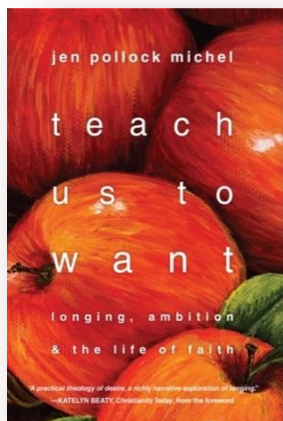


A NOTE TO THE PARTICIPANTS FROM THE AUTHOR:



Thank you for taking the time to read *Teach Us to Want*. I pray it is a lifeline to grace. In the book, I've told many of my own incriminating stories of desire, and this has been a deliberated act of confession. I have also shared my stories of tragic loss. These, too, felt critical for telling the perplexing truth about desire in the context of faith—that while God is good, (often) life is not. I hope that my stories will be your invitation to keep and share your own story. But most importantly, I hope they cause you to cherish the gospel story about which “the world itself could not contain the books that would be written,” (John 21:25).

The purpose behind offering this Bible study supplement is to provide groups with Scriptural exploration beyond what is offered in the book. Each week's study (there are six altogether) includes 4 parts:



Launch: Two questions to get the conversation going (5-10 min.)



Explore: Texts to read and inductive questions to answer (20 min.)

*This section is best prepared in advance as homework.



Examine: Questions requiring more interpretive analysis and introspection (20 min.)

*This section is best prepared in advance as homework.



Commit: A final text to read as well as application questions to consider (10-15 min.)

You may wish to *read Teach Us to Want* in its entirety before beginning the Bible study. Or, you may wish to do the Bible study first and then read *Teach Us to Want*, one chapter each week, discussing in small groups the questions included at the end of each chapter. However you choose to engage the content, I hope you'll take up this catalytic curiosity: *What do I want?*

Gratefully,

Jen



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WEEK ONE: THE CALL TO DESIRE

Launch

Which Scriptures have taught you how to pray?

What are the characteristics of effective praying?

Explore

Read the following passages from Genesis, which outline Abraham's journey of faith through some of his recorded prayers.

Genesis 12:1-9

1. What is God's promise to Abraham? His command?
2. How general or specific is God's Word to Abraham?

Genesis 15:1-21

1. From the first words God speaks to Abraham (v. 1), what can be inferred about Abraham?
2. Is Abraham "justified" in speaking to God as he does in verses 3 and 4? (Does God fault him?) Why or why not?

Genesis 17:15-27

1. How old is Abraham in this passage? How old was Abraham when God first gave his promise to him? (See Genesis 12:4.)
2. What desire does Abraham express to God (v. 18)? Why might he want this?
3. What is God's response to Abraham's misguided desire (v. 20)?

Genesis 18:22-33

1. What makes Abraham confident to boldly intercede for the city of Sodom?
2. What is the evidence of Abraham's humility before God, even as he prays boldly?

Genesis 22:1-19

1. Identify what is left out in this sparsely narrated scene.
2. What does Abraham's three-word prayer reveal about the state of his faith and even his desires?

Hebrews 11:8-16

1. All of the faithful men and women listed in this chapter (including Abraham) had a common desire. What was it (v. 16)?



Examine

1. At what moment does Abraham most fully surrender himself to God?
2. What important role did desire, even doubt, play in Abraham's journey? More importantly, how did God treat Abraham's doubts and desires?
3. Do you feel permitted to bring before God your doubts and desires, as Abraham did? Why or why not?
4. Consider this big idea: *Every prayer is an act of desire*. If this is true, can you pray without desire? How does your lack of desire (or inability to know your desires) affect your prayer life?



Commit

Read John 5:1-9.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, it was not uncommon for him to approach the sick and sin-sick with this question: "What do you want?"

Nevertheless, naming our desires before God can be dangerous. First, there are risks associated with desire. Consider this man's story in John 5. What risks does he face in order to name his desires? Second, there are responsibilities associated with desire. If the crippled man asks Jesus to heal him, what responsibilities will follow that healing?

1. What risks and responsibilities prevent you from naming your desires before God?
2. Life seems to cripple all of us: so what is it that you *want* from Jesus?
3. After today's lesson, for what will you begin to pray more boldly?

