

Live for Your Greatest Desire ■ Jesus

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the importance of desiring Jesus above all things, highlighting that true Christian self-denial is for the sake of finding ultimate satisfaction in God. It addresses objections regarding desire and love, showcasing how Jesus' act of dying on the cross was sustained by the joy set before Him in the presence of God. The sermon encourages believers to pursue their greatest desire for God, even if it costs them everything, as it leads to eternal joy and fulfillment.

Scripture: Isaiah 26:8, Exodus 3:14, Mark 8:34, Hebrews 12:1, Psalms 16:11, Revelation 21:3

Topics: "Desiring God", "True Satisfaction in Christ"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of desiring Jesus above all things, highlighting that true Christian self-denial is for the sake of finding ultimate satisfaction in God. It addresses objections regarding desire and love, showcasing how Jesus' act of dying on the cross was sustained by the joy set before Him in the presence of God. The sermon encourages believers to pursue their greatest desire for God, even if it costs them everything, as it leads to eternal joy and fulfillment.

Transcript

Let's pray together. I invite you to pray with me. Father, I ask now that the miracle of the new birth, the miracle of the awakening of a supreme desire for Jesus above all things, would be granted to thousands.

I pray that every Christian would be awakened fresh to desire Christ above everything. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

For over 20 years now, the flag that's been flying over Passion Conferences is from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 26, verse 8. You can find it on the website. You can read it on the screen. It goes like this.

Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your truth, we wait eagerly for you, for your name and your renown are the desire of our souls. It's never changed. From 1997, your name, oh God, your renown, your fame, is the desire of our souls.

So yes, Lord, we wait for you. We want you. We desire you.

And the reason that I say you and not just your name or your fame is first because that's what the text says. We wait eagerly for you because that's what the name means. Your name is your being in the Bible.

When God revealed his name in Exodus 3, he said, I am who I am. My name is my essence, my being. So when you desire the name, you desire the person.

And when you desire the renown, you desire the fame of the person. Now on this side of the incarnation, he has another name. The name is Jesus.

I don't know if you're as amazed as I am by these outrageous things Jesus said. The most outrageous thing that Jesus ever said was, before Abraham was, I am. So when you desire the name, when you say your name and your fame are my desire, you mean Yahweh, I am who I am, who is Jesus.

That's what we believe. Passion is built on the deity of Christ. Jesus is Yahweh.

And the Word became flesh. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was Yahweh. And the Word became flesh.

So we believe that Yahweh is now a God-man, Jesus. And then the angel says, you should call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. So, for 23 years, that's been the flag waving over passion.

Our desire, our greatest desire, which is what I'm praying for you, that your greatest desire would be for Yahweh, Jesus, the God-man, Savior. Not just privately, but me and Jesus, my desire satisfied, He and I, right here in this moment, happy. Rather, your desire is to be for Jesus famous.

Jesus renowned. Not a private desire. If it's only you and Jesus, you don't know Jesus.

The passion for His fame is right there in the verse. Your name and your renown are the desire of our souls. And when we say that His name and His fame are our desire, we don't mean maybe, maybe He'll be famous.

There's no maybe about it. The fame of God's name is not a maybe. Psalm 22, All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall, there's not a maybe, shall worship before you.

Why? Because kingship belongs to the Lord. And He rules over the nations. This is not a maybe.

The gospel of Jesus, the gospel of Yahweh, the gospel of the cross is going to reach the nations. He will gather His sheep. He will build His church.

For kingship belongs to the Lord. It's not a maybe. Revelation 5-9 You were slain.

And by your blood you ransomed people for God. That's a done thing. That's finished.

You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. They are ransomed. God's elect among the nations are ransomed.

They are coming from every tribe and every people. And the global glory of Jesus is not a maybe. Revelation 11 The kingdom of the world has become, it's as good as done, has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever.

There is no maybe. There will be no competing kings. His name, His fame will be supreme.

Every contending king will be thrown down. Isaiah 2 The haughtiness of man shall be humbled. You haughty, you're coming down.

The lofty pride of men will be brought low. Whether they're in politics or not, the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. Alone.

Which means that the humble and lowly in this stadium, the humble, the broken, the lowly, whose greatest desire is the name and the fame of Jesus, will receive your desire in full in due time. He will be with you. And you will be with Him.

And every hindrance, every obstacle between your joy and its total fulfillment will be removed. Revelation 21 Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with Him.

They will be His people and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

That's coming. This fame, this God-Man-Jesus, this Yahweh is coming. The desire of your souls for His name and His fame will not be disappointed.

There's no maybe about it. If you don't desire it, you won't have it. To be born again is to taste that God is more to be desired than anything.

That's what it means to be born again. The creation of a desire for God greater than the desire for anything else is to be a Christian. It's a miracle.

