

LIVING  
IT OUT



**DAILY  
BIBLE  
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# Dream Again

August 27, 2018

Throughout our current series, *This Is Me*, we have been learning about the potential that we have to make a difference for God. In week one, Ben shared that with God our limitations become our greatest potential for purpose. In week two, Casey Greenawalt shared with us that our unique personalities have potential with God. Ben taught us in week three that with God our pasts have great potential for purpose. And this past weekend, Ben shared that God wants to connect our passion and preferences to his purpose.

Each week, we have been invited to trust that God has great plans for our lives in spite of what we might believe about ourselves. We may look at our personality and think we don't have what it takes to make a difference. We may look at our past and think we have disqualified ourselves from being used by God. And when it comes to our passions and preferences, we may think that God has no use for them. As we trust God's great plan for each of these parts of us, we begin to recognize that his plans are possible because of *his* incredible dynamic power.

## **2 Corinthians 4:7**

*We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.*

As we trust God and believe that there is dynamic power in him, we can begin dreaming about how God can use us. This past weekend, Ben specifically invited us to begin dreaming about how God can use our passions and preferences for his purpose.

Many of us have stopped dreaming, but imagine if we all started dreaming again. Imagine what could happen if we all took a step in submitting our preferences and passions to the dynamic power of God!

Imagine what could God do with your love of biking. What difference could be made through your enjoyment of playing video games, and whose life could be changed by your love of reading? Chances are I did not name your preference

or your passion, but whatever it is, God can use it. Offer it to him today and watch God's great power begin to work in your life and the lives of others.

**Questions:**

How often do you dream about what God can do through you?

When you dream about God using you to make a difference, does it involve him using your passions or preferences?

**NextSteps:**

Complete this week's *LivingItOut* Study and continue to learn how God can connect your passions and preferences with his purpose.

Complete GrowthTrack, which will help you take steps toward discovering your purpose.

Attend Group Leader Training and prayerfully consider if leading a group is how God wants to use your preferences and passions to make a difference.

**Prayer:**

*Dear Heavenly Father, as I begin this week's study, I want to start by worshiping you. I worship you because you are powerful. I trust that your power alone is what can take all the parts of me and give them purpose and life. Thank you for loving me and for the great plans you have laid out for my life. You are worthy of all praise. Amen.*

*This post was written by Ben Bockert, Director of and regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# Passion Versus Preference

August 28, 2018

Have you ever thought about the difference between your passions and your preferences? I have a passion for reading and learning, and I prefer to read hard-copy books rather than the digital version. To say I have a passion for hard-copy books would not be accurate. If all I could access was a Kindle version of a book, I would read the Kindle version because my passion to read and learn supersedes my preference for the medium of learning. Heck, I will even go audio if I have to. A passion is something you are willing to go to the mat for, to suffer for. A preference is simply the choice you would make when given options.

This week, we are talking about how our passions and preferences have enormous potential with God. We have to be careful with our preferences, though. Mistaking preferences for passion can lead to silly disagreements over Starbucks versus Speedway coffee, texting versus calling, or hard-copy versus Kindle. In fact, some preferences may be unhealthy, and we actually need to let go of those all together.

Barring those examples, know that God cares about our preferences. It may just be your preference for Starbucks that connects you with another person who needed a smile or word of encouragement. In the hands of God, even the smallest details of our lives can be powerful for accomplishing his purposes. But like the apostle Paul, we must keep our passions and preferences in proper perspective.

## **Philippians 3:7-8**

*7 I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*

If you remember Ben Snyder's props from the weekend, peanuts, red clay powder, and baking soda only make a mess when you put them together. They need the nitrous gas to bring out their potential. When we know God, I mean really know him in an experiential and intimate way, what is otherwise garbage becomes dynamite.

## **Questions:**

Can you identify the differences between your passions and your preferences?

Have you ever mistakenly gotten passionate about a preference?

**Next Steps:**

Identify some of your own preferences. Talk with a trusted friend about any preferences that you may need to let go of. Pray and ask God to show you how he might be able to use your preferences to make a difference in someone else's life.