WEEK TWO, THE CAUTION OF DESIRE

Launch

Is it possible to pray wrongly?

What makes a prayer “wrong”?

Explore

Read Matthew 12:38-42; 16:1-4

1. What did the Pharisees and scribes want from Jesus?
2. What made their request “wrong?”

Read Matthew 16:21-23

1. What did Peter want from Jesus?
2. Why was this request “wrong?”

Read Matthew 20:20-28

1. What did the mother of James and John want from Jesus?
2. What had she misunderstood in making this request?

Read Luke 4:16-29

1. What had the crowd wanted, anticipating that Jesus would fulfill for them?
2. What was their reaction when those desires were disappointed?

Read James 4:1-10

1. What, according to James, are “wrong” prayers? (v. 3)
2. When we pray “wrongly,” what does this reveal about the condition of our hearts? (v. 4)
3. What is the antidote for “wrong” prayers and selfish desires? (What is our responsibility?)
4. What gospel hope does this passage offer for our “wrong” prayers and selfish desires? (What is God’s responsibility?)

Examine

1. Can you identify any commonalities between the “wrong” desires of the Pharisees, the crowds, and Jesus’ disciples? Why do they provoke rebuke?
2. How do we discern when our desires are good and God-honoring and when they are selfish and vain? What are our tools for discerning the difference?
3. Consider this big idea: *Prayer isn’t getting our way with God. It’s getting God in us.* Examine a prayer that you have been praying that has gone unanswered. Get at the root of what you really want. Is the request God-centered? Or are you asking God to somehow accommodate your own self-serving preferences?

Commit

Read Romans 8:26-30.

Often when we talk about praying, we forget the intercession that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit make on our behalf. The gospel reminds us that as sinners, though we want and pray “wrongly,” our prayers are accompanied by better and more holy prayers—those of the Son and Spirit.

1. Why is our weakness (v. 26) such a consoling thought in light of the topic of desire and prayer?
2. If we pray wrongly, is it possible to obstruct the will of God? What promise do we have in verse 28?
3. Knowing that *desire* is necessary for praying, yet acknowledging that we can want and pray “wrongly,” how do we pray both boldly (naming our desires) and humbly (confessing their contradictions)? Which of your prayers would begin changing in character and content if you held these two ideas in tension?

WEEK THREE, THE CONTENT OF HOLY DESIRE

Launch

Which human desires do you confidently know are aligned with God's will?

About which desires are you unsure, even suspicious?

Explore

Read Matthew 6:1-4, 16-18.

1. What does Jesus command his followers to do and not to do?
2. What false desires do these commands confront?

Read Matthew 6:5-15.

1. Describe prayer that Jesus considers hypocritical.
2. Describe prayer that Jesus considers sincere.
3. What three words would you use to describe the Lord's Prayer?
4. What is similar about the first three petitions (vv. 9, 10)?
5. What is similar about the last three petitions (vv. 11-13)?
6. What does this visible "balance" in the Lord's Prayer (between the first three petitions and the second three) say about the nature of holy desire?
7. What condition does Jesus give in verses 14 and 15?
8. Does this mean that prayer itself is conditional? What could Jesus be insisting on?

Read Matthew 6:19-24

1. Where in this passage do we find language to remind us that sin is a matter of, as Augustine described, "disordered loves?"
2. Why is it impossible to love money and love God simultaneously? What might we look for money to provide, which God himself intends to provide?

Read James 1:5-8

1. What desire does God commend in this passage?
2. What caution must we have in asking God for wisdom?
3. What does it mean to be "double-minded" in the context of desire? Why must this be avoided?

1 John 5:13-15

1. What will ultimately make our prayers (and desires) the boldest and most confident?

Examine

1. The Lord's Prayer is its own call and caution of desire. Explain.
2. How important has the Lord's Prayer been in your faith tradition? In your life?
3. What could be the advantage of more regularly immersing yourself in the language of the Lord's Prayer? How would it redefine your desires? How would it embolden them?
4. Consider this big idea: *The Lord's Prayer teaches us to make God's desires our own*. What does God evidently desire for his people based on the way Jesus teaches us to pray?
5. How can you align the prayers you're currently praying more closely with God's desires for your life?

