



## Am I Passionate or Complacent About Jesus?

**Philippians 3:13: (NASB) *Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do... forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead***



Every Christian loves Jesus, and every Christian wants to be acceptable to him. None of us ever wants to take his sacrifice on our behalf for granted. We do not want to fall into a pattern of complacency where we do not appreciate the blessings he gives us. While these are all well-stated intentions, we need to dig in much deeper to see how to make them well-lived principles. How do we actually live our love for Jesus and what role does passion play in that life? Where do the dangers of complacency lurk? Is all passion positive? Is feeling content really expressing a lack of appreciation for what God does for us? Fortunately, the Scriptures give us very clear answers to all of these.

### Merriam Webster Online Dictionary:

Complacency: (noun)

- 1: self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies
- 2: an instance of usually unaware or uninformed self-satisfaction

Passion: (noun)

- 1: a strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement for something or about doing something
- 2: a strong feeling (such as anger) that causes you to act in a dangerous way
- 3: a strong sexual or romantic feeling for someone

Both complacency and passion can mess up our Christian walk.



**The stagnation and chaos rings, *Why Comfort Will Ruin Your Life*, Bill Eckstrom, TEDx Talk**

- *Let me say that again. What makes you comfortable can ruin you, and only in a state of discomfort can you continually grow. Pretty quickly I became motivated to start a new journey, and after a couple years of work with my new team and a PhD friend at the University of Nebraska we had this epiphany on how to illustrate and apply the science of discomfort and growth. We called the concept the "Growth Rings." The growth rings represent living environments that promote or hinder growth, and that includes everything from your place of work to even a fishbowl. So, the first growth ring represents a low performing, low-growth environment called stagnation. Stagnation is understood by having to follow too many steps and permissions of minutia, thus stifles creativity, independent thought and action. To imagine an environment such as this, think no further than our state and federal governments. Now, the antithesis of stagnation is chaos - also low growth and low performing. Chaos can be caused by internal or external events or conditions. We see chaos occur at times in business mergers, natural disasters, and horrific events like 9/11. Chaos is having zero predictability or control over inputs and outcomes.*

**Growth  
Rings**



**CHAOS**

**STAGNATION**



Bill Eckstrom goes on to explain that what dictates the size of a goldfish is its environment. While a fishbowl is safe, it is very limiting in most every way. A goldfish can grow to huge proportions when in a pond. Where we live, work and play are proverbial fishbowls that dictate our growth.



What does this mean for our Christian life? Complacency focuses on the experiences of the past and the comfort of the present.

### We start with an example of complacency in action as shown by the scribes and Pharisees:

**Matthew 23:1-7:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; <sup>3</sup>therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. <sup>4</sup>They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.

...In the chair of Moses - we do not picture Moses sitting around much! The Pharisees were sitting in a place of authority, but we never saw Moses sitting. He stood, led, confronted - the Pharisees took a high level of leadership, making it a comfortable place to sit. As a result, they watered down spiritual leadership.

### In the midst of this complacent occupation and position of spiritual authority, the scribes and Pharisees also displayed a level of passion:

<sup>5</sup>But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. <sup>6</sup>They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, <sup>7</sup>and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

**Phylacteries** - one of two small black leather cube-shaped cases containing Torah texts written on parchment. One is worn on the arm facing the heart and the other on the forehead. It is a reminder to fulfill the Law with head and heart. The Pharisees were making these and their tassels on their clothing larger than the normal size so they would be sure to be noticed, showing superior piety. For us, this might be making sure everyone knows our good deeds or how much money we give to charity.



Going to church as a child, I remember the minister would wear special colored robes and scarves that went to the ground. I was confused because we learned about Jesus and the disciples in Sunday School, and coming into the church service, I did not picture any of them the way this minister looked. It was confusing to me.



We want to stay away from the lauding of a position, focusing instead on the executing of a responsibility. Jesus called the Pharisees out on this point.

Complacency actually gives permission for passion to thrive as long as it operates within the past and the comfort of the present. Complacency can water down our passion.

Complacency can happen when, as Christians, we breathe a sigh of relief believing that we are saved, no matter what we do.



**Episode 1050:  
What Does it Mean  
to be Saved?**

Clarifying salvation's true biblical meaning and applications

The Prosperity Gospel today is all about being comfortable, the exact opposite of what we are called to in Christianity. We can be passionate about finding comfort, but that is not what Jesus was about.