**Prayer:**

*God, thank you for making me wonderfully complex with passions and preferences that are unique to me. Keep my eyes open to opportunities for you to use my preferences for your purposes. And Lord, if there are preferences that I need to let go of, reveal them plainly so I see it. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

# Purpose for Your Passion

August 29, 2018

I've never heard anything as exciting and inspiring as listening to a "debt-free scream" on Dave Ramsey's show. These individuals and couples literally scream about their passion for the whole nation to hear. They have sacrificed and worked hard to intentionally pay off their student loans, credit cards, car loans, and sometimes even their mortgages! What's really interesting about listening to these stories is how frequently their journey includes hosting Financial Peace University classes. They are so passionate that they can't wait to share what they've learned with someone else. These are not financial experts, or even people particularly interested in numbers, but people who are sick of debt stopping them from living out their passions. Imagine how you could live out your passions if you had no payments. What would you do? How can you share your passions with someone else today?

How can God use your passions in other ways? I'm an avid reader. I never go anywhere without a book (the Kindle app has made my purse much lighter). I enjoy sharing stories and bits of wisdom I've read in small groups or one-on-one conversations. Occasionally, this leads to opportunities to share my faith. I may never know how God uses one conversation or one thought to change someone's life.

God gave each of us unique gifts and experiences that shape our passions. In the Bible, we read about the apostle Paul's willingness to suffer for his passion for Christ. He devoted his life and energy to pointing people toward Christ.

## **Philippians 3:10-11**

*<sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, <sup>11</sup> so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!*

Our passions have the potential to make a difference with God. Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father." Let your enthusiasm about your passion show. Let others see and hear what gets you fired up. There is a purpose for your passion!

## **Questions:**

When was the last time you were so passionate about something that you

wanted to scream your excitement? What was it that you couldn't wait to share with anyone that would listen?

With whom do you need to share your passion today?

**Next Steps:**

Think of someone who would benefit from hearing more about your passion. Find a practical way to connect with that person this week.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, thank you for giving me passion. Please show me how I can use my passions to bring people closer to you. Amen.*

# But First, Jesus

August 30, 2018

I love making lists. There's nothing like crossing out a task after it's completed. I also have a passion for leading a Bible study group. I love pouring effort into my group, facilitating studies on God's word and encouraging Christian fellowship. I decided one day to bring my love of lists to my group in a way that I had hoped would help all of us to keep moving in a good direction. A common trouble I had been hearing in my group is a lack of discipline or motivation. So I created a list on a Google Doc that we shared. We then came up with individualized goals to push us throughout the week. Most would include some form of a Bible reading goal or a prayer goal, and some would plan to memorize Scripture, avoid social media, or exercise regularly. We had a pretty solid start. Everyone filled out their daily entries on how well they did, and we would see progress. I felt that I was using my passion for leading (and for lists) to help people.

As months passed, we all started to fade in our participation, and more and more, we'd meet back up and talk about how we didn't even come close to meeting our goals. We simply weren't able to succeed in our goals on our own willpower. During all this, we had been working on a study that focused on falling in love with Jesus instead of just working harder and becoming more disciplined in our faith. I realized that while the list had good intentions and initially had positive results, it was encouraging self-discipline and working harder rather than leaning into the Holy Spirit and growing in our relationship with Jesus.

I recently revamped our goals document and changed it to just three questions:

- 1) What has made you fall more in love with Jesus this week?
- 2) What have you learned this week about Jesus' heart?
- 3) What has God revealed to you this week (i.e. What is he teaching you or convicting you of)?

My hope is that this will bring our focus back to deepening our relationships with Jesus, which will then allow the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit that we so desired in the first place.

## **Philippians 3:7-8a**

*For I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless*

*because of what Christ has done. <sup>a</sup> Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*

Without Jesus at the center of our motivation and at the center of our passions, they are rubbish. ***If in the end we don't use them to grow closer to him or bring others to him, they are a waste of time.***

**Questions:**

Is there a part of your life that you struggle inviting Jesus into? How can you remedy this?

Do you make a conscious effort to get to know the heart of Jesus? If so, what have you learned? If not, how can you go about doing this?

