

You'll Find What You're Looking For

By Bobby Schuller

Today, I want to talk about desire and the value of wanting something. And many of us, especially if you're religious, you think that desire, that passion, that wanting something, that somehow that's not godly or from God. And today I want to tell you this that in the Christian tradition, the belief is that your desire is actually your spirituality. That the more you desire something, the more spiritual you are. That's even true if you desire something bad. If you desire something bad, you are very spiritual the more you desire it. That doesn't mean it's good. I know a lot of people that say I'm spiritual. I say good for you. You're not a good person. I would never say that, but I think it.

Lots of people are spiritual. Bad guys are spiritual, good guys are spiritual. Spirituality is really a measurement of how alive you are. In the bible, the word spirit, the word 'heart', and the word 'will' are interchangeable. So, very often, when we read in the bible the heart, for example, out of the heart the mouth speaks, a famous bible verse. When we think of the heart, we often think of emotions, but in the bible, the emotions are located in the stomach. So when it talks about the stomach, it's talking about emotions. That's why fasting is training your anger, for example.

But in the bible, the heart does not represent emotions. The heart represents the will, the desire, and the choices you make in life. Your will is who you decide to be when all is said and done. Therefore, to be spiritual is to will a lot. And to have a bad or negative or destructive spirituality means you desire bad things for yourself and others, but you really want it. And to have a productive and a life-giving spirituality means that your spirituality is chaste, is the Christian word. Means its disciplined, its focused, and its towards a greater purpose than one's self. It's towards God's will that our will becomes like God. All right? That's a little heavy, but all that to simply say it's good to desire things.

Very often we think that the things we want in life, even the little things, we think they're petty and are somehow not Christian, and that God doesn't care about them. It's easy for us to think that something like a job or a business you want to create, or getting into a relationship, that somehow God doesn't care about that. But I want you to know that's a fundamental part of your spirituality, that it matters, and that I believe you're all good people, and that if you really are someone who is seeking Jesus Christ, it is very likely God put that dream in your heart. You think its petty, you think it's small. The more you want it, the more likely God put it there.

And so today, I want to encourage you that very often when we go through disappointment, and we're standing in that place of the in-between, we think I got to just stop wanting stuff, and I just gotta not

care, but very often depression is the point where you failed and lost so many times that you just give up and you say I'm going to stop wanting. That is not what God wants for you. God wants you to dream, dream big, desire big. The bigger your dream, the bigger your heart. And the purpose of living and following Jesus is not only to go to heaven but to bring heaven to earth and that's going to require people of faith. People who want something; the people who want it bad. People who have something they want so bad in their life they'd be willing to die for it. But no matter what it is you want, I want you to know that as long as it's not somehow against the word of God, it's not somehow harmful or sinful, I want to know that God wants it for you, too. That God is on your side. And that if you're working towards some desire, some dream, or you find yourself in this sort of.. it really can be a torturous waiting period, I want you to know God wants you to get wherever it is that you want to go. I just believe that.

And so many of us, we experience this. We experience life not always when we get the things we want, but when we are striving for the things we want. That seems to be when we have big, big hopes and big dreams, that is when most of us feel most alive because our will and our desire is aflame.

I remember when I was in college, my then girlfriend Hannah Presley, now Hannah Schuller. She is related to Elvis, it's a long story. My then girlfriend Hannah's uncle, who is a terrific guy, by the way,

invited me to be a part of a multi-level marketing business. And I was promised riches. I mean I was going to make money. I wasn't sure what it was we were selling, it had something to do with health insurance, but I knew that if I just got two people to sign up underneath me, and they got two people to sign up under them, I was going to make a fortune and I was going to be able to retire at twenty-two. So I was thrilled. I was pretty sure this was going to happen. And then as people were asking more about it, and saying it was like a Ponzi scheme, and it was all this stuff, I was like no, no, no you don't understand. I know I gave him four hundred dollars but you got to spend money to make money. Anyway, you guys know how this goes. I didn't make any money.

So I was feeling like I jipped my friends, and I burned a lot of bridges, and there are a couple of good MLM's out there that are really good, but most of them are totally tripe and garbage, but you heard it from me. Anyway. Not a lot of.. do you guys know what MLM is? Maybe? Okay, well it doesn't matter. The point is that I lost my four hundred dollars.