You can't make it happen. Nothing is more important in your life than the awakening of this desire. The triumph of this desire over all other desires is the most important thing in your life.

If the name and the fame of Jesus, the Savior, the Son of God, the King of Kings, does not become your greatest desire, you will not only waste your life, you will lose it. Which leads to two questions. Two objections, as I have experienced them and heard them over the years and now.

Two objections. And my hope and my prayer that in answering these two objections, these two obstacles between our gluttony, our deepest, fullest, longest, most durable desire on Yahweh Jesus, in answering these objections, that God might open your heart to desire. I pray that you will give yourself no rest until Jesus, personally precious, globally famous, is your supreme desire.

Now here are the two objections. Number one, Piper, doesn't all this emphasis on desire backfire in the end? Even if you say it's a desire for God, you're still making so much of your desire, the state of your own heart. You're going to make a God out of desire, Piper.

You make a God out of desire with all this focus and emphasis upon desire. The whole thing backfires, doesn't it? That's question number one. Here's the second one.

I know where you're going. What if I urge you, which I do, not only to desire the name and the fame of Jesus above everything, but to make that desire, that confidence, that that desire is going to be full. What if I tell you, you must make that desire the sustaining force of every act of love in your life? Or it's not acceptable to God.

Would not someone object? That is a perfect way to contaminate love for others. Turning it into self-seeking. My desire is going to find satisfaction through loving you.

So, it's all about me. It's all about my desire, and I use you. So, Piper, you ruin the moral beauty of love.

Sacrificial, self-giving love, you ruin it in front of all these students, telling them to pursue their desires and turning love into self-seeking. That's objection number two. If I thought that those two fears, the fear of making a God out of desire, the fear of turning love into a morally defective self-seeking, if I thought that was only a passion problem, I probably wouldn't focus on it.

But my experience is that probably hundreds of thousands of people around the world are lamed in their relation to God by the suspicion that desire is a dangerous ally in worship. Because it turns worship into about my cravings and my desires. And my sense is that there are hundreds of thousands of people who are hindered in genuinely loving other people by the suspicion that pursuing my desire through love is a defective motive for any good deed, let alone every good deed as you say, Piper.

So what should we do? Somebody raises an objection to something you've been taught, what should you do? Before you get entangled in psychological and philosophical and ethical analyses of your own desires, my suggestion, and this is what I'm going to do, is that before that, you look at Jesus. You open this book, and you look at Him. And you ask Him, what do you say about desire and its motive? How did you act in love in regard to the desire of your soul? You don't just go spinning off in philosophical thoughts coming out of your own head.

Who cares about your head? Everybody cares about this if they have any sense at all. God's explanation for how to think about desire, how to experience desire, how to pursue desire, how desire functions in worship and in love should make all the difference to us. So that's what I want to do.

I want to look at a passage in response to the first objection, and a passage in response to the second objection, and then ask the Holy Spirit to cause you to be born again. Or, if you are, to be inflamed afresh with a superior desire for God above all things. Perhaps the person who objects, this is objection number one, perhaps the person who objects would take me to Mark chapter 8, and he would say, look, it's obvious to us that you're making a God out of desire.

You've got things all out of proportion by telling these students to pursue and glut and fulfill their desires on God, because Jesus taught us to deny ourselves and take up our cross. And you're going around the country and to passion telling them to glut their desires, not deny their desires. So here's the verse.

You see it. If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Deny yourself, Piper.

Stop telling these people to pursue their desires and tell them to deny their desires. It's what the Bible says. And you know what a cross is, Piper? It's not a burden.

It's death. It's the electric chair to yourself. Come on.

To which I respond, you need to look more carefully at what Jesus actually said. How Jesus actually argues. One of the brothers when we were praying back there had his hand on my shoulder and he prayed that God would raise up not only missionaries, but pastors and Bible teachers and lovers of the Word of God.

And I thought, I would like that to happen. So I hope you're watching. Watch what I do here.

Because we read the Bible so superficially. So you need to look. I'm talking to my objector now.

Objector number one, you're making a God out of desire. You should be telling people to deny themselves, get on the road to those unreached peoples. I'm going to argue from the way Jesus argues that this text is not only not a problem for what I'm saying, it's the basis of what I'm saying.

Now I know that sounds backwards. How can Jesus teaching that we should deny ourselves actually teach that we should indulge our desire for God? How can He be teaching that? That's exactly what it teaches. And we'll see it in just a moment.

But let me state the premise and the big picture first then we'll look at it in the text. All Christian self-denial is for the sake of ultimate, eternal satisfaction in God. In fact, the effort to deny yourself God as your supreme desire is idolatry! Blasphemy! God offers Himself in this stadium right now through His Word, by His Spirit, He offers Himself to us as the infinitely valuable, infinitely beautiful, all-satisfying treasure of the universe for your full and everlasting pleasure.

