

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

Dear Colleagues,

A SINGULAR PASSION

Passion is the central issue of the Christian life. Not a passion to save the world. Or a passion to raise godly children. Or a passion to feed the hungry. Or a passion for *any* noble cause or ideal. But simply a passion to know Jesus Christ on the most intimate of terms. Everything else by way of comparison is "rubbish". Literally, "that which is thrown to the dogs."

"...I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ...My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times." (Phil. 3:8b; Psa. 119:20)

Jesus summarized the sum total of Old Testament teaching with two commands:

- (1) *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."* (Mk. 12:30) That is the essence of passion: Loving God without reservation or compromise with every fiber of your being. With all your heart, soul, mind and strength. The validation of our love for Him is our unequivocal obedience to His word. *"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me..."* (Jn. 14:21a)
- (2) *"Love your neighbor as yourself."* (Mk. 12:31) This second passion is subservient to the first and naturally flows from it: (Mk. 6:31b) Thus, service done in the name of Christ is the natural result of one's passion to know and love God.

Our vocation, our mission in life, our "one thing" is simply to know Jesus Christ; to walk in union and communion with Him; making the knowledge and pursuit of Him our one consuming obsession. As Paul stated, *"For to me, to live is Christ...Christ...is your life..."* (Phil. 1:21a; Col. 3:4b) Possessed by this singular passion, He will begin transforming us into his likeness as evidenced by purity of heart, compassion, gentleness, humility, sacrificial service to others, etc.

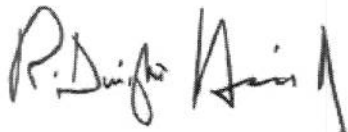
But we are to allow Him to accomplish the transformation in and through us. There are two ways to utilize an automobile: (1) Get behind it and push it down the road, or (2) Get in and let the engine do the work for you. Thus, the process of inner transformation can either be a laborious but futile endeavor on our part, or a Divinely empowered progression. It all depends upon whether or not the Source of the power is released for its intended purpose.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20) (See Phil. 4:13; 1 Thess. 5:10)

Fruitfulness will naturally follow from this inner transformation, because the very life of Jesus is being lived out through us, his cleansed and available vessel.

"If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work...I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing..." (2 Tim. 2:21; Jn. 15:5)

QUESTION: Would a careful observer of your life conclude that your primary passion in life is in fact knowing and loving God? Or that your primary passion is service for Him? Or, God forbid, that your principal passion in life is chasing the perishing tinsel of this world?



R. Dwight Hill

A Singular Passion

- 1) What are you passionate about? Is it ND football? IU Basketball? Sports in General? Building a Business? Growing your Church? Raising your kids? Building your Marriage? Sharing your Faith? Knowing Christ? When looking at your schedule, your checkbook, etc. Does this reflect what you are passionate about?

- 2) What does (or would) a passion for God look like to the people who observe you each day (spouse, co-workers, kids, neighbors, friends etc)?

- 3) How can we cultivate a Passion for Christ in our life?

- 4) How do you live out the command to love your neighbor as yourself?

- 5) Philippians 3:8 says “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of know Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” Is there anything in your life that you need to throw out in the trash in order to enjoy the greatness of knowing Christ fully?

- 6) When you think back over the years how have you seen Christ transform you? In what areas?

- 7) Terry Taylor (former US President of the Navigators) once said “You have time in life for one passion. Pick your passion carefully. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? (Consider Phil 3:8 and Mark 12:30-31)