

A 6-WEEK, NO-HOMEWORK BIBLE STUDY

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Ignite Your Passion for God

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Kay Arthur & Mark Sheldrake

4minute
BIBLE STUDIES

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PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



WATERBROOK
P R E S S

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This small-group study is for people who are interested in learning for themselves more about what the Bible says on various subjects, but who have only limited time to meet together. It's ideal, for example, for a lunch group at work, an early morning men's group, a young mothers' group meeting in a home, a Sunday-school class, or even family devotions. (It's also ideal for small groups that typically have longer meeting times—such as evening groups or Saturday morning groups—but want to devote only a portion of their time together to actual study, while reserving the rest for prayer, fellowship, or other activities.)

This book is designed so that all the group's participants will complete each lesson's study activities *at the same time*. Discussing your insights drawn from what God says about the subject reveals exciting, life-impacting truths.

Although it's a group study, you'll need a facilitator to lead the study and keep the discussion moving. If *you* are your group's facilitator, the leader, here are some helpful points for making your job easier:

- Go through the lesson and mark the text before you lead the group. This will give you increased familiarity with the material and will enable you to facilitate the group with greater ease. It may be easier for you to lead the group through the instructions for marking if you, as a leader, choose a specific color for each symbol you mark.
- As you lead the group, start at the beginning of the text and simply read it aloud in the order it appears in the lesson, including the Insight boxes, which appear throughout. Work through the lesson together, observing and discussing what you

learn. As you read the Scripture verses, have the group say aloud the word they are marking in the text.

- The discussion questions are there simply to help you cover the material. As the class moves into the discussion, many times you will find that they will cover the questions on their own. Remember, the discussion questions are there to guide the group through the topic, not to squelch discussion.
- Remember how important it is for people to verbalize their answers and discoveries. This greatly strengthens their personal understanding of each week's lesson. Try to ensure that everyone has plenty of opportunity to contribute to each week's discussions.
- Keep the discussion moving. This may mean spending more time on some parts of the study than on others. If necessary, you should feel free to spread out a lesson over more than one session. However, remember that you don't want to slow the pace too much. It's much better to leave everyone wanting more than to have people dropping out because of declining interest.
- If the validity or accuracy of some of the answers seems questionable, you can gently and cheerfully remind the group to stay focused on the truth of the Scriptures. Your object is to learn what the Bible says, not to engage in human philosophy. Simply stick with the Scriptures and give God the opportunity to speak. His Word *is* truth (John 17:17)!

IGNITE YOUR PASSION FOR GOD

Have you ever jumped in the car, started it, and then found yourself at your destination with no clear idea of how you got there?

It's a weird feeling to realize you are awake but mentally you have checked out. What's even worse is when operating on autopilot places you on a road you never intended, such as when you realize you're driving to work when you planned to go to the grocery store.

A similar situation can occur in our spiritual lives when we operate on autopilot, doing things out of habit rather than out of a burning passion to serve God.

Sadly, so many of us find at different times in our spiritual journey that we've developed apathy toward the things of God. The dictionary describes *apathy* as "the absence or suppression of passion, emotion, or excitement."

It's a dullness of heart that affects the way you look

at life. In the life of a believer, spiritual apathy might appear as a subtly decreasing interest in God and the things of God. A dullness of hearing when it comes to reading the Word of God and to hearing about the work of God. It's a lethargy, a sluggish feeling toward anything Christian.

Do you find yourself...

- reluctant to gather with other believers?
- finding multiple reasons to miss church, Bible study, and prayer meetings?
- singing the hymns and choruses rote, as empty words on the screen or in a book?
- constantly looking to the negative aspects of church and grumbling about them?
- turning not to the Bible but to the latest quick-fix spiritual growth book?

Does this describe your life? Are you noticing others around you who are on fire for Jesus? And do you wonder how you can ignite a fire that will propel you toward a deeper, more meaningful understanding of God?

Over the next six lessons we will explore why and how we become apathetic to the things of God. Our prayer is that through these lessons you will open your heart and mind to the truths of God and let them ignite a passion and fire that cannot be extinguished.

