

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

It was three weeks after the wind ceased to blow that the sea lion had a dream. As I told you before, there were other nights in which he had dreamed of the sea. but those were long ago and almost forgotten. Even still, the ocean that filled his dreams this night was oh, so beautiful and clear, so vast and so deep. It was as if he were seeing it for the very first time. The sunlight glittered on its surface, and as he dived, the waters around him shone like an emerald. And if he swam quite deep it turned to jade, cool dark and mysterious. In all his previous dreams of the sea he had never before found himself in the company of other sea lions, but this night he was surrounded by them. All were diving, turning, spinning and twirling. They were playing and encouraged him to join in the fun. Oh, how he hated to wake from that wonderful dream. It was so real to him. The tears running down his face were the first in many years. But he did not even pause to wipe them away, he did not pause for anything at all. He set his face to the east, and began to walk, as best as a sea lion could. "Where are you going?" asked the tortoise. "I'm going to find the sea." he replied, without looking back.

10. Entering more deeply into Desire.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst." - Jesus of Nazareth

We experienced a tipping point in the chapter titled 'The Divine Thwarted.' This chapter is like the launching pad that can take us to our quest of abundant life. We must enter through the doorway of desire. I hope by now we see why John has spent three chapters trying to bring eternity out of the clouds and into our conscious lives. The dilemma of desire is the deepest dilemma we will ever face. Its dangers are deep and potentially fatal. How then, shall we not lose heart? If we manage to somehow hang onto our desire, how do we keep from being consumed by it? The secret is known to all of us, though we may have forgotten that we know it, and thus some of us will need to rediscover the secret. However, there are three things that we must come to terms with in our deep heart. First, we must have life. Second, we cannot arrange for it. Third, it is coming. Now we are ready to proceed on our way.

Life is now a battle and a journey. This is the truest explanation for what is going on, and the only way to rightly understand our experience. Life is not a game of striving and indulgence. It is not a long march of duty and obligation. It is not, as Henry Ford once said, "one damn thing after another." Life is a desperate quest through dangerous country to a destination that is, beyond all our wildest hopes, indescribably good. Only by conceiving of our days in this manner can we find our way safely through. You see, different roads lead to different places. To find the land of Desire, you must take the journey of Desire. You can't get there by any other road. If we are to take up the trail and get on with our quest, we've got to get our hearts back, which means getting our desire back.

Eugene Peterson reminds us, "We must fight the forces that oppose our becoming whole; we must find our way through difficult and unfamiliar territory to our true home." It's not that there isn't joy and beauty, love and adventure now—there are. The invasion of the kingdom has begun but life in its fullness has yet to come. So we must take seriously the care of our hearts. We must watch over our desire with a fierce love and with vigilance, as if we were protecting our most precious possession. Refer Proverbs 4:23. We must do battle with the enemies of our hearts—those sirens that would seduce and shipwreck our desire and those

arrows that aim to kill it outright. We must journey forward, toward God, toward the Great Restoration and the Adventures to come. How awful would it be to reach the end of life's road and find we haven't brought our hearts along with us.

Recovering Desire. John tells of a few real life counselling sessions where people had actually lost desire. He says how he continues to be stunned by the level of deadness that most people consider normal and are contented to live with. So, how do we recover desire if in fact we have lost it? Are we half hearted creatures fooling about with drink, sex and ambition, when infinite joy is offered us? Are we like an ignorant child who is content playing in the mud hole when a holiday at the seaside is offered? We are far too easily pleased. In fact many would sell their birthright for a little bit of pleasure and some peace and quiet. It doesn't take a lifetime to work out that we are not going to get the life we truly want, and so we've learned to reduce our desires to a more manageable size. But let's be honest about what we've done, and call it what it is: sin. Put simply it means we don't trust God and his goodness. The first step in recovering our desire is to stop pretending that we'd be happy with our equivalent of clean socks. Simone Weil said, "The danger is that the soul should persuade itself that it is not hungry." Recovering our true heart's desire may involve facing some very deep disappointment. Undoubtedly, it will require painful self-examination. But we do not need to fear what we will find, for our heart is our ally in this journey. In recovering our desire we must be very aware of the enemy's tactics. Firstly, he takes people out of the battle by offering them a morsel, a tit-bit, a bone to keep them happy, and thus convincing them they are happy. If this fails, he threatens us from going deeper by telling us that our desires are evil. But since Christ came, everything has changed, we have been given a new heart, and that means nothing less than our core desires are good. We don't need to fear recovering our desire because our desire is from God and for God. So, let's come back to the simple question Jesus asks of us all: **What do you want?** Don't minimise it; don't try to make it sound spiritual; don't worry about whether or not you can obtain it. Just stay with the question until you begin to get an answer. This is the way we keep current with our hearts.

