

FRIDAY: *Desire – Our Responsibility*

Read: James 1:13-15 ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Reflect:

It’s really quite a scary progression. We all have desires – we see something we want – we dwell on it – it entices us – it becomes sinful – if not repented of it will kill us; if not literally (physically), then ultimately (spiritually).

The words for “lured” and “enticed” are metaphors used for hunting and fishing. It has been said that what distinguishes humanity from the rest of the animal kingdom is our ability to discern and make rational choices. Apparently when it comes to sin we are just like a famished wolf going after a wounded calf...or a fish taking it “hook, line, and sinker...”

Sin is personified as an adulterous woman (or a prostitute) in Proverbs. Given that fact it’s clear to see what’s influencing James’ thoughts in v15. In a day where contraceptives were nonexistent, giving in to lust could in fact lead to a child. That was the final outcome of the sinful act. Here James replaces the conceived child with “death” – a grim reminder.

Respond:

Do you realize “desire” is a neutral term? You can have good desires (cf. Monday and Tuesday).

Do you ever ponder what your sin looks like from God’s perspective? What about what your sin looks to you in hindsight – i.e., after the “moment” is passed? Can that help you correct some desires?

What are your top two or three “desires” you would like to change? What are two or three desires you would like to develop more fully?

Pray: Confess to God the two or three desires you would like to change. Pray for the various teachers of NLCC as they continue to prepare for Sunday. Pray for your desires to be shaped by God’s word.

SATURDAY: *When? How? Huh?*

Read: Matthew 24-25

Reflect:

What a bewildering couple of chapters. How does a person make heads or tails of them? Do these chapters indeed teach that some will be “left behind?” Why do we care? What is the importance of the question the disciples ask Jesus in 22:3?

88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988, well 1988 came and went. Perhaps he could’ve written another book, *89 Reasons Why...* Fortunately the author didn’t do that. But we certainly would like to know when the “Rapture” will be, if in fact there is one...

What about the “abomination of desolation” or the “withered fig tree”? What about those parables in chapter 25 – are they important when we look at Matthew 24? Hmm... Mt24:36 says that Jesus doesn’t know when He’s coming. If He doesn’t, how can we?

Respond:

Tomorrow’s sermon (Lord willing) will be on the topic of *Eschatology* – the study of “the last things.” Does that topic interest you at all?

Would you like to know when the world will end? How would that change what you do today?

What can you do today to prepare yourself for “conglomerate worship” at “the building” tomorrow?

Pray: Pray that God is glorified in the church services around the world on Sunday. Pray that guests are welcomed, that people are encountered by God, and that lives continue to be changed. Thank God for His love.

Anthropology: A Look at Our Desires

April 13 – 19

¹**de•sire** \di-ˈzī(-ə)r, dē-\ vb

- 1) to long or hope for: exhibit or feel desire for <*desire* success>
- 2) a. to express a wish for: REQUEST <they *desire* an immediate answer>
- 2) b. to express a wish to: ASK

Desire is expressed when things are said like...

- I don’t care what you want; I want to go home now.
- I don’t care what you have to do...just get it DONE!!

Desire is also expressed when things are said like...

- Are you OK? I’d really like to help you carry that.
- You know, I hadn’t thought of it in that way before. Let’s talk about this some.

²**de•sire** \di-ˈzī(-ə)r, dē-\ n

- 1) a conscious impulse toward something that promises enjoyment or satisfaction in its attainment
- 2) a. LONGING, CRAVING
- 2) b. sexual urge or appetite

Desire is expressed in statements like...

- He had an unquenchable thirst to be well known in the community.
- What mattered most to Steve was apparently his yard...he spent practically every waking hour of the weekend taking care of it.

Desire is also expressed in statements like...

- For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son... (Jn3:16)
- Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done... (Lk22:42)

Desire often has a negative connotation to it. Actually, it’s an amoral word. It has no morals. Desires can be good or they can be bad. If you listen to solely the world your desires will be self-centered (perhaps at best), or harmful (perhaps at worst). Ironically, if you listen solely to the Bible your desires can still be self-centered and/or harmful. That is simply because you have to choose to act; first to form the right desires (and get rid of the bad ones) and then to follow through with them. Choice matters...

MONDAY: *Desire – Those of Jesus*

Read: Luke 22:14-15 ¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

Reflect:

Verse 15 sounds extremely odd to us. Think about it...Jesus was Jewish; therefore He knew what happened to lambs at Passover time. Being the Passover lamb, Jesus knew He would be slain for the deliverance of His people. Yet He looked forward to this evening...

Was He sadistically looking forward to His gruesome death? I don't think so (cf. Lk22:41-42). Yet He was set on doing whatever it took to bring glory to the Father. He knew what needed to happen (cf. Lk24:44-49), and that gave Him strength for the immediate moment(s).