### Next is an example of the misplaced passion of Saul of Tarsus:

**Acts 26:9-14: (NASB)** <sup>9</sup>So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup>And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup>And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

*Furiously enraged* - this was improper passion. What happened to *love thy neighbor* and fulfilling the Law? Saul (later the Apostle Paul) was building up unlawful passions and the chief priests blessed his efforts.

Saul's passion consumed him. He would serve God by destroying Christianity at all costs. It seems most people's "passion" for Christ is a place of comfort and not a place of scriptural principle. This was the same for Saul. He was comfortable in chasing down innocent Christians.

### Then Jesus appeared:

<sup>12</sup>While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, <sup>13</sup>at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. <sup>14</sup>And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.



...kick against the goads (King James Version: kick against the pricks) - goads were thin pieces of timber with pointy ends of iron used to encourage a stubborn ox to move. Sometimes an ox would kick against it, hurting itself against the sharp point. The effect of *kicking against the goads* is stabbing yourself. This is a way of saying Saul's actions were futile, as he was headed in the wrong direction. Jesus was goading, or steering him, in the right direction.

Though Saul's passion was out of control and actually feeding the complacent authority of the chief priests, he was seeking God in his heart. Jesus proved his heavenly authority and Saul instantly redirected his passion. This is a wonderful example of putting passion in the right place.





Is my passion contributing to feeding a broken and unfulfilled life?

Is my passion helping me and those around me to grow towards Jesus or to grow in complacency?

How is the Bible transforming me? Am I consuming the “comfort food” of complacency or the “high-protein diet” of spiritual growth?

Is my “fish bowl” too small?

We choose what we spiritually feed ourselves - it is not just what we consume in church once a week. We need to be clear about our spiritual passion and complacency.

It is already obvious that we cannot just apply ourselves to our passion without knowing where it will lead.

**How do we determine which of our passions will bring spiritual fruit and which will bring chaos?**

By simultaneously paying attention to the dangers of complacency and the benefits of appropriately-focused passion, we can develop a clear understanding of what to look for and what to do. Our whole objective here is to adopt a passion that feeds off being a true disciple of Jesus.

The complacency revealed in the following audio clip will give us a beginning contrast point for what discipleship-fueled passion looks like:



**The order ring, Why Comfort Will Ruin Your Life, Bill Eckstrom, TEDx Talk**

- Coming back down the growth rings, next to stagnation is the most desirable environment: order. Order is knowing that what you do or what is happening in your environment leads to a predictable outcome, and in predictability comfort is found. But comfort is also what makes order so dangerous because science shows that anytime you continually do something - or even think about something the same way - you'll eventually stop growing. And this applies to every living thing, even our dog. You see, if Aspen had a chance, she'd choose comfort six days a week and twice on Sundays. But too much growth-limiting order would have prevented her from becoming a therapy dog. And had this been allowed, think of the lives this gentle soul would not be touching today. So, before your order continues to limit the way you think and act, remember what I said earlier. Growth only occurs in a state of discomfort.*

**Growth  
Rings**



**CHAOS**

**ORDER**

**STAGNATION**

We are trying to find balance. Too much passion makes us crazy and too much comfort makes us lazy. Even comfort can be an idol. But sometimes seeking comfort and order is appropriate - we call that rest. We absolutely need physical and mental rest in order to not burn out to the point where we are of no use to anyone. We have to take the scriptural principles of Sabbath to heart.



**Jesus upended the religious order of his day and exemplified the passion of living to do God's will:**

**Luke 9:23:** (NASB) *And he was saying to them all, If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

In those days, to “take up a cross” meant torture and death. This was radical thinking for their time, and our time!



Examining what discipleship is and what it is not



Our discipleship cannot be emotion-fueled, peer pressure-fueled or comfort-fueled.

**The prophet Habakkuk was given tremendous insight and hope through a vision, though he saw it as a catastrophic series of events:**

**Habakkuk 1:1-4:** (NASB) *<sup>1</sup>The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw. <sup>2</sup>How long, O LORD, will I call for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, Violence! Yet You do not save. <sup>3</sup>Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises. <sup>4</sup>Therefore the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore justice comes out perverted.*

Haven't we all felt this way at some point? *God, are You listening? Don't You see what is happening here? What are You doing about it?*

Habakkuk saw the chaos and misery of sin and rebellion against God as overwhelming forces. He went on to basically say to God: You are mighty! Why don't You stop this mess?

