

## I. Introduction

- A. Who's ready for good news?
- B. Our key verse for today is this:
  - 1. *"Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart."* (Psalm 37:4)
- C. We actually started talking about this verse last week. I have received some incredible feedback from that message. And I guess the thing that surprised me the most is simply that, a) so many Christians have never given themselves permission to consider the desires of the heart, and b) so few believe that they have a Father in heaven, who actually cares about those desires.
- D. Here's the truth: No matter what your earthly father was like, I can guarantee you that your Father in heaven wants what's best for you. He wants to give you the desires of your heart.
- E. I'll invite you to meditate with me today on the topic:
  - 1. **The Desires of Your Heart, part 2**
- F. The story of God's people begins when God calls a man named Abraham. God says Abraham leave this place you are living in go to a land that I will show you. This land will be incredible. It will be prosperous and abundant. It will be a place where you will live the life of your dreams. And then God told Abraham that this land is not just a gift, it is an inheritance.
  - 1. *"Then He said to him, 'I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.'"* (Genesis 15:7)
- G. This is the land that today we call Israel. Over 4000 years ago God deeded this land to Abraham and to his descendants, the Jews.
- H. By the way, this word is deeper than it seems.
- I. Because the land doesn't just mean a place, a spot on a map. The land means more than that. The land means a whole way of life. To inherit the land means to inherit abundance. It means to inherit prosperity. It means to inherit joy. It means to inherit peace.
  - 1. **Lesson 1: In the Bible, the Promised Land is the place of maximum possible enjoyment of the blessing of God.**
    - a) **This place is also called your INHERITANCE.**
    - b) **This place is also called your BIRTHRIGHT.**
    - c) **This place is also called a place of REST.**
- J. When you reach the second book of the Bible, God's people have been dislocated far away from the Promised Land. They have been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. God sends a deliverer named Moses to set them free. It should have taken them one year to reach the Promised Land. Instead, it took them 40.
  - 1. Well, actually, they did get there in one year. God said great job everybody! Now go in and enjoy the land! Step into your inheritance!
  - 2. The people said, But we can't go in, it's too scary.
    - a) God said, I will be with you. You can do this.
  - 3. But they said, There are gigantic enemies in the land.
    - a) God said, I am bigger than your enemies. Don't worry. I will give you the victory.
  - 4. The people said we are grasshoppers in their sight.
    - a) God said you are triumphant warriors in my sight. Now go in and take the land and enjoy it.
      - (1) There is something inside the human heart that resists stepping into the blessing of God. I'm going to talk about that.
- K. Well, this generation chose the wilderness over the Promised Land. A lot of people I know make the same messed up choice every single day.
- L. And so they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. And God still loved them. God still blessed them. God was still a father to them. But they were not happy. They were frustrated. They were up and down. They were angry. They were bitter. They got what they wanted but they didn't want what they got.
- M. That whole generation never experienced the Promised Land. They stopped short of the maximum enjoyment of the blessing of God.
- N. This is the biggest tragedy for a believer in Jesus today. The Bible warns about this.
  - 1. *"Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His Rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it."* (Hebrews 4:1)
- O. Here is a place, a Promised Land, a way of life, says God. And if you are going to be afraid of anything, be afraid of parking yourself somewhere outside this place.

## II. Series

- A. My talk today is part four in a series. We have been talking about the fatherhood of God. Last time, In part three, I showed you from Scripture that God gave you dominion over your life. That means the right to rule.
- B. As part of that dominion, God becomes your father, and he says, I will give you the desires of your heart.
- C. So we are going to continue with that. The title of my talk today is:
  - 1. **The Desires of Your Heart, part 2**

## III. The Resistance

- A. I want to go back to that generation of people that refused to go into the Promised Land.
- B. There was something in them that actually sabotaged something good in their lives. They were allergic to God's blessing. That whole generation fell short of entering God's beautiful, prosperous, secure, peaceful rest. They literally died in the wilderness.
- C. And I want to say that this is still happening today. Why?
  - 1. **Lesson 2: Every human heart carries a built-in resistance to the goodness, and the blessing of God. The Bible calls this resistance the flesh.**
- D. The flesh is your dark side. It is your prideful side. This is your inner brat, your inner thug, your inner bully, your inner narcissist.

