

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, October 31st, 2021
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Reformation Sunday
Mark 12:28-34
Oct 31, 2021

Welcome

Announcements

Community Bible Study

Starting on **Wednesday Nov 3rd, 2021, at 8am, Noon and 7 p.m.**, we will begin a community Bible study of the book of James. This will be a line-by-line examination of the book of James in an informal setting. The length of this study will be determined by the speed with which we proceed, but typically it has been 16 weeks or longer. Things that we will find are emphasized in the book of James are the Word of God; Prayer; Faith and Works; as well as separation from the world. He does this by examining many of the challenges that Christians face involving; suffering, works; controlling their tongue; illness and resisting worldly influences.

Youth Program

On Friday October 29th, 2021, at 7 p.m. the youth 12+ are invited to join Pastor Gerry at the church for an initial meet and greet. This will be the beginning of a regular Friday night program where youth will explore their Faith. We will look at issues of faith that are typical for today's youth, questions about God and faith, as well as spend some time learning about the doctrines of the church, the foundational core of Christianity and how to defend our faith when we are challenged.

The last Friday of every month starting in November will be an open question night where Pastor Gerry will answer questions from the youth about God and Faith

Contemporary Service

Finally, beginning on **Sunday November 7th, 2021, at 1 p.m.** we will have a Contemporary Worship Service. This service will be a mixture of a traditional service and modern service. The sermon will be identical to the 10:30 a.m. service, however the order of service will be altered, and the music will be more contemporary in fashion. It is my hope that though offering a later service we can reach those who are seeking God within the community and help them find a church in which they can take part in fellowship and build their relationship with God.

If you should have any comments, concerns or suggestions please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

God Bless,
Pastor Gerry

Call to Worship (Responsive)

Bless the Lord at all times;

God's praise will always be on our lips.

Make great the name of God;

We will lift up God's holy name together.

For the Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

**We will love the Lord with heart, mind, strength, and soul,
and praise God now and always.**

Prayer of Invocation

*Almighty God, we pray for your blessing
on the church in this place.*

*Here may the faithful find salvation,
and the careless be awakened.*

*Here may the doubting find faith,
and the anxious be encouraged.*

*Here may the tempted find help,
and the sorrowful find comfort.*

*Here may the weary find rest,
and the strong be renewed.*

*Here may the aged find consolation
and the young be inspired;*

through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Opening Hymn: "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name"

All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall.

Bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all.

Bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all!

O seed of Israel's chosen race
now ransomed from the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all.

Hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all!

Let every tongue and every tribe
responsive to his call,

to him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all.
To him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all!

Oh, that with all the sacred throng
we at his feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song
and crown him Lord of all.
We'll join the everlasting song
and crown him Lord of all.

Call to Confession

*In repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your strength,
but you would have none of it.
Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you;
therefore he will rise up to show you compassion.
For the LORD is a God of justice.
Blessed are all who wait for him!*

Prayer of Confession

*God of grace,
we confess that we have elevated
the things of this world above you.
We have made idols of possessions and people
and used your name for causes
that are not consistent with you and your purposes.
We have permitted our schedules to come first
and have not taken the time to worship you.
We have not always honored those who guided us in life.
We have participated in systems
that take life instead of give it.
We have been unfaithful in our covenant relationships.
We have yearned for, and sometimes taken, that which is not ours,
and we have misrepresented others' intentions.*
**Forgive us, O God,
for the many ways we fall short of your glory.
Help us to learn to live together according to your ways
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news!

*The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always accuse,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far he removes our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion for his children,
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.*

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.**

Responsive Reading

Deuteronomy 6:1–9 ESV

1 "Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it,

2 that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.

3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Music Ministry: "Child of God"

Who am I that the highest King would welcome me?