The next audio clip might help us understand how Habakkuk was able to accept the growth God presented to him:

**The complexity ring, Why Comfort Will Ruin Your Life, Bill Eckstrom, TEDx Talk**

- *When you feel discomfort hit, that means you've entered the complexity ring. Complexity is nothing more than changed order. But when your order is changed outcomes are no longer predictable, and it's unpredictability that makes you uncomfortable. And when most times your visceral response to discomfort is no, you can actually learn how empowering it is to consciously acknowledge discomfort. And then, when appropriate, choose complexity over order. I know seeking discomfort sounds odd and not many people do it, but you have to learn to embrace it because it's the only environment where sustained or exponential growth can occur.*

**Growth  
Rings**





One small example is when I had the opportunity to go to Israel with our church group. It was definitely outside of my comfort zone - going to a foreign country, different language, different currency, grueling schedule, but being able to “see” the Bible was invaluable and worth any anxiety.

### But order is good, right?

1 Corinthians 14:33: (New International Version) *For God is not a God of disorder but of peace...*

We can use the times we have order in our lives as a big reset button to get strength in the Lord until we have to deal with the next big thing that comes upon us. But order should be a tool to help us grow in our Christian walk and not be the destination of relaxation for us.



Life WILL bring us to that complexity ring. This is what Habakkuk was feeling. God’s answer back to him was that all was in accordance with His plan. Habakkuk needed to develop passion for the knowledge of God’s future plans unfolding, in spite of the chaos of his day.

### He needed to see the bigger picture and not just react to the circumstances of his current events:

Habakkuk 2:1-3: (NASB) *<sup>1</sup>I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved. <sup>2</sup>Then the LORD answered me and said, Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets that the one who reads it may run. <sup>3</sup>For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it for it will certainly come, it will not delay.*

As a result, Habakkuk stopped being passionate about trying to correct God about all the evil he saw from his perspective and started seeing it from God’s ultimate vantage point. Wouldn’t this apply to us? We need to learn God’s plan so that we can bring comfort to those around us.

*Though it tarries, wait for it* - it might seem to take a long time, but in God’s plan, evil will be permitted only for a time and for an eternal lesson. Sin brings sorrow and pain. Obedience to God’s righteous laws brings happiness and blessings.

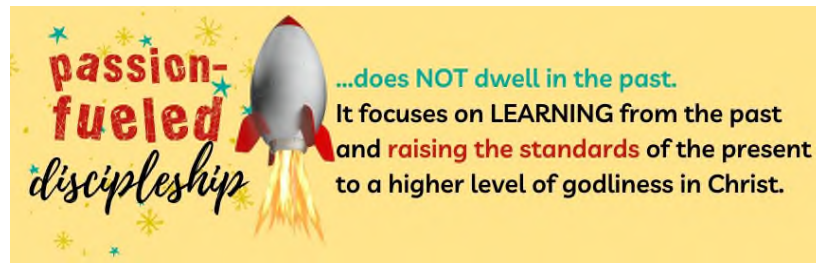
Habakkuk’s passion was taking what God told him and making it available to others. This is passion with a godly focus.



Is my passion based on a clear understanding of what God’s plan will bring and what my potential role might be?

Is this understanding just knowledge or does it move me?

We can go to church, read Scriptures and learn. But are we moved to action - not only from an emotional perspective - like Habakkuk?



So many people are stuck with either guilt, regret or letting injustices against them fester. These all put up unnecessary roadblocks to get to our future. Our past follows us but should not be tied around our leg, preventing us from moving forward.



We have to learn to put our past into a box, referencing it only when necessary. It should not be dragging us down.

### Instilling godly passion, of necessity, includes warnings against complacency:

**Philippians 3:1-11:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. <sup>2</sup>Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; <sup>3</sup>for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: <sup>5</sup>circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.



Paul's  
impressive  
resumé!

Paul could have dwelled in his past but he did not. He walked away from his past because serving Christ was a higher calling.

### Godly passion takes the lessons of what was, couples them with the lessons of what now is, and sets us up for a productive present:

<sup>7</sup>But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, <sup>9</sup>and may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, <sup>10</sup>that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death; <sup>11</sup>in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

*I count them but rubbish* - in other words: My past is trash. I learned from it and threw the rest away. Being in Christ is everything.