- E. When the Bible talks about your flesh, it does not mean your physical body or your skin or anything like that. It means something way more sneaky, and dangerous.
1. **Lesson 3: The flesh is actually another set of desires, competing with the God-given desires of your heart.**
- F. One of the reasons it's so hard to figure out what you really really want is because you have a lot of conflicting desires, scrambling to run your life.
1. *"We all conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."* (Ephesians 2:3)
- a) The noble part of your heart wants what God wants.
- b) The flesh part of your heart wants what God doesn't want for you.
- (1) If we look within our hearts, we find a jumble of conflicting desires.
- G. There are certain things that you desire/want that are just nasty. Let's just admit it. In fact, the Bible gives us a list:
1. *"When you follow the desires of your flesh, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity [porn], lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery [hooked on drugs], hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God."* (Galatians 5:19-21, NLT)
- H. Let me deal with the last part first. This is not saying they're not saved. They are saved. This is not talking about eternal salvation. This is saying they will not inherit the Promised Land. The kingdom of God (Romans 14:17). They will be those people who died in the wilderness pit. They fell short. They missed the grace of God.
1. All those legalistic preachers out there, who say that if you give into the flesh, you're not saved, or you lost your salvation, or whatever other errors they teach, they are wrong.
2. The truth is that any true believer in Jesus is capable of committing any sin that any unbeliever can commit.
- I. But this verse is saying that if you follow the desires of the flesh, you will not inherit the Promised Land. You will miss the fullest experience of the grace of God.
- J. Let me put it this way. You have two sets of desires, operating in your soul at all times.
1. **The desires of the flesh. (Ephesians 2:3)**
2. **The desires of the heart. (Psalm 37:4)**
- K. Which one does God promise to give you? Which one will lead you to the Promised Land? Which one will give you the most satisfying, meaningful, grace filled life, a human being can ever imagine?
- L. When it comes to figuring out what you want, when it comes to designing your life, there are a bunch big questions that everybody has to answer.
1. Who will be my God? Who am I? What should I do with my life? Career? Homemaker? Should I get married or not? If so, what person should I marry? Where will I live? Will I go to college or not? If so, which one? If not, what's the plan? How will I be employed? Should we have kids? What standard of living should I set for myself? How will I devote my life to Christ and the gospel?
- M. I am going to say that, in answering these questions, and all the other questions, too, the short answer is follow your heart.
1. **Lesson 4: When your heart is right with God, the desires of your heart are a reliable guide for your life.**
- N. But there's a complication.
- IV. What do YOU want?
- A. Last week I asked a question that a lot of people have a hard time answering. The question is, what do you want?
- B. And I am telling you that you can answer that question from either set of desires.
- C. And I am also telling you that when you consistently pursue what you want from the desires of your heart, you will step into the high ground of maximum blessing from God.
- D. But this is hard and this is confusing. How can we tell the difference. We have conflicting desires. We want one thing one day and the opposite thing the next day. We think we're making good choices, when we're actually making bad choices.
- E. So how do we tell the difference?
- F. I want to do some teaching on this. I want to give you a grid so that you can filter your desires, and figure out which desires will lead you to the wilderness, and which desires will lead you to the Promised Land.
- G. I called this God's Great Big Yard.
- H. Here's the lesson, and then we'll break it down.
1. **Lesson 5: In God's plan, you make all your choices within the 4 Guardrails of God's Great Big Yard.**
- I. People think that God is trying to limit them. He's not. He's trying to unlimit you. God has a great big yard for you to play in. His yard is 10 million times bigger than the devil's yard. If you want limitations, play the devil's yard. It's a playpen.
- J. This yard has four guardrails or boundaries for your protection and joy.
- V. **God's Great Big Yard**
- A. **Stay within God's moral guidelines and laws.**
1. If God says it's a sin, don't do it. If you have a desire to do something God said not to do, that desire is from the flesh.
2. When God first gave us his laws, he wrote them on tablets of stone. When you receive Jesus as your savior, God writes his laws once again, this time he writes them on your heart.
- a) *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them."* (Hebrews 10:16)
3. This means that every believer in Jesus has a new heart that has been reprogrammed according to God's moral nature. The ways of God, the promises of God, the truths of God, and the laws of God, have all been written into the operating system of your deepest heart.