WEEK ONE

Perhaps you've never truly known a burning passion for spiritual things. Or maybe your love for Jesus once burned brightly and He was your highest priority in life, but now the coals are barely glowing and your heart seems to be growing colder.

What is it that prevents you from experiencing an excitement for the things of God?


This week we will look at Scripture passages that give us insight into some things that smother our spiritual fires.

OBSERVE

Old and advanced in years, King David chose his son Solomon to be the next king of Israel. As David neared death, he charged Solomon to “Be strong...show yourself a man” (1 Kings 2:2). He urged his son to walk in God’s ways and “keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses” (2:3). Soon after this, David died and, as 1 Kings 2:46 tells us, “Thus the kingdom was established in the hands of Solomon.”

Let’s see what happened next and what we can learn for our lives.

Leader: Read 1 Kings 3:1–9 aloud. Have the group say aloud and...

- mark with a downward semicircle, like this , every reference to **Solomon**, including pronouns and synonyms.

1 KINGS 3:1–9

¹ Then Solomon formed a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh’s daughter and brought her to

the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem.

2 The people were still sacrificing on the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days.

3 Now Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.

4 The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place; Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

- mark every reference to **the Lord**, including pronouns such as **You** and synonyms such as **God**, with a triangle:



- underline the word **discern**.

As you read the text, it's helpful to have the group say the key words aloud as they mark them. This way everyone will be sure they are marking every occurrence of the word, including any synonymous words or phrases. Do this throughout the study.

DISCUSS

- How is Solomon described in these verses?

- What does verse 3 reveal about Solomon's behavior as king?

- What does this tell you about Solomon's heart toward God?

⁵ In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, "Ask what you wish Me to give you."

⁶ Then Solomon said, "You have shown great lovingkindness to Your servant David my father, according as he walked before You in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward You; and You have reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

⁷ "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my

father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.

8 “Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted.

9 “So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”

1 KINGS 3:10–15



10 It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing.

- What did Solomon request of God?
- What is the significance of his request in light of verse 7?

OBSERVE

Solomon had put his request before the Lord: he wanted a discerning heart to know the difference between good and evil so he could lead God’s people. How did God respond to this request?

Leader: Read 1 Kings 3:10–15 aloud and have the group...

- mark every reference to **Solomon**, including pronouns, with a semi-circle: 
- draw a triangle over every reference to **the Lord**, including **You** and **God**: 
- underline the words **discernment** and **discerning**.

DISCUSS

- What was God's response to Solomon's request? What reason did God give?

¹¹ God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice,

¹² behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you.

¹³ "I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among

the kings like you all your days.

14 “If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.”

15 Then Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and made peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

1 KINGS 11:1–11

1 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women...

2 from the nations concerning which the


- When Solomon made his request before God, who or what was Solomon’s greatest concern? Look back at verse 8 on page 6. Don’t miss a detail in respect to the people.
- What insight does this give you into Solomon’s heart, his passion for God?

OBSERVE

God answered Solomon’s prayer. He gave him “wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind” (1 Kings 4:29) so that people came from all over to hear his wisdom. The next few chapters of 1 Kings detail how Solomon built the house of the

Lord, and the Lord's glory and presence filled it. He then spent thirteen years building his own house. King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom (1 Kings 10:23). Then we come to 1 Kings 11.

Leader: *Read 1 Kings 11:1–11 and have the group...*

- *mark the references to **Solomon** as before.*
- *draw a heart over every reference to **the heart**, like this: *
- *mark the references to **the Lord** with a triangle.*

DISCUSS

- What do you learn from marking the references to Solomon's heart? Don't miss a detail!

LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love.

³ He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.

⁴ For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the

goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.

6 Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.

7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon.

8 Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

- According to verse 6, where did Solomon fail?
- What happened as a result?

- What does the text tell you about the Lord's feeling and response to Solomon?

⁹ Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded.

¹¹ So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant."
- What in your life has the potential to draw your heart away from the Lord?

EXODUS 20:1–6

1 Then God spoke all these words, saying,

2 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.

