

Fervency for His Supremacy

Seven Joyful Habits of Christians Who Are Hugely Passionate for Jesus



One glorious day not long from now, our Lord Jesus Christ will break in upon us, unmistakably and cosmically revealed for who he has been all along — the center and circumference of everything, for everyone, for all time.

But thankfully, our Savior has not postponed until the Consummation his intention to increase the flame of our love for him.

Indeed, throughout the Church by his Spirit, the Master of the universe persists at intensifying and deepening among his own a decisive devotion to his glorious person and his global purposes. According to Revelation 2:4, he aims to be no less than our “first love” (KJV). The Greek phrase used here for “first love” translates more accurately as “*supreme* love.” In other words, Jesus is to be our all-consuming love.

Therefore, what we want to ask is this: What are the secrets for igniting and sustaining a fiery passion for his Royal Majesty *here and now* that is like what he will unquestionably and rightfully receive from us *there and then* when we stand before him face-to-face?

Thankfully, there’s a clear answer because there is a well-worn path, navigated by saints across the ages, that has transformed a multitude of Christians into followers who are hugely passionate for their King.

In fact, I would suggest that every facet of godly devotion that the Bible talks about can be summed up by seven “secrets” — let’s call them seven “*joyful habits*” — which can be easily incorporated into your daily walk with Jesus, helping you to become a disciple “filled with a glorious joy that can’t be put into words” (1 Peter 1).

Here lies the hope that all of us can experience a life of “fervency for Christ’s supremacy.”

To make these core disciplines easier to grasp, I’ve assigned them seven easy-to-remember words that start with the letter “S.” Together they capture everything the Bible teaches about how believers who supremely adore their Redeemer get that way and stay that way. Let’s unpack them briefly, and provide one or two starter steps for each one.

Seven Joyful Habits

Robust affection for Jesus can be cultivated as we:

SEE him

SEEK him

SAVOR him

SPEAK him

SHOW him

SERVE him

SHARE him

There’s a logical sequence to these seven “joyful habits.” As you faithfully practice one of them it prepares you to implement the next. Think of it like this:

1. **SEE** Jesus more fully for all he is by how you study about him throughout God's Word — *which leads you to . . .*
2. **SEEK** Jesus more fully for all he is by how you pursue and encounter him through prayer — *which leads you to . . .*
3. **SAVOR** Jesus more fully for all he is by how you exult in him through worship — *which leads you to . . .*
4. **SPEAK** of Jesus more fully for all he is by how you talk about him with believers — *which leads you to . . .*
5. **SHOW** Jesus more fully for all he is by how you imitate him in word and deed — *which leads you to . . .*
6. **SERVE** Jesus more fully for all he is by how you minister to others for his sake — *which leads you to . . .*
7. **SHARE** Jesus more fully for all he is by how you introduce unbelievers to him as Lord and Savior.

These seven “joyful habits” shape the lifestyle of Christians who become hugely passionate for Jesus. It’s how they got that way and stay that way because one discipline quite naturally feeds into the next. Let’s look at each one more thoroughly.

Joyful Habit #1

SEE HIM

First, we start by *seeing* clearly what the Bible teaches from cover to cover about Jesus’ person and purposes right now, as he reigns at God’s right hand. Study him. Survey him. Scrutinize him. Sit at his feet. Soak up everything he discloses.

One practical jump-start to do this: Take full advantage of the vast number of *free* resources at www.ChristNow.com (highlighted at the end of this book). Think of it as your one-stop hub for free Bible-based resources to help you explore and experience God’s Son for all he is today.

For example: The ChristNow website offers you for free a *21-Day Journey* (which can be accessed using our free smartphone app, Christ Now) or a *55-Day Journey* (brief, daily email videos viewed on your laptop) — two ways to transverse the nine hours of teaching presented by **The Christ Institutes Video Series**, which you can also complete online at your own pace.

Or sign up for the two-minute **Daily Devotions**, which are built around 365 titles for Jesus found in Scripture. Offering an optional audio version, these readings are sent automatically to your email inbox every day for an entire year.