If you are still floundering in getting an answer for yourself, you may need to do one of two things to get clearer knowledge of your desire. Those who have buried desire beneath years of duty and obligation may need to give all that a rest so that their hearts can come to the surface. Abandon all but the most essential duties of life for a while. You still have to pay the bills, but everything else you should jettison. Do nothing unless it reflects your true desire. John says he gave up the religious practice of going to church for a year and found it one of the most refreshing years of his life. He did not give up on God or meeting with his close brothers in arms.

To those who have been living to indulge desire, they will need to give that a rest too. What does your heart feel when I suggest you give up your obsession? Listen to the panic—there's something beneath it, something you need to know. Now, I understand that going cold turkey may seem overwhelming, unattainable. You may have tried that before and failed. Let me offer a more gentle approach. Simply stay in your desire for fifteen minutes longer than you usually do. When you're feeling a pull to the refrigerator or the gym or the bedroom, stop and let the desire just be; let it become more acute. Don't do anything with it. Let yourself feel it, and as you do, let your heart put some honest words to what you're feeling. You might be surprised what you find there. Two examples. A wife *wants* another baby. Maybe she *needs* another baby to fulfil her sense of self worth or desire to be needed. A man seeks a higher position in his career for more money. Might it be for his self esteem and sense of identity? We must learn what is actually being aroused within us or, driving us, so we can be more

attuned to our true desire. In doing so we will be less prone to imposters.

Temptation often reveals imposters. We can learn many things about the journey of desire from Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.

Temptation 1. Hunger. Satan says to him 'Why don't you turn these stones to bread?' We all get hungry for food and we all get hungry for our desires. But, if we know our true desires, when we are tempted by these impostors, we will be unlikely to fall for the false life that is offered. However, the more we turn away from God, the more the other options increase!

Temptation 2. Trust. Satan says 'Throw yourself down...for he will command his angels to lift you up.' So the second temptation comes after we determine not to take matters into our own hands. The evil one uses the pain and confusion of this fallen world to cast doubt over God's goodness for us. God proved his love for us at the cross. This is to be our response.

Temptation 3. Worship. Satan says "If you will bow down and worship me, all these kingdoms can be yours." Jesus refuses Satan's final offer. The cat's out of the bag here. Satan is saying all along...you don't have to miss out, suffer, or not enjoy...just give your heart away and you can have it all. This is his number one ploy (deception) or lie, it simply is not true! You see, it all comes down to worship. What will you give your heart away for in return for the promise of life? But the life he offers is a shallow impostor of the real thing.

If we would endeavour, like men and women of courage, to stand firm in the battle and refuse to worship the impostors, surely we would feel the favourable assistance of God from heaven.

How do we retune ourselves to being sensitive to God, to his everyday Rehema for our lives. Over the last 50 years, with the introduction of television we have been bombarded with filth. Our minds have gradually become accustomed and desensitised to accepting verbal and visual information that was not acceptable two generations ago. This is the dullness that Paul referred to in Ephesians. We have become so sensual. This is why holiness is not numbness; it is sensitivity. It is being more attuned to our desires, to what we were truly made for and therefore what we truly want. Our problem is that we've grown quite used to seeking life in all kinds of things other than God. Back in chapter 8 we saw how God gave us sex as a metaphor for true worship. First there is courtship, then vulnerability, then comes communion...just being together. Try moving down this path with him. He is the perfect lover, he is our ultimate security and he will satisfy our spiritual longings. Only as we truly delight in God is it safe for him to give us our desires, for then they are not likely to become our idols. And by our delighting in God, he heals our false desires as our souls come true in the light of their maker. Worship becomes the means by which we most deeply heal our desire.

Is worship of God the hearts healer?

Mother Teresa's spiritual advice was "Spend one hour each day in adoration of your Lord, and never do anything you know is wrong. Follow this, and you'll be fine." Profound advice! Why do we not do it? Worship is the act of the abandoned heart adoring its God. What counts is the posture of the soul involved, the open heart pouring forth love toward God and communing with him. It is a question of desire. Worship occurs when we say to God, from the bottom of our hearts 'You are the One whom I desire' Our only hope for rest from incessant craving of our desires is in God.

For Reflection

Psalm 37:4 “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

Ezek. 36:26 “I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

Q1. What does 'getting your heart back' mean to you? Can you put other words to this statement that make sense to you? Why is 'getting your heart back' so important?

Q2. Have you thought of life as a battle and a journey, a desperate quest to our final destination that is indescribably good. How have you thought of life?

Q3. In answer to Jesus' question 'What do you want', try holding that desire, letting that desire just be; let it become more acute. Don't do anything with it. Let yourself feel it, and as you do, let your heart put some honest words to what you are feeling.

Q4. How did you go in answering the question that Jesus asks. 'What do you want? Don't minimise it, spiritualise it, just think it through and ask it.

Q5. Can you describe where you are in 'retuning yourself'. Are you at courtship? Are you at vulnerability? Or have you got to communion? Be as honest as you can about this answer,

Q6. ‘Only as we truly delight in God is it safe for him to give us our desires, for then they are not likely to become idols.’ Think about this statement for a day or so. Is worship of God with your whole being your Desire?