I was lost, but He brought me in

Oh His love for me

Oh His love for me

Who the Son sets free

Oh, is free indeed

I'm a child of God, yes, I am

Free at last, He has ransomed me

His grace runs deep

While I was a slave to sin, Jesus died for me

Yes, He died for me

Who the Son sets free

Oh is free indeed

I'm a child of God, yes, I am

In my Father's house

There's a place for me

I'm a child of God, yes, I am

I am chosen, not forsaken

I am who You say I am

You are for me, not against me

I am who You say I am

I am chosen, not forsaken

I am who You say I am

You are for me, not against me

I am who You say I am

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 I am who You say I am
 I am chosen, not forsaken
 I am who You say I am
 You are for me, not against me
 I am who You say I am
 Oh I am who You say I am
 Yes, I am who you say I am
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 Oh is free indeed
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 In my Father's house
 There's a place for me
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Scripture

Mark 12:28–34 ESV

28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”
29 Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.
30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ **31** The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” **32** And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him.
33 And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” **34** And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Children’s Hymn: “God Sees the Little Sparrow Fall”

God sees the little sparrow fall,
it meets his tender view;
if God so loves the little birds,
I know he loves me too.

Refrain:

He loves me too, he loves me too,
I know loves me too;
because he loves the little things,
I know loves me too.

He paints the lily of the field,
perfumes each lily bell;
if he so loves the little flow'rs,
I know he loves me well. [Refrain]

God made the little birds and flow'rs,
and all things large and small;
he'll not forget his little ones,
I know he loves them all. [Refrain]

Children's Lesson

How many of you know I use to be a schoolteacher? One thing that was common in every classroom back when I taught is that on the wall there was always a poster with the rules of the classroom on them. How many of you have seen that poster or some other place where the rules for the classroom are displayed?



I am guessing that the first few rules are also probably the same now as they were when even the oldest member here today went to school. The first rule was usually about respecting your teacher and the second about respecting your fellow classmates.

In today's scripture we see a scribe ask Jesus about the most important rules for life. I think he might have been expecting Jesus to answer with one of the 10 commandments, but instead Jesus tells him that the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself.

Many people think these two commands replace the Ten Commandments, however, if you look at them you will see that they are just the condensed version of the Ten Commandments. 'Love your God with everything you are' is a summary of all the commandments about respecting and

worshipping God. Love your neighbour as yourself is a summary about all the commandments about respecting your parents and controlling your behavior.

So, the question I have for all of you today is, 'Do you love God with everything you are? With your heart, soul, mind and strength?' How many of us could honestly answer that question with a 'yes'? If God were to walk into this church right now and ask that question, how would you respond?

The reality is that all of us place a lot of other things ahead of our love of God. God should be first. God created us, God loved us so much that he sent his son to save us, God loves us so much that he forgives us for the things we do that go against his will. Yet, we often put other things ahead of him.

We need to learn to make time to spend with God everyday of our lives. For some of us that might mean spending a few minutes in prayer every day, or picking up our bible, or opening a bible app and reading a few minutes each day. How about spending 10 minutes a day talking about scripture with our parents or grandparents or even our friends.

I am sure many of us spend more time on sports, or tv, or videogames or social media like TikTok or Instagram than we spend with God. Do you think God would believe you love him with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength if he was watching how you spend your time every day?

I challenge all of you, children, youth, parents, grandparents, single people, and families to spend look at how you spend your time and find ways to spend a few more minutes each week with God to show him just how much he means in our lives.

Let us Pray,

Dear Lord,

We ask that you would be with each of this week.

We ask that the Holy Spirit would be at work in us, bringing us into stronger relationship with you Lord.

Helping us to set aside those things which distract us from you and learning to love you with everything we are.

In the name of your one and only Son, Jesus Christ, we pray. AMEN

Prayer for illumination

*Blessed are you, Lord God Almighty, King of the universe.
In the beginning your Spirit breathed life into the creation,
and you continue to renew the face of the earth.
Your Spirit breathed life into the Scriptures,
and we pray you will continue to speak your Word to us.
Your Spirit breathes peace and comfort to the whole world,
and we pray you will enact that among us today.*

Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sermon

Passion is perhaps one of the most powerful forces in the world. We see this in young love where people will go to tremendous lengths to profess their feeling to someone. We see it as the driving force behind many of the greatest things that man accomplishes in drama, art, science, agriculture, and writing. Passion energizes people to push beyond their limitations and to pursue things which may not normally be attainable. Passion is what sustains people, it is what motivates people. It is what drives people to get out of bed and do things each and every day. The things that people are passionate about enables people to go above and beyond, to push themselves to their limit as athletes, to spend long hours in the lab as a scientist, to defend their homes with they very lives in times of conflict. Passion is what moves someone from being a participant to a leader. Everyone needs to have something that they are passionate about in their life.



