

You Might Be Lukewarm If...

Rev. 3:14-20

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Ann Daniels grew up in England. She was the youngest of five children. She worked as an assistant bank manager for many years until the birth of her triplets.
(https://s3.amazonaws.com/themoth-audio-development/moth_488_mrh_1710_5_23_17.mp3)

When her triplets were 18 months old, she was home playing with them when she saw an ad that was seeking ordinary women to apply for an expedition to the North Pole. (Ibid)

With a marriage that was ending, Ann was searching for something to add some focus and hope to her life, as well as being a full-time mother, which was her first passion. (Ibid)

Ann had never slept in a tent or been on skis, but she was ordinary and that is the part of the ad that she fit. (Ibid)

She sent in her application and the fee of 75 pounds, which she could not afford, and she waited.

She was invited to attend an initial meeting along with more than 200 women at a farm at Dartmore, England. She assembled the gear needed for the interview and off she went. (Ibid)

The day turned out to be a mini-boot camp, a kind of culling process to judge the physical stamina and determination of the women. By the end of the day Ann was almost in tears. She was ready to go home. (Ibid)

As they arrived back at the farm from their long run, the women were met by a stream of media. As a mother of triplets, Ann drew more than her share of attention. (Ibid)

“What will it be like to go on this expedition?” they asked. “What will it be like to go to the North Pole?” the reporters wanted to know. (Ibid)

Somewhere in those interviews, Ann became excited about the possibilities of the future. This was her chance of a lifetime to do something few ever have a chance to do. She knew she could either give up on the dream or give it all she had. Like a poker player pushing in all her chips, she decided she was going to go “all in.” (Ibid)

Ann left that first meeting and went home and dedicated herself to continuing to take care of her triplets while she entered a very intense and strict nine-month physical training program. (Ibid)

Friends taught her how to read a map, how to camp and pack in cold climate conditions. All her hard work paid off. She was chosen for one of five relay teams made up of three women each. (Ibid)

She did the first leg of the trip, which lasted seventeen days. While she didn't personally make it to the North Pole, this journey ignited her passion for the Arctic. (Ibid)

Ann Daniels and her teammate Caroline Hamilton later became the first women to reach the North Pole and later the South Pole as part of an all-women team in 2002. She tried to reach the North Pole alone in 2005 from Russia, but the Russians revoked her Visa and thwarted her expedition. (Ibid)

None of us have ever been to the North Pole, but we have been to other places and done other things because our passion has been ignited by some event, some person, some grand idea, or even by God.

For the last several weeks we have talked about writing our future story as a church. We are a part of a church because somebody told us the story of Jesus, which changed our lives.

We should have enough passion to tell that story to others and to have others join our journey in our church.

No future story will be worth writing if we do not have some passion about what God is doing among us, and where God is leading us.

1) Without passion, moving from ordinary to extraordinary is almost impossible.

I want our church to be extraordinary and above average in every way, not just ordinary.

To hear Ann Daniels tell her story, before she became an Arctic explorer she was exactly as the ad described, ordinary.

There's nothing wrong with ordinary—if ordinary is the best you can be. However, what if you can be more than ordinary?

Jesus mostly called ordinary people to be his disciples and leaders. But he didn't call them to remain ordinary.

Most of us are afraid to shoot for the moon because it's so hard to get there. So we shoot for the ceiling; that way we will not be disappointed.

In her country of Great Britain, Ann Daniels responded to an ad that invited ordinary women to apply for an expedition to the North Pole. How ridiculous is that?

Don't you think it took a little passion for Noah to build the ark? It only took 100 years to build it. How ridiculous is that?

God asked Abraham to pick up his family and travel to a land he would show him. So Abraham took his entire family, all he had, packed up the camels and traveled over 1200 miles before he got to his destination. How ridiculous is that?

Without passion, moving from ordinary to extraordinary is almost impossible.

2) Passion Requires Sweat Equity

Ann Daniels left the farm at Dartmore, returned home and trained for 90 days before she went back for the second part of the selection process. She worked passionately to prepare herself even though there wasn't a guarantee she would be selected.

When you see a commercial for a piece of exercise equipment, what kind of person do they use to sell the equipment?

Is it a person that's 30, 40, or 50 pounds overweight?

No, those are the people they are trying to sell the equipment to. So why not use those people in the ad?

Because part of the selling process is to make you believe that if you use their product that you can look like those slimmed down, rock hard, muscle toned people on the equipment.

The problem is that they cannot sell you the passion it takes to use the product.

Too many people treat faith like they do their exercise machines. People park their faith and then they don't exercise their Christian disciplines. They just walk all around them just like they do their exercise equipment.

Jesus told us to take up our cross daily and follow him and that takes passion.

The Apostle Paul wrote: "I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it everything I've got. No sloppy living for me! I'm staying alert and in top condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself" (1 Cor. 6:26-27) The Message Bible.

Paul was passionate about living every day for Jesus.

If churches are not passionate about Jesus, it becomes obvious to others in a short time.

When the Apostle John saw a vision while exiled on the Island of Patmos, he sent a letter to seven churches. One of those churches was Laodicea. God spoke specifically through John to that church: "I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15).

That's not a very comforting text. Most of us would say, "What's wrong with lukewarm? Hey, it's better than being cold, right?"

Not really. No one will be attracted to a cold church. That's why God said it would be better if a church was cold and not lukewarm. No one is going to go to a cold church. No one will waste time there.

However, in a lukewarm church people just get satisfied. It is the attitude that "Good enough is good enough."