**Next Steps:**

Focus your efforts not on self-discipline, but on getting to know Jesus. As you get to know him, you will love him more, and your relationship will grow. It is only after we build this relationship that we can accomplish what we set out to do, at least in a way that truly fulfills us.

Consider purchasing a Jesus-Centered Bible. It's a New Living Translation with added notes tying in Old Testament promises with ways Jesus fulfilled them. The notes throughout focus entirely on Jesus and his promises.

**Prayer:**

*Dear God, my purpose on earth is to grow in my relationship with you and to help others grow in theirs with you as well. I pray that I can use my passions to do just that. Sometimes we start things with good intentions and still find ourselves veering away from what you want. Please help me to remember to pray first before starting anything, so I can know that you are guiding me. Amen.*

# Passion Defined

August 31, 2018

This week, *LivingItOut* has examined the relationship between our passions and our preferences. In the fourth installment of the “This is Me” series, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder provided a helpful framework for considering the connection between passion, which he defined as “the choice for which we are willing to suffer,” and preferences, “the choices we make when given options.” As Ben emphasized, God desires that we connect our passions and preferences to his purpose.

Today, we’re going to dig into the etymology of the word “passion,” the meaning of which has evolved significantly over the centuries. Along the way, we’ll connect some dots between its original meaning and its present-day connotations.

The Oxford English Dictionary references “passion” as a Middle English term derived from the late Latin word “passio,” which was itself rooted in the Latin “pati”—to suffer. The original meaning of the word is evident in the phrase, “the Passion of Christ,” which commonly describes the period between the Last Supper and Christ’s death on the cross at Calvary.

Through the years, the term took on broader connotations and began to be used to refer to strong emotions. In modern usage, passion commonly signifies fervent affection or love, strong devotion, or intense desire (for something or someone).

On its surface, this evolution of the meaning of passion may seem curious. However, there are many cases in which word meanings have evolved dramatically over time. For example, did you know that when the word “nice” was introduced into the English language some 500 years ago, it meant “foolish or stupid” ([wordcentral.com](http://wordcentral.com))?

Even so, connections can be drawn between the historical and present-day definitions of the word. Our passions inherently involve an element of desperation. After all, if we did not care so deeply, they would not be passions.

And those passions, which we hold so tightly—whether they be love, devotion, or desire—often involve suffering.

German philosopher Georg Hegel said, “Nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished without passion.” Hegel’s use of the word passion could easily be changed to suffering. Indeed, many of mankind’s greatest accomplishments are the product of both devotion and some element of suffering.

For example, it took author J.R.R. Tolkien 12 years to write *The Lord of the Rings*. Johannes Brahms labored for nearly 20 years in composing his Symphony No. 1. And Auguste Rodin’s famous sculpture, *The Gates of Hell*, consumed 37 years in its making.

This intersection of the past and present meanings of passion is not limited to masterworks; it’s equally evident in our everyday works. Whether it involves professional or personal desires, including our worship, the echoes of a suffering passion are often intertwined with our striving passions.

Of course, passions are not exclusively righteous or good, which underlines the importance of aligning our desires—particularly those for which we are willing to suffer—with God’s purpose.

### **Questions:**

Are your passions aligned with God’s purpose?

What conditions or guardrails can you instill to ensure that your choices remain or become aligned with God’s desires?

Consider the pursuits, people, and causes about which you are most passionate. Are you truly willing to suffer for these choices? If the answer is “yes,” why is this so? Conversely, if the answer is “no,” what changes do you need to make?

### **Next Steps:**

Set aside time today to make a list of your primary passions, defined by Ben as the choices for which you are willing to suffer, and devote time to examining if and how they align with God’s purpose. Pray that God grants you the strength to pursue and achieve the passions that connect with his purpose, even when they involve suffering. For those items that may fall short of this standard, consider how you can realign your choices and actions to be in lockstep with God.

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, I am forever grateful for your passion—the suffering you endured on my behalf—and for the passions that fuel my spirit. I ask that you grant me the wisdom to discern my passions and preferences alike, so they may drive me to remain forever connected to your purpose. It is in your holy name I pray, amen.*