

Desires and Surrender

DAY 1: Dreams for our lives

1. When we were young we had great dreams for our lives—how work would develop, we'd have a happy marriage, raise good kids, buy a house, pay off college debt, and have a bright future.

2. When you look back on your life what dreams did you have for your life?

3. One of the things that tends to be true about ourselves when we were younger was a naivete about life. Place a checkmark next to the items you found more difficult than you imagined.

Life is harder than we imagine.

Relationships are harder than we imagine.

Work is harder than we imagine.

Changing bad habits is harder than we imagine.

Marriage is harder than we imagine.

Raising kids is harder than we imagine.

Living on a budget is harder than we imagine.

4. Proverbs tells us that many times we fit the profile of “the simpleton.” The simpleton believes that life should be simple, things shouldn't be that hard, change should be easy to manufacture, people will easily cooperate, etc.

5. What strikes you about each of the following verses on the simpleton.

Proverbs 1:32 For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them;

Proverbs 7:7 I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense.

Proverbs 9:6 Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight.

Proverbs 22:3 The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.

Psalms 119:130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

Day 2: Dreams meet reality

1. As we get older we realize a startling and dream-shattering truth. The world we live in is not Disneyland. Life is not like a TV show where all problems magically get solved in 30 minutes.

Genesis 3:17 “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

2. Even the great Apostle Paul found:

a. This life exceedingly difficult:

1 Cor. 4:11 To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. ¹² We work hard with our own hands.

b. Getting bad treatment from people is difficult:

1 Cor. 4:12b When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; ¹³ when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.

c. Dealing with himself was exceedingly difficult.

Romans 7:18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. ^u For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

3. The reality is we live in a fallen world. Things that seem like they'd be simple to do are more difficult. Problems you thought you solved keep reoccurring.

4. Then life happened. We discovered that:

- Work was a lot more work and hours than we imagined.
- Marriage relationships don't just grow when they're on auto-pilot.
- Raising kids is more demanding and time-consuming than we imagined. We are “on-call” 24/7.
- Running a household is a grind: laundry, groceries, cooking, car maintenance, home repairs, budgets and bills, etc.
- And then there's the drama of extended family. O joy.
- Problems never go away, they keep popping up.
- Stress goes up. Demands for your time and energy go up.

5. Where have you most met the reality of a fallen world?

6. What strikes you most from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Shattered dreams and desires

1. Sometimes God allows our highest and fondest dreams to shatter. Sometimes this is due to our foolish belief that our dreams are our highest priority and will provide our deepest satisfaction. This foolish belief is ultimately destructive. (1) It reinforces the foolish belief that I don't need God, which turns us away from what we most need! (2) It curves our human nature more and more inward on ourselves. (3) It eventually chokes out the relationships we most want to enjoy.

2. The bible teaches us about desires. The first thing we learn is that there are different kinds of desires.

Sinful desires. These are desires that violate God's commandments and laws. To chase these desires is sinful. Eventually we pay a steep price for this.

Deceitful desires—these are desires that “promise” to fulfill us. Sometimes there is immediate fulfillment but it doesn't last long. Over time, the “kick” we get from those desires lessens, requiring more and more. It is the law of diminishing returns. The long-term effect is addiction.

Godly desires—desires in line with God's will for us.

Deepest desires—The deepest desire we have as humans is to love and enjoy God, and share Him with others. We have little to no idea of these deepest desires deep in our hearts until we realize that the desires we have been chasing just won't do.

3. Here are some pertinent verses that illustrate the different “desires” we feel.

Ecclesiastes 2:10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. It was meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

Ecclesiastes 6:2 God gives some people wealth, possessions and honor, so that they lack nothing their hearts desire, but God does not grant them the ability to enjoy them, and strangers enjoy them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil.

Romans 1:24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

Romans 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Romans 8:5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

4. It is not until we are in touch with our deepest desires to know, love and enjoy God, and to share Him with others that we will be in touch with what is most meaningful and satisfying to our soul.

Psalms 37:4-5 Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord and He will make your paths straight.

Isaiah 26:8 Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts.

5. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: What we must learn, often the hard way through pain

1. Our working assumptions had been:

- A. We really didn't need God, not at least in daily, functional way.
- B. We could produce the kinds of feelings that brought
 - 1. Great and lasting satisfaction, and
 - 2. Delightful and growing relationships.

2. What does it take to dismantle these foolish assumptions? Pain. More specifically, relational pain and emotional pain.

3. When emotional pain or relational pain strikes us our response to God goes in one of two ways. Either we get angry at God and blame Him for doing nothing to alleviate our pain, or we humble ourselves to God and ponder how He wants to, and apparently must use pain redemptively in our lives.

Pain is the divine surgery to un-Velcro our hearts
from the foolish assumptions that mess up our lives.

4. Many times the divine surgery works in the reverse order of our foolish assumptions. We come to see the following in this order:

- A. I can't produce the kind of feelings that bring:
 - 1. Great and lasting satisfaction, and
 - 2. Delightful and growing relationships.
- B. I really do need God on a daily and functional sense.

5. Under each of the verses below, jot down what strikes you as it relates to today's topic.

Romans 5:3-5 More than that we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 8:28 We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

1 Peter 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. ¹¹ To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: The problem of the “self;” the solution of the cross

One of our foolish assumptions is that the deepest happiness comes from outside of us. Instead, the deepest happiness comes from inside, and makes its way outside.

1. Sometimes it is not until we are face-to-face with the solution that we begin to finally see the root of our problem.

Mark 8:34 Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

2. Jesus’ solution to the human dilemma points out the root of our human problem: the elevation of the self!

The human problem: we are *naturally* self-focused, self-serving, self-satisfied.

3. There is in our human nature something that makes messes of things, of ourselves and relationships. It is the “self.”

4. The self has a mind and will of its own.

- It is determined to center all of life around me and my interests.
- The self is convinced that God is really not necessary for my self-interests.
- The self believes it can achieve the life it wants, the feelings it desires, and the desires it wants satisfied.
- The self believes that other people ought to cooperate with my need for satisfaction. In fact, they not only ought to, but must. Even God must cooperate.

5. This brings us back to our verses for today. Jesus’ solution is:

- We must deny self.
- Crucify the self
- Lose self
- Utilize what can be redeemed of the self for God’s purposes and other’s blessing

6. The self sits on the throne of our hearts. It must be dethroned. Only Jesus Christ can sit on the throne of a human heart. He begins to reverse the damage and dysfunction of the self in us.

7. What finally breaks that “spell” of the self on the throne of our hearts? The cross.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

8. John uses the word “perish” not in the physical sense but in the personal, emotional sense. It is a euphemism for emptiness, meaninglessness, loss of hope, etc.

9. John uses the word “eternal” not just in the quantitative sense but also the qualitative sense, as in full life, or abundant life, here on earth.

10. It is the stunning, sacrificial love of God on the cross for each one of us that can finally break the awful spell of the tyranny of the self! Why would Jesus die for someone like me?!?!?

11. What strikes you from today’s devotional?