Legend states that on Sunday Oct 31st, 1517, a German Monk by the name of Martin Luther nailed his critique of the Roman Catholic Church to the door of All Saint's Church in Wittenberg. His work primarily protested the selling of indulgences which was a widespread practice of the Roman Catholic Church of the time. He sought to bring the Roman Catholic Church back to focus on Scripture Alone and not a pursuit of the wealth and

worldly power they possessed and desired. Because he spoke out against the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church he was excommunicated in January of 1521 and decaled a Heretic and an outlaw. Many other reformers who aligned with Marti Luther such as John Calvin and Huldrych Zwingli were also excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church for their insistence of adhering to the Word of God as it was written.

Another man who is probably less well known worldwide by the name of William Tyndale also spoke out against the Roman Catholic Church and their practice of controlling the Word of God by only having a Latin version of the Bible. He was fluent in many languages and believed that the Word of God should be accessible to anyone who can read. For this reason, he went against the wishes of the Roman Catholic Church and translated the Bible into English for the first time in 1526. In 1535 he was arrested by the Holy Roman Empire and sentenced as a heretic for his crime of translating the Bible. In 1536 the sentence of the court was carried out. William Tyndale was originally sentenced to be burned at the stake alive, however at the bequest of Tomas Cromwell he was graciously strangled to death first and then his body was burned.



These men let their passion for God's word be the driving force in their lives. They placed trust in the Lord and the Lord alone. They knew that they would be condemned by the Roman

Catholic Church. They knew that they could suffer excommunication or worse. Yet their passion to serve the Kingdom of God was what motivated them to challenge the Roman Catholic Church and its power.

MARK 12:28

28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"

In the Scripture we heard today we a scribe approach Jesus and asks, 'What is the most important commandment?' It is a scribe that asks this and not a Pharisee or a Sadducee, a man who spent his entire day meticulously copying the word of God. If there were any man who would have scripture memorized it was a scribe. The scribes at the time had to go back and count the number of letters on each page to ensure that they had not made an error while hand copying scripture. This scribe that approached Jesus had likely memorized every command in both the Old Testament and his natural curiosity led him to inquire about the most important commandment given to man.

MARK 12:29-30

29 Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

Jesus is giving the answer that every Jewish Leader would know. It was once again from the Shemah the Jewish Book of Law. This is the part of the creed which everyone of the Jewish faith was expected to recite in the morning when they awoke and, in the evening, before they slept. It was based Old Testament teachings. One of which is.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9

⁴"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Which makes it very clear that this is something that every Jew should know. These words should be on the heart, always in their hearts and they are called to teach them to their children, as well as think upon them at all times!

So, this was not a new teaching, in fact it should be one that was prevalent in the whole of Jewish culture and society. Essentially, they were being told to live their lives with a passion for Christ.

This is an instance where The Message paraphrase actually does a good job of bringing this idea forth.

MARK 12:29-30

Jesus said, “The first in importance is, ‘Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.’ And here is the second: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’ There is no other commandment that ranks with these.”

We are called to put God as the number one thing in our life. When we are called to love him with our heart, soul, mind, and strength it implies that this is an activity, not something we do passively, but something we put an effort into doing each and every day of our lives.

This idea that our relationship with God needs to be an active relationship is brought out elsewhere in scripture.

