

## "Thirsting for God"

Why do some people pursue life 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. And today we're going to explore how to renew our passion for life.

Welcome to *In Search of the Lord's Way*, where we 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. So thanks very much for letting us into your busy life. We really appreciate hearing from you, and 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 and verse 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 God. 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 to the fullest, while others just drift aimlessly. Some are passionate about their faith, while others are apathetic. 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 Scripture and asking, "How can I renew my passion for God?"

Some folks have never been close to God; they don't know what they've missed. My friend, I pray that you'll look deep into your soul and ask yourself if you have a close and loving relationship with God? And would you like one?

I always appreciated when people tell me us that they've been watching or listening. We want to be a blessing to you, and so we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy, or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send us an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto: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](http://www.searchtv.org).

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Philippians 4:4 to 7, and then we'll see how we can renew our passion for God.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 4, verses 4 through 7. "Rejoice in the Lord always; 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." What a great passage. Let's pray together. Father we're so grateful that You do protect us and help us. And Father we find our joy in You and in the Lord Jesus. And we're thankful that we can come to You with our burdens and that You will help us. Father help us to live by Your will always. May You will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Have you ever been thirsty, really thirsty? Have you ever had the kind of thirst that demands a drink of water now? Well, 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

hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5 and verse 6). Now Jesus used two familiar things, hunger and thirst, to teach us how God looks at righteousness. God blesses the person who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, and God will give him satisfaction.

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

Now think! When was the last time you were really thirsty for God? When did you last hunger to be close to God? When did you last hunger to worship, to praise Him, and to thank Him? When was the last time reading the Bible or hearing a sermon from God's word was an immediate demand? It's so easy to forget what you need to be healthy and right with God.

Some people take for granted that God is always there, always cares, and is always available when they need Him. They have room in their lives for God when they hurt and they need Him, but they ignore God until some real need arises. Their relationship with God is really part-time. Their lives say to God, “Well, 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.

Part-time Christians don't want to be close, unless they want something from God. They have a shallow relationship. Let me ask you, would you like to be married 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 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 and 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.”

Many people cheat themselves out of a real life by focusing on everything that is 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 confusion and misunderstanding. You see, when they push the Bible away, they're pushing life and pushing God away.

The Bible is no ordinary book; it is 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 to be forgiven, how to react to suffering, how to grow on the inside in spirit, 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 uplifts; it comforts; it corrects; it trains; and it makes us new. 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. Now 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, (he says) love one another earnestly {fervently} from a pure heart, since you've been born again, not of a 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 fails, but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this is the word, that is the good news that was preached to you.” God's Word is the key to being “born again.” 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 will come to know

and to be close 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 die when we remove ourselves from God. People don't intend to get away from God; they simply drift away unconsciously. The Bible says in Hebrews 2 verses 1 to 3, "Therefore we must pay (we must pay, 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 such a great salvation?" A person can slowly stop reading the Word of God, stop praying, and stop going to church. And before long he's drifted away from the God who loves him.

Desperate situations sometimes wake us up and lead 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 remember that 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'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 truth. Political correctness is often the world's way of putting God to silence. When people listen to the world and forget God, they end up ruining their lives. Every social ill in America comes from people ignoring 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.

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 and prayer. Don't simply read the word of God, study it and meditate upon it. Psalm 1 verses 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 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 feed 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 heart to Him in prayer. 1 Thessalonians 5 and verse 17 says, "Pray without ceasing." Well, God is not saying pray 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Well no one could do that. Instead God is telling us to stop quitting on prayer. Some folks stop praying altogether. And that's what God doesn't want you to do.

Some folks think they're bothering God by praying, but God doesn't feel that way. He invites us to pray, to ask, to seek, and to knock. And 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 prayer. God loves you so much that He wants to hear your prayers. He wants to hear your hearts.

If you want to be closer to God, let me suggest that you do this one, simple exercise every day. "Well 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 suffering for you and me. Remember how God has answered your prayers. Remember how the Scriptures gave you hope and comfort. Remember the strength 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 that it's so healthy for your spirit and your attitude. The Bible teaches in 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 is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

When we concentrate only on the negative, we lose sight of God. When we concentrate on the positive, we grow more thankful to God. Oh every day we need to stop and say to God, "thank you, thank you, thank you" for all that You do for us.

Now there's 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! Who according to his great mercy, has caused us to be 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." Now 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.

Is there anything in your life that keeps you from being close to God? Is there anything in your life that robs 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 verses 1 and 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 tangle us up. Some things are not sinful in and of themselves, but they so distract and rob us of time with God, that we lose sight of the Lord who loves us. We also have to think about sin. Yes sin, ALL sin, separates us from God. The Bible says in Isaiah 59 verses 1 and 2, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid *His* face from you so that He does not hear." Oh my friend, if you want to draw close to God, you have to clean the sin out of your lives. And I hope that you'll do that today. Let's pray together. Father help us to love You with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. And give ourselves fully and freely to You in our time, and in our efforts, and in our obedience. And Father, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Several years ago a middle school in Oregon faced a unique problem. Well a number of the girls began to use lipstick. And they'd 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 that she had to do something to stop this problem. So, she called the girls to the restroom with the custodian.

And she explained that lip prints caused a major problem for the custodian, who had to clean the mirrors every single day. Well 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 then he scrubbed the mirror. Well, since that time there weren't any more lip prints on the mirrors. You know if we could see the filth in sin, we wouldn't be so attracted to it. God hates sin. And He calls it iniquity, because it twists and ruins lives.

God loves you and wants something better than sin will give you. Jesus said in John 10 verse 10, that "The thief comes only to steal and kill and 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 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. Now 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. Oh, I hope you'll do that today. That you'll obey the gospel and be baptized.

We hope and pray that our study has blessed you. If you want a free printed copy, or CD of this message, "Thirsting for God," 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](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org).

Or, you can call the Search office toll-free. The number is 1-800-321-8633. Now all of our programs also appear on our website at [searchtv.org](http://searchtv.org). You can download these programs in a printed, audio, or video format. We also offer free study sheets to go along with our programs. You can download them free at our website or call and request them. They'll help you study God's Word with us.

We do ask that you please worship with one of the churches of Christ your area. The church loves guests, and you'll be glad you did. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.