Read it. Psalm 16:11 In your presence, God, there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Full and forever. You can't improve on that. There's nothing fuller than full.

There's nothing longer than forever. If we turn away from that offer, if we turn away from the offer of everlasting pleasure in the presence of God as the fulfillment of our lifelong desire, if we turn away from that, say, no God, Jesus taught me to deny myself, I cannot accept that offer to pursue You as my full and lasting pleasure, we are idolaters. So listen again.

Mark 8:34 If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. So, pause. Make no mistake, before we go to verse 35, make no mistake, there is real self-denial in the Christian life.

A real cross to die on. Real suffering to endure for Jesus. A real death to die.

A real old John Piper that's got to be put to death every day at age 73, no less than 23. There is real self-denial. Christianity is costly.

It will cost many of you your lives. I'm thinking, you're going to give tonight towards these languages, right? Thousands of languages. That means unreached people.

They don't have the Gospel and they don't have the Bible. Are you going to take it to them? Are you going to become a Bible translator? Or are you only going to give? Now I know most of you shouldn't go. How many? A thousand? A thousand for the next 13 years? I'm going to make it happen.

I'm not going to just give to make it happen. I'm going to train to make it happen. I'm going.

Where does that come from? That comes from a lot of self-denial. But how does Jesus argue? The Bible argues. You know this, don't you? The Bible is not a string of pearls.

It's a chain. It's a chain of arguments. So what's the argument in verse 35 for verse 34? Let's look at it.

For. You know what that word means. Because.

So verse 34 should be obeyed because. Whoever would save his life will lose it. And whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's will save it.

Do you see how he's arguing with verse 35? Why should we not save our little American comfortable lives in the service of Jesus and not go to the unreached people? Why? Because if we do that we lose our lives. And you don't want to lose your life. See the argument? You get the argument.

Why should we be willing second half of the verse to lose our lives in the service of Jesus and leave behind so much of what other thousands are craving and living for? Why should we be willing to do that? Answer, we're going to save our lives if we do that forever. And you want to save your life. So what does the argument assume in order to work, in order to be valid? No.

It assumes no true disciple will throw away eternal joy in God for a mere 80 years of comfort here. We're not idiots. Christian disciples are not idiots.

That's no deal. 80 years of bliss. Eternity of misery.

Not a deal. Disciples of Jesus along with Jesus assume that desires for joy in God forever are more should be stronger than the desire for anything this world has to give. That's the assumption of the argument.

If pursuing our desire our eternal joy in God costs us everything here let it go. We lay it down. Let goods and kindred go this mortal life also the body they may kill God's truth about it still I'm going to translate a Bible.

This is how bold Christians come into being. This is where risk-taking missionaries come from. This is where your world gets turned upside down.

So, no, no, no, no we do not make a God out of desire. Our desires make clear what our God is. This world or God.

Our name or His name. Our fame or His fame. Our desires are not what we worship.

They are our worship. And what we desire most is God. If you belong to Jesus you say Isaiah 26 we're circling back you say Isaiah 26.8 Your name and your renown is the desire of my soul.

That's the mark of a Christian. Not a mature Christian a Christian. There's a lot hanging here in the balance.

Objection number two I see where you're going Piper and I don't like it. You are leading us to say not only that we should desire the name and the fame of Jesus above all things. You're leading us to say that that motive, that desire that longing should be the sustaining force of all of our loving acts.

Which means our entire life. Because Paul said let everything you do be done in love. And yet you are here this morning ruining love.

You're taking a morally beautiful act of self sacrifice and turning it into an ugly act of self seeking by making your desire the motive for others good. I don't like that Piper. So once more we look to Jesus and

this time we'll look at Hebrews 12 verses 1 and 2. I'm gonna start in the middle of verse 1 let us run with confidence the race that is set before us.

Looking to Jesus the founder that's what I wanna do. I wanna look to Jesus. Show me what you did Jesus.

Show me how you did it. Model for me how to do this. Looking to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

So the writer pictures life your life as a marathon. Not a sprint. You see it in the first seven words of that text.

Let us run with endurance the race. You don't need endurance to run a hundred meter dash. You need strength.

If you're gonna run for 26.22 miles you need endurance. Christian life is just one long life of costly love. You need endurance to make it to the end.

Jesus' marathon lasted 33 years. This is the underline last night. 33 comes after 20.

You get that from last night? 33 comes after 20. Death at 33 comes after the kind of desires that have been cultivated in the 20th. He ran the final hours of the race with nails in his feet and nails in his hands and a crown of thorn on his head and he never stopped running the marathon.