Sample some of the **Teaching Videos**, which feature Christian leaders from many streams of the Church focusing on exciting facets of Christ's supremacy from God's Word.

You might try this approach that involves you more directly: Create your very own "**Regal Bible**." There's nothing to it! Simply take a copy of the Bible and using a yellow highlighter pen, mark the mosaic of insights about Christ found throughout Scripture. Book by book, highlight every passage or verse or phrase that helps to reveal more of who Jesus is.

For example, you might highlight the dozens of Messianic prophecies found throughout Isaiah, the texts that *foreshadow* promised encounters with Jesus' kingly person and kingdom project.

Or, to make it easy on yourself: Throughout Colossians (a book bursting with truths about Jesus) mark texts that define how the glory of Christ and his kingdom purposes are being *fulfilled* in who Jesus is and what he's up to right now.

Once you've finished this exercise with just one book, go back through it to review your discoveries (all of which pop out in color!). Spend time reflecting on how the highlighted passages enable you to *see* God's Son more fully for all he is today.

As you move on from one book of Scripture to another, you'll be amazed at how much of God's Word turns *yellow*! Maybe we should identify them as the "supremacy Scriptures" — passages that are spectacular because they reveal the glory of our sovereign!

Joyful Habit #2

SEEK HIM

Those who *see* more of the greatness of Christ become motivated to *seek* more meaningful, more intimate engagement with the person of Christ. The greater our discoveries of his magnificent qualities, the greater will be our desire to draw closer to him and enter into the fullness of life we have in him.

Essentially this means we must continue nurturing an ongoing life of *prayer*, what Scripture calls “seeking God’s face.” But how do we do this well?

One practical suggestion: Return to some of the highlighted passages uncovered in your “Regal Bible.” Then reformulate those verses so they are turned into prayers. For example, Ephesians 2:6-7 says:

God raised us up with Christ. He has seated us with him in his heavenly kingdom. That’s because we belong to Christ Jesus. He has done it to show the riches of his grace for all time to come.

As a focus for prayer that seeks more of Christ, use the emphasis of those verses to say this to the Father:

Dear Father, thank you for raising us from the dead with your Son and then seating us in your kingdom to reign with him. Now convince the world of the revolutionary nature of the salvation found in Christ, by how you draw us nearer to him. Saturate your Church with visible demonstrations of his redeeming power that will flow from his throne for all time to come. Amen.

Based on what Scripture both teaches and models, your primary prayers as a Jesus follower should be for more intimate insights and revelations into specific truths about our Savior and his supremacy leading to a deepening of your relationship to him. Invite the Holy Spirit to teach you how to apply your ever-enlarging vision of Jesus in daily living. Ask for yourself and your fellow believers that the Father would wake you fully to the biblical realities about Jesus as Lord, opening up transforming encounters with him.

Seek the Father’s help to deepen your devotion toward his Son, to make you as passionate for Jesus as he himself is — to be filled with a passion you express both in word and deed.

"[Help me to] grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3) — *this* should be our heart's cry every moment we breathe. As we walk with him, we are called to pray for one another as Paul did in Ephesians 3:

May his Holy Spirit give you his power deep down inside you. Then Christ will live in your hearts because you believe in him . . . May you have power together with all the Lord's holy people to understand Christ's love. May you know how wide and long and high and deep it is. *And may you know [Christ's] love, even though it can't be known completely. Then you will be filled with everything God has for you* (emphasis added).

Joyful Habit #3

SAVOR HIM

And so it follows: The more we *see* him and *seek* him, the more of himself and his global cause he reveals to us. Scripture guarantees it: "When you look for me with all your heart, you will find me. I will be found by you . . ." (Jeremiah 29).

In turn, "finding" him causes believers to *savor* him more than ever — that is, increasingly to worship him, exult in him, appreciate and enjoy him for all he is today — not only in our liturgies but also in our lifestyles.

One practical aid that has helped many Christians delight more fully in their reigning Lord is to revisit a traditional hymnbook. Study the words of some of the historic worship anthems of the Church that focus on the glory of Christ. Note the richness of the vocabulary believers used over the past three hundred years to reverence and esteem Jesus.

