

This is an exciting time! We are here today to set a course for the year 2014, which I believe will be a year of breakthroughs. Are you ready?

## **Part 1: Feel the Passion!**

### **Texts:**

**Ecclesiastes 9:7-10 (NIV)** - "Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. [8] Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. [9] Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun---all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. [10] Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

**Ecclesiastes 10:7-10 (The Message)** - "Seize life! Eat bread with gusto, Drink wine with a robust heart. Oh yes—God takes pleasure in your pleasure! Dress festively every morning. Don't skimp on colors and scarves. Relish life with the spouse you love Each and every day of your precarious life. Each day is God's gift. It's all you get in exchange for the hard work of staying alive. Make the most of each one! Whatever turns up, grab it and do it. And heartily! This is your last and only chance at it, For there's neither work to do nor thoughts to think In the company of the dead, where you're most certainly headed."

**Hebrews 12:1-2 (NKJV)** - "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, WHO FOR THE JOY

that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

A. Life was meant to be enjoyed! It is an undisputed fact that those who accomplish significant goals enjoy life much more than those who do not. So what separates those who make their lives count from the rest of the pack? It's passion!

1. Making a mark in life has nothing to do with being smarter, more gifted or having greater opportunities than others. Wasted intelligence, talent and opportunities are common in life.
2. Those who make the greatest impact on society, whether in business, ministry, or other arenas, are not necessarily the most gifted or who have the most opened doors.
3. Rather, these are the ones who make the best use of what they have. Passion propels them to dimensions and heights far beyond those with greater talent, skills, opportunities and resources. This is true in ministry, business or any other endeavor.
4. Too many complain about the chances they never had, yet they consistently fail to take advantage of what *did* come their way.
5. It's also unfortunate how many equate success with ignoring the principles of God's Kingdom, which causes them to feel justified in striking Him from their list of priorities.
6. It's true that some who ignore God are successful—yet they will pay for their choices later.
  - a. **Psalm 73:2-3 (NKJV)** - “But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”
  - b. **Psalm 73:17 (NKJV)** - “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.”

B. I believe you can honor God and still be successful. That's His plan and His will for your life.

1. The most successful people in the Bible honored God and lived according to the principles of His Word.
2. As an ethnic group, the single most successful race in the history of mankind are the Jewish people. For millennia, they have enjoyed great favor and blessings by observing the principles of God's Word.
  - a. While numbering only 2½ - 4 % of the world's population, they control approximately 45% of the world's wealth.
3. Righteous or not, those who are the most successful are passionate about what they do. The difference between really enjoying life and just existing is passion.
4. Those who have ignored God, yet made their lives count, have been consumed with a passion to succeed.
  - a. **Mark 11:24 (KJV)** - "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."
5. This year, let's talk about the many ways passion can prompt us to make a difference for God, our families, and His Kingdom. It can literally change our personal ministry and the world in which we live!
6. The way to make your life the very best it can be is found in God's Word. So, if you're going to stick around, you might as well enjoy yourself, right?
7. To get from where you are now to where you were meant to be demands a **breakthrough!**

C. This year, I believe the Holy Spirit wants a breakthrough in every area of our lives. Therefore, our theme will be: "Feel the Passion!"

1. For me, 2013 was a year of warfare. But extending far beyond my personal endurance, I believe my struggles also involved the church. As

the year drew to a close, the conflict had only intensified in the months of October, November and December. Leaving Africa last week on the plane, I was still feeling the effects of warfare. But when I awoke in Amsterdam, it had all disappeared. Something had changed! Sitting in the lounge waiting for my next flight, I sensed a breakthrough---as though something had shifted in the heavenlies.

While waiting for my connection, imagine my surprise a couple hours later to receive a text message from Hrvoje, one of my sons in the Gospel. He related his dream that night of seeing me in intense warfare, intercession, and worship. Then suddenly, God broke through and angels came to drive back the enemy. It was a tremendous breakthrough! You can imagine how I felt as I read his message!

2. But, this breakthrough wasn't just for me. I believe it was for C.T. God often allows His leaders to experience certain situations that will help them identify with their people. (Remember the story of the Prophet Hosea and Gomer?)

D. What is the meaning of the word "passion"?

1. Merriam Webster Dictionary: a noun that dates back to the 13th century.
2. Etymology: Middle English, from Anglo-French, from Late Latin passion-, passio suffering; being acted upon; from Latin 'pati': to suffer.
  - a. Often capitalized, the sufferings of Christ between the Last Supper and His death are illustrated in a gospel narrative, "The Passion."
  - b. 'Suffering' (definition now obsolete).
  - c. The state or capacity of being acted on by external agents or forces.
  - d. 'Emotion,' such as: his ruling passion is greed; the emotions being distinguished from 'reason.'
  - e. An intense, driving, or overmastering feeling or conviction.
  - f. An outbreak of anger.

- g. Ardent affection, love, a strong liking or desire for or to some activity, object, or concept.
  - h. An object of desire or deep interest.
3. All these definitions come from the root word "to suffer"--which means: to want something or to love something so much, it hurts!

E. People with passion accomplish much more than those who are lacking, simply because they want it so badly, it hurts!

1. **Joke:** A man who was really out of shape told his personal trainer, "I'm so depressed, I don't know what to do. I can't get a date with a single woman. I've tried everything I know to lose weight, but nothing works." "I think I can help," said the coach. "Are you willing to do anything to lose this weight and get in shape?"

The man replied, "I'll do anything!"