At least I thought. Until they brought me to a convention where there were thousands of people. And the guy got up there and he said this business is not about hype, it's about building something great. And I said okay, that's pretty good. And then he goes, let's bring out the cash machine. And then an alarm went off and confetti fell from the roof and I thought, oh gosh, what did I get into?

And then, just when I was at my lowest point, they called a ticket number. It was mine. I went in front of thousands of people, I went into a cash machine and I grabbed \$420 dollars out of that cash machine. And I got out. I got out.

Okay. Why do I mention that story? There are these times where we get these big high hopes and a lot of times they don't make any sense at all. And yet we know that in those times, we have certain desires in life, even when they're vain, or greedy in my case where I just.. oh I'm going to make so much money and retire at twenty-two. You feel alive!

So think of that. Think of the times in which you fell in love, or you wanted a new job, or you were going to step out and create a business, or you were going to start all over again, or move to a new town, or come to a new church and you get all excited about this thing that's going to happen, and very often in life, we have these highs and lows. And that's, in many ways, a big part of our spirituality: what we desire. And I want you to know that when you are in a place of hopefulness, a place where you desire something big in your life, that very often that's just exactly where God wants you to be.

And many of you have been wanting that thing for years, and you're maybe just about to give up, and you're about to quit. And I want to say don't worry, don't despair, keep your eyes on the prize. Keep your hope on God. He's faithful. I just believe He will get you there. And that's a word from the Lord to you. Amen?

So you become what you desire. You become what you desire. Now I know you say, Bobby to be honest with you, I desire a hamburger. Don't take it too literally, but when you desire what is good, and you desire it with all your heart, you become a better person. I just believe that. And as you desire something good, and you might not know if it's good. Again, if it's not against the bible, it's probably good. When we get these little wins in our life, when we keep pursuing certain things, very often those little things that we don't think are important: taking a cooking class or whatever it is, that as you grow in those things, you're actually developing your character. And all of those things like puzzle pieces in the end can come together to make you a better version of yourself in Christ Jesus.

I think with all my heart that God put whatever dream and desire it is that you have in your heart, and you ought to nurture that desire. You ought to build that dream, and as you build that dream, that dream will build you. Don't worry, don't despair, keep your eyes on Him. Keep your eyes on Him. Don't look at all of the other distractions, all of the negative things that will want to get in your way, all the challenges. Look, you're going to fall, you're going to make mistakes, but God's not punishing you. He's lifting you up. He's forgiving you. He's encouraging you. He's giving you His Holy Spirit. He's giving you everything you need to accomplish the impossible.

Advent, this waiting for Christmas where the season we're in right now is a sort of a liturgy of waiting in the in-between-ness. It's a season of waiting for the coming of the Messiah. And that relates to all of that patient waiting that we have to do in life for the things that we not only want, but the things we really need. Emotionally, spiritually, there's things in our life that we need, but they're not here and we find our self saying God, when is this going to happen? How far away is this thing? And I want you to know if you're in that in-between, to be patient. Don't despair. Don't worry. God's either going to get you there or He's going to bring you something better. And I'm going to believe with you He's just going to get you there. If you want something that bad He's going to get you there, I just believe it.

Advent is the reminder - remember the best things in life are worth the wait. They are. But sometimes when we have to wait and work towards something, man, when we get there is there a party or what? And do we appreciate that thing? We do. And does it build our character in the in-between? It does. And is that something we want to hear when we're in the in-between? No, it's not! You never want to hear that. But I promise you in the end it's going to make sense.

God promises the Jewish people that.. well first He promises Abraham that he's going to have many sons. And that they'll outnumber the stars in the sky. God says to Abraham, you see all the stars in the sky? Your descendants will outnumber them and they will be blessed

and they will be a blessing to the world. And that is the first promise of the Messiah. The promise that through the Jewish people would come a tremendous blessing, not just for the Jewish people, but for the whole world. And this promise comes in various prophecies. You see it in the major and minor prophets. The foretelling that someone, the Messiah is going to come. He's going to usher in the kingdom of God and everything is going to change. And so advent is the study of that sort of in-between.

You see the prophet writers. You see them saying when, Lord? How long? When will He come? How long must we suffer under the hand of Pharaoh, Babylon, Assyria? Why is this happening to us? And the response is always hang on my children. Hang on. He's coming. He's coming. He's coming. And that is a word for you today.