COLOSSIANS 3:23

²³ **Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men**

Everything we do is intended to be done for the Lord. Whether it is related to the church or not we should always have the Lord in our mind. If we are a farmer, we should farm the land with the Lord our God in mind, if we are a nurse or a doctor, we should treat people with the Lord our God in mind. If we are a cook or server, we should do our jobs with the Lord our God in mind. Everyone, in every job, in every task, and in every hobby should have the Lord their God in mind. Even when we play a game or take the dog out for a walk, we should do so with the Lord our God in mind.

We should be passionate about God and the scripture in every aspect of our lives. Yet truthfully, it is very difficult to do so. We live in a world where those who are passionate about Christ, or passionate about scripture are viewed differently. You can be passionate about so many things, social justice, politics, food, sports, a television show, or a book series and no one will bat an eye. However, the moment you are passionate about God everyone starts to look at you differently, like that is something you just should not be doing.



Think about that for a moment, a middle-aged man with a wife, 2 kids, a house, a dog, a corporate office job where they manage hundreds of people can go out on any Sunday in the fall wearing shorts and have his body painted in the colors of his favorite sports team. He can jump, scream until his voice goes hoarse, act like a fool, get in arguments, suspend his own reality about the chance of his team winning a game. He can walk around the parking lot at a tailgate and garner the respect of those around him and those at the office on Monday when he tells them all about his weekend.

Yet if that same man were to dare to speak about his pastor's sermon on Monday at the office he would likely be looked at as a religious nut, a fanatic. In today's corporate world he might even end up with a reprimand and a trip down to HR where he would be told to not bring up the subject of his faith while at work.

We are allowed to have passion for so many things in this world, in fact for almost anything in this world, except God.

Yet this passion for God is exactly what God wants from us. In the book of Romans, we are called to be a living sacrifice to the Lord.

ROMANS 12:1-2

12 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

We are called to chose to be passionate about God even when the world does not want us to be passionate about God. Even when its difficult we need to put an effort into keeping ourselves passionate bout our Love of God. Even when it might not be socially acceptable, we need to be passionate about our love of God. Whether we are old or young, a new Christian or an old Christian you are called to be passionate about God everyday in everything you do.

Today, on this Reformation Sunday, I want us to look at this first part of the greatest commandment how can we have a passion for God in our lives in all we do. I want us to explore those things which interfere with our ability to be passionate for Christ in the same way as those who started the Reformation.



The first problem for many is balance. This is one that often trips up pastor to be honest with you. If you are overfocused or under focused you lose your passion. We know that we are taught in the Bible that there are seasons for all things. A season to sow and a season to reap is probably the easiest for people to understand. This is essentially a call for balance in one's life. In our lives we need both work and rest, both input and output. If we have too much of one and not enough of the other, we will experience burnout.

This holds true in our jobs, when we are overworked or underworked, we lose our desire to work. In our relationships, where if we see too much or too little of someone it impacts our feelings about them. In our hobbies, where too much time spent on them can cause us to become board with them and too little can make us lose interest.

However, how does this apply to God?

Well, some of us are always giving, always helping, always taking things on within the church. Whenever something needs to get done you are volunteering, whenever someone needs comfort, you are comforting, whenever a project is started, a mission takes place or cleaning is done you are there. The problem with this is that if you never take the time to recharge, if you never take the opportunity to rest, you will eventually burn out. You develop what is known as compassion fatigue; basically, you reach a point of stopping caring. Because you care so much and for everyone else, you forget to care for yourself and this results in a gradually lose of caring for others, not because you do not want to care or help, but because you are just too tired to do so anymore.

Then on the other side we have those who are taking in too much. They are always learning, always listening to sermons, always going to Bible studies, always participating in workshops, always attending Christian events. You are getting filled with all of this glorious knowledge of who God is and how wonderful he can be in your life, and it is not shared. Not because you do not love God, but because you are so focused on loving God you are actually forgetting to love your neighbour. The danger here is that you can often become hypocritical and judgemental when you do not humble yourself.

The reality of a Christians life is that we are called to study, know, and love our God with everything we are, then we are called to share all of that with the people around us each and everyday. We need input and output; we need study and ministry. There are people here today who give too much time to study and not enough to ministry, and there are people here today who give too much time to ministry and not enough time to study. And there are people who who do to much and never rest, just like there are people who who rest too much and do not do enough for Gods Kingdom.