For example, in over one thousand of the hymns composed by Charles Wesley he unpacks what theologians term a "high Christology." These anthems praise Jesus not only for who he was and will be, but just as importantly, for who he is today exalted at God's right hand.

Reflect on how others have expressed what it meant for them to savor the wonders of Christ; then join their praises by whispering the words aloud, as

an act of worship. You might even try to sing the hymn during your times of private devotions.

The free **Worship Videos** at www.ChristNow.com provide another effective resource to help you savor Christ. Representing a variety of worship styles and approaches, they are chosen expressly to incite believers to exult in God's Son.

As you begin a new day, you might incorporate one into your Bible study and prayer time. While you watch and listen, let its exaltation of Jesus fill your heart with new passion for praising Jesus. You even might even decide to sing along!

Then send the link to some Christian friends by email, Twitter, or Facebook so they can join you in savoring Christ in new ways.

If we heed the exhortation of Colossians 3 we can't go wrong:

Let the message about Christ live among you like a rich treasure . . .
by singing psalms and hymns and songs from the Spirit . . . Do
everything you say or do in the name of the Lord Jesus (emphasis
added).

Joyful Habit #4

SPEAK HIM

But there are more secrets to gaining “fervency for Christ's supremacy.” As Christians *see, seek, and savor* the Ruler of all, we begin to discover a growing and unquenchable desire to *speak* about him to others and to do so frequently — starting off most naturally with the fellow believers we gather with every Sunday.

Speaking out about Christ to those who were *already* Christians defined the heart of Paul's two-year ministry in Ephesus, as he summarized it for the church's elders in Acts 20 (note words about verbal communication highlighted in italics):

You know I have never shrunk from *telling* you anything that was for your good, nor from *teaching* you in public or in your own homes.

On the contrary I have most emphatically *urged* upon both Jews and Greeks repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus . . . [I want to] finish my course and complete the ministry which the Lord Jesus has given me in *declaring* the good news of the grace of God . . . as I *preached* the kingdom of God . . . I have never shrunk from *declaring* to you the complete will of God (PHILLIPS, emphasis added).

For Paul, speaking of Christ to God's people day in and day out was his priority mission, followed afterward by speaking of Christ to those who had never heard the gospel before (as he discusses in Romans 15). He states this succinctly in Colossians 1:

God has given me the responsibility of serving his church by proclaiming his entire message to you . . . So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ (NLT, emphasis added).

Then the apostle urges his readers to follow his example. As Paul states in Colossians 3, God's people must commit to nothing less than conversations about Christ whenever they come together. Here is his exhortation in three different translations:

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. *Teach and counsel each other* with all the wisdom he gives (NLT, emphasis added).

Let the [spoken] word of Christ have its home within you [dwelling in your heart and mind — permeating every aspect of your being] *as you teach* [spiritual things] and *admonish and train one another* with all wisdom (AMP, emphasis added).

Let the Word of Christ — the Message — have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. *Instruct and direct one another* using good common sense (MSG, emphasis added).

In other words, regularly we need to focus on speaking openly of the glory of Christ in our conversations with other Christians. As we fellowship over coffee on a Sunday morning before the service, we should bring Jesus into our exchanges. Whatever the immediate topic during Sunday school discussions or in weekly Bible study groups we should give priority to exploring the truth about Jesus' supremacy as foreshadowed in Old

Testament passages and fulfilled in the New. During conversations among family members around the dinner table on any given night, at some point we should encourage a focus on something about the wonders of Christ.

In other words, make it your goal at every legitimate opportunity to speak into the life of a fellow disciple something exciting you've recently discovered about Christ — or include it in a PS in your next email, or post it on your Facebook page.

A seminary professor reported to me that one morning he tweeted to his nearly 2000 Twitter followers a fresh perspective on Christ's supremacy he'd gained from Scripture that day. In response it ended up being re-tweeted 10,000 times before the day was over! Through modern technology he "spoke" of Christ and thousands whom he will never meet "heard."

And as a result — and this is true about every time we share more of Christ with each other — the Holy Spirit had something to work with, with each follower, that the Spirit did not have before. And in light of his primary role to increase our vision of Christ exalted (see John 16) you can be sure he will fully exploit each opportunity!