Commit

Read Acts 8:9-25.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done" are phrases that expose what becomes self-glorifying about our ambitions, even those that seem "holy." In this passage from Acts, Simon the Magician becomes a believer, but it's clear that he isn't immediately weaned from his former unholy desires.

1. What fame had Simon enjoyed before his conversion? How might that fame have corrupted his desires, even as a believer?
2. What does Peter commend to Simon after his rebuke?
3. Repentance is a gift of grace—and the first word in our transformation. How might you repent of unholy desires and ambitions?
4. If the language of the Lord's Prayer began to inspire your desires, what do you expect would change?

WEEK FOUR, THE CHARACTER OF HOLY DESIRE

Launch

Describe what godly contentment looks like.

Can we desire—and yet remain content?

Explore

Read Matthew 6:25-34.

1. Earlier in this chapter, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray. What connection might this passage on worry have to the Lord's Prayer?
2. What is the common temptation we face in situations of scarcity?
3. According to Jesus, what is the antidote for worry?
4. What desires are commended to us in this passage?
5. If this passage teaches us *what* to want, it also teaches us *how* to want. What is the character of holy desire?

Read Philippians 4:4-20.

1. When we make our requests to God, what must we also do simultaneously?
2. What is the by-product of healthy desire and holy petition?
3. How do the qualities in verse 8 describe “good” desires?
4. This passage indicates Paul had certain needs that some churches met. How did the Philippian church provide for Paul? How might they have known about that need?
5. What is the current state of Paul's financial needs (v. 18)?
6. What are the “fruits” of Paul's godly contentment? What virtues has contentment produced? (vv. 10, 13, 19, 20).

Read Psalm 78.

1. What words are used to describe the generation of the Exodus? (v. 8)
2. How were they stubborn? How were they rebellious?
3. What miracles did God perform on their behalf?
4. What clues are we given that the desires of the Israelites became unholy “cravings”? (See also Numbers 11.)
5. If the Israelites had chosen to “set their hope in God and not forget the works of God,” how might they have expressed their needs (desires) differently?

Examine

1. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul defends pastors and missionaries who depend on financial support from their sending churches. Could we say that it is “discontented” of Paul (or anyone else) to name a need and pray for it to be filled?
2. Consider that God commands us to, “let our requests be made known to [him].” If we are not praying petitions (because we feel selfish and greedy to name our desires), are we sinning?
3. What is the difference between desire that is content and desire that is discontent?
4. Describe how desire, accompanied by thanksgiving and praise, moves out of the unholy category of “craving.”
5. Consider this big idea: *Holy desire is an act of trust*. What situations are you facing that require you to fully trust God, having the “assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,” (Heb. 11:1)?
6. How can your prayers, in these situations, boldly align with God’s will? How can you be made willing to wait, trusting for the right answer at the right time?

Commit

Read Matthew 7:7-11, 17, 18.

As we discern our desires, examining them in the light of Scripture, we will want to understand both the *content* of our desires as well as the *character* of our desires. In this final passage, Jesus reminds listeners that healthy trees produce healthy fruit; unhealthy trees, unhealthy fruit.

1. According to verses 7-11, how should we approach God with our requests?
2. *Holy desire is an act of trust*. Expand on this idea. Whom must we trust? What must we trust them for?
3. What soul-indicators reveal that you are steadily and confidently trusting God? What soul-indicators reveal that you are falling headlong into fear and worry?
4. In what one area of your life do you sense God asking you now to relinquish greater control—and to trust him? What active steps of faith will you take? What requests will you make of God?

WEEK FIVE, THE COMMITMENT OF HOLY DESIRE

Launch

Describe a New Year's Resolution that you've kept.

What differed between that successful resolution and other failed attempts?

Explore

Read 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-26.

1. What were the sons of Eli like? What were they known for doing?
2. How did Eli respond to his sons?
3. What was likely the desire of Eli's heart for his sons? Did his actions reveal a courageous commitment to that desire?

Read 1 Samuel 8:4-22.

1. What does the nation of Israel ask of Samuel?
2. How does Samuel react to this request?
3. How does God himself interpret their desire?
4. What warning does Samuel give, indicating the Israelites haven't fully understood their desires?

Read 2 Samuel 18:31-19:8

1. Why is David mourning in this passage?
2. Absalom had been a traitor, but he was also David's son. How do we know that David's desires were conflicted about dealing with Absalom?
3. Why does Joab rebuke David?