You need balance. To be healthy and physically fit you need a balanced lifestyle, exercise, and rest, eating healthy and snaking on the unhealthy, too much of either can lead to problems. For a healthy spiritual lifestyle, it is the same, you need balance. You need to spend time in both private and corporate worship of God. You ned time of fellowship with fellow Christians and time when you go to God alone. You need times when you read and study God's word, and times of ministry where you share God's word with others. When you have too much of one and not enough of the other yo are missing out on your opportunity to be closer to God. Too much fellowship and not enough study and you start to lose your connection with God. Too much study and not enough evangelism you start to lose your connection with God. Balance is the key, both seasons of input and of output, seasons of work and seasons of rest. So, think about what season you are in and whether it is time for a change of seasons in your life.

What else can cause us to lose our passion for God?

How about not utilizing the talents He has given to us. God has made everyone of us unique, we all have different talents and abilities, gifts from God. The big questions should be what am I to do with these gifts? The answer lies in the scripture.

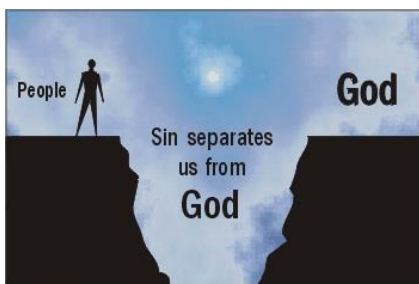
1 PETER 4:10-11

¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

God gave us our gifts to serve others not ourselves. This is an incredible truth. God gave us all our unique talent set for his purpose and not our own. It took me a long time to realize this, as some of you know I have a pretty diverse career background. I was constantly using the talents God has given me in various jobs to make money and live my life, but I was never satisfied. I was always seeking more, a more difficult job, a position with more accountability or responsibility,

or simply more pay. I worked and worked, at times to exhaustion, because I was never satisfied in my work, because I was working for myself, for my desires.

Then when I started to balance out my spiritual life, I discovered the answer to my work life. God has throughout my life given me a pretty impressive skill set and I should be using it to serve His Kingdom. No job I could ever take would utilize the skill set that God has given me, no matter what I was doing I would always be unbalanced, unless I served him in ministry, here my life and my spiritual life are balanced. Being a Pastor utilizes those talents God has given me, in the same was leading worship utilizes those Gifts God has given Morna. Each of you has a gift, a gift that is probably not being utilized in how you make a living in the secular world, so how are you using it in the spiritual world. How are you using your gifts to serve God?



Even if we know how to maintain a balance and use the skills, we have can there still be things that interfere with our relationship with God? Absolutely, one of the biggest is the sin we all have in our lives.

This is a tough one, because its often exceedingly difficult for us to admit our sins to ourselves. To admit those things, we know we do that do not make God happy. The reality is

that we all sin, everyone of us, every human being who has ever lived since Adam has sinned. Yet sin has this power to take us away from God. How does sin take our passion for God away? Little by little, it creeps in slowly, it starts to take away the small joys we find in life, it starts to remove the passion we have through guilt. Guilt is a powerful emotion, perhaps one of the strongest we have.

When it comes to sin many of us think we do not have guilt, but the truth is we probably do. We rationalize our sins away. We think 'It's ok, everyone does it' or we go back to the old question is it really a sin? We rationalise and justify our sin because we are trying to avoid the guilt. We all do this, all of us. Yet subconsciously this begins to eat away at us, we know the truth, we know we are sinning. The guilt pops up and we look for ways to supress it, to push it back down, to make it go away. Yet, there it is again in our lives.

The guilt will eventually rob us of our passion, eventually it will overwhelm us, and we will no longer have a passion for God. We see this often in the Psalms of David, his guilt pushed him low, he laments his life often and it is not until he comes before God and admits his sin that he feels restored.

