

## Regaining purified passion

On the surface, shallow, superficial. Some words that describe how I've felt for quite some time. Deep inside I felt like I was doing the bare necessities, just enough to get by. But I did not connect to God on a deeper level anymore. Especially reading His Word (and contemplating about it) did not attract me. I was preoccupied with all kinds of things. It's reflected in a poem I wrote in that period.

### First love

Sunday church.  
Where's my smile?  
Monday doubts.  
Or denial.

Tuesday prayer.  
Got to run.  
Wednesday course.  
On and on.

Thursday gone.  
Worries care.  
Friday left.  
Heart's not there.

Saturday.  
Do loop while.  
Sunday church.  
Where's my smile?

My routine.  
I forgot.  
Thinking of.  
My first love.

I guess I'm not the only one who has experienced these periods of losing the first love in some sort of way. No doubt there are a dozen of writings out there about regaining that pure passion. Probably they're full of "keys", "steps" and "solutions".

I dare not write that way. For I do not claim to have found "the way", I can only testify what worked and still works for me.

### Clutter

Have you ever tried to have a conversation in a café where the music is very loud (you can't even hear yourself think)? Exactly: it wears you out, makes your voice gruff and it's impossible to really communicate.

Simple metaphor to describe what was hindering my mind. I won't blame the information age we live in, because that takes the responsibility away from me and it leaves me powerless since I cannot change the common tendency to bombard with information. It's my responsibility what I choose to see, read, hear, absorb. And I diagnosed myself with a bad case of TMI<sup>1</sup>. My mind was full, cluttered by seemingly important things. No time and no room to tap into God's love and the rest He provides.

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<sup>1</sup> Too much information.

### **Habits**

I think it's in the genes of man to live in patterns, to have habits. I'm glad we are designed that way, because I do not have to think about whether I am going to have breakfast and get dressed for work or not: I just do it. Think about the number of automatisms you have built in. Do you have to think about the question if you should eat? Of course not, your body will urge you to.

I saw that it works the same in the area of following Jesus. I need spiritual food, so I will try to find something to fill myself with. The habits I develop, whether they are good or bad, determine how open I am to the Holy Spirit. What kind of habits am I talking about? I could give a list of my own habits, but that won't trigger your thought process. It's for you to find out what these habits are in your own life. Some of them might be good, a couple might need some adjustments and others should be plucked by the root. Let the Spirit tell you what habits (disciplines) He wants you to learn, reinvent or unlearn.

Just as soldiers need training to develop automatisms to be effective on the battlefield, we need training to develop automatisms. In summation: following Jesus involves discipline. Without it you cannot persevere. This doesn't mean it's a lifeless set of routines and that there is no spontaneity or creativity. No, it's a way to submit your will to the Holy Spirit so that He can teach you day by day.

### **Tunnel vision**

Do you (know or) remember the feeling of falling in love? Everything revolves around that person. There's no one else and you are so happy to only think about...that special person. It's a strange phenomena but it feels so good to have a tunnel vision. Nothing can come between you and your loved one and you won't allow anything to disturb your relationship. Even to the point of neglecting your duties on work, for your study or whatever you're supposed to do. This is very healthy for a certain amount of time I think.

After the pink clouds your feet meet the ground again. Other things claim to deserve priority again and some of them actually do. Therefore, part of maintaining love becomes a matter listing priorities in such a way that the one you love sees her/his needs met. I assume you know that you sometimes have to give up things in order to invest in the other.

### **Reconsideration**

I felt like I needed to reconsider how much time I'd put into "these important things". Jesus talks about many things we find important but that He considers God's responsibility to take care of. Again I do not want to give a list of what these things could be: find out. Read about it in God's Word. For instance Matthew 6:25-34, but there are more passages that will ease your mind: God provides. Obey Him and do not think you have to be in control: Proverbs 3:5-6 *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."* I challenge you to find out how many things you can let go off in the knowledge that God will provide these things for you.

Besides I felt that I wanted to please some important people in my life a little too much. Proverbs 29:25 *"Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe."* He who tries to please everybody pleases nobody. I needed (and still need) to realize that I do not depend on the good opinion of others, no matter how important they might seem. If I let the affirmation of others lead me I will not be free. Aaron feared the people in Moses' absence and made the golden calf (Ex 32:22-24). Saul lost the kingdom for fearing the people and sparing Agag (I Sam 15:24). Herod feared the people, his wife, and his friends, so he killed John (Matt 14:6-11). Pilate feared the people and his political relationship with Caesar (John 19:11-16). Peter both denied the Lord out of fear of others (Matt 26:69-75) and compromised the gospel (Gal 2:11-13). For me it was and is a choice to first listen to God and not to be image conscious. It delivers me from the stress to please people. It's not that I don't want to please others. It's just not my motivation anymore. Do you recognize anything for yourself?

**Purified**

Step by step I am regaining passion. And it's different from my first passion: in some sort of way it has been purified. Because it involves more deliberate choices it's more mature. I have discovered new ways to relate to God. For instance: He's got a lot of humour, so I can be goofy and actually be close to Him. I'm glad that He's nothing like the over serious types you see walking around with frowned faces having a realistic (read pessimistic) view. Even when I unplug, I can involve Him in that. He's given that gift of humour to me and I can share it with Him. And I can continue writing about more ways, but it comes down to this. He's involved in more aspects of my life than before.

**Just a beginning...without end**

I'm looking forward to experiencing more of this as God will gradually show me what choices to make. There is no formula, no manual to find that first love again, but if you are having difficulty in this area I hope you are triggered to wrestle with God. He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.