

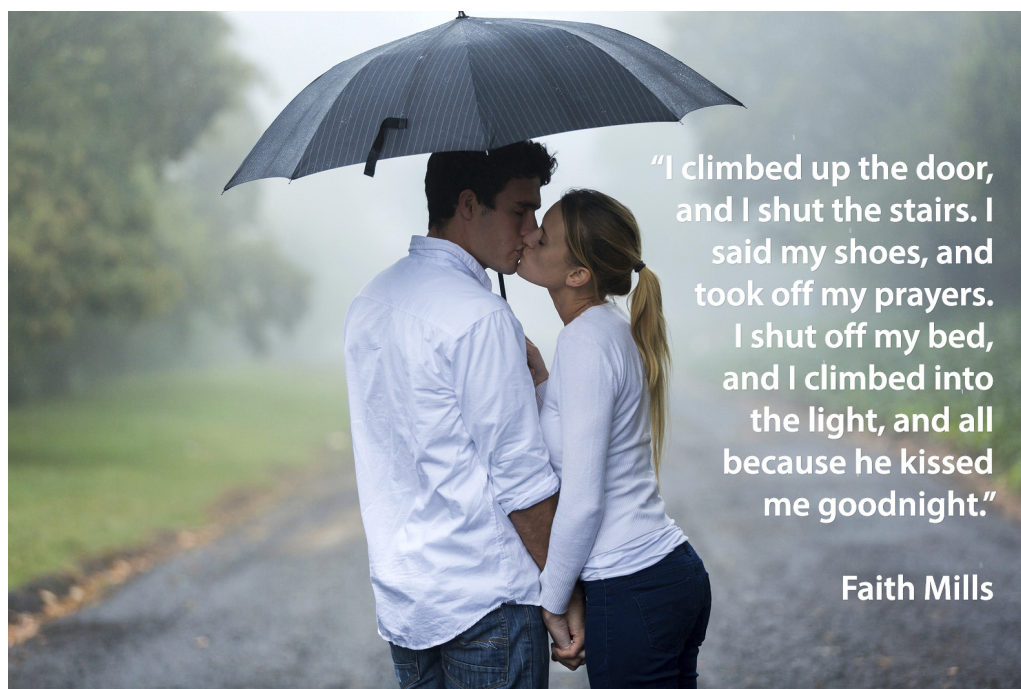
God's Great Passion

My wife and I met at bible college. At first, I did not realize she would eventually become my wife. As the days passed, like a warm summer breeze, my love for her blossomed like a rose bud. I remember taking a trip to Denver, Colorado, by automobile for a missionary organization. It took two days to get there. During the trip I found that I could only think about her and at the end of each night, I wrote her a letter about the events of each day. I told her how much gas the car consumed and how many miles I traveled. At the end of each letter I dropped hints that I loved her. We laugh now about those stupid letters, but she knew and I knew that there was more to those letters than gasoline and mileage. My thoughts were of her and nothing else. Faith A. Mills' following poem probably described what I was like on that trip, "I climbed up the door, and I shut the stairs. I said my shoes, and took off my prayers. I shut off my bed, and I climbed into the light, and all because he kissed me good night." Anyone who has been in love, understands the passion of this poem. My future wife had not kissed me; she did not need to.

BURNING HEARTS. Recently I asked a group of Christians the question, "Do you know God more than your spouse?" How would you answer the question? What is the greatest passion of your heart? Your answer will tell you who occupies your thoughts. Your answer will tell you how much you really want to know about God. May I ask, "Do you want to love God and know Him more than your best friend

or spouse?" "Whom do you think about and whom do you want to know most?" "Who consumes your thoughts and fans the flame in your heart?"

The Apostle Luke tells us that after Jesus died and returned to life, He visited His disciples on at least three occasions (John 21:14). On one of those occasions, two of Jesus' disciples were walking together on the road (Luke



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24:13-14). One of the disciples was named Cleopas. After awhile Jesus met them and started walking alongside (Luke 24:15-35). The disciples did not recognize Him and started telling Him about the death of Jesus. After a while this “stranger” explained the Old Testament truths about Jesus to them, but they did not know that he was Jesus until later when they had dinner together.

And it came about that when He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. (NASB) Luke 24:30-31

Then Jesus opened their understanding and the disciples knew that this stranger was Jesus. I imagine they were very emotional to make this discovery - then He disappeared.

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comes the wonderful part. After Jesus left they made a surprising statement. Here it is,

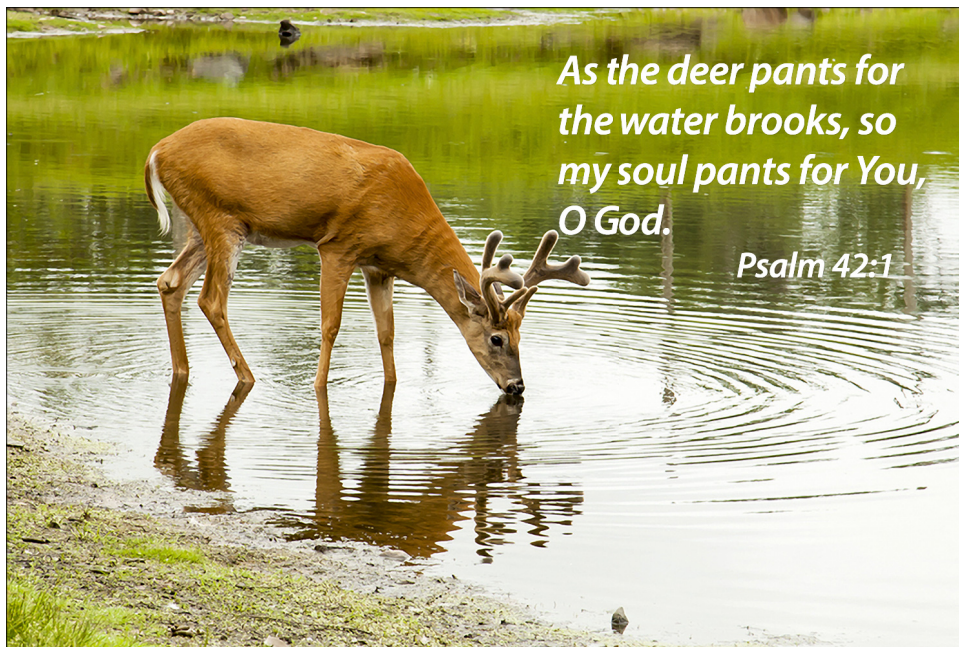
And they said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” (NASB) Luke 24:32