He learned from the experiences of the past, but all the status and elevation he had obtained before were worth nothing in comparison to being in Christ - which is everything. His past brought him here to Christ - Thank you, "Past," - now go away. He was on a new path, a stronger path, driven not by emotion, but by God's providence and God's holy word.





Does my passion accept what my past has taught me, while walking away from it?

Does it fuel the discipleship principles of my present and does it drive me to serve God?

Is my passion bringing me towards God through Christ or towards something else?

We need to ask ourselves these important questions.

Not only do we need to see the big picture, but we also need to be engaged in how that vision changes us right now.

**Does our passion-fueled discipleship have to adhere to a strict rulebook of orders so we can flourish in Christ?**

Just because we have talked about having order in our lives as being fertile ground for complacency is not an excuse to avoid order! On the contrary, spiritual passion flourishes on doing God's will and NOT our own. That is exactly what Jesus did. Our challenge is to have our order come from God and not ourselves.



Since we have not talked too much about Jesus, maybe this title should have been, Am I Passionate or Complacent About the Gospel Message!

It is impossible to separate Jesus from the gospel message. *Take up your cross and follow me* - it cost him to deliver this message of "good news." He wants us to follow him and be involved in the delivery of that good news, too, and understand it so we can be like him. If we want to love Jesus then we need to love the message of the gospel. We need to love the sacrifice, the opportunity, the goodness, the hope, the kingdom and the resurrection because this is what Jesus lived for. Just loving Jesus is nice, but we need to expand on that.



Some people, especially those who may have become Christians later in life, may seem to be over-the-top gushing about their love for Jesus. This might make us feel uncomfortable. Does this kind of witness turn some people off instead of attracting them to the message, as it comes on a little strong? If I am not like that, does it mean my faith is weaker?

We need to be careful about emotion. It is good in its place, but emotion is not the driver of the gospel. If we are trying to witness about Jesus to others and we are gushing, we might be missing the whole point for the person we are witnessing to. The witness should be about the message of hope, salvation and the purpose of the death of Jesus. He died not just for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world. There is a resurrection for all and the opportunity for reconciliation with God! We want to be careful not to be overly emotional, even though this message fills us with joy, because too much emotion can cloud the message of the good news. Jesus was about the gospel. When we talk about Jesus it is necessary that we discuss the gospel as well.





## Complexity Triggers #1 and #2, *Why Comfort Will Ruin Your Life*, Bill Eckstrom, TEDx Talk

- *Complexity Trigger #1 is it can be forced upon you. When I got fired, I didn't have a chance to stay in order. Complexity was selected for me, and when this happens, how much you grow depends on how you respond to it. Now, I could have remained angry. I could have used it as an excuse, but what I actually learned is that I sucked as an employee, and I'm much better off accepting the risks of running my own company. Complexity Trigger #2: Someone can help you get there. This is the role of parents, teachers, coaches and bosses because left on their own, people will consciously or subconsciously select the comfort of order, and they then need to be pushed into complexity in order to continue growing.*

Talk about jumping into complexity - try starting a weekly radio program when you have never done one before! Jonathan, what have you learned in the past 23 years about passion and focus in the experience of Christian Questions?



This is a “big picture” lesson. I count it a privilege to be a part of the Christian Questions team and to co-labor with over 50 volunteers. Everyone’s passion inspires me to do my part as best as I can in sharing God’s wonderful plan of salvation for all. My passion comes from the reality that God is love and that he called me to represent His truth. The weight of responsibility drives me. What I’ve learned over the last 23 years in God’s word through Christian Questions is beyond what I could have done on my own. It’s a gift I never want to take for granted. I thank the Lord for His kindness shown to me and those who receive a blessing from our efforts.

It is a growth experience that takes a lot of work and a lot of change, involving a lot of shaking up. The complexity is good! It forces us beyond our emotions and into something higher.



**Athletes are great examples here. Practice does not make perfect - perfect practice makes perfect - we have to practice the right things:**

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: (NASB) <sup>24</sup>Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. <sup>25</sup>Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

We need to get our heads right to get into the game. Exercise self-control in all things. Self-control comes from our mind.



The mental side of the game is focus, abiding by the rules, self-control, knowing what victory looks like. We have to listen to the coach! Every good athlete has a great coach and Jesus is ours. We follow his guidance.

