

Mike Bickle: Become Passionate for Christ

There they were, all 12 of the men who knew Jesus best, holding their breath, wondering how Jesus would respond to the deliberate rejection He had just received from some Samaritans. Racing out from among the other disciples, John the apostle, with eyes burning and emotions in an uproar, couldn't stand it a moment longer.

"Jesus," he burst out, "can we burn their city down? Let's just burn them up and show them who's in charge!" (See Luke 9:52-54).

You may not recognize him, but this explosive young John is also the John found leaning on the Lord's breast at the Last Supper and the one who stood beside Jesus' mother, Mary, at the foot of the cross. He's the same John who in time became known as "the apostle of love."

John called himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He knew the affection God had for him in spite of his human weakness, and he proclaimed it to the earth.

Beginning as an impatient and edgy young man, he became a highly esteemed, tenderhearted apostle. His transformation from the hot-tempered youth of his early days to passionate lover is evidence of God's ability to change the human heart.

I have studied the life of John the apostle because it is one of the clearest illustrations of the way God empowers His people to move from immaturity and weakness to wholehearted love for Him. John saw himself as a person whom God loved deeply. He saw this even in his immaturity, and as a result, he was radically changed.

The secret John discovered is the truth of God's delight for

His people. This is the secret the Holy Spirit desires us all to share. John was filled with human weakness but became fearless in love.

We need to cease drawing our identity from secondary things and learn to find it in the reality of who we are before God. The Holy Spirit is calling forth lovers of God who are free from Satan's accusations instead of being controlled by them. It is the truth of God's love and affection for us that causes our hearts to break away from the devil's encumbrances and begin to soar.

Deep within our hearts, we long to be lovers of God. But discouragement wars against us when we look at our cold, passionless hearts and question if it is possible for them to be set on fire.

As weak human beings, we often see ourselves only as failures. But Jesus does not define us by our "immaturity."

God has purposed from the time of our new birth that we identify ourselves according to the way He feels about us and by what He declares over our lives regarding the righteousness of Christ. So even in our immaturity, He delights in us. His love for us is beyond our comprehension.

When we determine our worth based on other people's perceptions of us, we are doomed to feel like failures. Even success that is defined according to what people think has an inherent inability to satisfy—an inability that is God-ordained. God has created us never to be adequately satisfied with the pleasures of our natural identity.

When we are excelling in every area of our lives, our hearts still will not be fulfilled. God's perfect plan is to draw forth our hearts in love.

Believing Satan's accusations regarding failure leads to distorted images of God and an unclear perception of what we

look like to Him. With these untruths hovering over us, we become paralyzed by the thought that God is disappointed with us.

We lose our motivation to persevere and press in to the Lord. We lose our energy to seek His face. We identify ourselves as miserable failures before God and give in to spiritual bondage.

In truth, however, we all are “disciples whom the Lord loves.” This definition of ourselves gives us the impetus to pursue God and to receive from Him a true picture of who we are. Then, even in our weakness, we—like the disciple John—can become passionate toward the Lord.

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