4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

5 “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers

OBSERVE

Leader: Read Exodus 20:1–6 and have the group...

- mark all references to **the Lord**, including pronouns, with a triangle.
- mark **gods** and **idols**, including synonyms and pronouns, with a big **I**.
- draw a heart over the word **love**.

DISCUSS

- What did you learn about God?
- List what you learned from marking the references to idols.
- If an idol is anything that moves God out of His rightful place, anything that you bow down to, give greater worth than you give to God, what would be some common idols in your culture? Among your peers?

INSIGHT

Idol worship does not necessarily mean we have a golden calf or wooden image on our mantle that we bow to three times a day. An idol can be anything we put above our relationship with God, or whatever steals our heart away from God. It can be money, power, relationships—anything we treasure above God. In Colossians 3:5 we read that greed is a form of idolatry.

- From what you've observed in your life and in others, in what ways do idols draw us away from God? Seek to smother our passion for God?
- Is anything in your life taking priority over God? Would you consider it an idol? Why or why not?

on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

DEUTERONOMY 30:15–20

15 See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity;

16 in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it.

17 But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them,

18 I declare to you today that you shall

OBSERVE

God is clear about His expectations for those who claim to follow Him. Let's look at what God told His people, Israel, in Deuteronomy, just before He took them into the Promised Land.

Leader: Read Deuteronomy 30:15–20. Have the group...

- draw a triangle over every reference to **the Lord**, including pronouns.
- underline every reference to **the Israelites**, including **you** and **your**.
- mark **heart** and **love** with a heart.

INSIGHT

Deuteronomy is the fifth book of the Law, also known as the Torah. The idea behind the word *Torah* is “to inform, instruct, and guide.”

DISCUSS

- What did you learn from marking the references to God? What choice was He offering?

- God gave three clear instructions for how His people should live. What are they? (Hint: look at verse 16.) Number the instructions as you find them in the text.
- What evidence of spiritual passion do you find in these verses? What precedes obeying God and holding fast to Him?
- In Scripture the word *but* indicates a contrast. What contrast is made in this passage?
- So we don't miss it, what does God say will draw us away from Him?
- What are the consequences of our heart turning away from God? What does it look like when we turn toward Him?
- What do verses 19–20 say regarding those who choose to obey?

surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it.

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants,

²⁰ by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.

MARK 12:28–34

28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?”

29 Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God is one LORD;

30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

31 “The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other

OBSERVE

Let’s jump ahead to the New Testament, where Jesus referred to the Deuteronomy 30 passage to answer a question from a scribe, who was an expert in the Law.

Leader: Read Mark 12:28–34 and have the group...

- underline **Israel** and the pronouns **you** and **your** in reference to the people.
- draw a heart over the word **love**.

DISCUSS

- What did Jesus say was the foremost commandment? Underline it.
- What was the second commandment? Underline it.

- What did you learn about love in this passage?
 - What helpful descriptions, if any, do you find regarding what it looks like to have passion for God?
 - Just so you don't miss it, to what degree are we to love God?
 - How would following these commandments shape our daily choices?
- commandment greater than these.”
- 32** The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that He is One, and there is no one else besides Him;
- 33** and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”
- 34** When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

WRAP IT UP

We saw in our study this week how our hearts can be drawn away from loving God when we allow anything or anyone to take precedence over Him.

In Matthew 6:21, Jesus taught that where our treasure lies, our hearts will follow. Though Solomon initially found his treasure in the Lord, it seems as he grew older, he found his treasure in his wives and was therefore drawn to false gods.

Like Solomon, so many believers have left their first love and don't know it. They've given a portion of their hearts over to their own desires and the things of this world, mistakenly believing they can serve both.

Are you trying to make room in your heart for both the kingdom of God and the treasures of this world? It will never work out. God tells us He is a jealous God. He must be first. You can't be consumed with love and passion for Jesus Christ if you have a divided heart.

The first step in moving forward is to confess to God that you have left your first love. Repent—have a change of mind, of heart. Tell God you want to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Ask Him to remove the idols that have crowded into your life and to kindle the fire of passion in your heart.