

God and Our Unmet Desires

Ruth shared this at our Kingdom Living Community gathering:

What do we then do with these longings and desires that go unmet? I mean, they keep presenting themselves in one way or another.

I think what I do is simply bury them (and I see others do it too). On one hand, of course we do. It feels like we have to. You cannot live your life with a constant awareness of heightened desires that are unmet, just as you can't go through your day continually pining for a life you do not have. You have to live the life you do have. But I find that from time to time God comes and actually stirs our longings and desires, awakens them. You see someone and think, What would life be like with her (or him)? Over dinner one night someone tells you how much he loves his job, and you think, Maybe it's time for a change. I always did want to _____ (fill in the blank). Be a writer. An architect.

Why does God do this? Wouldn't it be better to let sleeping dogs lie?

No. To bury the deep longings of our hearts is not a good thing. Doing so begins to shut our hearts down, and then we fall into that "get on with life" mentality. For me, that means bearing down and working. Getting things done. But my passion slowly fades away, and life recedes from me. I cannot bring to my work the zest I once did, so even my work suffers. Because my heart is suffering. It's like a form of slow starvation. If your body doesn't get what it needs, you can run for a while without it. But slowly the erosion begins to manifest itself. You get tired, your muscles ache, or you start having headaches or a thousand other symptoms. You need nourishment.

The heart is like that. Thank God, we cannot force it down forever. Hurting, it begins to insist on some attention. Now, we can either listen to those rumblings and let our hearts surface so that we bring them to God, or we can give in to some addiction. The starving heart won't be ignored forever. Some promise of life comes along and boom – we find ourselves in the kitchen closet taking down a quart of ice cream or cruising the Internet for some intimacy.

God knows the danger of ignoring our hearts, and so he reawakens desire. You see a photo in a magazine, and pause, and sigh. You see someone with a life that reminds you of the life you once thought you would live. You're channel surfing one night and see someone doing the very thing you always dreamed you would do – the runner breaking the tape, the woman enjoying herself immensely as she teaches her cooking class. Sometimes all it takes is seeing someone enjoying themselves doing anything, and your heart says, I want that too.

God does this for our own good. He does it to reawaken desire, to stir our hearts up from the depths we sent them to. He does it so that we don't continue to kill our hearts and so that we don't fall prey to some substitute that looks like life but will become an addiction in short order.

He sometimes does it so that we will seek the life we were meant to seek. Isn't this just what happens to the prodigal? He wakes one day to say, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!"¹ "Look at their lives", he says. And he is stirred to head for home. To seek life. I have given up on friendship several times in my life – made the subtle agreement to go on without it. But God came and stirred my desire through a scene from a movie, a story a colleague was telling, or an old photograph of a time when I had a good friend. It stirred me to go back and give friendship another try. Don't give up.²

Purchase John's book: www.amazon.com.au/Walking-God-Study-Guide-How-Hear-Voice/dp/B01HAK31NK

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For Kingdom Living Community
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1 – Luke 15:17

2 – John Eldredge (2016) "Walking With God" Expanded Edition, Nelson Books p:180-181