

5 Bible-Based Ways to Regain Your Joy and Passion

As a pastor, I often hear this statement. Responses differ depending on the situation, but one thing is clear: Our passion and purpose, along with obedience to God, are closely interwoven. Problems arise when we seek comfort, convenience, money, status or recognition above the passion that God has placed within us.

Literally millions of men are unhappy simply because they chose a lucrative career rather than a career that they were gifted for and enjoy. They put God on the back burner and wonder why they lack passion.

If life is all about us, and what we want, we will always struggle with discouragement. We need to recognize that there is a master builder who has a plan.

The Great Depression of the early 1900s brought devastation through financial ruin. Why then does today's society experience so much unhappiness when we are at the pinnacle of financial success? It's simple: Passion for life is directly related to purpose. Many are living, but there is no life in their years.

Without God truly directing our lives, lifelong fulfillment and purpose are impossible to achieve. You might say, "I go to church but still lack passion." Although it helps, going to church doesn't guarantee spiritual fulfillment any more than going to the gym guarantees health. Spiritual fulfillment requires lifestyle changes and focused attention as does maintaining health.

Most feel depressed from time to time, simply as a result of our human condition. Physical conditions, adverse circumstances, chemical imbalances, spiritual attacks or

combinations of these can create feelings of despair, dependency and helplessness.

How do you avoid the emotional roller coaster? First, check the obvious: Who are you associating with? What do you watch and/or listen to—does it build you up spiritually or pull you down? What thoughts fill your mind—negative, bitter thoughts or thankfulness? Are you walking in obedience to God's word, because "the way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. 13:15)? Are you spending time in prayer and reading the Bible?

Mild depression and sadness are common to all of us, but when it lingers, it often requires more focused attention. Exercise, fun, friendship, forgiveness, kindness—all are biblical solutions that can gradually help with recovery, but again, there are clear cases of clinical depression that I'm not simply dismissing.

Our first resort must be complete abandonment to God; a fully surrendered life that focuses on His word and His promises. Fulfilling our purpose in life is not a destination; it's a journey through day-to-day opportunities. It can be filled with unforeseen challenges, but it's a rewarding journey if you look to the Creator to provide the compass.

True fulfillment comes from having a God-given purpose for your life, and then acting on that purpose. Many do not have a true vision for their life. They buy and build, invest and earn, date and marry but are still unfulfilled. Without a vision, their journey becomes mindless wandering. It's been said if you don't know where you're going, you'll probably get there. Let's revisit biblical principles that encourage vision and passion:

First, are you truly in right relationship with God? You must start here: Philippians 4:6-7 encourages, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God. And the peace of

God, which surpasses all understanding, will protect your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Passion and vision are maintained through a deep and consistent prayer life.

Second, is your mind truly fixed on the things of God? Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” If you struggle with fear and anxiety, I would encourage you to reevaluate your mental diet of television, movies and the internet. Are they fostering fear and anxiety?

Third, are you focused on thankfulness or negativity? 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19 says, “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Do not quench the Spirit.”

Fourth, are you truly obeying God’s Word? James 1:22 says, “Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

Fifth, are you allowing circumstances to affect your joy? Many are happy when life goes their way but very unhappy when it does not. This is largely because they measure happiness by what’s happening to them. When things go well, they’re happy; when things go poorly, they’re unhappy. I’m not suggesting we should never be upset or depressed, but if happiness is measured by our circumstances, it’s going to be a very rough road ahead.

In closing, Romans 15:13 says, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.” 2 Thessalonians 3:16 adds, “Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.” He is our only hope. {eo}

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