Look, we don't have many of the answers for the why, the suffering, and the sort of spiritual warfare that we're all sort of caught in, but I want to say to you hang on. He's coming, He's coming. Don't despair, don't give up, don't just curl up and give up and quit. You have an unbelievable future ahead of you as long as you simply hang on to the Lord.

Isaiah is the passage from today that speaks that. And God says to Isaiah, "comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed; that her sin is paid for. That she's received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice of one in the wilderness. Prepare the way of the

Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill shall be made low. The rough ground shall become level. The rugged places plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall.” You feel weary and tired? “But those whose hope is in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not grow faint.” That is a promise to you.

Man, if you’re burned out, if you’re weary, if you’re tired, if you’re out of energy, fix your eyes on God. Don’t pay attention to all that other stuff. Fix your vision on Him and He will get you walking, and He will turn your walking into running, and He will turn your running into flying. That is a promise. Very often we look and we see these people in our lives and they’re soaring like eagles, and we’re stuck in the pit, and we think I’ll never fly. But sometimes that daunting vision of flying, in order to get there, first you need to just start walking.

Friends, I want to say to you that whatever it is you’re going through, just start walking, and when you start to walk, run, and when you start running, you’ll start flying, and that comes from keeping your hope, keeping your desire, keeping your vision on the Lord. He’s going to get you there.

I remember psychologist therapist Amy Moran was telling a story about just a guy that she was treating, and he was overweight, and he just kind of felt like he couldn't accomplish anything, and his life was getting worse and worse. He had diabetes and he just tried diet plans, and he couldn't do any of this, and he just kind of gave up. And then all of a sudden the diabetes started causing him to go blind and somehow for him that low, low point triggered him to make a change.

So he didn't lose a bunch of weight overnight, he just made one small change, one little step: he stopped drinking 2 liter bottles of Pepsi every night, and started drinking 2 liter bottles of diet Pepsi. It's great. And all of a sudden he started losing a little weight, he started sleeping better, he started feeling better. And then he said well maybe I'll stop eating my ice cream snack before I go to bed and eat a healthy snack before I bed. One little change. He did that and he started losing more weight, sleeping better, feeling better.

Now he's starting to feel encouraged and so just driving around, and he sees in a yard sale an old exercise bike for a couple of bucks, and he picks it up and he takes it back to his place and decides why not, I'll just peddle on this thing while I'm watching Dancing with the Stars. So he does that, he starts peddling at night, eating his fruit instead of ice cream, drinking his diet Pepsi instead of regular Pepsi, and all of a sudden one of those days when he's peddling on that bike and he's watching TV, his vision goes from blurry and it starts to get a little

clearer. And he starts to see a little better. And all of a sudden, just making some of those small changes in his life, he started to get a new vision for his life. She said he comes into my office now, he's lost tons of weight, he's getting into all of these things but you don't get those places overnight. Sometimes you just make a small change. That's all God needs to get you where you need to go. You can't soar always at first. Sometimes you need to just start walking. If you can't walk, crawl, but get moving.

There's something about in that waiting, whatever it is that you desire. Maybe you want to get remarried, or maybe you're looking for a new job, or maybe this is a new town for you and you haven't met anybody, or whatever it is, you want to start a business so there's this thing on your heart, or you want to beat your addiction. Whatever it is, a lot of times there's this in-between waiting where it just feels like it's taking so long, and we can't seem to get our mind or our heart to think about anything else because we want this thing so bad. And I want to just tell you keep pursuing that thing. Don't give up on it.

I know that in-between. I know personally that time erodes. I know that when you want something, you know, we want our son to be great, and he will be. But these things that you face, that you're waiting for, that you want in life, when you're in that in-between, there's an erosion, a taxing thing that happens to your soul in the same way that if you let water rest on steel, it can erode it and make it brittle.

In the same way, if you let go of hope, if you let go of your desire, if you give up, your soul starts to erode under the weight of time. But not you. That's not who you are. That's not you. You're going to keep going, you're going to keep moving in the direction of what God has called you to do, and who He's called you to be.

You say, Bobby, you don't know how long I have been waiting. That's true. I don't know. But one thing I believe is that the longer you stay faithful, the greater the reward. And it pans out in different ways, but the more you want something and keep pursuing that thing, I believe with all my heart that the longer it takes to get there, the greater the reward is going to be. A lot of people, especially young people, they see all their friends getting great jobs and they just feel like they're doing what God's called them to do, but nothing's happening. Your friends are getting married, they're having kids, maybe they haven't met anybody, or their career isn't taking off, or whatever, and they just see that people are going way out, and sometimes it feels like you're going backwards. But I want to tell you that very often, for believers, when you're going backwards, it's not that you're really going backwards, you're creating a tension in your destiny. God is preparing you for your future.