### Next is the physical side - the “doing” side of the game:

<sup>26</sup>Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;  
<sup>27</sup>but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Apply muscle memory, both physical and mental, to the actual daily engagement of discipleship. We have to learn it so well that it becomes somewhat instinctive to follow through in *agape* (love without expectations) fashion. Our automatic reaction should be to grow and learn these instincts over time. This does not come naturally but is developed within us.



### Paul walks us through the discipleship process of transformation in a simple way here:

Philippians 4:4-9: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! <sup>5</sup>Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Words like *gentle spirit*, *be anxious for nothing*, *peace of God* - do not sound passionate; they sound calm. But there is incredible power in calmness. This is what Jesus showed us in so many ways. He was graciously calm. Great passion behind a gentle spirit is a powerful force.



### Let's look at the inward focus on godliness:

<sup>8</sup>Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. <sup>9</sup>The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.



Is my passion still tied up in my own will and plans, or is it founded solely on what the Scriptures show me are the most important things?

Is my passion an example of human thinking or spirit-mindedness?

Where is my passion leading? If it is not leading in the best direction, learn and change direction to walk in the right path.





Prior to volunteering with Christian Questions, my life was a circle of work, home and recreation with some church and Bible study on the outer ring of the circle, certainly impacting my life but not consciously the center of it.

Back in 2010, I started out by making the commitment to typing up the CQ Rewind Show Notes every week for the listeners to follow along with the audio. This required me to set aside several nights a week after work to finish it, but it forced me to really marinate with the lessons, having to listen over and over to what you both said while I tried to type it. By the way, Rick, you talk really fast.

Over time my role expanded to other duties and now I'm blessed to be an on-air contributor periodically. The discipline of finding the extra hours it takes to study for this has really benefited me. My inner circle is taken up by God and Bible study more so than ever before. I need to make sure that it is transforming me to be better so that it is a true investment of time.

You put yourself in a position of responsibility and contribution, which then put you in the position of being surrounded by growth opportunities.

Accountability is a big part of this because my work must get done since others rely on my part.

Working with the gospel in whatever way we can will change us, if we allow ourselves to grow. The power of the passionate examples of others fuels our own focus on EXACTLY what is important.



First, a personal view that says, "I must be internally fixed on what I must do." **Paul gives us a picture of what our Christian passion should look like:**

**Hebrews 12:1-3:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

This *cloud of witnesses* is a cloud of testimonies of faith in **Hebrews 11**.

These are inspiring examples of people from the Old Testament. We need to draw the inspiration from the examples around us and before us, but then we need to *fix our eyes on Jesus*. This is where Christian passion comes from. It is internal; we need to fix our heart, mind and very soul on following after him. This is not a flare-up of emotion, but a driving action!



Second, an external view that reminds us that we are living epistles (writings or letters) of Christ.

**What does my epistle show to others - Christlikeness or mediocrity?**

**Philippians 1:12-18:** (NASB) <sup>12</sup>Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, <sup>13</sup>so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, <sup>14</sup>and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. <sup>15</sup>Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; <sup>16</sup>the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; <sup>17</sup>the former proclaim Christ out of selfish



*ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup>What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,*

Paul was abundantly clear that the horrible difficulty of imprisonment was firmly within the providence of God for the sake of the gospel. Furthering the gospel was his life's passion, and he therefore was in a state of gratitude while imprisoned.



Does the heat of my passion vary based on my reactions to what is happening to me, or is the steady flame of "God's will be done" continuously burning through me?

What is driving the passion within ourselves? Is it emotional, or is it much larger?

Godly passion is squarely based on moving God's will forward, no matter what is happening around me.

**How can the admonition, "godliness with contentment is great gain" and having strong passion for Jesus work together?**

One of the primary directives of a successful Christian life is that of an accepting and contented life. This is important because we usually do not know all of the reasons for our experiences because they are in place by the providence of God. If this sounds like an invitation to be laid back, think again! Godly contentment is not complacency - we cannot confuse the two. As far as contentment, whether our personalities are very structure-oriented, technically-oriented, action-oriented or relationship-oriented, the principle of godly passion remains the same. It may manifest in different ways depending on who we are, but it is NOT emotion-driven contentment; it is gospel-driven. It is Jesus-driven contentment.