Guilt and human passion are not compatible. Guilt makes us do foolish things. Guilt causes fights in relationships, guilt causes avoidance, guilt causes us to stop doing the things we love. God did not want us to live a life full of guilt. That is the story of the Gospel, God sent his one and only Son to die on the cross for our sins, so we could live free of our guilt and love him with the passion he intended. When we talk about freedom in Christ this this is the freedom we speak of. The freedom to come to God and confess our sins to him, the same way that David did, and to receive his forgiveness for our sins, because of the price that Jesus paid in his blood for them.

1 JOHN 1:9

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

How do we get rid of our guilt, we come to God and say 'God you are right! What I am doing is sinful. God help me live a life away from this sin and free of this guilt.' We do not need to live with our guilt, we just need to be brave enough to confess our sins to God, to Confess our sins and repent from them, and accept the loving gift of grace that God has given us.

Once we learn to confess our sins to God freely, to seek out his help in resisting the temptations and to accept the gift of grace he has given, we find our love and passion for God will grow.

Speaking of emotions that hamper passion, other than guilt can we think of any emotions that can interfere with our passion for God.

How about anger, jealousy, and resentment. The emotions that are related to conflicts in our lives. When we experience these emotions, we tend to avoid situations where they take place. If work is full of conflict, we find it hard to go to work. If our hobby is filled with people who are angry at one another or where jealousy is common, we lose interest in that hobby.

Something as simple as a small argument with someone we love is enough to ruin our entire day. We all have experienced this, especially parents of young children who struggle to get them ready and then go somewhere. The stress and tension results in a conflict and the whole trip is ruined for everyone because of that emotional disruption.

So how do we get past the conflict, how do we beat the emotions of jealousy, anger, and resentment?

We learn to forgive. We learn that the anger, the jealous and the resentment do not do to the person we harbour these feelings against and in fact only harm us. We learn that it is better to forgive and move on with our lives than to get caught up in these cycles of emotion which impact every aspect of our lives.



When we learn to forgive, we can stop letting others impact our relationships with God. We learn that Loving our neighbour by forgiving them does more for us than it does for them. We are the ones relieved of the burden of negative emotion and given the ability to have our passion restored. When we forgive others and learn to place everything in God's hand, we can truly experience the wonders of His power. Forgiveness gets rid of the conflict in our hearts and minds that takes the passion out of our lives.

The next passion killer is one that I am afraid has hit a lot of churches and people in the last year. Perhaps one of the easiest ones to slowly infect our lives and make us lose our passion is living in a way that does not place God first in our lives. Fellowship with other Christians is necessary to help us grow in our faith, even to maintain our faith, yet over the time of this pandemic many people have fallen out of fellowship with their fellow Christians.

Many people only experience a worship service through a screen, or a speaker or even on a piece of paper. They are missing the social interaction, that sense of community that comes

alongside worship and praise of our Lord. Human beings were designed by God to live in relationships with one another, this is why it was bad for Adam to be alone, and Eve was brought forth. Relationships are critical to human well being. Prisons know this, the worst possible punishment that can be given to a criminal is solitary confinement, the removal of all social interaction, and this is what this pandemic has done to many people, but Christian and non-Christian. It has removed their passion for God and in many cases for life itself.

But this is not a problem unique to the pandemic, it has been happening throughout time, it just seems more clearly visible now. People who lose their passion for Christ follow a very predictable pattern. First coming to church becomes a ritual, not a practice. They come, but they do not really participate anymore. They are physically present and mentally on vacation or at work, or in a hobby. Of course, they justify this, I am busy, its just for hockey season or hunting season, it is just until I finish this project at work. I will watch the service on the internet later when I have more time. Just like sin it works its way in slowly and we try to convince ourselves its ok, after all, its not like we are not going to church ever, right?

However, after awhile it becomes a lot easier to not go and watch the service later. It becomes easier to justify not going, or not participating than it does to go and to take part. This is when our heart starts to turn cold for God. The distance between God and ourselves seems to grow, because we have no one around us helping us fan the flame of our passion.

