

# PASSION SERIES: WHERE PURPOSE MEETS VIRTUOUS PASSION

## **PURPOSE AND PASSION.**

If purpose is the destination, passion is the fuel to get there. If purpose is the reason for living, passion is the energy released to live every day according to that purpose, even and especially in the face of suffering.

## **PASSION IS THE EXPRESSION OF PURPOSE AS IT CAPTURES OUR WILL, ENGAGES OUR EMOTIONS, AND PERMEATES OUR DAILY LIFE.**

Passion is compelling and intense volitional commitment, as well as driving emotional energy and unbounded enthusiasm released in vigorous and untiring pursuit of valued ends.

Nineteenth century American poet James Russell Lowell was one of a group of writers called the Fireside Poets or the Schoolroom Poets. This included the likes of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Lowell rubbed shoulders with these literary geniuses and had ample time to reflect on what made someone a giant in the field. He observed,

"Talent is that which is in a man's power; genius is that in whose power a man is."

Substitute passion for genius and Lowell had it right. Passion is

"that in whose power I am."

## **OUR GREATEST CONTRIBUTIONS IN LIFE ARE NOT MEASURED BY WHAT WE POSSESS—OUR TALENTS OR GIFTS OR INTERESTS—BUT BY WHAT POSSESSES US—PASSION. WHILE MANY THINGS MAY INTEREST US, ONLY PASSION CONSUMES US.**

Passion as a Virtue. It is necessary to note that, like purpose, all passion is not created equal. Virtuous passion regulated by noble purpose must be differentiated from passion that has its roots in a damaged inner life. Emotional need and insecurity may generate self-destructive or self-serving passion. These bursts of energy and enthusiasm can be profoundly destructive, bordering on fanaticism.

Along these lines, I am reminded that the Apostles James and John were passionate men. Jesus noted this fact early on, assigning them the nickname the "Son's of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). They possessed an unbridled passion that would later lead them to "judge first and ask questions later." Luke reports this unfortunate incident.

And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem; and He sent messengers on ahead of Him.

"And they went, and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him. And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:51-56).

James and John didn't lack of passion. But their passion was grounded in a self-serving purpose—they wanted Jesus to exert earthly power—destroy the village—and install an earthly Kingdom in Jerusalem, which would afford them significant status and the perks that went along with it (see Matthew 20:20-28).

## **VIRTUOUS PASSION IGNITES US, LAUNCHES US AND SUSTAINS US THROUGH THE GREAT OBSTACLES INHERENT IN FULFILLING A NOBLE PURPOSE.**

This is decidedly not the same as the destructive emotional energy associated with fanaticism. Fanaticism is excessive and unlighted zeal. The fanatic is a narrow and obstinate person animated by self-centered concerns. James and John came dangerously close to the passion of a fanatic, not the passion released in followers of Jesus.

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