That would hurt. It did hurt. And he finished.

And I could wish in a room that's got many unbelievers and believers in it I could wish that we could all agree in the history of the world there never has been an act of love greater than the act of Jesus dying for his enemies that they might be saved. There's never been a greater there never will be a greater act of love. So the question is, alright, if that was the greatest act of love how did he have the strength to do it? Don't go philosophical on me.

Don't go theological on me. Go textual. Read your bible.

You will be saved from much nonsense on your campuses if you're a person of the book. What does the text say? Right in the middle of the text. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross despising the shame for the joy on the other side of suffering, on the other side of death, on the other side of the resurrection he could taste it.

And so he considered the shame you know criminals were crucified naked and reviled shame was the name of the game to kill this way and he considered the shame and he despised the shame. What does that mean? What does he despised shame mean? He pictured shame as a kind of tempter. You faced him.

Shame, he said. Shame, I know what you're trying to do to me. I know the power that you have to turn people away from the path of obedience and love.

I know how you create in the human soul an almost irresistible desire not to be embarrassed. Oh, I don't want to be embarrassed. I know how you work.

And shame, I can taste. I can taste right now in the court and on the cross. I can taste a joy 10,000 times greater than you would give me if I feared you and followed you and escaped embarrassment.

I can taste it. And shame, I despise what you are doing. I hate you.

I turn away from you. I throw you out. Shame, you will not direct me off my path of love and obedience for the joy set before me.

I'm going to finish this and you can just go to hell where you come from. And with that, he endured the cross, threw shame to the wind, died for sin, rose again, reached the joy. He reached the joy that was set before him.

Here's my conclusion. Mark this. Either believe it and be a Christian or don't believe it and don't play games.

The greatest act of love that was ever performed in the history of the world was sustained by the desire for joy in the presence of God. When it says in verse one, looking to Jesus, it doesn't mean don't act like Jesus. Jesus is a bad model here.

Don't follow Him and be motivated this way when you love other people. It doesn't mean that. It means that's a good example.

That's a good way to love. That's a good way to die. That's a good motive for going to the unreached peoples of the world and leaving everything behind.

That's a good model. Look at Him. Look at Him.

That's what it means when it says looking to Jesus. So, last question then. If every act of love, true love, real love, Jesus-like love, is sustained by a desire for the joy that is set before you in the presence of God, then how is it that every act of love is not corrupted into self-seeking? Selfishness.

You're teaching these students to be selfish in love. How is that not a valid criticism of what I'm saying? Why isn't the cross, to put it crassly, why isn't the cross a great act of selfishness? Since for the joy of His own soul, He died for you. For the joy of His own soul, in the presence of God, He died for you.

Why is that not selfishness? Here's the answer. Selfishness is using or ignoring other people to get your happiness at their expense. That's not what's happening on the cross.

That's not what's happening when you genuinely love somebody. Jesus is not using or ignoring sinners as He dies for them. Jesus is suffering and dying precisely to include others in the happiness He desires.

That's the answer. Let me say it again. You weigh it.

You test it. Selfishness is pursuing your happiness by ignoring or abusing or neglecting others in order to get your own private gladness. That's not what's happening on the cross.

Jesus is suffering and dying precisely to include others in the happiness that He longs for. So, how does that apply to you? Nobody, at least if they're thinking clearly, nobody calls it selfishness when you aim to increase your happiness by including others in it at the cost of your life. Nobody calls that selfishness.

Nobody calls it selfishness when you are pursuing your fullest and longest joy by drawing as many as you can into it because you know that your enjoyment of God is bigger when other people are with you in it and you're willing to die for that. Which is what Jesus did and I look around this room and think of what you're about to commit to financially tonight and I pray way more than financially. I pray that you will be satisfied in Him.

So, we conclude. Passion 2020 is still flying under or still under the flying banner of the miracle of desire for your name and your fame. And I'm calling you here at the end, your name, your renown, oh Lord, are the desire of our souls.

Nothing is more important than for you to experience the triumph of this desire in your heart. If the name of Jesus, Savior, Son of God, King of Kings, if the name of Jesus does not become your greatest desire, you will not only waste your life, you will lose it. But if Jesus becomes your greatest desire, though it may cost you your life, you will finish the race.

Many will come with you and you, together with them, will enter into the joy of your Master forever. So, Father, I ask now that the miracle would come in these days. I pray that no one would escape the power that you are exerting.

That you would lay hold on unbelievers who just came to check out what this is. And I ask that they would leave convinced God is glorified and people are loved. If I pursue you, God, as my supreme desire and am willing to lay down my life to include others in it.

I pray for that miracle now. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/CScG8pSxRDU.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/live-for-your-greatest-desire-jesus/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net