HEBREWS 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

How do we stir up the passion for Christ in one another? How do we encourage our family and friends to be enthusiastic about Christ? How many of us talk about the sermon after Sunday, or even after the sermon? How many of us take time during the week to talk about God with other Christians we know? How many of us are reaching out to those who may feel isolated and in solitude and making sure they are aware that someone cares for them. How many of us are taking the time to reach out to both Christians and non-Christians to encourage in them a passion for Christ?

What is your purpose as a Christian? The great commission answers this for us all and ties in directly to the sharing of our faith and encouraging of one another.

MATTHEW 28:19-20

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

This is what all Christians are called to do. It is easy to lose your passion if you do not have a purpose. Once again it is coming back to balance. If we are all study and learn with no output, we become stale. We need purpose to drive our lives. Think of all your favorite things, you do

them for a reason. Without that reason they become something that we do out of habit and not passion.

When we understand that God put us here for a reason it gives us a purpose in our lives, it gives us a reason to continue on even when things get difficult. Purpose is the output, the mission, the teaching, the evangelizing, the use of your talents that God has called on you to give to his kingdom.

Passion is the thing that gets us out of bed in the morning. Even on those frosty winter days, when the sun is not up and the chill in the air is right outside the covers. When everything in our body says, 'stay in bed, it is warm and comfortable,' yet we throw the sheets off and get up because we are taking on a task we want to take on.

Discover your purpose and you will drive your passion for Christ. I have seen people who were lukewarm to God be ignited by taking on leading a Bible study, or teaching kids in Sunday school, volunteering at a homeless shelter, or even helping to clean up the Church grounds. Once they have that purpose in life, they begin to explore their relationship with God, they are in fellowship with others who help fan the fire for Christ in their lives and they begin to shine with their passion for God in their lives.

Which brings us almost full circle to the answer given by the scribe who posed this question to Jesus:

MARK 12:32-34

" 32 And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. 33 And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

The scribe was not like the Pharisees or the Sadducees who spent their life studying the laws of the Jewish religion. The scribe was a man who invested his entire being into the copying of God's word. He knew that all the laws pointed to these two things. Love God with everything you are and love your neighbour like yourself.

We need to spend time with God to discover his purpose for our lives. To discover how he wants us to use our talents. To be able to receive both input and output and to balance our spiritual health.

We need to have a passion for God in our lives driven by our purpose. So, spend time in scripture, spend time in worship, in praise and in fellowship. Spend time with God with others around you and by yourself, spend as much time with God as you can and then share God with everyone you meet. Passion for God is what we are all called to have.

The book of Revelations teaches us of the importance of our passion for God. There are warnings given to seven churches, some are given because of apostasy, some because of falling

away from teaching, some because of the influence of pagan worshippers. And one Church is warned of its lack of passion, the church of Laodicea is told.

REVELATIONS 3: 15-16

¹⁵ **“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!**

¹⁶ **So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth**

They are lukewarm, they have no passion, no fire in them. How many of us are like this, how many of us are lukewarm to Christ? We section away our lives, Family, work, hobbies, church. Each gets its allotted time in our life maybe its work that gets our passion, or hobbies, maybe even family or perhaps its sports.



God tells us it should be God. God should be the object of our passion; it may not start out that way.

Even the biggest forest fires in the world are started with a small spark.

C.S. Lewis said that ‘The only thing that Christianity cannot be is moderately important.’ He said this because if God loves us so much that he was ridiculed, tortured, and crucified for you and you really believe that, then you owe him the entirety of your life. If you do not believe that then he does not matter. You cannot be lukewarm; it cannot be moderately important. You are either starting a fire with that little spark, or its going to burn out.



If you have that spark, seek that balance in your spiritual life. Get involved in study and mission. Input and output. Get involved in sharing your gifts, find out what you are passionate about. Get involved in helping others fan the flame of their passion and let them fan the flame of yours. Be burning hot for God, be the light that shine brightly for all the community to see. Be the one that reaches out

into the community as a beacon for those who have a small spark to come to and feed their own little fires. Remember the fathers of the Reformation, they were just people who believed in the Word of God and their Faith changed the world, Remember the story of Edward Kimbell and how his faith and desire to reach every child impacted the lives of so many people. Big or small be passionate about your faith, this is what God asks of each of us in our lives.

