

## **PASSIONATE LIVING 3**

### **“Balancing the Relationships of Life”**

Do you like watching a good juggler? I do, partly because I have tried it, and I can't master it. Probably don't have the patience to practice another hobby. I can manage one ball, sometimes two, but no more. Do you ever feel that balancing the relationships in your life are like trying to juggle more balls than you can handle? With parents living longer, grown children returning home more often, teenagers and their raging hormones, children and their increasingly busy schedules, spouses working more, jobs demanding more, squeezing in a little leisure; does your life ever feel like a juggling act out of control? Mine does, and that's part of what I want to visit with you about today.

Part of learning and choosing to live a Passionate Life is found in understanding and practicing the balance of relationships in our lives. Jesus models this balance throughout his life, but in one particular passage in Luke 6 we see an example of each of these essential relationships and how he focused his life to create and continue that balance.

*“One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles...When they came down from the mountain, the disciples stood with Jesus on a large, level area, surrounded by many of his followers and by the crowds. There were people from all over Judea and from Jerusalem and from as far north as the seacoasts of Tyre and Sidon. They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and Jesus also cast out many evil spirits. Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone.” Luke 6: 12,13,17-19*

It's a great story, and we'll break it down in a minute. Last week we also spoke of balance (a word that will become familiar throughout this series), as we looked at the semi-circle/pendulum of balancing work and rest, abiding and producing fruit; being and doing.

Today, we'll consider how balancing the relationships of our life will help foster a more passionate life, and the shape we'll use to remind us of this truth today is the triangle. There are three primary relationships in each of our lives, and we must have balance within those three if we are going to live happy, productive, effective, efficient, meaningful, fruitful...passionate lives. Here we go.

### **1. THE UPWARD RELATIONSHIP, WHICH REQUIRES CONVERSATION**

*"One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night." 12*

We begin with the Upward relationship because obviously that is the most important relationship for any of us. If I had to reduce this whole series into one principle, (I'm glad I don't, you're probably wishing I would), the one key to unlocking the secret of living a passionate life, it would be this one; to live a passionate life requires first and foremost and not to be forgotten; that our relationship to and with God is the essential relationship in our life. Time might uselessly be spent perfecting all the other 10 principles we have and will be discussing in the coming weeks, but without first settling the Upward relationship, with its varied demands and blessing; will leave us less than human.

I don't think it too strong to state that any person, any person, who chooses or ignores the offer to live in an intimate relationship with God; is actually less than fully human. We are spiritual beings, and relating to the God who made us such is essential for understanding and enjoying that spirituality; even that humanity. Many times people reject being 'Christian' for fear of all the fun stuff they might have to give up. I contend that the people who are best equipped to authentically enjoy life are those who have committed those very lives to Jesus Christ. Freedom in Christ is one of the major byproducts of loving God, and passionate living.

In the midst of Jesus' amazingly complex and busy life, he observed the priority of spending time alone with God, maintaining that upward connection. I often wonder...if Jesus Christ, the Lord of the universe, the Prince of Peace, the Alpha and Omega, the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God Himself, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords choose the priority of spending time praying to God...WHO IN THE HECK do we think we; that we can neglect or ignore that relationship?

A word about the word Conversation. Obviously we have to talk with God, and allow God to talk with us, to maintain this upward relationship, but the word 'Conversation' means something more. Today it carries no more weight than two parties visiting or discussing something. But in the King James Version of the Bible, and in the language of King James' day, the word conversation had a deeper meaning. Let me give an example: In Philippians 1: 27 in the KJV we read this verse: *"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."* And we might attempt to interpret that verse to mean that our 'talk' ought to reflect, the gospel of Jesus. It would certainly include that, but it means more. The word 'conversation' in 1611, meant 'your whole manner of life', not just what words you said. It meant that our lives were to 'becometh', or 'be worthy of' or 'measure up to', or 'be balanced with' or 'carry the same character' as the gospel of Jesus Christ. We might translate this verse today: "Let the way that you live your life be balanced with the way Jesus lived His"! Jesus prayed to His father and we must too. The Upward relationship requires "conversation." Our kids would translate it: "If you're going to talk the talk, then you better walk the walk." AMEN

## **2. THE INWARD RELATIONSHIP, WHICH REQUIRES COVENANT**

*"At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles...When they came down from the mountain, the disciples stood with Jesus..."* 13

The inward relationship that I am talking about today is not about issues of self-image, or taking care of your self; as important as those might be, those issues are part of the Upward focus mentioned already.