Did you see that? Their hearts were burning within them while Jesus explained the scriptures to them. Why did their hearts burn? Aren’t words just words? What happened to

these men? Spoken words do not cause burning inside of a person. There is nothing magical about human language. What happened? The answer is found in their hearts. Their hearts were burning just as the hearts of two lovers burn when words are spoken between them. The hearts of these two disciples were burning because they now knew more about Him. They loved Him!

AS THE DEER PANTS FOR THE WATER. We see the same passion in Psalm 42:1-2.

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God . . . (NASB) Ps. 42:1-2



This is the passion of the choir director - a passion to know God. His heart is like a thirsty deer who longs for water, living water, just like the two disciples whose hearts were burning - just like the promise Jesus made about rivers of running water. Is this the passion of your

heart - to know Him - to love Him and to know Him more than anyone else, more than your mother, father, spouse, friend, daughter or son?

GOD’S GREAT PASSION. What do you think is God’s passion for you? What is God’s great passion for you? Would you like a peek into God’s heart - into His emotions? What does God want most? The answer is found in Jeremiah 9:23-24,

Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might,

let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me . . . (NASB) Jer. 9:23-24

The great passion of God's heart is that we will want to know Him. God is talking about more than just our salvation. An understanding of God starts when we begin to trust Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, but there is more than that. He wants us to know all about Him!

SEARCHING FOR HIM. If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you have probably heard again and again that you are supposed to read the Bible in order to know God. You might even remember that as a new Christian, reading the Bible was like eating chocolate. It was wonderful. But that may not be true any more. You know the stories about Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, Lot's wife and Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses and Pharaoh,

Joshua and the land of Canaan, Samson and the Philistines, David and Goliath, Daniel and the lions den, and Jonah in the great fish. How can you know God more from these stories?

Most of us know that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and always present. We know that God never changes, but do you know God intimately? The Israelites whom Moses led through the wilderness did not know and understand God. Yes, they saw Him part the Red Sea, drown the Egyptian army, provide them manna, and give them water from rocks. They saw His acts. Many of us read the Bible and see His acts or deeds too! But they did not **KNOW** God. Listen to the following Psalm.

He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel. (NASB) Ps. 103:7

They knew only His acts, but Moses knew the ways of God. Moses really understood God. Why? Here is the answer,

Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found favor in Thy sight, let me know Thy ways, that I may know Thee . . . (NASB) Ex. 33:13

Moses asked God to reveal Himself so that He might know Him. Moses wanted to know more than **FACTS** about God. He wanted to **KNOW** God, to know God intimately.

This is the same passion the Apostle Paul had.

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count

them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ . . . (NASB) Phil. 3:8

The greatest passion of God's heart is that we believe Him and earnestly desire to know Him as a close friend. Jer. 9:23-24

Now Paul does not mean that he wants to become a Christian when he says that he wants to know God. Paul is already a christian and an apostle. Paul has the same passion that Moses had. He wants to know God intimately.

WITH ALL YOUR HEART. How can we know Him in a meaningful, intimate way? How can we know Him intimately? The answer is found in this verse,

And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you,' declares the LORD . . . (NASB) Jer. 29:13-14

The intimacy comes when we search for Him with all of our hearts. I love the statement, "And I will be found by you . . ." He promises that we will find Him. But we must search for Him with all of our hearts. If we are content with a Bible reading program, or reading books about the Bible, then we

will never really know Him. If our goal is to know the Bible, that is a good goal but not the best one. The best reason to know the Bible is to know God intimately. Some have said that we do not need to know the Bible and all we need is to know God. But, my friend, that is not possible. We can only know His ways by first really knowing His Word. That is why scripture calls us again and again to study it, and Jeremiah 29:12-13 tells us that one of the greatest benefits is to know Him.

CONCLUSION. God wants us to search for Him in the pages of scripture with all our hearts. The search does not end when we find Jesus and begin to trust Him to forgive our sins. It is only the beginning. He wants us to continue searching the pages of scripture so that we can discover His acts, and then to ponder, dwell on, and reflect on what you have read in order to gain a deeper understanding of Him.

Think on the Word of God throughout your day and ask Him to reveal Himself to you in a new way. Start every morning, by thanking Him for who He is and what He has done for you. Talk to Him as a friend. That is what we do with those we love. We earnestly seek a close relationship with them. He wants us to be passionately seeking a closer and deeper intimate relationship with Him. He wants us to desire to know Him and to love Him. Is that the longing of your heart? This is the great passion of God's heart. Seek to know Him as you would a close friend and search for Him as for expensive treasure. The greatest honor you can give God is to believe in Him and to daily, earnestly seek a very close relationship with Him. Thank Him for loving you!

The great passion of God's heart is that we believe Him, want to know Him, and will always seek for Him as for expensive treasure. He wants a relationship with you!