

**Series:** Vision Month 2021

**Title:** Passions – Defining What Makes Us Unique

**Text:** Acts 17:10-16

**Date:** January 17, 2021

Passions are a third subject to consider when creating a church strategy. Many organizations refer to these as “core values.” For the purposes of this study, we will use the words “passions” and “core values” interchangeably. Whatever you call them, these are clearly stated desires concerning direction and culture. In his book *Ministry Nuts and Bolts: What They Don’t Teach Pastors in Seminary*, Aubrey Malphurs defined core values as “the constant, passionate, biblical core beliefs that drive the ministry.”<sup>1</sup> Many overlook this topic in their rush to get busy with the work of the church. Such a faux pas, however, can be a fatal mistake. Passions are the thing that bring fire and holy energy to our ministry systems and strategies.

### **Desire, Not Direction**

It is important to clarify that passions don’t necessarily deal with direction. Purpose and priorities are focused on that subject. Passions are focused on desire, values, and convictions. Sure, they can influence direction, but they don’t determine it. I like to say that passions aren’t primarily concerned with “what” we do; instead, they are interested in “how” we do it. They aren’t the substance of our mission, but the spirit in which we carry it out. Passions provide the heart, zeal, and personality that typify our work. They are the core values that drive, shape, and influence the unique ways in which we minister.

Passions are not mission. They are not the ultimate vision for our organization. They should be regarded as neither a doctrinal statement nor a strategy. Those things have a place, and they hold an important relationship to passions, but they are different. The issue of core values (or “passions,” as we are calling them) is concerned with deeply held convictions that shape behavior. In his book *The Advantage*, Patrick Lencioni says this concept is concerned with the question “How do we behave?”<sup>2</sup>

### **The Biblical Precedent**

There is biblical precedent for this concept. When Paul ministered in various contexts, the way in which he carried out his mission differed. What shaped his approach? Passions and core values! Consider his trip to Athens. Acts 17:10-15 describes the way in which Paul landed in that city after fleeing persecution in Berea. His traveling companions stayed behind in the prior locale, so Paul was alone when he arrived in Athens.

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<sup>1</sup> Malphurs, Aubrey. *Ministry Nuts and Bolts: What They Don’t Teach Pastors in Seminary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1997), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Lencioni, Patrick. *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 91-104.

Having a few days to himself, Paul visited the city, observed the culture, and undoubtedly had some interactions with the natives. What he saw disturbed him. Acts 17:16 says, “While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed when he saw that the city was full of idols.” The Greek word translated “deeply distressed” is an interesting one. It was often used in a negative sense to depict an unhealthy and unholy type of irritation. In such a sense, the word could have translated “to become provoked” or “to become upset.”<sup>3</sup> The only other use of the term is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-5. There it was used in this negative sense, as Paul said, “Love is...not irritable.”

As used in our current text, the word appears in more of a neutral sense. Luke did not mean to convey a negative sort of anger or irritation on the part of Paul. Instead, the text suggests the act of being provoked in a positive sense.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the word translated “deeply distressed” literally meant “to bring to a point.” Thus, in the context of our passage, it metaphorically portrayed Paul’s thoughts, temperament, and courage being sharpened.<sup>5</sup>

Why did Paul experience such an emotional stirring? Our passage provides a clue. Luke used a passive tense verb to describe Paul’s emotions. The point was that something made the apostle impassioned. An outside force provoked a righteous irritation within him.<sup>6</sup> What was that force? It was the false religion of Athens. Ancient writings have given testimony to the way in which the city had an abundance of statues to the Greek pantheon of deities.<sup>7</sup> As Paul gazed upon the brazen idolatry of the city, he was stimulated on the inside. He became irritated in a good way. His soul raged with holy furor. Passion boiled!

As we seek to minister within our contexts, we ought to be stirred similarly. Passion ought to build in our souls as we consider the sins and idols of our cities. Holy zeal should grow as we get to know the strongholds that keep our people from a full devotion to Christ. Ungodly addictions and attitudes ought to irritate us in a good way. The rising tide of sexual sin and substance abuse should stir our souls to action. Like Paul, we should be disturbed when we observe people who are given over to ignorance of God’s truth. False doctrine and false gospels should disturb us. Broken lives ought to break our hearts.

