

DESIRE: a book written by **John Eldridge**
The journey we must take to find the life that God offers us

Introduction

Some of the highlights from the book *Desire* and Study guide.

“Above all else guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23).

The wisdom of this passage is simply this – to lose heart is to lose everything. Because everything that makes a life worth living flows from the heart. These being Intimacy, romance, love. Adventure, meaning and purpose. Courage, sacrifice and joy. We need this wellspring of life within us if we would live and not merely “get by”. So then how do you guard your heart? The answer lies in *Desire*. What you do with desire is what you do with your heart. How you handle your deep desires is how you handle your heart. It’s that straightforward. *Desire* is powerful. One of the most powerful forces in our lives. *Desire* can lead us to the life we were meant to live. And, desire can get us into a lot of trouble, too.

Is desire a gift from God? Psalm 24 says “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart”. He has given us a heart that desires deeply, and he uses those desires to draw us to himself, and to live the life he created us to live. What we need to learn is how to listen to desire, how to interpret it. *Desire* is speaking to us all the time. It is one of the deepest voices of our heart which many of us have never been taught to understand. *Desire* can lead us to the life we were meant to live. It can shape our hopes and our dreams. It can sustain us in times of distress and suffering, too. It can lead us to God, if we will listen carefully. That is why we must take the journey of desire, the path of learning to listen to desire, and find in it the treasure God has there for us.

You see, to live life fully as God meant us to demands a full recovery of the heart. You need the wellspring flowing swift, clear and true. And that depends on how you handle your hearts desire which will in turn determine to a great measure what becomes of your life.

Once upon a time there lived a sea lion who had lost the sea. He lived in a country known as the barren lands. It was a dry and dusty place that was really a desert. Only a kind of coarse grass grew there and there were very few trees. It was mostly dust and the wind made one very thirsty. Of course, it must seem strange to you that such a beautiful creature should end up in a desert. How he came to this barren place no one could remember. It all seemed so very long ago. So long ago, in fact, that it appeared he had always been there. How could that be you may ask? He was after all a sea lion. But as you know, once you have lived so long in a certain place, no matter how strange it may seem, you come to finally think of it as home.

1. 'Our Heart's Deepest Secret'

It seems to me we can never give up longing and wishing while we are alive. There are certain things we know to be beautiful and good, and we hunger for them.

There is a secret set within each of our hearts. It is the desire for life as it was meant to be. Isn't there a life you have been searching for all your days?

But you see, life comes to us as a mystery. We all share the same dilemma – we long for life and we're not sure where to find it. We wonder if we do ever find it, can we make it last?

The greatest human tragedy is to give up the search. Nothing is of greater importance than the life of our deep heart. We were born with it, it is never completely satisfied, and it never dies.

Often we are unaware of it, but it is always awake...Our true identity, our reason for being, is to be found in this desire. The clue to who we really are and why we are here comes to us through our heart's desire, and often it comes in surprising ways, often unnoticed or misunderstood. Now and again though, they come as moments in our lives that we wish could go on forever. Those moments in your life where, if you had the power you would make time stand still for them to go on. Something in your heart says ‘This is it – finally it has come. This is what I was made for’. However, it does not last, and cannot do so.

Our dilemma is this: the life we long for, we cannot have. And the worst possible reaction we can have to our dilemma is: we get used to it, if not immediately then gradually, so that we scarcely notice it. This is even worse than the fall of man. For in that, the greatest of all tragedies, we merely lost paradise and with it, everything that made life worth living. What happened since is unthinkable: we have become used to it. Most of us live as if this life is pretty much the way things are supposed to be. We watch the news, which includes murder, genocide, terrorism, famine, atrocity after atrocity, and yet we accept it as the norm and are not even visibly moved by what we see on the screen. Do we ask ourselves “Why are these tragic events happening in our world?” or “Why has life turned out differently from the way I thought it would be?”

As we think about these things in the quiet moments of the day we may sense a nagging within, a discontentment, a hunger for something else. But because we have not solved the riddle of our existence, we assume something is wrong – not with life, but with us! Even while we “are getting on with life”, we still have an eye out for the life we secretly want. We can never entirely give up our quest for the life we want.

Life as usual is not the life we truly want and it is not the life we were made for. If we would only listen to our hearts, we would learn the secret of our existence...we have come to the wrong star. The true happiness is that we don't fit. We have come from somewhere else. We have lost our way.

The secret that begins to solve the riddle of our lives is simply this: we are like the sea lion who has lost the sea. We were made to live in a world of beauty and wonder, intimacy and adventure all of our days.

But to abandon desire, is to abandon the most important journey of our lives. If we do this, we leave our hearts by the side of the road and head off in all directions such as fitting in, getting by, being productive and many other mundane things. So bringing our heart along with us in our life's journey is the most important mission of our lives and the hardest. It seems Matthew 16:26 is correct. “What good will it do a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?”

It all hinges upon what we do with our desire. If you look around, you will see most people have abandoned the journey. They have lost heart. They are camped in places of resignation or indulgence, or trapped in prisons of despair.

We must listen to desire, look at it carefully, let it guide us through the false routes and dead ends. The only fatal error is to pretend we have found the life we prize, that is to mistake the water hole for the sea. Even our troubles and our heartbreaks tell us something about our true destiny. This isn't the way it was supposed to be!

To desire something and not to have it – *is this not the source of nearly all our pain and sorrow?*

For Reflection

Proverbs 4:23 'Above all else, guard your heart with all that you have for it is the wellspring of life within you.'

Q1. What is the secret set within each of our hearts.

Q.2 Isn't there a life you have been searching for all your days? Try and describe this life for which you are searching.

Q.3 What has been one of your greatest losses or disappointments? Whom or what did you lose and what did it mean to you?

Q.4 Can you describe some of those moments we wish would last forever and moments you wish had never begun.

Q.5 How has life turned out differently from the way you thought it would?