**Our godly contentment is to be very focused:**

**1 Timothy 6:6-10:** (NASB) <sup>6</sup>*But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. <sup>7</sup>For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. <sup>8</sup>If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. <sup>9</sup>But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

Paul is focusing Timothy on godly contentment. Christian contentment does not revolve around earthly things, lavish lifestyles or excess in any area of our lives. Desires for these attach us to a worldly wealth mentality that breeds spiritual complacency. We cannot be about the "stuff" - the cars, the homes and so forth, and still put Jesus and the gospel first. The two do not mix.

We cannot be content only when things are orderly in our lives. We have to find contentment even in the times of complexity and chaos. Contentment is like an umbrella over it all because we know that no matter what is happening to us or around us, if we are true, dedicated Christians, then God's providence will be overruling our experiences.





### Complexity Trigger #3 and Claudette Colvin, *Why Comfort Will Ruin Your Life*, Bill Eckstrom, TEDx Talk

- Complexity Trigger #3: Trigger it yourself. Take a journey with me back to Montgomery, Alabama, in the 1950s. Imagine, if you will, a young girl who's Black and she attends an all-Black high school, and she takes a city bus to get there and home, which wasn't unusual in that era. On March 2nd, 1955, she boards a bus to come home from school and she sits near the back in the first row of seats where Blacks are allowed to sit. And as the bus continues to fill with White people, there's eventually no more room in the front of the bus. According to local law, she needed to move further back to create room for White people to sit. Montgomery had an order in place that when followed led to a very predictable outcome: repression of people with little conflict. But 15-year-old Claudette Colvin had just spent the last month in high school studying Black history, and she was understandably fed up with the historic and existing atrocities. And so, on this day, she decided she didn't like Montgomery's order and by refusing to give up her seat, she sent a community, our laws and our entire country into complexity. Yes, nine months before Rosa Parks made her famous decision to stay put, it was a 15-year-old girl that was handcuffed, dragged from the bus and taken to prison. It was Miss Colvin, not Rosa Parks, who first fought the law. And by the way, was also the star plaintiff to testify in the famous lawsuit that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.*



The strength and the courage of this very young woman is inspiring in the face of all kinds of adversity. This act was bigger than just emotion - it needed to disrupt the simple order that kept people moving along without waves, but was the wrong direction Alabama (and the country) should have been going. It took a 15-year-old girl to jump-start the change in American history.



The kind of passion we are talking about puts the emotional ups and downs aside and moves forward to accomplish the will of God, whether we feel like it at that point or not.



There were many times when I did not feel like putting together a CQ episode, especially in the times when our family was going through some deep, emotional traumas. At these times, there was no energy, no anticipation to do this. It was a chore, a difficulty and a challenge. I felt like quitting sometimes. But by God's grace, He helped me stretch in a way I thought was beyond my capabilities. I woke up several months later, recognizing the difference. I looked at what He taught me and how I grew. I have never forgotten that lesson. This is what passion is - letting God's providence stretch you beyond what we think is your capacity. Let Him decide, not you. The spiritual muscle memory that helped pull me through was developed in small steps.

PHILIPPIANS 4:12

## HOMEWORK

Memorize this inspirational text!

**Paul addressed the contentment issue and directly connected its resolution to his firm stance of reliance on spiritual strength and guidance *instead of* needing any emotional rush:**

**Philippians 4:10-14:** (NASB) <sup>10</sup>*But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.* <sup>11</sup>*Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.* <sup>12</sup>*I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.* <sup>13</sup>*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* <sup>14</sup>*Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.*

Verse 12 in the King James reads: *I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound.* We never want to forget God when things are at their worst OR when things are going really well. Paul had the worst and the best and those external circumstances did not change his outlook or his goals respecting the gospel message. It is what we love most about the Apostle Paul!

Paul's needs were only physical and not emotional. His passion for Christ depended on God's providence and nothing more. The Philippians helped him financially and he thanked them, but he said even if they had not, he would have been okay because it was God's providence for him. Even if his needs were not met, he was still passionately focused.



Emotional highs are not sustainable - fireworks are momentary. We cannot look at that emotional high as a sign of growth. Our *change of character* is the sign of growth - developing the fruit of the spirit.

God's promises transform us. The power of His influence in our lives brings us far beyond the pictures of strength and vitality in our world. The key here is to wait upon the Lord for His strength and guidance - His "stretching."

