



## *God's Great Passion*

**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)**

As often happens, a young man met a woman at Bible College and did not realize that she would eventually become his wife. As the days passed, his love for her blossomed like a rose bud. He can laugh now when he looks back to the time that he took a trip to Denver, Colorado by automobile for a missionary organization. It took two days to get there. During the trip he could only think about her mile after mile and turn after turn. In the evenings he would write her a letter about the events of each day. They were his version of a love letter. He told her how much gas the car consumed and how many miles they had traveled. At the end of each letter he would drop a hint that he loved her. He and his wife laugh now about those letters, but she knew and he knew that there was more to those letters than gasoline and mileage. His thoughts were of her and nothing else. Faith A. Mill's poem probably describes what he 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. His future wife had not kissed him; she did not need to.

### **Burning Hearts**

Recently a group of Christians were asked the question, "Do you know God more than your spouse?" If you were asked that question, what would be your answer? What is the greatest passion of your heart? How you answer will reveal who occupies your thoughts. Your answer will tell you how much you really want to know about God. Do you want to love God and know Him more than your spouse or best friend? 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 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 their friend, 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. Luke 24:30-31 (NASB)*

Then Jesus opened their understanding, and the disciples knew that this stranger was Jesus. We can only imagine that they were very emotional to make this discovery. Then He disappeared.

Now comes the wonderful part. After Jesus left, they made a surprising statement.

*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. 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

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)*

It is the passion of a choir director. This is 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, and just like the promise Jesus made about rivers of running water. Is this the passion of your heart - to know Him and to love Him and to know Him more than anyone else, more than your mother, father, spouse, friend, daughter or son?

1. What do you think is God's great desire? What is God's great passion for you? Would you like a peek into God's heart - into His emotions? The answer to these questions is found in Jeremiah 9:23-24. What does God desire most for you?

2. When Jesus was here, He offered us something, John 7:37-39. What is the meaning of the symbol?

3. How do we first start a relationship with Jesus (1 John 2:12-14)?

4. How much time do you think it can take to really know Jesus?



*ur personal relationship with God starts when we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.*

## Seeking and Searching

Moses was another man who had a passion to know God. He started life in Egypt as the adopted son of Pharaoh. He was the Prince of Egypt. He fled from Egypt after killing an Egyptian soldier. Later he met God in the Midian desert at the age of 80 years. God had prepared this man with trials and struggles. God worked a miracle in his life, and Numbers 12:3 says that Moses was the most humble man of his time. God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. He performed miracle upon miracle. He was the leader of about 6 million people. Many of us would be happy with that. We would have thought that we had arrived when we saw God doing miracles through us, and making us a leader of so many people. But Moses was not satisfied.

1. Do you know what Moses wanted more than miracles and fame? The answer is found in Exodus 33:13.  
What did Moses really want?

2. What did Moses ask for in Exodus 33:18? What was Moses seeking?

3. When Moses asked God in Exodus 33:13 to let him know His ways, what was he asking? What are God's ways? Psalm 103:7 gives us a comparison between what God did for Moses and what He did for the Israelites. What do you think is the difference between "acts" and "ways"?

Moses wanted to know more than some FACTS about God. He wanted to *know* God, to know God intimately. 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. That "chocolate bar" may be small or discolored. You may 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 Palestine, Samson and the Philistines, David and Goliath, Daniel and the lion's den, and Jonah in the great fish. But there is no fire in your heart when you read them. The fire has dimmed or is just smoldering.

We cannot love him if we do not know Him, and we will not want to pursue Him if we do not love Him.

Moses' fire was in flames. He wanted more than just facts about God. 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 Moses wanted to know God personally - in a deep way. At the end of Deuteronomy we are told that Moses was the greatest prophet of his time.