Let us Pray,

For Obedience and Love

O Lord,

you command me to ask,

grant that I may receive what you give.

You have told me to seek,

let me be happy in finding.

You have bidden me to knock,

I pray, open for me.

Graciously direct and govern all my thoughts and actions,

that, for the future,

I may serve you

*and entirely devote myself to obeying you.
 Accept me,
 and draw me to yourself,
 that I may henceforth be yours
 by obedience and love,
 since I am already yours,
 as your creature.
 Yours, O Lord,
 you live and reign forever and ever. Amen.*
 Source: Augustine of Hippo

Hymn: "In Christ Alone"

In Christ alone my hope is found
 He is my light, my strength, my song
 This cornerstone, this solid ground
 Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
 What heights of love, what depths of peace
 When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
 My comforter, my all in all
 Here in the love of Christ I stand
 In Christ alone who took on flesh
 Fullness of God in helpless babe
 This gift of love and righteousness
 Scorned by the ones He came to save
 Till on that cross as Jesus died
 The wrath of God was satisfied
 For every sin on Him was laid
 Here in the death of Christ I live
 There in the ground His body lay
 Light of the world by darkness slain
 Then bursting forth in glorious day
 Up from the grave He rose again
 And as He stands in victory
 Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
 For I am His and He is mine
 Bought with the precious blood of Christ
 No guilt in life, no fear in death
 This is the power of Christ in me
 From life's first cry to final breath
 Jesus commands my destiny
 No power of hell, no scheme of man
 Can ever pluck me from His hand

Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Invitation to Offering

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,
where moth and rust consume
and where thieves break in and steal;
but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust consumes
and where thieves do not break in and steal.
For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3) We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer.

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only.
standrewspertthoffering@gmail.com Please include your Offering Envelope # in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (eg Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer

*Praise be to you, LORD,
the God of our father Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.
Yours, LORD, is the kingdom;
you are exalted as head over all.
Wealth and honor come from you;
you are the ruler of all things.
In your hands are strength and power
to exalt and give strength to all.
Now, our God, we give you thanks,
and praise your glorious name. **Amen.***

Pastoral Prayer

Enduring God,

On this Reformation Sunday, we thank you today for your faithfulness to us and to the tradition that has shaped us as disciples of Jesus. Thank you for your living Word which continues to reveal him, and for the gift of your Spirit to help us interpret your wisdom in the midst of challenging times.

Eternal God,

On this Sunday marking the faithfulness of all your saints, we give you thanks for people in our lives and across the ages who have shown us your loving kindness through their witness to Christ in so many different situations. Inspire us by their examples and show us how we, too, can live out our faith in the midst of challenging times.

Loving God,

You keep calling us to care for those in need and show hospitality to strangers in our midst. Thank you for your persistent love which continues to comfort and challenge us all. Open our hearts and eyes so that we can see how to offer that love to others in the midst of challenging times.

Living God,

You bring new life to the discouraged and those facing danger and death. Thank you for signs of hope which break into pressures of the pandemic and its consequences for so many, in the midst of challenging times.

Creating God,

we praise you for the beauty of this world and the rhythms of nature which sustain us. Give us courage to act on behalf of your creation where it is stressed or broken, and nurture our commitment to act as your stewards within creation in the midst of challenging times.

Wise God,

hear us in this time of silence as lay before you the people and places on our hearts this day. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Closing Hymn

Benediction

Someone asked Jesus,

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied:

*“ ‘Love the Lord your God
with all your heart
and with all your soul
and with all your mind.’*

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it:

‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

*May our Lord Jesus Christ,
the one who came with grace and truth,
also fill your hearts with grace and truth,
as you serve him in the days ahead.*

*And may the joy of the Lord—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—
be with you and strengthen you each day. Amen.*