In other words, if you're going backwards, as a stone goes back in a slingshot. You're going backwards as an arrow is going back in a bow. And to model this, I'm going to invite Chad and Hannah to come up and we're going to re-enact an angry birds here. Welcome to Shepherd's

Grove. I'm going to see if I can hit that jib back there. But very often like maybe this is you, and you're all angry, you're an angry bird so we're in Southern California, and here in Southern California, kids love water balloon launchers. And I've ruined many beach goers days when I was eleven or twelve from afar. If you get it right, this can go a long way.. Is it making a noise? I heard something there. All right. All right.

And so very often this is you, and you see everybody and they're going this way, and they're going farther than you, and you feel like you're going backwards. And that tension is growing, and it's growing, and you think when am I going to get anywhere in life? And then. Oh, that was so bad. Can we try it one more time?

CB: It was better in the green room. Better in the green room.

BS: We're going to try one more time. I just ruined a bunch of people, they're like, and then you go like five feet? Oh man. All right, let's try it one more time. What do you think? What do you think, Chad?

CB: That way.

BS: This way?

CB: That's how I do it.

BS: All right, all right, I'm trusting you. You ready, Hannah?

HS: Yes.

BS: All right. Let's try this again, okay? All right, you're going back, everybody's going forward, the tension is mounting.

HS: Wait, the beak, the beak is stuck. The beak.

BS: All right the beak is stuck. Here we go. On no! Yes! Yes!

That's what I'm talking about. The reason those gimmicks go so far is like very often people will be like, Bobby, I liked your sermon. I'll be like thanks, what did you like about it? And they'll go oh.. it was just encouraging. But I guarantee if you go home and you say it was a good sermon, you're going to say well he used this analogy of angry birds where, you know. Images stay in our minds, so. Forgive the gimmick, but we like having fun here.

Anyway, but that's true. I've seen it. As a pastor I've seen it in so many people's lives, that as they just stay faithful in the thing, it doesn't feel like they're going anywhere, but the tension of their destiny is growing. And there comes a point of release in which they get launched into what God calls them to do. You've got good things ahead of you. You've got good things.

And this idea has been presented before in business, in leadership things. Malcolm Gladwell presented an incredible study of this thing called the tipping point where so many individuals, businesses, they just keep grinding away at this thing over and over and over without much of a result, and then all of a sudden it tips. And like a glass filled with water, it tips and water goes everywhere, like an avalanche. All of a sudden all of that hard work, that dedication, that faithfulness, it pays off.

And I know that so many people give up in the eleventh hour because they lose hope because they go through so many failures and I want you to know, don't lose hope. Keep your dream alive. Keep your eyes on Him. And I believe even if you don't get to where you want to go, it's going to be even better. That you'll say it's better, not me. You will look at it and go this is even better than what I dreamed for, and you'll know that in-between made you into a more joyful, life-giving, godly person.

So there's a few things I want to say in order to fix your eyes on God and to keep your hope on Him. You can't look and stay focused at other things. Don't dwell on your past. Believe in the future that God has for you. He has a great future for you.

Many of us, maybe we're doing great or we're wanting to go somewhere, but we have this sense of shame about something from our past, something that we did. Maybe something that was done to you, but still you feel shame about it, and you feel like you're never good enough. Or maybe there's some sin, or maybe you hurt somebody in your past and you just think God can never use somebody like me. Let me tell you, there's no saint without a past; there's no sinner without a future. That is Augustine and that is the truth. And I believe that many of us, we dwell on our past, and we think that our past is worse than everybody else's. It's not. Everyone has a past but the good news is that everyone has a future. I believe in the gospel. That God calls fisherman to get out

of their boat and to walk on water. He can use imperfect people to do impossible things and He loves to do that.

So don't focus on your past. Believe in the great future God has for you, and just receive, not only the forgiveness and mercy, but the great love and favor and blessing. God wants to open up heaven and just pour out blessing on you. He just wants to overwhelm you with life and blessing. I believe it with all my heart.

This word, in Isaiah when we're studying, he says the Lord has given you from His very hand a double portion for your sins. It's like you needed a dollar but He gave you two just to show you how valuable you are.