4. This is your new heart. This is who you are.
5. If you want to understand how your conscience is wired, then look to the moral character of God which is revealed through his laws.
6. So when I say that you can do what you want, and when I say that the desires of your heart are a reliable guide for your life, I am saying that any desires you have that break God's laws or disobey God's word are from the flesh. It's not the the deepest part of you.
7. The very best things, the most beautiful things, the deepest desires of the human heart, all of these things are within the power of your choice, always within the guardrails of the laws of God.
8. So God's moral laws: that's the first guardrail.

**B. Keep your commitments.**

1. You are free to make all the choices and any choices you want as long as they are within God's moral laws, AND as long as they do not make you break your word.
2. If you're trying to follow Jesus, and if God is leading your life, then God will never lead you to go back on your word.
3. Here's what Jesus said.
  - a) *"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."* (Matthew 5:37)
  - b) *"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold."* (Proverbs 22:1)
4. If you said, you would come and work for a company for at least a year, then no matter what better offer comes your way, it is God's will for you to work for that company for that time. You will find your joy there, in the place where you keep your word.
5. If you said, for better, for worse till death, do us part, no matter what better offer comes your way, it's God's will for you to make that work. And if you're on marriage number two or three or beyond, let's make the one you're in right now the one that works.
6. If you are married, you and your spouse are a unit. The husband gets one vote. The wife gets one vote. And both of you have veto power. That's part of keeping your word.
  - a) I have a friend who became a pastor in Chicago. He had a good job working for the electric utility. Union job. Good wages. But he felt a real burden for one of the struggling neighborhoods in Chicago. He really wanted to quit his job and start a church there.
  - b) He told me, Bill, I can't do anything until My Wife is on board. So he said, I just started praying. I didn't pressure her. I didn't even ask her about it. I just started praying and said, Lord if you want me to do this, then you have to get My Wife on board too.
  - c) About a month later, he said, Bill, My wife came to me and said, honey you need to quit your job and we need to go plant a church in that neighborhood.
  - d) And they did. And I've been there and it's awesome.
7. God works miracles in the lives of people who keep their word. Who fulfill their promises. Who fulfill their obligations. Who live with integrity.
8. God will bring about better results in your life than if you connive and manipulate and go back your word.
9. I can see only three exceptions, and I will not get into them. Let me just say them:
  - a) If there is an emergency.
  - b) If there is a breach of contract by the other party.
  - c) If you are released from your commitment by the agreement of the other party.
10. If you want to go to the Promised Land, you will find it waiting for you squarely within the laws of God, and within the commitments you have made.

**C. Employ boldness-adjusted wisdom.**

1. Wisdom is the Bible knowledge once it's gotten inside of you enough to be part of you. And once it has begun to reformat all you think about stuff. When you have wisdom, you see all the choices in your life from God's point of view.
2. Even if the Bible doesn't specifically say something against it, if it is unwise, don't do it.
  - a) It is not wise to take on debt you cannot pay.
  - b) It is not wise to make yourself vulnerable to someone before you really know them.
  - c) It is not wise to start a new business, and expect to live off it for at least the first year.
  - d) It is not wise to quit your day job and wander the world's oceans in search of the perfect wave, especially if you have a family.
  - e) It is not wise to establish a bond (physical or emotional) with a married person that you're not married to.
  - f) It is not wise to jump into something when everybody who knows you and loves you is against it.
  - g) It is not wise to skip your homework or not show up for class.
  - h) It is not wise to do drugs or alcohol.
  - i) It is not wise to push sexual boundaries.
  - j) It is not wise to keep putting yourself in places where you know you face temptation.
  - k) It is not wise to think you're smarter than God.
3. *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones. Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine."* (Proverbs 3:5-10)
4. There's the Promised Land. There's the desires of your heart.
5. Make wise choices.