That means whatever approach you take, great promise resides in speaking out to God's people about God's Son and his spectacular supremacy. Here's what Romans 10 promises you whenever you talk about the glories of God's Son with God's people (and unbelievers, as well):

Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word about Christ (NIV).

So faith comes from hearing; that is, hearing the Good News about Christ (NLT).

So faith *comes* from hearing [what is told], and what is heard *comes* by the [preaching of the] message concerning Christ (AMP, emphasis theirs).

As long as we keep pouring truths about the greatness of the Savior into those who belong to him, we challenge our fellow believers to keep growing in their own vision and faith and passion toward Christ for all he is today.

Finally, here's one more practical discipline for speaking Christ into his followers. I call it "*SEE something, SAY something*." There are two parts to this strategy:

1. ***SEE something***: Commit to the Father that each week you will spend sufficient time in Scripture and prayer, however much is required, until you *SEE something* new about the wonders of Jesus' person and purposes that is fresh and alive to you. You want to discover an insight about him that excites you so much you know you would enjoy passing it along to another believer so that person too can experience a similar encounter with Christ in his fullness.
2. ***SAY something***: The flip side of this strategy requires a second commitment. On the Sunday of that same week, you resolve to attend church on a mission — with the intention to pass along to a brother or sister your newly found truth about Jesus, taking a few moments to *say* to them what you *saw* a few days earlier.

Consider this scenario, for example: Between Sunday school and church as everyone is mingling in the fellowship hall, you take thirty seconds to tactfully approach a friend with this request: "Bob (or Julie), I discovered something about God's Son this past week that's so exciting I simply have to pass it along to someone else! Could I take thirty seconds and tell you what I saw?" Of course, no Jesus follower will turn down such an offer!

One additional step you might try: Once you've finished "saying" your new-found insight, conclude by praying with your friend about that truth, asking the Spirit to reveal to both of you the reality behind what you've talked about, thus increasing passion for God's Son in both of you as a result.

Joyful Habit # 5

SHOW HIM

Those of us who develop a lifestyle of *seeing, seeking, savoring, and speaking* Christ will over time experience a shift in how we *show* him as we increasingly imitate him. Why is that?

It has been rightly observed: “We end up looking *like* what we keep looking *at*.” In other words, the more we focus on Christ by practicing the other “joyful habits” and thus increasing our devotion to him, the more we will grow into the likeness of him. The one follows the other.

Often unconsciously — yet inevitably — we begin to incorporate and exhibit the qualities of his character, his strength, his compassion, his holiness. We enter into a fuller display of what Jesus’ lordship looks like when his Spirit applies it in concrete ways.

Scripture points to this transformation in Romans 13: “. . . put on the Lord Jesus Christ as if he were your clothing. Don’t think about how to satisfy sinful desires.” Again, in 2 Corinthians 4: “We who are alive are always in danger of death because we are serving Jesus. *This happens so that his life can also be shown in our earthly bodies*” (emphasis added).

In Philippians 3, after Paul talked about his undiluted pursuit of more of Christ, he admonished the believers at Philippi: “Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who *follow our example* (Philippians 3, NLT, emphasis added). Likewise he wrote to the Corinthians: “You should imitate me, *just as I imitate Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11, NLT, emphasis added).

Again, based on the key principle, we end up looking most *like* the person we keep looking *at*.

Reflecting on the way Jesus will totally fill our vision on the day he returns in victory, John reminds us that this will conform us to his image as a result:

Beloved, we are [even here and] now children of God, and it is not yet made clear what we will be [after His coming]. We know that when He comes *and* is revealed, *we will [as His*

children] be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is [in all His glory]. (1 John 3:2, AMP, emphasis added).

With the very next sentence, however, John calls his readers to put into action *here and now*, on a daily basis, the same radical dynamic of “looking like what we look at” — similar to what will happen at his glorious appearing:

And everyone who has this hope [confidently placed] in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (holy, undefiled, guiltless) (1 John 3:3, AMP).

