

Desire: The Journey We Must Take to Find the Life God Offers

By John Eldredge



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Can we find a life filled with passion, without being overwhelmed by it?

In *Desire*, John Eldredge writes, "There is a secret set within each of our hearts. It is the desire for life as it was meant to be." Yet how do we uncover our desires and learn to decipher them? As Eldredge says, "We all share the same dilemma?we long for life and we're not sure where to find it. We wonder if we ever do find it, can we make it last? . . . We must journey to find the life we prize. And the guide we have been given is the desire set deep within, the desire we often overlook or mistake for something else or even choose to ignore. The greatest human tragedy is to give up the search."

Many good people have been told that the path to a holy life requires us to kill our hearts' desires. And call it sanctification.

But in this re-release of one of Eldredge's most inspiring works, we discover that God is the author of our deepest desires. He has given us desire, and he loves to fulfill our hearts' desires. For as the Psalms declare, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (37:4).

God is calling to you through the desires of your heart.

How you respond will set the course for the rest of your life.

"[Desire] is a profound and winsome call to walk into the heart of God and hear Him sing to your soul about His love. In a world of frenzy and clamor about desire, we often miss the ache that lifts our face to look into His eyes. This book will stir your heart and invite you to know the one desire that captures all passion for His purpose. Drink in this work, and your life will not be the same."

Dan Allender, Author, The Healing Path

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Editorial Review

About the Author

John Eldredge is an author, a counselor, and a teacher. He is also president of Ransomed Heart, a ministry devoted to helping people discover the heart of God, recovering their own hearts in God's love, and learning to live in God's Kingdom. He lives near Colorado Springs, Colorado.

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Once upon a time there lived a sea lion who had lost the sea. He lived in a country known as the barren lands. High on a plateau, far from any coast, it was a place so dry and dusty that it could only be called a desert. A kind of coarse grass grew in patches here and there, and a few trees were scattered across the horizon. But mostly, it was dust. And sometimes wind, which together make one very thirsty. Of course, it must seem strange to you that such a beautiful creature should wind up in a desert at all. He was, mind you, a sea lion. But things like this do happen.

How the sea lion came to the barren lands, no one could remember. It all seemed so very long ago. So long, in fact, it appeared as though he had always been there. Not that he belonged in such an arid place. How could that be? He was, after all, a sea lion. But as you know, once you have lived so long in a certain spot, no matter how odd, you come to think of it as home.

CHAPTER ONE

Our Heart's Deepest Secret

We are never living, but hoping to live. -- Pascal

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

And I still haven't found what I'm looking for. -- U2

There is a secret set within each of our hearts. It often goes unnoticed, we rarely can put words to it, and yet it guides us throughout the days of our lives. This secret remains hidden for the most part in our deepest selves. 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? You may not always be aware of your search, and there are times when you seem to have abandoned looking altogether. But again and again it returns to us, this yearning that cries out for the life we prize. It is elusive, to be sure. It seems to come and go at will. Seasons may pass until it surfaces again. And though it seems to taunt us, and may at times cause us great pain, we know when it returns that it is priceless. For if we could recover this desire, unearth it from beneath all other distractions, and embrace it as our deepest treasure, we would discover the secret of our existence.

You see, life comes to all of 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 ever do find it, can we make it last? The longing for life within us seems incongruent with the life we find around us. What is available seems at times close to what we want, but never quite a fit. Our days come to us as a riddle, and the answers aren't handed out with our birth certificates. We must journey to find the life we prize. And the guide we have been given is the desire set deep within, the desire we often overlook or mistake for something else or even choose to ignore.

The greatest human tragedy is to give up the search. Nothing is of greater importance than the life of our deep heart. To lose heart is to lose everything. And if we are to bring our hearts along in our life's journey, we simply must not, we cannot, abandon this desire. Gerald May writes in *The Awakened Heart*,

There is a desire within each of us, in the deep center of ourselves that we call our heart. We were born with it, it is never completely satisfied, and it never dies. We are often unaware of it, but it is always awake . . . Our true identity, our reason for being, is to be found in this desire.

The clue as to who we really are and why we are here comes to us through our heart's desire. But it comes in surprising ways, and often goes unnoticed or is misunderstood. Once in a while life comes together for us in a way that feels good and right and what we've been waiting for. These are the moments in our lives that we wish could go on forever. They aren't necessarily the "Kodak moments," weddings and births and great achievements. More often than not they come in subtler, unexpected ways, as if to sneak up on us.