6. You might have noticed that the third guardrail doesn't simply say wisdom, it says, boldness-adjusted wisdom.
7. I'm just saying that sometimes God actually wants you to step into a bold adventure, even though it doesn't look good on paper. The math doesn't work. The finances aren't right. Do you have slim chances of success. Strictly from a wisdom standpoint, it's a bad idea.
8. Sometimes you need to go ahead and do it anyway.
9. The poster child for this is Jonah. Jonah, God said, go to Nineveh. Go preach the gospel to pretty much the worst people you could imagine.
10. From pretty much every standard, that was unwise.
  - a) This was unsafe.
  - b) These people weren't interested in the gospel.
  - c) They had a history of violence against the Jews.
  - d) Nobody was going to respond to his preaching.
- (1) It just didn't pencil out.
11. I think that once in a while, you've got to go against conventional wisdom and take a flying leap into the great unknown. Especially when you're young and unattached.
12. If all you ever do is be super cautious, and make perfectly wise choices, and do the math before every decision, you're going to live a very safe and very boring life.
13. We need a few believers in Jesus willing to get out of their comfort zones long enough to move some mountains.
14. Boldness adjusted wisdom.

**D. Honor your truest identity in Christ.**

1. You are who God says you are. Be who God made you to be. Do not contradict your identity.
2. Do not make choices that go against who you are in Christ.
  - a) *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* (2 Corinthians 5:17)
3. You are a new creation. You have a new nature. Any desires you have that make you contradict your new nature are from your flesh, and not from the real you.
4. You have an inheritance. You have a birthright. You are an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. You are spiritual royalty. You are spiritual nobility. Rise up to your high calling. Never stoop beneath your rank.
5. God always calls people as he sees them, not as the world sees them. And not even as they see themselves.
  - a) When the people said, We are grasshoppers in their sight, through Caleb, God said, "You are well able to conquer this land" (Numbers 13:30).
  - b) When God found Gideon literally hiding from his enemies in a hole, God said, Greetings, Mighty Man of Valor. (Judges 6:12)
  - c) When Mephibosheth called himself a dead dog, through David, God called him a Child of the King. (2 Samuel 9:8)
  - d) When God's people actually named themselves, Forsaken and Miserable, God reminded them: your true names are Delightful and Beautiful. (Isaiah 62:4)
  - e) Joseph was thrown in prison, but he never identified as a prisoner. So he literally came to rule the world.
  - f) Daniel was taken hostage as a teenager in Babylon, and Esther was taken hostage as a teenager in Persia, but they never forgot who they really were, so they never identified as victims. And both of them became rulers of the known world.
  - g) Identity is everything. Who you are in the deepest part of your heart, that is the person God is trying to unbury from the avalanche of sin.

**(1) Your Promised Land is a God-given manifestation of your truest identity in Christ.**

6. This is so important that I have made a little resource for you.
  - a) It is a list of 72 blessings that make up your identity and riches in Christ. Your privileges. Your Royal stature.
  - b) There's also a list of 72 lies that the world in the flesh and the Devil use to hypnotize you.
- (1) We're going to have these for you next week. But my prayer is that you will use these to rehab your identity.

**VI. God's Great Big Yard**

- A. So this is God's great big yard. It's bigger than the devil's yard. And it's way more fun. When you play in this yard, you'll never have regrets.
- B. And I'm telling you that if you consistently make choices inside these guardrails, you will set your life squarely in the Promised Land. You will experience the absolutely fantastic gift of a God-blessed life.
- C. Okay, so let's use this thing.
- D. Let's say you're trying to figure out some big choices. What job to take, or what city to live in, or who you're going to marry, or what college you're going to.
  1. You thought about it. You've prayed about it. Some of your choices are outside God's great big yard. Some of your choices are inside God's great backyard.
  2. What do you do?
- 3. Pick whichever option you like best.**
- E. Pick any one from inside the yard. God will bless you. God will give you good success. You can't go wrong. Because God has made you an iron clad promise:
  1. *"Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart."* (Psalms 37:4)