

God's Great Passion

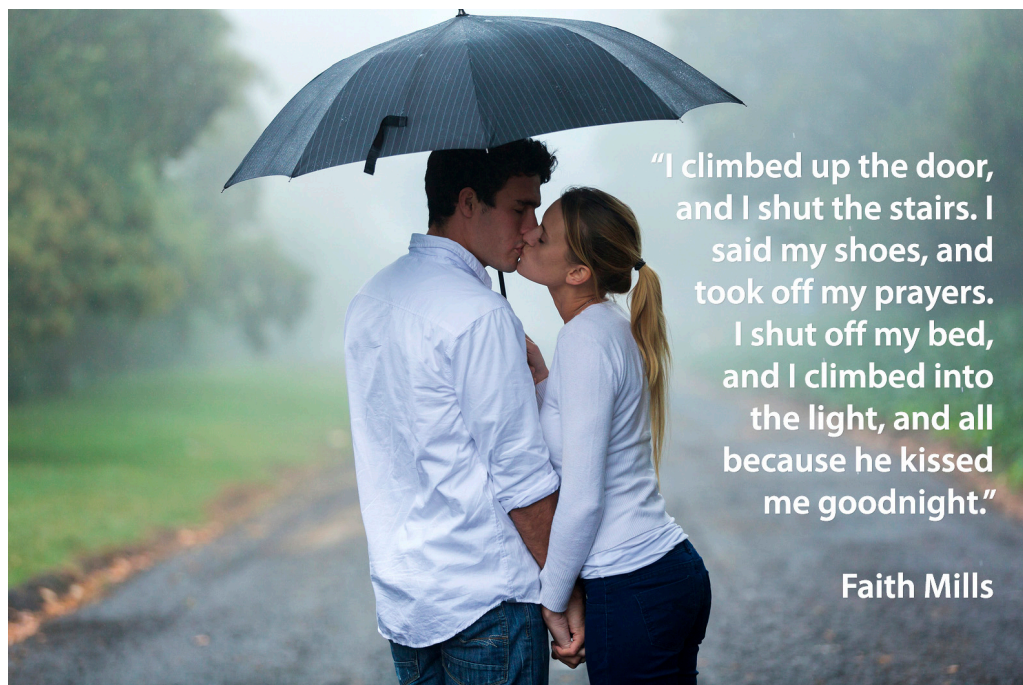
My wife and I met at bible college. At first, I did not realize she would eventually become my wife. As the days passed, like a warm summer breeze, my love for her blossomed like a rose bud. I remember taking a trip to Denver, Colorado, by automobile for a missionary organization. It took two days to 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 For God. 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



"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 goodnight."

Faith Mills

Jesus' disciples were walking together on the Emmaus Road (Luke 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 . . .

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. Luke 24:30-31 (NASB)

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

Now 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?" Luke 24:32 (NASB)

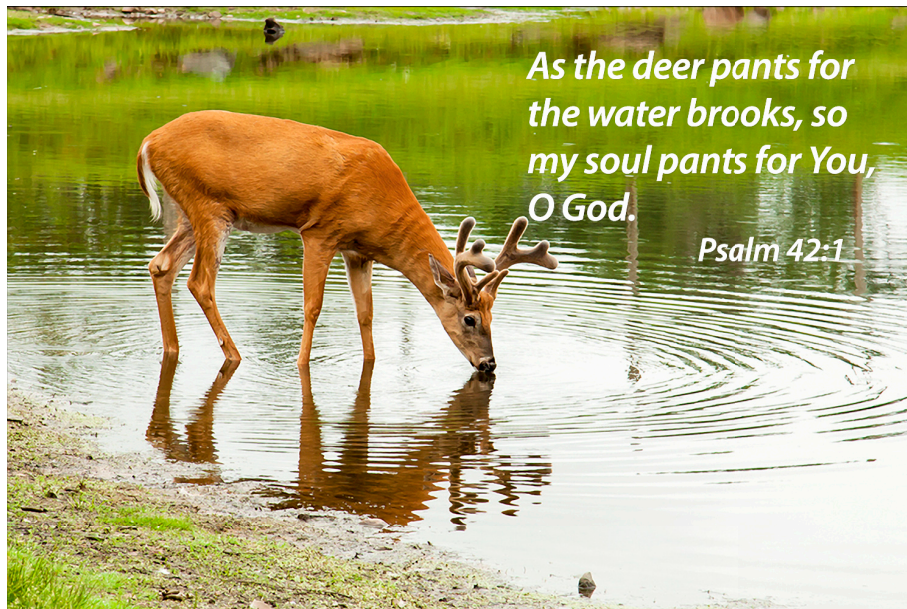
Did you see that? Their hearts were burning within them while Jesus explained the Scriptures to them. The Greek word for "burning" is *kaio*. It means 'to set fire to' or "to

burn." It is a picture of a heart that is flaming with emotion. Why were their hearts burning with emotion? 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 had been with someone they loved and wanted to know!

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 . . . Psalm 42:1-2 (NASB)



He says that his heart pants after God. The Hebrew word for "pant" refers "to a strong yearning for someone or something." It is a picture of a deer that is hot and very thirsty, who

is craving water. So, the choir director did not like or admire God. His heart was like a thirsty deer who longs for water, living water, and just like the two disciples whose hearts were burning within. So, he seriously longed for a relationship for God. Is this the passion of your heart— 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. In the gospel of John, we are told five times that the apostle John was a man whom Jesus loved (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). We are told that Jesus loved John with a *phileo* love. That is, Jesus had emotion for John (John 20:2). In the Upper Room we are

told that the disciple leaned against Jesus when they ate a meal (John 13:23). The picture is one of close relationship. We see this again in 1 John 1:1 when the apostle John writes this about Jesus,

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life.” 1 John 1:1 (NASB)

This is a picture of a close relationship between Jesus and John. Other prophets and men in the Bible also had a close relationship with God. So, can I ask, “What is God’s great passion for you? Would you like a peek into God’s heart - into His emotions? What great passion does God have you?” 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 . . . Jeremiah 9:23-24 (NASB)

The great passion of God’s heart is that we will want to know Him. In John 17:3, Jesus said this,

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. John 17:3 (NASB)

Here Jesus reveals that the first step to having a relationship with God is to be given the gift of eternal life. Then you will be able to know Him more and more! But Jeremiah 9:23-24 refers to much more than this first step. 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. But God wants us to know all about Him! He desires that you and I long to know Him. That we pant like a deer to know Him. That we want to lean against Him and know 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 lion’s 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,

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

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 do not know God. Listen to the following Psalm.

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

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 . . . Exodus 33:13 (NASB)

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 . . . Philippians 3:8 (NASB)

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 . . . Jeremiah 29:13-14 (NASB)

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. Knowing God deeply is a sign of spiritual maturity (1 John 2:12-14). That requires a deep knowledge of Scripture.

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. Abraham was called the friend of God. So, tell Him that you want to be His friend too! 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!