1. What is the greatest statement that is made about Moses in Exodus 33:11 and Deuteronomy 34:10?

2. What is the greatest passion of your heart?

3. There have been others down through history who have had a great passion to know God, too! Their hearts have burned within them. Some of these men lived before Jesus, but they loved God with great passion and longed to know Him. Others longed to know Jesus while He was here, and others have wished that He was still here on this earth. Who had a passion for God in 2 Kings 23:24-25? How is he compared to King David and King Solomon?

4. What does God say about Daniel the prophet in Daniel 9:23? Why do you think these comments were made about him?

5. What does James 2:23 say about Abraham? What does this say about the relationship of God and Abraham?


6. Philippians 3:8 helps us see the heart of another man who desired to know God. Who is this person? What was he willing to give away in order to satisfy his heart's desires?

7. Was the Apostle Paul already a Christian when He wrote Philippians 3:8?

8. What three things does the author of 1 John 1:1 remember?

9. Who is the author of 1 John 1:1-3 and who is he thinking about?

10. What was the heart's desire of the author of 1 John 1:1-3?



*God's greatest passion is that you will search for Him as lost treasure: to believe in Him and passionately long to know and love Him more and more.*

## Discovery

How can we know Him in a meaningful, personal way as these men did? How can we know Him as a friend knows a friend? Do we find Him by reading books about Him? Do we know more about Jesus by spending time together with other people? Do we know Him more by serving Him with all our effort? What is the answer to these questions? Moses, King David, the Apostle Paul, and the Apostle John have given us the examples. Now, how can we know God as a friend? The answers to our questions are found in the following questions.

1. What does God tell us that we need to do in Jeremiah 29:13?
2. How seriously should we do this according to the last part of Jeremiah 29:13?
3. Now here is the best part. What will happen if we do this with all our heart according to Jeremiah 29:14?

4. What are the steps to spiritual maturity according to 1 John 2:12-14?

5. How does a man or woman get his/her sins forgiven? How does one become a spiritual child (1 John 2:12-14)?

6. What are the characteristics of a spiritual father in 1 John 2:12-14?

## Conclusion

The personal relationship comes when we search for Him with all of our hearts. The relationship starts when a man or woman first believes in Jesus Christ (John 3:16). That is the first result of our seeking and searching for God with all our heart (Acts 17:27).

... that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. Acts 17:27 (NASB)

When we finally believe in Him, He forgives our sins and then the goal of our searching and seeking is to know Him deeper. God wants us to continue to seek and search for Him, and He has promised that "I will be found by you . . ." He promises that we will find Him. But we must search for Him with all of our heart. 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 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.

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 by studying the pages of Scripture so that we can discover His acts, and then continue beyond His acts to a deeper understanding of His ways. He wants us to be passionately searching for Him. Is that the longing of your heart? The great passion of God's heart is that we will want to know and love Him as expensive treasure.

## Things To Ponder

1. You cannot have a relationship with God unless you desire to have Jesus as your Savior and Lord (Acts 17:27; John 3:16). The relationship starts when you believe in Him. Do you believe in Jesus?
2. If you have already believed in Jesus (see the first question), do you now have a passion for a deeper relationship with God?
3. What is God's passion, according to Jeremiah 9:23-24?
4. How can you know Him according to Jeremiah 29:13-14; Philippians 3:8, and 1 John 2:12-14?
5. Is Matthew 22:36-37 also true for the person who longs to know God?
6. What is the response of one who loves Jesus (John 15:14)?

# God's Great Passion

**Answer true (T) or false (F) to each of the following statements:**

1. God calls everyone to believe in Jesus Christ. \_\_\_\_\_
2. King David loved God more than any king after him. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Daniel was highly favored by God. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Moses wanted to know more than just facts about God. \_\_\_\_\_
5. God's great passion is that we would know Him. \_\_\_\_\_
6. The Apostle Paul wanted to know God more than anything else. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The goal of every Christian should be to know the Bible more than anything else. \_\_\_\_\_
8. We can experience living water in our inner being by seeking to know the Bible. \_\_\_\_\_
9. One will want to know God when one loves Him. \_\_\_\_\_
10. God desires a personal relationship with you. \_\_\_\_\_