Joyful Habit #6

SERVE HIM

Ministering to others’ needs, especially those in the household of faith, is a very tangible, hands-on approach to express a direct, undying love for our King. As Jesus illustrated in Matthew 25:

Then these righteous ones will reply, “Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?” And the King will say, “I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, *you were doing it to ME!*” (NLT, emphasis added).

Not long ago I wrote about this to dear friends who had spent weeks ministering to a fellow Christian who was enduring unrelenting physical suffering:

Recall those encouraging words from the Lord Jesus that by serving the “least” of his followers we are serving HIM (Matt 25). This means, in one very real sense, though you are exhausted right now remember this: You’ve also actually expended yourselves in days of *worship* — that is, you’ve been loving and adoring and blessing the *Savior himself* as you gave yourselves so sacrificially to the precious saint who belongs to him. That’s his promise in Matthew 25.

The fact is that when God’s people see how much God’s love for us is displayed in his own passion for us — the passion of Christ exposed on the cross — then loving his Son by loving each other with self-giving love

unleashes in us a similar passion back toward Christ as well. As Scripture urges:

This is real love — not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. *Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other . . .* All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God . . . God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them (1 John 4, NLT, emphasis added).

Brother Lawrence, in his classic *Practicing the Presence of God*, relates that even while he was washing dirty dishes after the meals in the monastery he used the time to focus on worshipping God. Even so, when you serve God's people who are in union with God's Son, you are automatically doing so in "the presence of Christ," expressing your affections toward the person of Christ, ministering to him in the process.

So this is another way to express our fervency for his supremacy — by blessing those who live under the shadow of his reign.

Joyful Habit # 7

SHARE HIM

The more we practice these six joyful habits, the more we become intensely wrapped up with Jesus day by day. But the passion we are celebrating in our relationship with him is not for us alone. The Father intends for us to *share* him as our all in all with the world — the world at the end of our street and the world at the ends of the earth.

That means ultimately that wherever Christians go — to the marketplace, the schoolyard, the inner city, the rural poor, the government, or the unreached peoples around the globe — we should be stirred up to spread the good news of God's Son with unbelievers *because* we have become so zealous for his name and his reign ourselves.

We can begin this outreach to those around us in three basic ways: through our *prayer* for them and through our *care* for them, which prepares the way for us to *share* with them.

In the process of reaching out to unbelievers and the unreached, the unanticipated reward is how Jesus becomes even more precious to *us*, as a result.

It's like what often is observed when a bride-to-be eagerly reports to all her girlfriends what a wonderful man her future husband is to her. To her amazement, the very act of sharing him with others ends up deepening her *own* longings and passions for him as well.

Jesus taught that love for him results in obedience to him (John 14). And chief among his mandates is this from Matthew 28:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end.

Here's one crucial way fervency for Jesus' supremacy expresses itself: by our determination to *share* him and his gospel with those who are lost, doing so in such a way that we exalt his name to them, spread his fame around them, extend his reign among them, increase his gain from them, and ratify his claim before them.

Become Hugely Passionate for Christ

These seven simple words beginning with "S" are visible in Christians who are developing a magnificent obsession with the King of glory, deepening in their love for him as they:

SEE him, **SEEK** him, **SAVOR** him,
SPEAK him, **SHOW** him, **SERVE** him, and **SHARE** him
for ALL he is today as our reigning Messiah and Lord.

When Paul declares of himself, "For me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1), these seven responses comprise what that way of life must have looked like to

those who knew Paul. However, it was the pattern he expected every other believer to pursue.

Why not activate joyful habit #1 — SEE him — and work your way from there through all seven disciplines. Allow your practice of the first one to prepare you to step into the next, and so on. Finally, when all seven are actively a part of your life, they will ignite and sustain in you a hugely passionate heart for God's Son — amplifying the glory of Jesus through you wherever you go.

To get started right now, turn the page.

There you will learn more about the Christ-exalting website www.ChristNow.com that we spoke of earlier. It is filled with *free* resources from many streams of the Church to support you as you enrich your daily walk with the King of Glory.

Log on to discover for yourself how ready it is to feed and fuel individual and corporate Christ Awakenings in this generation. It's there ready for *you*.

