

How's Your Passion for God These Days?

When they were really little, I used to love throwing my kids around on the bed or the couch. Listening to them belly laugh as they hurled through the air and landed safely on a soft mattress or a cushy couch was one of my favorite things to do.

My kids' favorite game is called "Quicksand Monster." The game is very simple, and it is an automatic scream and giggle fest in my house. I lie on the floor as the quicksand monster. The kids try to run across the living room without getting caught in the "quicksand." I catch one of them and pull him or her closer to me while squeezing tight. Then the other three jump in to save the poor wretch who has fallen into the clutches of old quicksand monster. The kids struggle and work to free their sister or brother, but the one who saves is the one who gets caught and pulled into the bog. My kids can literally play this game all day long. They never get tired of it.

You see, my kids don't love me because I walk in the door at night and put my bag down and decree throughout the home, "Children! Thy father is home. Thou shalt commence loving me." No such decrees are necessary. My kids love me because I wrestle on the floor and throw them end over end across the couch. Loving a father is natural and loving our heavenly Father is also natural.

The way of love begins with what C.S. Lewis called an "appetite for God." We develop a passionate appetite for God as we loiter in His presence. God is not looking for thrifty worshipers—churchgoers who are on a tight schedule. The Spirit is looking for people who take pleasure in lingering in His presence. Mike Bickle writes:

In our day, the Holy Spirit is emphasizing the anointing that

was upon Mary of Bethany which is the anointing to “waste” our lives on one thing: extravagant devotion to Jesus Christ. It is the anointing to linger long with an engaged spirit in the presence of the Lord.

Noninitiates will wonder what all the fuss is about. Like Martha, they will wonder why their sister sits while they work. But the rapt and rumpled worshippers in Spirit will not be deterred. They have discovered the secret to a passionate appetite—it is excessive devotion at the feet of the Master. They want to be captured by Him, pulled into the depths of His being—and hopefully drag some other poor unsuspecting soul with them into the irresistible love of the Father.

The John 3:16 of the Old Testament is Deuteronomy 6:4. It is called the *Shema* of Israel. The word *shema* means “hear.” It is a call, a summons to listen to Moses’s law concerning the covenant to the Jews. It goes like this: Hear [*shema*] O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (Deut.6:4). Let’s stop right there. Notice the “oneness” of our God. This is more than just numerical oneness. It is categorical oneness. Uniqueness. It is similar to the idea of holiness. When we say that God is one or that He is holy we mean that His is “other.” That is, there is nothing else in all creation like Him. As to His nature, He is entirely “other.” Jesus stated to the Samaritan woman that God is “Spirit,” meaning He’s not like you and He can’t be tethered to your shrine. He’s something else—literally.

This means that there are aspects of His nature that we cannot comprehend. Theologians refer to this as the “non-communicable” nature of God, meaning that some of God’s attributes cannot be passed on to us. Many of His character traits do transfer: His compassion, His communal nature, His empathy, authority, morality, and self-awareness. All of these traits He has passed on to us. But there are mysterious aspects of His nature that we will never understand, like His Trinitarian nature, His infinite nature, or even His sovereign

choices. I don't get how He can be omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), or omnipresent (everywhere at once). As finite beings, we will never quite comprehend these enigmatic aspects of His nature. Does this mean that God is off-limits to us? Not at all. Just because we can't *comprehend* Him doesn't mean we can't *apprehend* Him. What do I mean by this?

By way of example, my children cannot fathom the scope of my responsibilities as a pastor, as a professor, or as a husband to their mommy. They don't understand the complexities of the homework I grade, and they don't understand all the protocol and details of my daily existence interacting in professional environments. For that matter, they don't even know how to order my favorite beverage: a 16-ounce, nonfat, two-pump almond latte with a pinch of cinnamon (I know I am one of those annoying people).

Though my kids don't *comprehend* all the complexities of my life and responsibilities, they can, however, *apprehend*, or experience me as their dad. When I get down on the floor with them to wrestle and toss them around, or squeeze and snuggle them, I am real and their experience with me is real. I can also bring my knowledge down to their shelf. I can help them with their homework, or explain a Bible story, or teach them how to build a model car. I may not be able to explain all the densities of my adult existence, but they can encounter the essence of me in their little worlds.

You see, you don't have to have a full explanation of something to experience its fullness of essence. And this is true with the **Spirit of God**. He is *other*. Yet, we can love Him deeply from the heart. And God "has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5). The Spirit makes it possible for us to receive and to be carriers of this holy contagion—God's love.

Loving God and loving people is the very environment of a

Spirit-empowered church. Affectionate love for the Father and selfless love for others is the key to unleashing the power of the Spirit and the power of the gospel in our lives. It is attainable by His Spirit.

Adapted from “Father, Son and the Other One” by Jeff Kennedy, copyright 2014, published by Passio, Charisma Media/Charisma House Book Group. This book is for you if you have struggled to tap into God’s presence as a transforming, empowering reality.

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Prayer Power for the Week of 04/14/2014

This week allow yourself to be “dragged into the irresistible love of the Father.” Thank Him that although you, in your finiteness, can’t *comprehend* all of Him, He invites you to *apprehend* or experience Him as your heavenly Father and Redeemer. As you journey through “holy week” and approach Easter, meditate on His great love and sacrifice for your redemption and thank Him for pouring His love into your heart by His Holy Spirit. Ask Him to direct your steps to be a carrier of His love and redemptive message throughout this season. Continue to pray for the nation, our allies and its leaders. Pray that revival would spread and permeate every aspect of our society, and that we, as God’s people, would unite in prayer and purpose for the expansion of His kingdom. Rom. 5:5; Deut. 6:4; John 3:16; 1 John 3:1-2