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P.O. Box 341, Pasadena, CA 91102 • Tel.: 626.622.3469 • marion@legacy-makers.org • www.legacy-makers.org

*Presents*

# *“Nurturing a Life of Passion”*

## Discovery Guide

By

**Marion D. Skeete, M.Div**

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# “Nurturing a Life of Passion”

## Discovery Guide

*All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the New International Version.*

### **Week One: Questions 1-5**

**Prayer Focus:** Lord, use the suffering and crises in my life to wake me up from spiritual numbness into resurrected, passionate living.

**Reference Scriptures:** Romans 12:12; Matthew 15:8-9; 1 John 2:15-17

#### Understanding Passion

Passion is often what wakes us up in the morning, and inspires us to pursue our goals. We are in love with the very notion of passion. However, the truth is, we tend to limit passion to the sensual. In a society that thrives on “feel good” experiences, whenever our passion dies, it immobilizes us and derails our hopes and dreams.

1. Can you recall a situation in which your hopes and dreams were derailed and you lost your passion? What was that experience like? Share with the group.

Ironically, the word “passion” in its original sense means “a sharp agitation of the mind.” That’s definitely not a feel good experience! From the word passion, we also derive the word, “patient,” which means “to suffer.” So in a passion play or movie like The Passion of the Christ, Jesus suffers. However, don’t throw away the original idea of passion just yet! Passion is redemptive. In other words, Jesus doesn’t just suffer—end of story. The suffering brings about victory. The sobering reality is that our suffering makes our “resurrection” ultimately more meaningful. Resurrected life or passionate living is born in the crucible (turning point) of crisis. The depths of human courage and resilience stem from the resources of passion. The greatest works of art, science and technology owe their creation to human passion. So, you can only imagine what happens when one has godly passion! We cannot avoid crisis and suffering in our lives, but as Christ-followers our victory can be even more enriched by our right attitude in those times of suffering.

Read Romans 12:12. “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

2. Can you think of a situation in your life in which you suffered the loss of something or someone—health, marriage, finances, relationship, etc.? What was your attitude in that suffering? Does it seem unrealistic or even unfair that God would tell us to be patient in suffering? How is that possible? Please cite an example from your personal experience.

Your Life in 3 Acts: As you probably already discovered from doing the exercises above, the painful experiences of our lives play out very much like a passion movie, with a beginning, middle and end. Okay, not exactly! Real life doesn't happen so neatly, but we can certainly learn a lot from the movie industry about the importance of suffering and opposition to bringing about a victorious outcome in the life of a hero. In this case, that's you. So, let's engage some more in the story of our own lives, as God, the Creative Genius, the Master Screenwriter, reveals how he can use our pain to restore passion.

#### Act I of Your Life—The Setup

This first act is called the Setup, and unbeknownst to you, God is setting you up to move you from self-preservation mode into the true freedom of a passionate, resurrected life in Christ. This phase of your story represents the time leading up to your suffering or crises, when everything is “normal.” In this phase, you, the hero of the story, are going about your merry way. Life is good, and possibly even uneventful. It has its problems, but not enough to keep you up at night...

3. In your own words, share your story with the group. Remember, share about the time leading up to a crisis, not the crisis itself. What kind of person were you—driven or laidback? How was your spiritual walk— deep intimacy with God, doing all the right things, or on a spiritual low? Were there any signs along the way that you were heading into a crisis or difficulty? What were they?

Read Matthew 15:8-9 and 1 John 2:15-17.

4. What does Matthew 15:8-9 tell us about the “right things” that we do for God? Do you think you can do these “right things” and still lack godly passion? How? What are some of the enemies within us that can steal godly passion? According to 1 John 2:15-17, what are some of the enemies in the world that can steal godly passion?

Break into smaller groups and let someone in each group read the following:

Turning Point 1: This is the point, at the end of Act I, where, you, the hero's normal life and routine have been severely disrupted. You may have seen the signs along the way, but now you are suddenly hit with a shocking reality and forced to come out of any denial. It could be a spouse's confession of unfaithfulness, a new health challenge, a financial crisis. Whatever it is, you have entered into a new reality and you must respond to the crisis at hand. You have just been "set up" by God. He has allowed this trial to give you a new way of living. As much as you would like to, there is no turning back to the old way. A life-altering decision must now be made.

5. Take some time to personally reflect on the scenario above. Ask yourself, What is my Turning Point 1 story? What crisis have I faced in the past that severely disrupted my normal life? What crisis am I facing now? How do I react to that crisis? What decision should I make? If it is a crisis you faced in the past, ask yourself these same questions in the past tense. Each person should share his/her Turning Point 1 story with the group.

End this week's session by praying for each other that in the week ahead, God will continue to guide the process of restoring passion in each person's life. Pray specifically for those who are presently at "Turning Point 1" in their lives—that God will grant them the courage to make the right decisions, and to completely trust him with the outcomes.

## Week Two: Questions 6-10

**Prayer Focus:** Lord, give me the courage to confront my enemies, both internally and externally, and the perseverance to pursue and overcome them.

**Scripture References:** 2 Kings 7:3-8; James 1:2-3; Psalm 18:4,5,17,37.

### Act II of Your Life—The Confrontation

Okay, so you've made a decision to adjust your life based on your new reality. Great! But the enemy has turned up the heat! Everything that can steal your passion comes against you, to keep you in self-preservation/defense mode. For \*the speaker, it was the backstory of her parents' impending divorce that was the real cause of her lack of passion.