There's this word in the bible called *lutruē* and *exatēratzo*, which is this word that's used for our redemption and our forgiveness, and the price that was paid so that we could be forgiven. And it invokes a legend, this legend that back in the day, there were wealthy men in Rome who would go and say a slave was a thousand dollars, they'd pay a hundred thousand dollars to free the slave, and they would say you're worth more than any bit of gold. You have incredible value.

And that is what the cross says to you. The cross is a message of hope that says your freedom.. I mean the son of God was given for you. God loves you as much as He loves Jesus. If not He wouldn't have given Jesus for you. He loves you so much. And don't neglect the forgiveness and the price that was paid for your redemption.

So stop focusing on your past and believe in the future God has for you. You're a terrific person. Don't let anybody tell you otherwise.

Sometimes we have people in our family, our old circles that are always reminding us of how this we are or how that we are, trying to hold us back. Don't listen to those voices anymore. When the devil tells you about your past, it's because he's afraid of your future. Don't listen to impossibility thinkers. There's a lot of them out there. There's more people that believe in the impossible than believe in what is possible and they're happy to tell you, don't listen to them.

There's a legend, I'm sure it's not true, it's got to be an urban myth, but I'm going to tell you anyway because it's a terrific story. There was a guy, a soda jerk back in the turn of the century. Back in the days you couldn't just go buy a bottle of soda, you had to go to a pharmacy and then you had a guy with a little white hat and he would cook up a soda for you at the pharmacy. He was called a soda jerk.

And one day there was this soda jerk who fell in love with another girl, and they wanted to get married, so they went to the girl's father to arrange the marriage and the father said to the guy, you will never marry my daughter. She's going to marry someone educated and wealthy like me.

Broken-hearted, this soda jerk left this town, went to another town, opened up his own pharmacy and made this new drink and people were going nuts for it. They loved it. And there were lines out the door.

And it became successful enough that he ended up selling it to the Pepsi Company and they said what do you call this drink? And he says I named it after the man that broke my heart. I named it after the father of the girl who wouldn't marry me. It's called Dr. Pepper.

I just think God loves stories like that, and whether it's true or not, I think that stories like that happen. I think that God's going to really enjoy you proving everybody wrong. I think God just loves it when we cross that finish line and all the people that said you couldn't, you wouldn't, you're not this enough, you're not that enough, or your too much this, or you're too much that, and you get there with joy and humility and gladness, I just think that heaven rejoices in that. I'm going to celebrate with you, too, in that.

So don't listen to impossibility thinkers. Don't focus on the bad news. I know bad news comes all the time, but don't focus on it. Focus on what's possible. If it's possible, it can happen. I mean obviously that's redundant, but believe in what's possible in your life. Don't just embrace all the bad news. You know we have to be realistic, but at the same time we are people of faith, and we believe that God likes to break the rules for His kids. I believe that with all my heart. And don't focus on what you have lost, focus on what you have left.

Maybe you lost someone recently, a husband or a wife, and you just don't know how you're going to get along without them. Or maybe one of your kids, or a best friend. Maybe you lost your job, or maybe you

had wealth and you lost it. Friends, I want to tell you that if we dwell on what we've lost, we're going to remain in a lost place, but if we believe in what's possible, and what we have, we become joyful people, and we invite blessing back into our lives. I know the grieving process is really difficult, and the waiting process can be even harder, but I want to encourage you don't focus on what you've lost. Focus on what you have left. There's incredible power in gratitude that draws us to the people we love, and that brings incredible meaning in our lives.

So don't worry! Don't worry! Don't despair! Don't give up! That's not you, that's not who you are. Live a life of gratitude and focus on the possibilities that are available to you in Christ Jesus. God is going to do great things. And don't diminish your desire, and don't give up your dream. That is what makes you such an awesome person. Keep pursuing, don't give up, and trust that God is holding your hand. Trust Him in the midst of the fog. You're going to get there. Be patient. I know it stinks. He's going to get you there. You're loved, you're favored, you're blessed. God's going to open up so much blessing in your life there's not going to be enough room to contain it. I believe that for you, in Jesus' name.

Father, thanks so much for calling us here. Lord, we love you, and I pray, God that you would open up heaven and bring victory and just bring tremendous blessing and favor to everyone's life who's here, in Jesus' name, amen.

