

A DESIRE FOR GOD

by Jerry Johnson

"Seek, grope" These words speak to a real desire, a thirst for something or someone. Have you ever stopped to think about the role that desire plays in your life?

Especially as adults, much of what we think and do flows from our desires. Certainly we have outside pressures and forces that determine some of our actions, but in our society we have a great deal of freedom in what we do or say. Think for just a second.

What are the greatest desires of your life right now? Are they material possessions or something more intangible such as friendship, joy or love? How do these desires direct or determine your thoughts and actions? Now for the big question: Do you have a desire for God in your life and if so, where does it fit in with your other desires?

We all have desires that shape our lives and the decisions we make each and every day. Where do these desires come from? That's a tough question to answer. They may stem from our surroundings, how we were raised or the influence of other people in our lives. But even if we are affected by these outside forces, there must still be something deep within us that resonates with these influences to shape our desires. For instance, our parents may have strongly encouraged us to play a

"...so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him,..."
Acts 17:27

particular sport or musical instrument as we were growing up, but that doesn't mean we would necessarily have a desire to play that sport or

instrument. In fact, if we don't really have that desire but we are pushed or even forced into a particular activity, it will be tedious or boring for us. But if we do have a real desire for that sport or instrument, we will put in great effort, even to the point of causing us discomfort or pain, to fulfill that desire. Where this inner desire comes from can be as mysterious as God himself. It just seems to be there, instinctively.

What we do know is that God has placed within each one of us a desire for him. Unfortunately, we don't always recognize it. We may cover it up with other desires, mistake it for another desire, or just ignore it altogether. In any case, it is only God himself that can fulfill this desire he has placed within us. St. Augustine expressed it well in his famous quote: "Lord, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you". Our goal then should be to discover or uncover this desire for God, so that it may have a real impact on our life. Once we come to recognize it and experience it, it will shape and influence all of our actions and decisions. If this is the most important desire of our heart, it will help us to put all other desires in their

proper place. It will lead us to a deeper and deeper conversion to Christ and to the eternal life that he offers us.

So back to the big question. Do you recognize a desire for God in your life? If not, what is preventing you from this experience? Are you so bogged down with other desires that there is no room for God? Are there hardships, illnesses or other circumstances that have caused you to ignore or reject God? Or do you not recognize that your desire for love or relationship may in reality be a desire for the God who is love. Are you trying to fill that desire in ways that are actually leading you away from the only one who can calm your restless heart?

At the root of all that is blocking our desire for God is sin. Satan tempts us with many other desires which will lead us away from the only one who can truly fulfill all desire. We must pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us to repentance. That repentance that will free us from our sin and help us to uncover that desire for God. That desire that we are desperately in need of. Amazingly, God desires us first. He loves us first. How can we not respond with a deep desire and love for him!

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The Catechism of the Catholic Church

"The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for:"

-CCC 27

"The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it..."

-CCC 1718

"Man is in search of God. In the act of creation, God calls every being from nothingness into existence. "Crowned with glory and honor," man is, after the angels, capable of acknowledging "how majestic is the name of the Lord in all the earth." Even after losing through his sin his likeness to God, man remains an image of his Creator, and retains the desire for the one who calls him into existence..."

-CCC 2566

"O God, you are my God- for you I long! For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts, Like a land parched, lifeless, and without water. So I look to you in the sanctuary to see your power and glory. For your love is better than life..."
Psalm 63:2-4

SUGGESTED READING

The Fulfillment of all Desire
 by Ralph Martin

THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS

1. What am I doing to uncover and stir up the desire for God that is within me?
2. Am I seeking God first in my life?
3. Does my prayer life express a simple desire for God and to come into communion with him?

PRAYER – THE EXPRESSION OF DESIRE

"As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God. My being thirsts for God, the living God..."
 Psalm 42:2-3

"...Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him."

-CCC 2560

"According to Scripture, it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain."

-CCC 2562

"The invocation of the holy name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always. When the holy name is repeated often by a humbly attentive heart, the prayer is not lost by heaping up empty phrases, but holds fast to the word and "brings forth fruit with patience." This prayer is possible "at all times" because it is not one occupation among others but the only occupation: that of loving God, which animates and transfigures every action in Christ Jesus."

-CCC 2668

"Contemplative prayer seeks him "whom my soul loves." It is Jesus, and in him, the Father. We seek him, because to desire him is always the beginning of love, and we seek him in that pure faith which causes us to be born of him and to live in him. In this inner prayer we can still meditate, but our attention is fixed on the Lord himself.

-CCC 2709

"We must remember God more often than we draw breath."

-St. Gregory of Nazianzus