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<sup>3</sup> Friberg, Timothy, Barbara Friberg, and Neva Miller. *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 302.

<sup>4</sup> Zodhiates, Spiros. ed. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. 1122.

<sup>5</sup> Zodhiates, 1122.

<sup>6</sup> Gingrich, F. W. and Frederick W. Danker. *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament: Second Edition*. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 152.

<sup>7</sup> Earle, Ralph. *Beacon Bible Commentary: Volume VII*. (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1965), 458.

## **“God, Give us Zeal!”**

We need fire in our bellies, a passionate zeal regarding the things of God that drives our work for the Lord. A purpose statement will ring hollow, and priorities will be mere tasks, if there is not godly zeal to drive our beliefs and behaviors. J.C. Ryle wrote extensively on the need for holy zeal amongst God’s people. He once said, “There is little danger of there ever being too much zeal for the glory of God...Depend upon it, the church seldom needs a bridle, but often needs a spur. It seldom needs to be checked, it often needs to be urged on...What can be more worthy of zeal than eternal things, than the glory of God, than the salvation of souls?”<sup>8</sup>

David sang of his passion for the things of the Lord, saying, “Zeal for your house has consumed me” (Psalm 69:9). Though others neglected and profaned the place of worship, and despite the insults he experience because of his faith, the things of God were still his foremost desire. He had intense passion for the glory and worship of the Lord. May we cultivate a similar spiritual state.

It is important for local churches to consider this subject of passions. In this study, we will do so by looking at several topics. First, we will consider the two types of passions or core values an organization might have. Second, we will talk about how to identify passions by talking about the basis for church passions and by providing tips for discovering church passions. Next, I will give an example by describing the five church passions of my local church. Finally, I will conclude by giving some biblical tips for increasing zeal.

### **ACTUALIZED VS. ASPIRATIONAL**

Before we get into the business of talking about how to articulate one’s passions, there is an important matter to consider. There are generally two types of passions. It is critical that we are clear on this, because many are afraid to state a passion they don’t fully possess.

Humans are funny creatures. Often times we desire to be something, but we are afraid to speak of it because we know we don’t fully embrace it. We don’t want to be a hypocrite, so we rationalize, saying things like, “Well, I’m not really good at that.” We often hold ourselves back by labelling ourselves and concluding that we can never be anything different.

James Clear speaks about this issue in his book *Atomic Habits*. He remarks on how our preconceived identity of ourselves can determine the state of our future selves. He says, “True behavior change is identity change.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, you are unlikely to become something different if you continue to regard yourself in the same way.

A principle can be applied here to organizations. When crafting value statements, many churches know they need to change, but they are fearful of articulating their desire

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<sup>8</sup> Ryle, J.C. *Practical Religion*. (Edinburgh, UK: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2013),192-193.

<sup>9</sup> Clear, James. *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones*. (New York, NY: Avery, 2018), 34.

to be something different. They are shy about placing certain subjects on the list of their passions, because they know they don't embrace them.

Maybe an example will help. Many churches want to be diverse. They desire to reflect the demographical make up of their community, but they don't do a really good job at it. As a result, churches may be slow to state "diversity" as a church passion. Such trepidation could exist over other desired values as well – church unity, missions engagement, evangelistic outreach, or intergenerational ministries.

We can find help in navigating through this struggle by considering the fact that there are generally two different types of core values – actualized values and aspired values. The first set deals with things a church is strong in. Some congregations may not be shy about saying they are passionate about relationships. They know they have a family-like love amongst their congregation, so they state that passion boldly. My church can boldly regard missions as a core value. We support several missionaries, engage in short term missions regularly, and send a good amount of financial support overseas. International missions is an actualized value.

The second type of value is one that doesn't come so easy. Aspirational values are things that are not yet realized. They are values we want to have, but we realize we don't have them yet. Aspirational values are ones at which we are aiming. They are things we are aspiring after.

In one ministry in which I served, we established "unity" as one of our passions. I almost felt phony as I prepared to make a presentation to all of our people about our stated core values. Everyone present knew good and well that we were a divided bunch. Because we were in more of an urban context, people lived miles apart. The Sunday gathering was the only time in which most of our people saw one another. There wasn't a culture of sharing life and meaningful interaction.

