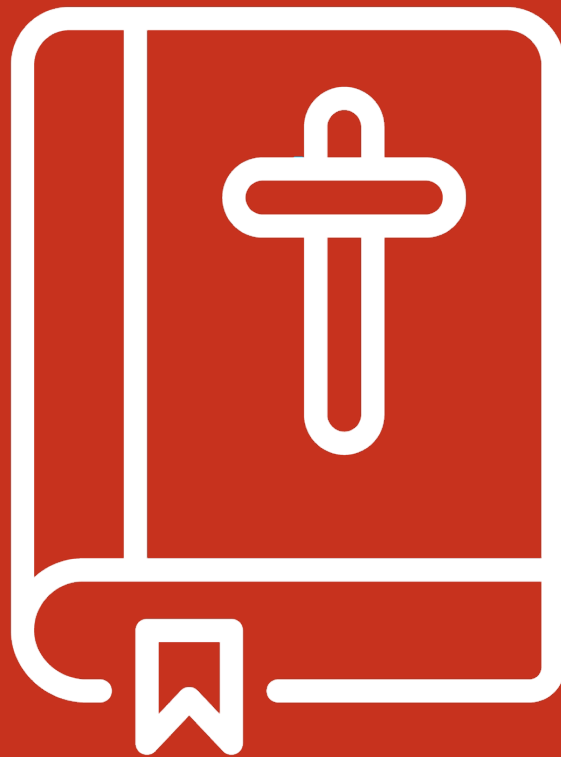


A Series of Short Messages with Big Truths

STORIES AND SCRIPTURES

Issue Three



DESIRES OF YOUR HEART

Jimmy D. Brown

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STORIES AND SCRIPTURES #3: *Desires Of Your Heart*

[The following transcript is from a ten-minute message shared with an audience at a local gathering.]

I have a confession to make: I have never liked veggies, edamame, or hummus. Shocking, right? I love chili, cupcakes, and hot dogs—basically, if it was ever featured in a 1950s carnival, I like it. But eating things that taste like twigs and tree bark? Hard pass.

A few years ago, I was running a 50-mile race in Wisconsin when a shirtless guy cruised past me. On his back, written in Sharpie, were the words “Vegan Power.” In my mind, I translated this as “I eat weeds.” Now listen, good for him, but while he was eating salads, I was crushing pizza, chips, and cookies at the aid stations. You know, the real athlete’s diet. I wasn’t even racing—I was just eating my way through Wisconsin.

About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through, I caught up to him. As I passed, I really wanted to yell, “Powered by donuts, baby! How do you like me now?” But I didn’t. There were still miles to go, and I was afraid he’d pass me again.

Here’s the kicker: guess what I now eat every day for lunch? A salad. A real one—with spinach, feta cheese, and all the healthy stuff. And I actually love it. What happened? My tastes changed. I developed an appetite for salads that wasn’t there before.

That’s what happens spiritually when we put our faith in Jesus. Becoming a Christian isn’t about swapping an old list of bad behaviors for a new list of good ones. It’s about God giving us new appetites, passions, affections, and tastes that weren’t there before. Following Jesus begins with new desires that lead to new behaviors—it’s inside-out change.

Listen to Galatians 5:16-24 (ESV):

[16] But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. [17] For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. [18] But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. [19] Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. [22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things, there is no law. [24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. -

These verses show that, if we belong to Jesus, our desires change. We are given new appetites for God and His ways that weren’t there before. Our old selves, once hostile to God, are dead, and we’ve been

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made alive in Christ with Spirit-given desires and Spirit-produced fruit.

So, here's the main point I want to make:

God gives us new desires that grow when we feed them.

But those old desires still tempt us. The gospel has set us free—those old desires no longer rule over us. They've been nailed to the cross. But that doesn't mean we don't feel their pull. A battle is raging inside of us between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit. If we yield to the Spirit, we won't gratify the old sinful desires. Instead of doing the works of the flesh, we'll produce the fruit of the Spirit. Again, it's inside-out change.

So how do we win this battle? Because this internal conflict can be won with the Spirit's help. What I want to propose is one of the things we can do is to feed the new Spirit-given desires so they rule in our hearts and lives. And I want us to understand that in doing this we will be very happy in God and God will be honored in us. This isn't about begrudging submission—it's about discovering new appetites for things we never dreamed could be so good and satisfying.

There's a story of a young man who explained this battle perfectly. He said, "It's like I've got two dogs inside me: a good dog and a bad dog. And they're always fighting." When asked which dog wins, he replied, "The one I feed the most."

Similarly, that's what happens in our daily battle between the old desires and the new desires. The desire we yield to is usually the one we feed the most—through what we read, watch, listen to, where we go, who we spend time with, and how we use our resources. These things either stir up fleshly desires or godly desires.

So, how do we win the battle? Relying upon the grace of God and the power of the Spirit...

We starve the old desires and feed the new ones.

Or, put another way...