A few weeks ago we looked at what Paul had to say about Jesus' obedience in Philippians. He was obedient so God would be glorified (Phil2:11). Keeping the importance of God's glory at the forefront of our minds can help us with our desires as well.

Respond:

Read Luke 22:24-27. Do you ever find yourself focused on the wrong desires?

Read Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:18 (there are more). When was the last time that prayer helped you have a proper desire for something?

What is one specific way you would like to bring God glory this week? Can someone help you?

Pray: Confess to God that you need help for your desires to be more pleasing to Him. Pray that your desires would be formed by the truthfulness of God's word. Pray that the body of NLCC would have a growing desire to be unified.

TUESDAY: *Desire – Revealed by Prayer*

Read: Matthew 6:9-13 ⁹ Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Reflect:

The “Lord’s prayer” can certainly expose our desires. Do we really desire God’s name to be holy? Are we concerned with how others view Him? Do we live our lives in such a way that those observing us can see we live for Him?

What about forgiving others? Matthew has a lot to say about ours not being forgiven if we don't forgive others (e.g., Mt6:14-15; 18:21-35). While it is hard for us to reconcile with our thinking, being extended grace and forgiveness is how people change – if not those in need of forgiveness, then us (into a more “mature” person) as we forgive...

Deliver us from evil. How often do we pray that? Do we really want it? The proper translation of that verse is “deliver us from the *evil one*” – i.e., Satan. We can't be “delivered” from all evil, but we can pray, and while praying be assured, that God won't abandon us. He never does.

Respond:

The “Fatherhood” of God is touchy. For some it is a good feeling, for others it is terrible; both can stem from childhood experiences. Thank God He is a perfect Father.

Do you have someone you need to forgive? Are you going to let pride (or anything else) get in your way? Do you see the danger in that?

Does your prayer life consist of the things for which Scripture encourages us to pray (e.g., Mt9:36-38; Acts4:29-31; Col4:2-4; 2Thess3:1) or for “Great Aunt Betty’s knee?” I'm not saying physical healing is unimportant – BUT what is of ultimate importance?

Pray: Continue to pray that your desires will be pleasing to God. Confess to God an area you struggle with in your life – be assured of His help. Pray for a forgiving heart; a heart that loves as God loves.

WEDNESDAY: *Desire – Maturity*

Read: James 1:2-4 ² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Reflect:

My goodness, what nonsense! At least that is often an initial reaction when reading these verses. Why is that? The options are many...but by and large, we desire everything to be “easy” and a “bed of roses” don't we?

The combination of “when” and “meet” (v3) indicates trials are going to happen. We do nothing to deserve them...God isn't punishing us. Sometimes bad things happen simply because we live in a fallen world. Sometimes bad things happen because others make bad choices. The hard part to swallow is that sometimes bad things happen because we have made bad decisions...

Also, “bad things” (at least we think they're bad) happen because God is in fact testing us. He desires our maturity, as should we. Working towards maturity is important; it enables us to serve God more effectively. Yet maturity takes effort...

Respond:

Do you easily get discouraged or frustrated? Join the crowd; no one is immune. Do you have someone to help you? Who? **A)** Have you thanked them? or **B)** Why not?

Read Gen6:5-6. Please remember, everything you see around you, including everything that happens to you, isn't necessarily God's will!! Yes, God is ultimately in control – but He gives us a free will to make choices

Do you desire to be a mature follower of Jesus (i.e., “perfect and complete”)? What are you doing to attain that? Are you more mature now than you were last year?

Pray: Thank God for the built in support system that is already present in “the body of Christ” (the church). Pray for a growing desire to be a mature follower of Jesus. Pray for Tammy Krause and the Youth Group as they meet tonight.

THURSDAY: *Desire – Giving*

Read: James 2:14-17 ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Reflect:

“Wow, that's rough...I'll be praying for you...” While undoubtedly said with good intentions, sometimes those words are practically useless...especially if we have the means to do more. The fact of the matter is that some people will never want to hear about God until they see or experience those who claim to follow Him assisting others – like themselves.

James 2:14-17 has similar vocabulary found in James 1:5-8. Apparently James is trying to get the point across that just as God gives generously, we should do no less.

James repeatedly stresses the interrelation of faith and what we do. If you think about it, faith (generally speaking) influences our entire life. You flip a light switch and you expect (e.g., have faith) the light will come on. You sit down and you expect the chair to support you. You believe in God, you should expect it to impact your life...

Respond:

Was the top paragraph to the left offensive to you? Regardless of if it was or wasn't (I hope it wasn't), why?

When was the last time you did an act of service for someone else? When was the last time you did an act of service for someone who didn't belong – or attend – “the church”?

How did your relationship with God impact and influence the decisions you made yesterday? How can it today?

Pray: Thank God for His love for us; a love that transforms us for His glory. Pray for areas in which NLCC can become more involved in Emporia and the surrounding communities. Pray for the elders and preaching minister as they will be meeting this weekend – pray for unity and a productive, God-honoring meeting.