In my preparation, I became aware that a value could be aspired without being actualized. In fact, some values should be aspired! Because of my newfound perspective, I stood boldly and lovingly before our people. I was honest with the fact that we weren't as unified as we could have been and I presented "unity" as an aspired value.

This actualized/aspirational mindset can do a lot to help organizations. Seen in this way, passions can become a way of both describing and directing organizational culture. In one sense, core values can't be determined; they can only be detected (actualized). In another sense, leaders can develop a new set of desired values over time (aspired). As you lead your congregation to define your passions, keep these things in mind. It may even be helpful to designate which of your values are actualized and which are aspired.

### **BASIS FOR CHURCH PASSIONS**

When you get ready to put pen to paper and identify your church passions, it is critical to consider what things can influence your passions. Every church is unique in this matter. No two local congregations are exactly alike. Each will have different shades of core values.

Sure, congregations who are devoted to the inerrancy of Scripture and the Great Commission are going to hold a lot of things in common. They will likely hold to the same overall mission and similar key priorities. Such things shouldn't change from church to church. However, passions will change. Daniel Im has commented on this reality, saying, "Though every church shares the same starting point for their vision – the Great Commandment and Commission – the way they approach it is unique. This is because every church has a unique personality – a distinct set of values."<sup>10</sup> As you seek to discover your passions, consider several places to look.

### **Location**

The physical location of your church should probably be the first thing to consider when developing your church passions. Perhaps you've heard it said that a church ought to look like its community. There is certainly biblical precedent for this. If congregations are ministering according to Jesus' plan outlined in Acts 1:8, they will intentionally minister to reach those in their city.

In one church I pastored, we allowed this truth to influence our passions. We realized our congregation was demographically and socio-economically different than those within a two to three mile radius of our church. As a result, we had a stated passion that reflected our aspired desire to reach our community. Your location should have bearing on your passions.

### **Cultural Context**

The way people in your community live, talk, relate, work, and play should also have an influence on your core values. Is your church surrounded by singles, college students, or senior adults? The overwhelming presence of a certain demographical group might need to shape your core values. Are people known to be busy, to be family-oriented, to have long commutes, to have more free time because of retirement, or to have a slower pace of life because they live in a rural context? The live/work/play dynamics of your community might need to be represented in your core values. Is your community marked by certain non-negotiable values and beliefs? Are the people in your community known to be intellectual, professional, rich, poor, religious, or irreligious? Such things should probably influence your stated core values.

### **Desired Traits**

Every church is imperfect. None is without flaws. We know this to be true from personal experience. The Bible also bears witness. Consider the epistles we find in the New Testament. Nearly every single one of them was written to address problems within a local congregations.

Where is your church lacking? What are its biggest problems, the gaping holes that need to be addressed? Your deficiencies are often sign posts that reveal the need

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<sup>10</sup> Im, Daniel. *No Silver Bullets: Five Small Shifts That Will Transform Your Ministry*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 203.

for a strong aspired value. In one church I pastored, the congregation had become predominantly older in demographics. Everyone knew we needed to reach younger families. As a result, “family-oriented ministry” became one of our five passions. In time, we saw the Lord add a good number of young families to our body.

## **History**

Many church leaders would like to erase the history of their church. Sometimes this is because of problems in the past. At other times, pride is the culprit. Some pastors and staff operate by the “since I’ve been here” mindset. They regularly talk about how “the best days are still ahead” with little concern for the past. While it is important to have a forward perspective, leaders who overlook the history of their church do so to their own downfall. The past is what it is and it does have an influence on the present, and the future.

To lead well, we need to understand where our people have been. We have to be honest about the good, bad, and ugly. Maybe we serve in a congregation in which monumental things took place in the past. It seems the best days may be in the annals of antiquity. Even in a situation like that, leaders need to be aware of the church they lead and develop honest passions on the basis of that awareness.

I ministered in one context in which the church had struggled with theological liberalism at one point. A spirit of cynicism and doubt still tainted the congregation to a degree. When it came time for developing our passions, we surveyed the people. We gave all who were in a small group a blank sheet of paper and asked them identify what core values they felt were important. Interestingly, “Biblical authority” was the number one response we received. I believe the congregation was aware of its past problems. The people wanted to set a new tone for a new day. Looking in the rearview mirror is helpful for navigating safely into the future.

