

## A Passion? A Discipline? Both?

*What is it?*

*Why does it seem so difficult to grasp?*

*How do I get focused?*

*Why does change not happen faster?*

*Why do some things not seem to change at all?*

*Where has the energy gone?*

*What are my priorities?*

*What do I need to do to get the energy back?*

If you have ever struggled with trying to keep yourself focused on God so that you can grow in your relationship with Him, then don't stop reading yet.

After accepting Christ into your life, you need to grow in our knowledge of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and God's Word. 1 Peter 2:1-3 says, *"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."* As a new Christian you received initial instruction (milk) about God and His Word. As you mature in your walk, God will reveal deeper pieces of truth to you (food).

Much difficulty comes when trying to mature in your walk with the Lord. This has to be more than the mechanics of setting aside a time to read, pray, fellowship or go to church. Even with a spiritual mentor you will still have to get up each day and develop or continue the new habits which will bring you closer to God.

For me, part of the difficulty was changing my thought patterns from those of the world to those important to God. Another challenge was moving the information from my head to my heart. Until you can do that, you may spend a while drinking milk. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 says, *"Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You*

*are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?"* And Isaiah 53:6 says, *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way."* Commitment to stay the course and grow closer to God is difficult, time consuming and costly, but NOTHING is more rewarding.

To grow up in Christ, you have to be able to change your thinking and the focus of your heart toward your relationship with God.

Deuteronomy 6:5 says, *"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."*

God considers your relationship with Him the priority of your life. Being able to focus on God and keep your priorities on Him, instead of the world, takes more than effort (worldview – work harder and you get what you want). There has to be an intense determination to refuse worldly thinking and to make God more important than anything else.

What you need is a burning desire, a craving, a passion to know the Living God and feel His presence. You need a passion FOR Christ.

If your energy goes away, then your focus has changed. If your focus has changed, you may not have fully developed a passion FOR Christ. Pray that God will open your heart completely to know Him in a deeper way. Consider meditating on Colossians 3:2, *"Set your mind on things above, not on things of this earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."*

It is difficult to determine a process or describe how you reach a point where God is the most important thing in your life. But until you acknowledge your desperate need for God everyday or recognize your place as a part of His plan, you will continue to struggle to reach God and overcome your worldly habits.

God promises us in Philippians 4:13 that, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* Ask God and let Him strengthen you! You have to be willing to commit totally to what He

wants to do with you and not just give Him partial control part of the time. This is a serious challenge because in John 16:33 He tells us, *“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

God knows what you will face. You have to unconditionally accept that God is always with you in and through your troubles so that in times of trials your faith does not falter, causing you to drift away. Psalm 46:1 says, *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble”*. Trials should bring you closer to God not farther away.

This is an incredible commitment on your part to cross over from horizontal (worldly) thinking to vertical (Godly) thinking. To begin giving yourself totally to God and trusting Him completely, you need a deeper, heartfelt abandon to follow Christ. In doing so, you will feel His peace and joy and have an unending desire for more of Him. God becomes the focus of your life. Then as you look to Him you can be confident of His promise in John 15:7, *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

When you receive this promise, it will cause a shift in your desires. You will begin asking Him for things in line with HIS will for your life and not YOUR will for our life.

So which is it? A passion? A discipline? Absolutely! After you have the passion to know God better and acknowledge your intense thankfulness for what He’s done for you, the discipline becomes a by-product. It’s not the discipline that drives the relationship, but the passion — which produces the energy to stay focused on the discipline — and bring you ever closer to the living God. Without the passion, it’s all just words!

*Heavenly Father, I thank You for the incredible sacrifice You made to bring me into a right relationship with You. I pray You will bring me into a complete understanding of what all this means and a knowledge of the complete hope I have in You—toward an unending passion for more. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen!*