Lukewarm churches are satisfied. They do not want to sweat. They do not want to be stretched. They do not want to sacrifice. They are bogged down in discussion about money, and process, and who is in charge. These churches do more damage to the kingdom than those that are cold.

They do not want to imagine the future. They do not know where they are going, nor do they want to discuss it. They think it's a waste of time. The members have no interest in growing the church, just in doing things for themselves. There is no passion.

3) Passion Gives You Purpose

When her marriage failed, Ann Daniels was looking for something in addition to motherhood, to add some purpose to her life.

Oddly, an expedition to the North Pole grabbed her attention and gave her added purpose.

Ultimately, she fell in love with the Arctic and found the purpose she was made for: exploration.

It is a wonderful thing when you know where you are going. You can tell the difference in college students who have figured out their passion, who know their direction and those that have not. Those that now their major and direction are focused, driven, settled, and have more peace.

Every business, school, team, organization, and church should have a clear purpose. They should be able to answer the questions:

Why are we here? Where are we going? How are we going to get there?

With these questions answered, it should be evident to everyone that the members are "all in," and excited to be a part of what is going on. That attracts others, creates excitement, and pleases God.

4) Passion Requires Sacrifice

To hear Ann Daniels describe the time when she and her team crossed 500 frozen miles of Arctic Ocean to the North Pole is to listen to a journey of pain.

For 28 days the temperature ranged from minus 42 to minus 56 degrees Celsius. Ann suffered frostbite on her middle toe and her little toe.

At Day 47 a resupply plane met them with fuel and food and one of the three members of the team had to be flown out. There was still over 300 miles left to go. If you had frostbite on two toes and 300 miles left with the temperature that far below freezing, how many of you would have gotten on that plane? (Ibid)

Count me in. But it was passion that caused these two women to continue. On day 80 these two women planted the Union Jack and they sang their National Anthem to celebrate their accomplishment of making it to the North Pole. (Ibid)

Jesus understood where he was going. He was going to the cross. He understood that the way he would get there was to be obedient to God and submit to the Father's will; "Not my will, but yours be done," Jesus prayed.

So we refer to the final week of Jesus' life as the Passion of Christ.

The gospel writer says Jesus could have avoided his suffering by "calling ten thousand angels."

Yet because of his love for us, Jesus yielded to God's will. His face was set. He knew his course. He did not waver. Because of his passion, we are the beneficiaries. We are the recipients of God's love and forgiveness, which is not something we can earn. It is a result of God's grace, his gift to us.

You may ask, "Why would anyone want to have passion that is sacrificial?"

The reason?

5) Passion Brings Rewards

You hear that in the voice of Ann Daniels as she clearly believes the rewards of her expeditions were worth the price she paid.

When our passion is in line with the will of God, we have tapped into the source of power and strength that no person can adequately explain and that no church can harness, capture, or have exclusive right to.

Clearly the Passion of Jesus was worth his sacrifice. All of us are the beneficiaries. We can receive the gift of his Spirit which allows us to live with purpose. The Holy Spirit gives us our guarantee of eternal life, which the Lord promised.

This is what makes all of us extraordinary. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is Christ living in us. It is the promise of eternal life.

What about you this morning? What ordinary parts of your life would you like to see become extraordinary? What about our church? What parts of our church would you like to see become extraordinary?

As we put together our future story, I don't think God wants us to go to the North Pole. But where in the world does God want us to go?

Wherever we go, it will take passion to get there. Passion requires sweat equity and sacrifice. That blossoms from our deep desire for others to experience the love of God through us. That's when we find purpose and rewards.

But that can't happen if we are just lukewarm. How do you know if you are lukewarm?

Well...

You might be lukewarm if you spend more on sporting events or cable television in a year than you give to the Lord's work.

You might be lukewarm if you pray mostly for parking places or to win the lottery.

You might be lukewarm if you care more about the direction of the stock market than the direction of your church.

You might be lukewarm if you were so upset that a visitor was sitting in your normal seat that you didn't even welcome her to church, or worse, if you asked her to move out of your seat.

You might be lukewarm if the last time you invited someone to church was when your child was baptized.

You might be lukewarm if you have a gift that you refuse to use for the Lord.

You might be lukewarm if the last thing you were glad to see changed in the church was a child's diaper in the nursery.

You might be lukewarm if you were more upset that the service went past 12:00 than you were excited that someone actually came forward during the invitation.

You might be lukewarm if you read the obituaries more than you read your Bible.

We are lukewarm if we journey into the future and have no passion for seeing people come to know Jesus and if we have no willingness to listen to the Lord or to each other about how that ought to be done.

If that person is you, I want you to imagine yourself coming forward and lighting a candle. Are there any lukewarm people among us this morning?

If so, God wants you to move from being lukewarm to being passionate in your faith.

Yes, your passion will require sacrifice and some sweat equity, but it will give you purpose, rewards, and God will use it to move you from ordinary to extraordinary.

Tell God right now that you want this passion burning bright and hot within your soul. Let me pray for you now.

God, I pray for each person who desires to move from living a lukewarm live to living a life of passion, moving from an ordinary to an extraordinary life of faith.

Ignite passions within us to serve you by loving those around us, even those who are difficult to love. May all know that we serve you, that we do not compromise our integrity, and that we will not be swayed to veer off course by temptation.

Help us to live extraordinary lives. May our church move forward and may we together soar with faith and make every ministry pleasing in your sight. In Jesus name. Amen.

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