## **Strengths**

It is for good reason that Tom Rath’s *Strengths Finder 2.0* stayed on bestseller lists for over five years. Our strengths are integral to our personal and organizational success. Effective leaders know that impactful organizations leverage their strengths. When articulating core values, leaders should keep these things in mind. As you do the work of building your organizational strategy, look at your positive qualities. Ask yourself, “What are we already good at?” You’ll likely find something that should be reflected in your church passions.

My current church has a long history of meaningful missions involvement. When our staff did the work of writing out our church passions, we quickly realized missions should be one of them. Leveraging your strengths and including them in your passions is a way of ensuring good work continues. It is also a way of positioning your congregation for more effectiveness. Strong organizations maximize the areas in which they excel. In my current context, we know many are drawn to our church because of our heart for the nations.

## Resources

Though many leaders sometimes wish the subject of finances would go away, money and material things are a part of the ministry. We can't overlook budgets and the bottom line if we want to build the kingdom of God. It is for this reason that Jesus provided straightforward teaching and strong parables on the subject (Matthew 6:21 and Luke 19:11-27). It's hard to reach people without resources. That's why Paul made strong appeals for financial gifts to his mission endeavors (1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and Philippians 4:10-20). Because of the Bible's teaching, leaders should be sensitive to the subjects of stewardship and generosity. Maybe these matters don't need to be communicated in one's passions, but maybe they do. When generosity is lacking, an aspirational value may help. When it is strong, an actualized value might help celebrate people's stewardship in way that will encourage future generations.

## Personality and People

You can't get away from who you are. Your church is made up of a unique group of people. The mix of personalities, values, skills, and life experiences makes your congregation different from all others. To be the best you can be, it is important for your church to be true to its temperament, giftedness, and opportunities. In her book *Personality Plus*, Florence Littauer says, "We are all different. We were all born with our own set of strengths and weaknesses, and no magic formula works wonders for all of us."<sup>11</sup> Though her words were written in reference to individuals, they can be applied to local bodies of believers.

There are always things that need to change in churches. Sometimes sin, doctrinal error, and pride bring spiritual pollution. I'm not talking about turning a blind eye to those things. I'm expressing the need for churches to be honest about who they are in order to reach their community. There is an endemic plaguing American Christianity in which many congregations seek to be effective by mimicking others. Know this – a certain style of dress, a particular program, or a new mode of worship will not transform your church and your community in and of themselves.

The more sure path to faithful effective ministry is to be true to yourself. I had a ministry mentor who used to say, "Be who you are in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the results to God." I think about his advice often. Knowing ourselves and being true to ourselves are critical to developing a sincere and strong ministry. Copycats rarely make a meaningful difference. Consider this issue when developing your church passions. Articulating who you are can do a lot to encourage your church regarding who she should be in the future.

## TIPS FOR CRAFTING CHURCH PASSIONS

When it gets down to the brass tacks of identifying your church passions, there are several things to keep in mind. There are steps to take and things to do. Many leaders err in this matter because they assume they already know the core values of their church.

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<sup>11</sup> Littauer, Florence. *Personality Plus*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1983), 10.

They pump out a list of values within minutes. They then wonder why their vision doesn't resonate with their people. Others try to superimpose their values upon others. When they begin the work of sharing their strategy, they can't understand why some seem antagonistic. If you want to craft church passions that add value and motivate your people to action, consider the following five tips.

**Be honest.** In a world in which unbridled positivity is the mantra by which many church leaders operate, it is perhaps needful for to remember that deceit is a violation of God's Moral Law (Exodus 20:16 and Matthew 5:33-37). Many church leaders are guilty of trying to portray their ministry as being something its not, of trying to force it into the mold of another church. Indeed, there is often a need to rejuvenate and revitalize our congregations by pursuing new initiatives and creating a fresh culture, but don't fall into the trap of trying to force your people to be something they aren't.