Think of times in your life that made you wish for all the world that you had the power to make time stand still. Are they not moments of love, moments of joy? Simple moments of rest and quiet when all seems to be well. Something in your heart says, *Finally-it has come*. *This is what I was made for!*

WHISPERS OF JOY

It was the final evening of our summer vacation. We had spent nine wonderful days in the Tetons hiking and swimming, laughing and playing, enjoying rare and wonderful time together as a family in a stunningly beautiful place. During our explorations, we had discovered a quiet pond in the woods, about a half hour's walk from camp, where wildlife would often come in the evening. This night, we planned to arrive at dusk and stay until night fell to see what nature might reveal. The sun was setting behind us as we arrived, and far off in the east massive thunderheads were building above the Absarokas, cloud upon cloud, giant castles in the sky. The fading day was slowly turning them peach, then pink, then gray.

A pair of trumpeter swans were swimming across our little pond, looking for all the world like something from a fairy tale. My wife and I sat together with our three boys on a spot of grass near the water's edge, our backs against a fallen log. Across the pond lay a meadow, the stage for the evening's drama. As light began to fade, a bull moose with a massive rack emerged from the willows directly across the meadow from where we sat. He spotted us and stopped; we held our breath. Silently, he disappeared into the trees as mysteriously as he had come. Before we could be disappointed, a cow moose and her calf appeared from another part of the meadow, wandering along grazing. We watched them as night continued to fall.

A cool breeze stirred the pines above us. Crickets began their twilight chorus. The cow lay down in the tall grass, but we could still see her calf. Sandhill cranes were calling and answering one another around the marsh with their haunting, primeval cries. The boys huddled closer to us. A beaver swam by our feet, making a V through the surface of the pond, faded with the light to a gunmetal gray. Far off in the distance, lightning was beginning within those cloud fortresses, flashes of glory. A small herd of elk came out to graze at the far end of the meadow, just as darkness was settling in. Finally, as if not to be left out, a lone coyote began to

howl. It was one of the most breathtaking nights I have ever experienced in the wilderness, a living work of art. As the Scottish poet George MacDonald knew so well, something is calling to us in moments like these.

Yet hints come to me from the realm unknown:

Airs drift across the twilight border land, Odored with life;

... whispers to my heart are blown

That fill me with a joy I cannot speak, Yea, from whose shadow words drop faint and weak.

--Diary of an Old Soul

I know these years are passing quickly, and the time will come when our boys will no longer want to vacation with us. They will find other loves and form other ties, and our lives will never be the same again. Sitting there with them in the woods, clutching their flashlights, whispering to each other about each passing mystery, I would have given anything to stop the clock, turn it back if only for a few days, let us live it all again. But the seasons pass with or without our permission, and I knew in my heart we could not stay. For a moment, we were all caught up in something bigger and more beautiful than we had ever known, "suspended above the earth," as Norman MacLean says, "free from all its laws, like a work of art. And I knew just as surely and just as clearly, that life is not a work of art, and that the moment could not last."

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

Sometimes these moments go unrecognized as they unfold, but their secret comes to us years later in our longing to relive them. Aren't there times in your life that if you could, you would love to return to? I grew up in Los Angeles but spent my boyhood summers in Oregon where both my mother's and my father's parents lived. There was a beauty and innocence and excitement to those days. Woods to explore, rivers to fish, grandparents to fuss over me. My parents were young and in love, and the days were full of adventures I did not have to create or pay for, but only live in and enjoy. Rafting and swimming in the Rogue River. Playing in the park. Huckleberry pie at Becky's along the road to Crater Lake. We all have places in our past when life, if only for a moment, seemed to be coming together in the way we knew in our hearts it was always meant to be.

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,

The earth, and every common sight,

To me did seem

Appareled in celestial light,

The glory and the freshness of a dream . . .

Heaven lies about us in our infancy;

Shades of the prison-house begin to close

Upon the growing boy,

But he beholds the light, and whence it flows.

He sees it in his joy; . . .

At length the man perceives it die away,

And fade into the light of common day.

--Ode, Intimations of Immortality from Recollection of Childhood

Wordsworth caught a glimpse of the secret in his childhood, saw in it hints from the realm...

Users Review

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Evelyn Brown:

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