6. What's your backstory? What's going on behind the scenes of your life, when everyone thinks you're the picture of strength and perfection? What present trauma or past memory is playing into your current situation?

Read 2 Kings 7:3-8.

7. What can we learn from these four lepers about overcoming the fear to confront the enemy? What was their reasoning that compelled them to take action? Can you apply that same reasoning to dealing with your own crisis? Discuss.
8. What did God do to cause the enemies in the camp to disperse? What does this story say about the power of community? Have you been alone in your suffering? Suggest some ways you can band together with and mutually empower fellow-sufferers.

Turning Point 2: This is the point, at the end of Act II, where the hero must confront the enemy face to face. You have had enough. Whether the enemy is internal or external, the intensified struggles leading up to this moment of confrontation have forced you to realize that the enemy will not go away without a fight. To make matters worse, the enemy's new strategy is to play "catch me if you can" games, in an attempt to confuse and dissuade you. But you have decided that even the initial confrontation is not enough. You must now completely move from the defensive to the offensive. You must persevere and pursue.

Read James 1:2-3.

9. This Scripture says that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Do you think your “perseverance muscle” has been developed during the course of this trial? How so? In what specific areas are you persevering where you didn’t before?

Read Psalm 18:4,5,17,37.

10. Personally reflect on these verses and spend time in quiet confession. This Psalm vividly depicts the fact that even when we feel strengthened to pursue and overcome our enemies, God is the One we must depend on to rescue us. We cannot trust our own strength. Confess to God the ways you have not trusted him to be God in your suffering. Perhaps you have sought vengeance on your own. Perhaps you have made a human being your enemy, rather than the real enemy of your soul. Maybe you are disappointed or angry with God for even allowing this trial into your life in the first place. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart, and as he reveals them to you, lay aside any weights that will hinder your pursuit.

### Week Three: Questions 11-15

**Prayer Focus:** Lord, deliver me from any temptation to return to self-preservation as my mode of operation. Continue to infuse me with godly passion that would compel me to action on behalf of others, as I continually draw from You, the Passion Giver.

**Reference Scriptures:** 1 John 4:4; Ephesians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Philippians 3:12-14

### Act III of Your Life—The Resolution

In this final act of your suffering, the stakes are much higher. The enemy has upped the ante. For your every offensive move, he levels a huge counterattack. He seems to be outmaneuvering your every trap, while growing increasingly furious and confused at your surprising wit and strength. Your strategy is to lure him back to home turf—because that is what he has dis-

rupted, and that's the place with which you are the most familiar—and where you are the strongest. But achieving this would be no easy feat.

11. Spend time in quiet reflection and prayer. What represents “home turf” for you? In respect to your inner/personal life, what area/s did the enemy disrupt or violate? 1) your integrity 2) your reputation 3) your freedom 4) your peace 5) your faith 6) your security 7) other\_\_\_\_\_ Do you have faith to believe that once the enemy is defeated, home turf can be restored back to its original condition, or a new condition? Which would you prefer and why?

Read 1 John 4:4 and Ephesians 3:16.

12. Many battles are fought and won, not merely by military might, but with inner strength. What do these Scriptures say about the internal power that the Holy Spirit gives us versus the external strength of the enemy? How can you apply that power to your situation?

Turning Point 3: This is the point, at the end of Act III, where you and the enemy are in the throes of a vicious life and death struggle. You are putting up a heroic fight, but your bloody, battered body is wearing out, and it seems like your enemy is gaining the advantage. However, with the last bit of strength left, you are able to brutally strike your attacker with a homegrown weapon, knocking him totally unconscious. Crisis resolved! Victory won! With your newly acquired victory and a renewed and invigorating sense of passion, you are now inspired to use your experience to help women facing various kinds of abuse, or perhaps it's helping army veterans rehabilitate back into society. No longer living life to please self, you are now impassioned with a cause—God's greater purpose for your life that compels you into action.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

13. The word “compels” in the Scripture means to necessitate, to be driven to take action, or to impulsion to a purpose. What then does it mean to be compelled by Christ's

love? What does Christ's death, burial and resurrection have to do with nurturing a life of passion?

14. If your crisis has been resolved, what action have you been compelled to take on behalf of God's greater purpose? How has your suffering contributed to your understanding and embracing your purpose? If your crisis has not yet been resolved, what do you look forward to in that regard?
15. \*The speaker warns of some danger zones, even when there is a resolution to our crisis and suffering. Reflect on these points. Then, in closing the session, read Philippians 3:12-14 and let it be a framework for your small group prayer session.

Danger zones post-resolution: 1) returning to self-sufficiency and not God-dependency—leaving oneself vulnerable to attack from the enemy who can rise up from ashes; 2) getting stuck in the past trauma—being plagued by reoccurring nightmares or memories; 3) getting stuck in the past victory—making a monument of the victory and not being able to move into the future.

A framework for group prayer: Philippians 3:12-14: "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Closing Prayer: End with a group prayer session, praying that everyone, no matter where they are in their faith journey, will "press on toward the goal." Also, pray specifically for those in different phases of their passion stories: Normalcy has been disrupted and they're faced with a decision; they have had enough and they're confronting and pursuing their enemy; God has resolved their problems but they are tempted to go back into self-preservation or get stuck in the past.

\*Reference to "the speaker" means Marion Skeete. For a copy of the video message that accompanies this discovery guide, please visit our website and click on Videos & Guides: [www.legacy-makers.org](http://www.legacy-makers.org)