



# Family Values

## Virtue Realities

### Passion

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Within the Christian tradition, passion refers to suffering, in particular the suffering and death of Christ. It encompasses the events that took place on the last two days of Jesus' life, as popularized by Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. It is the core of the gospel message. God loved us so much that He was willing to go to the cross on our behalf to make things right.

Early Christian witness also involved suffering to one degree or another. As a matter of fact, the English word for martyr has as its root the Greek word for witness. After Peter rebukes Jesus for suggesting that He will "*undergo great suffering*" and "*be killed,*" Jesus turns to the crowd and says, "*If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.*" (Mark 8:31-35) The most convincing testimony of all is to suffer death out of allegiance to Christ, the risen Lord.

Passion can also refer to something that we are enthused and excited about. Something we are committed to without any reservations. Something that energizes and motivates us. Something that gives us focus and propels us forward. It is the object of our zeal, the focus of our devotion. It is what we are passionate about.

The apostle Paul knew what it meant to be passionate. He approached his work with an unquenchable passion. Even prior to his conversion he describes himself "*as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.*" (Phil. 3:6) Paul did not do anything halfway. Writing to the Philippians from prison, he states in no uncertain terms: "*I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ . . . I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.*"

(Phil. 3:8,14) Paul knew what was important. He did not waver. His focus was clear, as he confessed to the Corinthians, "*For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*" (1Cor. 2:2)

In our culture today, it is easy to get sidetracked in terms of what we are passionate about. For some success is the driving force. For others it might be the accumulation of material things or tech toys. Another person might be turned on by power. While still others might equate passion with sexual prowess. Yet we dare not confuse any of these with Christian passion.

Christian passion is rooted in the boundless, unconditional love that God showed us in Christ. It is relational and flows from God's desire to be connected with us, in spite of our reluctance and resistance. We are excited to let the world know that we are part of God's family. We are "turned on" by what God has done for us in Christ. We can put our life on the line because of the one who gave the ultimate sacrifice for us. It is this connection through the Spirit that gives us meaning, courage and motivation. It is passion at its best.

The following are suggestions for putting passion into practice:

1. **Ask God to rekindle your passion.** Spend 15 minutes each morning to reconnect with the source of your passion.
2. **Give testimony to what's important.** Let people know where your allegiance lies, even if it leads to sacrifice and suffering.
3. **Show passion for the Word and for prayer.** Study God's Word and invite the Spirit to work in you and through you.
4. **Get excited about possibilities.** Be hopeful. Let go and let God.

**Affirmation:** Today my passion for God rules!

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