave you hope and comfort. Remember the strength 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.

Counting your blessings is so healthy for our spirits and attitudes. The Bible teaches us in that book Philippians 4, verse 8, "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, think about these things." Dwell on them, focus on them. Focusing on the negative will take our eyes off of God. But focusing on what God has done for us will help us to stay close to God. When we concentrate on the positive, we grow more thankful to God. And every day we need to stop and say to God, "thank you, thank you, thank you" for all You do for us.

Now there is one more thing about God's blessings that we must remember. God has lovingly prepared a future for us, one that gives us hope. The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:3 to 5, "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 hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." As Christians we have the true and living hope in the true and living God. We have all the blessing of God in this life and we have heaven too! In Christ we are of all people most blessed.

If there is anything keeping you from being close to God, get rid of it. Is there anything in your life robbing 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 and 2 says: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside (also lay aside) every weight, and sin which clings so closely, 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."

Many things in our lives can tangle 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 sight of the Lord who loves us. We also have to think about sin. Sin, ALL sin, separates us from God. Isaiah 59:1 and 2 says, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." If you want to draw close to God, you have to clean the sin out of your lives. And I hope you'll do that today.

Let's pray. "Father we're thankful for Your love and we're thankful for all the good that You've done for us. Help us to put the sin away and to draw close to You by loving You and reading Your word by praying and doing good things. Be with us and help us to do Your will always. In Jesus name, Amen."

A middle school in Oregon faced a unique problem. A number of the girls began to use lipstick. Well then they would put it on in the restroom and then press their lips against the mirrors, leaving dozens of little lip prints. Well this went on several days. And finally the principal decided she had to do something to stop this problem. 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 clean the mirrors every day. To demonstrate how difficult it was, she asked the custodian to clean one of the mirrors. Well he took out a long-handled brush, he dipped it in the toilet, and scrubbed the mirror. Well, since that time there were no more lip prints on the mirrors. You know if we could see the filth that's in sin, we wouldn't be so attracted to it. God hates sin. And He calls it iniquity, because it twists and ruins lives.

Now God loves you and wants something better than sin provides. Jesus said in John 10:10, that "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. And I hope that you'll do that today.

We hope our study has blessed you. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs that you watch; this helps spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold of us don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

So focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. So if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So that we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us, tell a friend about this program, let them know that you watch, let them know about how much you care about God and care about their soul. And as always we say to you, God bless you and you know what, we do love you, and that comes from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.