Many are falling into the trap of ignoring who they really are in favor of a fantasy. In such situations, websites, social media accounts, and the internet are used to pump out a counterfeit image. Ministers overlook their people are and they turn a blind eye to the honest facts. In the end, vision casting is hollow at best and infuriating at worst. If your church wants to uphold passions and core values that inspire and mobilize people for ministry, be honest. Don't twist and scheme. Don't overlook the real state of affairs. be honest about your identity, values, strengths, and weakness. The truth may hurt, but embrace it.

**Be real.** Years ago, I read this statement on a friend's social media account — "Hype is dead. Authenticity is the new cool." Though that axiom could be applied to a lot of areas of life, I think it has great meaning for twenty-first century ministry in America. Many ministry leaders spend most of their time running on the proverbial gerbil wheel, expending needless energy trying to be something they aren't.

Closely related to the need to be honest is the need to be real. God only made one you, and He only made one church like the one you lead. Remember, it takes all types of leaders and all types of churches to reach all types of people. God can use you and your congregation in a peculiar way. Just be who you are. When you are authentic, the light of Christ can shine brightly through you (Matthew 5:16).

When you put on masks and try to be something you aren't, His light is dimmed by your fleshly efforts. Be real and let the Holy Spirit use you. Know this — in the end, the Lord will expose the phoniness and pretense that hinders our work for Him (1 Corinthians 3:13-14). Counterfeit ministry never pans out. You might as well relax, let your hair down, and be real.

**Don't have too many.** When I was in seminary, the word "passion" was a buzz word among young ministers. It seemed everyone was "passionate" about everything. Being one who leans towards a bit of cynicism, I made a covenant to not use the word!

Now I know that holy passion and zeal is indispensable to meaningful ministry. At the same time, I am aware of the danger of overusing the concept. I shouldn't be zealous about everything, nor can I be. Your church can't be either. If you are passionate about everything, you are really passionate about nothing.



The whole point in this matter is that there are a few driving desires that make us and our individual congregations unique. As a result, our list of passions should be limited. If we articulate too many, our people will be overwhelmed. Our list of supposed core values will become meaningless. Patrick Lencioni has said, “When leaders who adopt too many values finally realize what they’ve done and that there is no hope for actually putting their many values to practical use, they often end up ignoring them altogether.”<sup>12</sup> I recommend only having a list of three to five passions.

**Stick to your values.** Be aware of the temptation to write your vision out on a piece of paper and never refer back to it. Values aren’t values unless they drive what we do and define who we are. As you move forward with your ministry strategy, refer back to your passions on a regular basis. When you plan events or launch new programs, perform an audit to ascertain whether or not what you are doing is in alignment with your stated core values. Communicate your passions regularly. Talk about them and share them. Preach on them and teach about them. Review them in meetings and talk about them over lunch and coffee. Never stop mentioning them. When your people start to get sick of hearing about your actualized and aspired values, you will know you are just getting started in the vision casting process. Stick to your biblical values and you will build a church culture the Lord can use for His glory.

**Be Biblical.** Though contemporary ideas from the world of business can be helpful to a degree (I have quoted business thought leaders in this chapter), be careful that your values reflect Scripture. You stand on shaky ground when you attempt to lead your church according to the ideas of men. On the flip side, you stand on a solid rock when you are Scripture driven (Matthew 7:24-29). None can effectively argue against your vision if it is rooted and grounded in God’s book. Make sure you can trace all of your passions back to specific passages of Scripture. Better yet, provide verse references in your printed pieces that list your core values.

**Survey your people.** No one leader can set the tone for church passions. In addition, no person or group of people can really decide what they should be. Passions aren’t determined; they are discovered. You can only get in touch with what’s truly important to your church by interacting with your church. For this reason, I suggest you survey your church in some way.

In one church I pastored, we surveyed the entire congregation via our small group ministry. I made a brief mention of this earlier. As our leadership team worked on developing a church ministry strategy, we created a lesson concerning church passions. We held a leaders meeting with our small group leaders. In that meeting, we introduced the topic and shared materials they could use to teach their people. The lesson plan included a survey members could complete. Through that process, we received a lot of feedback. When the smoke cleared and the dust settled, we discovered there were five passions that were very dear to the hearts of our people.

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<sup>12</sup> Lencioni, Patrick. *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 92.