**We need to be completely absorbed in His direction and NOT in how we might feel:**

**Isaiah 40:27-31:** (NASB) <sup>27</sup>*Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, My way is hidden from the LORD, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God?* <sup>28</sup>*Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.* <sup>29</sup>*He gives strength to the weary, and*



to him who lacks might He increases power. <sup>30</sup>Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, <sup>31</sup>Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

All of the emotional hype and energy that humanity can muster is NO match for godly strength!



Whenever you told me or Jonathan, *It is okay, I've got this! We can do this* (meaning, whatever it was new that you learned). We were like, *OH NO, something new is coming!* Over and over again with Christian Questions, we get to that short time period when we have everything under control, we can breathe, we can handle it - then BLAMMO! Something new happens that the Lord has in mind for us to do that stretches us beyond what we thought we could do.

The wonder of God's providence is a good thing. The stretching should never end. This is what Christian passion is - it is not about how you feel, it is about moving forward and being able to serve in a stronger way. Appropriate single-minded Christian passion is a renewable energy source. It is God-fueled!

ChristianQuestions.com



Our Christian passion  
is God-fueled,  
so it is a renewable energy.

Even the Apostle Paul, after all that he did in God's service, always saw the uplifting opportunity to get better and to continue striving:

Philippians 3:12-16: (NASB) <sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. <sup>13</sup>Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; <sup>16</sup>however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.

Paul took nothing for granted. He was still working and growing in Christ.



It is obvious that complacency is an enemy of Christian growth. While fighting this enemy, we need to remember that misplaced and fleshly-fueled passions are also serious challenges to our discipleship.

Let us press forward in the single-minded footsteps of Jesus, knowing that our God will provide the strength and courage needed to those who wait on Him.

This comes down to understanding that whatever our personality is, wherever we are coming from, if we are disciples of Christ, our job is to put ourselves in a position where we can be used by God. We want to promote the gospel. We should uphold the brotherhood, be an example, and live in a way that we are living epistles. Whether we are out in front with the microphone or are behind-the-scenes doing the proofreading, our focus is in being Christlike to the best of our ability.



This is the passion that drives Christianity and our faith!

*So, am I passionate or complacent about Jesus?  
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on October 11, 2021  
Ep. 1199: Are My Christian Beliefs  
Based on Truth or Error?

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.

### Bonus Material and Study Questions

Here are a few other texts to focus our discipleship-driven passion for Jesus:

**Philippians 1:21-27:** (NASB) <sup>21</sup>For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup>But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. <sup>23</sup>But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; <sup>24</sup>yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. <sup>25</sup>Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup>so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again. <sup>27</sup>Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

**1 Corinthians 9:19-23:** (NASB) <sup>19</sup>For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. <sup>20</sup>To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; <sup>21</sup>to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. <sup>23</sup>I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

**Psalms 27:4:** (NASB) One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple.



# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep. 1198: Am I Passionate or Complacent About Jesus?

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1198-passionate-complacent-christian-zeal/>

See:  CQ Rewind  
SHOW NOTES

1. In what way were the scribes and Pharisees complacent? How did that affect their spiritual growth? What did they do to show their superior piety? (See Matthew 23:1-7)
2. How did Saul of Tarsus show his passion for God before becoming the Apostle Paul? Why was his display of passion actually harmful? What saved Paul? (See Acts 26:9-14)
3. What did Jesus require of those who wanted to follow after him? How can we apply this to our discipleship today? What three things should *not* be what fuels our discipleship? (See Luke 9:23)
4. How did the prophet Habakkuk experience complexity during his life? What can we learn from his experiences? What does discomfort and complexity enable in our lives? How did Habakkuk finally handle his discomfort? (See Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-3)
5. How did Paul feel about his past accomplishments? Why? How can we apply his example to our lives today? What did Paul walk away from? What did he gain? (See Philippians 3:1-11)
6. What are some practical things we can do to grow spiritually during times of complexity? (See 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Philippians 4:4-9)
7. What should Christian passion look like internally? What should it reflect to others? (See Philippians 1:12-18, Hebrews 12:1-3)
8. What should godly contentment look like? Why should we *not* rely on emotion? (See Philippians 4:10-14, 1 Timothy 6:6-10)
9. How can we use God's strength and guidance to grow beyond our own capabilities? Why do we need to fight complacency? Where in your life do you see yourself as complacent? (See Isaiah 40:27-31, Philippians 3:12-16)
10. How do passion and contentment drive your discipleship? What do/will you do to use both to continue your Christian development?