Read Matthew 19:16-22

1. What does the rich young ruler seem to initially want (v. 16)?
2. What commitment does he refuse?
3. What does his refusal to obey Jesus indicate that he really wants?

Examine

1. Explain how Eli, David and the rich young ruler *think* they want something—but their actions betray different desires.
2. These men are all examples of “double-minded” men. (See Week 3, James 1:5-8). Describe a time when you have been double-minded, bringing a desire to God while yet remaining unwilling to commit to the risks and responsibilities of that desire. How did the situation eventually resolve?
3. Are there any prayers you’re now praying that might be suffering from your state of double-mindedness? What fears/hesitations prevent you from making the commitments to which holy desires obligate us?
4. Consider this big idea: *Holy desire inspires commitment to obedient action*. The greatest evidence of wanting something may be our willingness to participate in the hoped-for outcomes. What faithful responsibilities can you combine with the risks of your desires?

Commit

Read Luke 14:25-33.

Throng of people followed Jesus throughout much of his earthly ministry. They were enthusiastic about the promised Messiah and eager to see him deliver them from Roman oppression. But Jesus seems insistent that they examine their desires and count the real cost of discipleship.

1. Jesus compares radical discipleship to which two human endeavors?
2. How does each of these analogies challenge the self-interest of the crowds?
3. According to this passage, what wise practice is important before stepping into desire?
4. Are there desires you currently have but cannot commit to fully because of life’s limitations? How difficult it is to wait on those desires?

WEEK SIX, THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY DESIRE

Launch

Describe a time when you knew God had answered your prayers.

What did you do to celebrate?

Explore

1 Kings 8:1-66

1. Describe the scene in this passage.
2. Who is gathered? What is the purpose of this celebration?
3. What had been one of King David's greatest desires during his reign? (v. 17)
4. What answer did God give to this desire of David's?
5. To whom does the author of 1 Kings give clear credit for the completion of the temple? (v. 20) To whom does Solomon give credit? (vv. 23, 24)
6. What is in the evidence of Solomon's humility as he prays?
7. What is the evidence of Solomon's boldness as he prays?
8. What desires does Solomon bring before God as petitions? (vv. 27-53)
9. What does Solomon mean when he blesses the nation of Israel, saying, "[May he] incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers?" (v. 58) How is this blessing a desire *for* holy desire?
10. What is the nature of this celebration? How long does it last? What does it entail? (vv. 62-66)
11. Of what aspect of God's character are the people more confidently assured as a result of the seeing David's desire fulfilled?

Psalms 20:1-9

1. What specific desires and petitions are named for the nation of Israel?
2. What is the anticipated outcome of those fulfilled desires and answered petitions?
3. What confidence inspires these bold petitions?
4. What is the interaction between desires and plans and petitions (vv. 4, 5)?

Examine

1. The temple dedication is a scene of great joy, and Psalm 20 talks about the “joy” of God’s salvation. Describe why joy is one outcome of holy desire.
2. Dorothy Sayers wrote, “The greatest sin of the Christian is to be joyless.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?
3. How joyful are you today? And is it possible to be joyful even in the midst of difficult circumstances? How?
4. Consider this big idea. *Holy desire enjoys God’s goodness.* What are the ways you’re keeping record of God’s goodness in your life? What are the ways you’re celebrating, in community, the rich history of God’s goodness to you, your family, and your community?

Commit

Read Psalm 37. In this study, we’ve considered:

- ✓ The **Call** of Desire
Every prayer is an act of desire.
 - ✓ The **Caution** of Desire
Prayer isn’t getting our way with God. It’s getting God in us.
 - ✓ The **Content** of Holy Desire
The Lord’s Prayer teaches us to make God’s desires our own.
 - ✓ The **Character** of Holy Desire
Holy desire is an act of trust.
 - ✓ The **Commitment** of Holy Desire
Holy desire inspires commitment to obedient action.
 - ✓ The **Celebration** of Holy Desire
Holy desire enjoys God’s goodness.
1. Where do you see each of these elements in Psalm 37?
 2. Consider verse 4. What does it mean that God will “give you the desires of your heart?”
 3. What desires has God confided to you? How do these desires provide direction toward your calling?