"Okay," the fitness trainer said. "Be dressed and ready to go tomorrow at 8 a.m."

Next morning, a beautiful woman in a skintight exercise suit knocked on the man's door. "If you can catch me, you can have me," she said. And away she flew, with the man huffing and puffing right behind her.

This happened every day for the next 12 months. Feeling confident each day that he would surely catch this woman, he lost 150 pounds.

But when he whipped open his front door at the end of the year, instead of the babe, a desperate, out-of-shape woman in a jogging suit was waiting for him. "The personal trainer said to tell you that if I can catch you, I can have you!"

Motivation is contagious! Pass it on!

2. The French philosopher de la Rochefoucauld said, "Passionate people are the only advocates that always persuade. The simplest man with passion will be more persuasive than the most eloquent without."

3. Or how about the words of the German philosopher Hegel: "Nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished without passion."
4. Passion is the reason some succeed and others don't. They just happen to want something more than anyone else!
5. Donald Trump, a great entrepreneur, said it like this: "Without passion, you don't have energy; without energy, you have nothing."
6. John Wesley said, "When you set yourself on fire, people love to come and see you burn."

F. In our day, it seems acceptable to have passion for **anything** but God. Yet, He should be our very *greatest* passion in life!

1. It's okay to have passion for sports or making money. And there's nothing wrong with being passionate about a career or a hobby.
2. It's considered normal—and even noble, to have passion for a particular cause. Mother Teresa was admired for her passion to help the poor.
3. The enemy has made a deliberate—and seemingly *successful* attempt to force our culture to believe that being passionate for God is radical and uninformed.
4. Billy Graham said, "If Christianity is anything at all, it is EVERYTHING!"
5. Think about it! If God really **does** exist, . . . if there is a hereafter where your spirit will live forever . . . if heaven and hell are real . . . if the Bible is true. . . if God truly wants to bless our lives . . . and if the Bible is His guide for a more fulfilling life here on earth . . . then Christianity is the most important thing you will ever study. And God is the most important One you could ever hope to know or embrace!
6. Can anyone dare NOT be passionate about Christianity?

G. I believe God's challenge for C.T. this year is: dare to live passionately for Him—and see what He will do for you in return!

1. Watch Him transform you to become the envy of everyone you know!

2. Watch Him bless you until you're absolutely amazed at what's happening!
3. Watch Him open doors that have been closed, and then surround you with so much favor, your enemies will begin saying good things about you and the devil will begin complaining because you are so tightly protected!

H. To see a scriptural example of how to arrive at where you want to go, the writer of Hebrews instructs us, "look to Jesus."

1. **Hebrews 12:2** reveals that the joy of the goal set before Jesus enabled Him to persevere through the suffering and humiliation of the cross.
2. Passion will help you keep going when others quit, and make you keep trying when everyone else surrenders.
3. Passion doesn't consider the cost or the suffering.
4. Passionate people are **not** temperate. Their lives are out of balance simply because their passion won't allow it!
  - a. When Jesus visited the temple and saw how this place of worship had been degraded to a place of corrupt commerce, He was so angry, He overthrew the money changers' tables.
  - b. Christ's passion for God and His House would not allow Him to act passively.
  - c. **John 2:17 (NIV)** - "His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."
5. God rewards people who are passionate for Him.
  - a. **Isaiah 53:12 (NIV)** - "Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death."

I. Too many people merely exist—because they have no burning, consuming, soul-driving passion!

1. I cannot accurately say they are content to merely exist, because they aren't really living at all.

2. Without passion, you have no sense of purpose. Without a sense of purpose, you have no direction. Without direction, there is no sense of achievement.

J. Elisha, the successor to the great Old Testament prophet Elijah, was a man of incredible passion.

1. **1 Kings 19:19, 21 (NKJV)** - "So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him....." [21] So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.
2. Elijah wanted to pass the torch to someone with passion . . . someone who had the same fire that he possessed.
3. For Elijah, being a prophet was no easy assignment. Today, it seems that the favorite way to spell "p-r-o-p-h-e-t" is "p-r-o-f-i-t." But in those days, being a prophet could easily cost your life.
4. Jesus said that Israel stoned the prophets God sent to them, meaning the office of a prophet did not qualify for long-life expectancy.

k. Before its dream can successfully become a reality, passion must always be tested.

1. Before Elijah relinquished to Elisha his office as prophet to the nation of Israel, he designed a test to determine if Elisha had the passion he needed.
2. On several occasions in 2 Kings, chapter 2, Elijah tried to persuade Elisha to stay while he went on ahead. But each time, Elisha refused.
3. Elijah's testing for Elisha was similar to the training for U.S. SEAL TEAM candidates. In a grueling segment of "Hell Week" training involving

physical endurance, mental tenacity and true teamwork, two-thirds or more of the class may call it quits or “ring the bell.”

- a. The tradition of DOR (Drop on Request) consists of dropping one's helmet liner next to a pole with a brass ship's bell attached to it and ringing the bell three times.
- b. Only an exceptional few with burning desire will persevere when their bodies are screaming to quit, yet continue on.
- c. Why will the recruits be urged to give up? Because if there is any “quit” in them, the trainers want to know **now**—before they're in a heavy battle with the mission's success and the lives of their buddies depending on them.

**L. Life Application Points:**

1. What do you want God to do for you this year? Define it!
2. This will be a year of breakthroughs. If you want it badly enough, God will do incredible things in your life.
3. Set your face to seek Him—until it happens!