You don't have to do what I did, but I do encourage you to consult your people. Maybe you will take this matter to the entire church, or perhaps you will consult with a representation of the body. Whatever the case, don't make the mistake of establishing church passions by yourself. Don't even trust in a small group of people. Go big with this thing. Include more people and you will get a more true picture of what your church really values. Remember Scripture says, "Without guidance, a people will fall, but with many counselors there is deliverance" (Proverbs 11:14).

### EXAMPLES OF PASSIONS

To help you understand how to implement a passions statement, let me provide you with an example. Below I am going to share the five core values for the church I serve. Our staff identified these values by relying on years of experience within the church, and through consultation with key leaders. The values I share don't have to be your values, nor should they be. You must be true to who you are. But by looking at what my church has done, you may get a better picture of how to articulate your passions.

**Biblical Authority – We desire to allow the Bible to dictate all our beliefs and actions.** My church sees fidelity to Scripture as being an actualized value. By this we refer to the Bible's right to determine the course of our faith and practice. It is our deeply held conviction that the Bible should set the tone for our beliefs and behaviors. Scriptures that shape this conviction are 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12; John 17:17; Matthew 5:17-19; and Psalm 119:105-106. In a world in which many churches are slighting the sufficiency of Scripture by following after false philosophies, man-centered dogma, and entertainment-driven approaches to religion, we believe the Bible is sufficient to renew souls, enlighten minds, and build Christ's church. Each ministry activity and every meeting of the body should center on the truths expressed in God's Word.

**Faithful Stewardship – We desire to be generous with our time, talents, and treasure to advance the Kingdom of God.** In a world in which many are looking out for number one, we want to leverage all of our resources for Christ. This involves stewarding our financial resources, our spiritual gifts, and our schedules for Him. We are grieved by the way in which our fast-paced busy culture blinds many to the priorities of the church. We want to covenant together to put Jesus first in our lives. All that we have is from Him, and all that we have should be used for His fame and renown. We understand that God owns everything, and we realize He needs nothing from us, but we are aware that He gets great satisfaction when we offer our lives in an act of worship as sacrifices to Him. Passages that instill this conviction within us include 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; Romans 12:1-2 & 6-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Matthew 6:21; Genesis 1:28-30; 2 Samuel 24:24; and Malachi 3:10.

**Ministry Excellence – We desire to glorify God by doing everything to the best of our ability.** Americans live in a culture of high standards. Restaurants regularly renovate to keep pace with the newest chains. Health clubs and gyms are required to reinvent themselves and refresh their equipment, or they risk going out of business. The standard

of living in our country far exceeds that of many other cultures. We have come to expect excellence at home, at work, in the marketplace, and at places of recreation. If we feel something is subpar, we ditch it.

Certainly our cultural perspective in this matter can become unhealthy, but it is what it is. Americans expect high expectations. We don't want to become slaves to our culture's moors, but we do want to be aware of them. To minister effectively and faithfully, we realize we must aim to do things to the best of our ability. This core value is sensitive to our culture, but it is also rooted in Scripture. In His Word, the Lord often encourages us to serve Him wholeheartedly with full devotion. See Colossians 3:23; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; Ephesians 4:12-15; and 2 Corinthians 8:7. For my congregation, this value is both an actualized and aspired one.

**Family Focus – We desire to provide biblical ministries that support and empower families.** The Bible upholds the importance of families in God's plan for human history. The Lord ordained marriage and family as a means of populating and subduing the earth (Genesis 1:28-31). He also established the home as a place for training children in the ways of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4-6 and Ephesians 6:4). Ultimately, the family is critical to society because it is, by divine design, intended to mirror the gospel to an unbelieving world (Ephesians 5:25). Considering Paul and Peter's encouragement to parents and children in their epistles to first-century churches (Ephesians 5:22-6:4, Colossians 3:18-25, and 1 Peter 3:1-7), it seems obvious that churches should work to support families in their efforts to disciple their children. Pivotal passages that undergird this passion include Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 127:3; Proverbs 22:6; Psalm 78:1-8; Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 11:18-21; and Joshua 24:15.