*We remove things that weaken our desires for Jesus and His kingdom,
and we fill our lives with things that strengthen our desires for Jesus and His kingdom.*

Now, let's press in on these two points:

1. *Remove things that weaken our desires for Jesus and His kingdom.*

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- Whatever robs our love for Jesus, our joy in Jesus, or our purpose with Jesus—let's remove it.
- If something makes us chronically discontent or angry, keeps us from gathering with the church, encourages wrong prioritizes or desensitizes us to the Spirit's leading, let's get rid of it.
- Things that crowd out time in prayer and Scripture, numb us to the beauty of God, fuel fear and worry, or entice us with the world's values, let's starve those out.

2. *Fill our lives with things that strengthen our desires for Jesus and His kingdom.*

- Whatever increases our love for Jesus and deepens our peace, joy, hope, and strength—let's add those things in.
- If something stirs up worship, strengthens our faith, encourages holiness, guides us into God's truth and plans, or fuels our excitement for grace, let's get more of it.
- Those things that lead us to repent, fill us with awe for God, stir up gratitude for His blessings, motivate us to live out our calling and makes us long for heaven—let's fill up on them.

So, as much as possible:

*We remove things that weaken our desires for Jesus and His kingdom,
and we fill our lives with things that strengthen those desires.*

For me, things that grow my affections for Jesus include writing in response to my Bible reading, listening to podcasts or music, meaningful conversations, prayer walks, running and getting into nature. Things that rob my affections include social media, certain movies and TV shows, the news, and materialistic environments. So, I try to build my life around what stirs my faith and avoid what weakens it.

I encourage you to take a close look at your life. Make a list of what deepens or weakens your love for Jesus, then make changes so that the desires God has put in you are the ones that grow.

God gives us new desires that grow as we feed them.

And listen to what Psalm 37:4 says:

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (ESV)

Do you see? The new desires we are given are connected to our delight in God. The more we delight in Him, the more we will desire all the privileges and benefits that God means for us to have in knowing Jesus ... and He will give them to us.

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When we delight in Him—when we love, treasure, savor, and worship Him—our desires align with what He wants for us. And what He wants for us is always for our good and always for our joy.

As John Piper says:

I think delighting yourself in the Lord is what shapes the desires of your heart so that it will be good for you for God to grant them.

The heart that seeks after God trusts that He is after our happiness, that He knows best how to bring about our happiness, and that the desires of the Spirit lead us into true happiness in Him. This is why we must build our lives around what stirs our affections for Jesus. In other words, feed your delight in Him.

One final thing. Verse 24 says:

“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

So, my question is simple: Do you belong to Jesus?

Listen, Jesus lived the perfect life we couldn't—He never gave in to sinful desires. Then, He was crucified in our place for all our sins and rose victoriously so we could be forgiven and freed from sin, and given new, better desires. Plus, eternal life! Praise God!

So, if you haven't yet turned from sin and put your faith in Jesus, you can do so right now. Ask God to forgive you and free you from sin, and replace those old desires with new ones—and if you mean it, He will. Come see me if you have questions or want to receive Jesus today.

For those of us who already belong to Jesus, one of the ways we can better walk by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of the flesh is to be intentional about what we take in. There is a battle raging, so let's starve out the old desires and feed the new ones.

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father, we know there is a battle between the old desires of the flesh and the new desires of the Spirit ... and we need Your power and Your grace to win. So, we ask You to help us to walk by the Spirit so we don't gratify the desires of the flesh. Would you show us those things that stir up our delight in Jesus and those things that weaken our love for Him, our devotion to Him and our enjoyment of Him? We ask You to prompt us even today to start making some changes for what we take into our lives so we starve those old desires and feed the new ones. May all of this bring glory and honor and praise to You, for You alone are worthy of it. In Jesus' Name we pray, amen.

Reflection Questions

1. What stood out to you from this message as most meaningful? Why?
2. What was the central idea or theme from this message?
3. What Bible verses or passages were used, and how do they support the message?
4. How does this message relate to your life right now?
5. In what ways did this message convict, encourage or inspire you?
6. What good news did you receive in this message?
7. What did you learn about God that is praiseworthy in this message?
8. How was grace and the gospel presented in this message?
9. What do you think God wants you to do as a response to this message?
10. With whom do you need to share or discuss this message?

PRAY IT

- *God, I praise you because...*
- *I confess that I struggle with...*
- *I thank you for...*
- *Please help me...*

How has God spoken to you through this message?

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Connecting With Me

If you have questions about any of the enclosed material, or if you have any other questions about life with Jesus, please reach out to me by using the *Contact* form at the bottom of the page at *JimmyBrown.com* (making sure you enter your email address correctly). I will personally reply back to you, usually within 24 hours (excluding holidays or weekends).

NOTE: There are a number of free resources available at JimmyBrown.com, and I regularly add more to the site. Check back often for additional materials to access at no cost.

Other Connections

- Social media (personal page): www.Facebook.com/thejimmybrown/
- Daily devotions: www.FinishLineFaith.com or www.Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/
- Travel / mission vlog (with my wife, Paula): www.TheMissionAmerica.com

*If this resource has been helpful to you, please reach out and let me know.
And please pass this document on to other people who may, by the grace of God, be helped too.*