The Inward relationships we must maintain to produce a passionate life, are those intimate relationships filled largely by your closest loved ones, and a few true friends. Jesus chose from among the hundreds who followed him, 72 to be ambassadors, from the 72 he chose 12 to become apostles, and from the apostles he chose 3 (Peter, James and John), to be his friends. I've heard it said that if a person dies and can count 5 true friends in his life; he has been blessed.

King David had the same circles of intimate friends we see in Jesus. He had 3 brave friends who risked their lives to cross enemy lines of a warring nation to fetch their friend and king a drink of water from a well in Israel. David was so moved with their willingness to sacrifice their lives, guess what he did with the water? He poured it out as an offering to God, for he knew he was unworthy to drink something that might have cost his friends their lives.

The second relationship priority we must maintain to achieve passionate lives, are our intimate circle of friends, supporters, advocates, mates, accountability partners; those with whom we can be brutally honest. The kind of friend who'll not think twice about telling you there is spinach on your teeth, or your fly is down. The kind of friend who will sacrifice something personal for no other reason than your personal benefit.

Jesus modeled this for us with the relationships he maintained with his disciples, and especially with the partiality he showed to the inner 3. How do you suppose that made the other 9 feel? Doesn't matter, Jesus knew the truth of which I speak today, and we must learn it to live balanced lives.

All of us need comrades to stand with us in the toughest times. All of us need 'mates' to share the good times. All of us need someone to hold us accountable, and all of us need someone to call at 2am, when some temptation seems insurmountable.

These relationships are defined by covenant. God modeled this for us initially by choosing the nation of Israel to be his 'covenant/chosen' people. Jesus continues this by instituting a 'new covenant' that invites all of us. A covenant is another word for a promise...but stronger! A covenant is another word for a contract...but weightier. A covenant is another word for a commitment...but deeper. When two people stand before this altar and enter the "covenant" of marriage, they are saying more than just 'as long as you make me happy.' No, it's..."until death parts us!" The maintenance of those inner relationships is step number two in living passionate lives.

### **3. THE OUTWARD RELATIONSHIP, WHICH REQUIRES CARING**

*"...surrounded by many of his followers and by the crowds. There were people from all over... Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone."* 13-17

Jesus was uniquely aware that all his relationships needed balance, including this one. Don't you suppose that just once in awhile he might have preferred a relaxing whole day of fishing with his friends, or staying on the mountain retreat with his Father, or maybe even just sleeping in? I bet he did, but he also knew his greater purpose (passion), was to share his life with others who did not yet know him. I am hopeful we might catch this vision as well!

Do you know why we don't have an Evangelism Committee at First Church? Because that job, that ministry, that task; cannot be relegated to a 12 member committee; it is required of all of us to be evangelists; all of us to share our lives with those who don't know Jesus; all of us caring about those who have greater needs than we do.

Dawson Trotman, the founder of The Navigators was fond of saying:  
“Evangelism is nothing more than one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.” Evangelism is hard for most of us because we think we have to be like Billy Graham, we don’t!

Sharing our lives with those who don’t know Jesus is a natural result of maintaining relationships with people who don’t know Jesus. The longer you are a Christian the more intentional you must be to make sure that at least some of your acquaintances are not yet Christians. We need to take a more holistic or natural approach to thinking about evangelism. It’s doesn’t have to include a memorized recitation of the 4 spiritual laws, just listening, and sharing what God means to you, and is doing for you. It doesn’t have to include a pounding with the 12 lb King James Bible, just caring enough about someone to be their friend, until and even after Jesus becomes their friend too!

My friends, I want you to take the guilt garment off. Just live your life, and don’t be afraid to say a good word for Jesus, and I can guarantee you that God will bring people into your life/path who He wants you to touch. It begins with caring. The nature of the Christian life is caring. We must care that people around us are going to hell if they don’t know Jesus. We must care that people around us are going to bed hungry, or without medicine, or shelter, or clothing. It begins with caring. No one will care how much you know, until they know how much you care! Jesus cared about the least, the last, the lost...US! And we must care too!

In conclusion: The Passionate Life is within our grasp. We have discussed another principle; balancing the three primary Relationships of Life. Here is the message in a nutshell to help you remember. You receive from God; you share together what God has given you; and you give to others what you have. That is how you live a balanced relational life; up, in, out! Get it? Got it! Good!

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