**Community Engagement – We desire to show Christ to those around us by serving our community.** We believe the Lord has sovereignly and providentially placed us in our exact location for our purpose. We must see beyond church walls to the people around us. It should be our desire to minister to people within a close proximity of our church. Yes, we should engage in international missions and church planting within our nation. In addition, we believe we can minister to many people within our county, as well as the areas surrounding our city. Such a scope of ministry seems explicitly expected in the Lord's command found in Acts 1:8. However, we believe we would be remiss if we failed to minister to the people closest to us. We desire to have a ministry that impacts people in our city. We want to aim to be present in our community, to be involved and to be known. We are passionate about being used by the Lord to transform our town. John 17:18; Acts 17:6; Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Peter 4:8; and Mark 16:15 are passages of Scripture that foster this commitment within our souls.

## HOW TO BUILD PASSION

Your church passions won't build themselves, nor will they maintain themselves. A pure, life-changing, and community-transforming zeal for ministry can only be given by God's Spirit. You can't muster it, nor can you manufacture it. Writing clichés and catchphrases on a piece of paper, engraving them on your website, and embroidering them on a polo won't suffice.

To have godly affections that move your people to holy action, a work of God is what's required. Remember the Lord's admonition to Zerubbabel via the prophet Zechariah – "Not by strength or by might, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Armies" (Zechariah 4:6). Though the Lord's pronouncement had special meaning for God's people during the times of Darius, application can be made to us. The Lord has told us "you can do nothing without me" (John 15:5). Through His Word, we know we can also do all things through Christ (Philippians 4:13). As you lead your church to embrace certain passions, stay mindful that God alone can cultivate godly zeal. Commit yourself to the following three actions if you want meaningful core values to characterize your church.

**Pray for zeal.** Ultimately, godly passion can't be created through the flesh. In order for you to have holy energy and enthusiasm for the work of God, you need a work of God within your soul. The good news is that God implanted His Spirit within our souls at salvation. Though you can't muster Christ-centered zeal on your own, the Holy Spirit can create it within you (Romans 5:5 and Galatians 5:22). As a result, if you want to grow in passion for your ministry, pray that the Spirit would give it to you.

David understood this. After his moral failure in the issue related to Bathsheba, he prayed for restoration. He cried, "God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore the joy of your salvation to me, and sustain me by giving me a willing spirit. Then I will teach the rebellious your ways, and sinners will return to you" (Psalm 51:10-13). I've often prayed David's prayer over my own life. It's amazing how God is faithful to honor His word. It seems my zeal for what matters to Him magically grows when I regularly pray.

Our only potential for holy passion comes from God. Put your core values on your prayer list. Regularly ask that the Lord would give you a bigger burden for each of them. Trust in the Spirit of God and watch Him work!

**Take action.** Sitting on the sidelines will never stir your soul. Obedience is often the key to growing your godly zeal. Paul's aforementioned trip to Athens illustrates this point. It was when the apostle stepped out to minister that his heart was "deeply distressed" (Acts 17:16). He would not have been zealous to share the gospel in Athens if he would have stayed Berea. If you want to be passionate about your passions, be committed to acting upon them.

**Look to Jesus.** There is power in gazing upon our Lord and His glory. J.C. Ryle has said that it is by "beholding Jesus we are transformed."<sup>13</sup> Scripture confirms this reality. It says, "We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Godly zeal doesn't grow by looking to self. The world can't help us either; however, there is power in focusing on the Lord. If we want to build passion concerning our passions, we must make sure we are continually "keeping our eyes on Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2).

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<sup>13</sup> Ryle, 178.

## PASSIONS AUDIT

- We said that passions are not the same as mission, vision, strategy, or a doctrinal statement? What are passions? How are they different from mission? Vision? Strategy?
- Passions deal with how we behave. They can be thought of us being what makes us unique. We said passions give “identity” to what we do. What do we mean by these descriptions?
- There are two different types of values – aspirational and actualized. What are the actualized values at your church? What types of values do you think our organization should aspire after?
- What type of process could your church put in place to detect what your values may be? Should you involve the key leaders or the entire church body in such a process?

### MY MINISTRY STRATEGY (Use this table to articulate your ministry strategy)

Organizational Concepts (“7 Ps”)	Fill in the Blank
My Purpose:	
My Priorities:	1. 2. 3. 4.
My Passions:	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.