

DESIRE a book written by **John Eldridge**
The journey we must take to find the life that God offers us.

The Sea lion found in letting go of his beloved tree and water hole that he experienced a freedom he had not known before. He winced as he raced across the hot sand on his flippers. The sea was beginning to come into view. It was so exciting, after all these years away from his sea, the thought of coming home was almost too much for his heart to bear. He stopped for a moment just to look at it. It had never looked so blue and inviting, even in his dreams. However, what he did not know was that he had died from the heat on the journey there, and what he was now experiencing was the real thing. It was clear as crystal as far as his eyes could see. It was so cool and refreshing. He began to notice that everything seemed at least a hundred times better than he had ever experienced before, even in his wildest dreams. He could spin, dive and twirl at great speed without effort, and all his friends were there. It was then he realised.... he was home.

12. Keeping Heart-To the End.

“Sometimes I awake, and lo, I have forgot, and drifted out upon an ebbing sea. My soul that was at rest now resteth not, for I am with myself and not with thee.” George MacDonald

John says, “Our journey together is nearly at an end. In this last leg I will provide some guidance for you to consider carefully, on how not lose heart for the journey that lies ahead.” Forgetting is no small problem. Of all the enemies our heart must face, this may be the worst because it is the most insidious. Forgetfulness does not come against us like an enemy in full battle formation with banners waving. Nor does it come temptingly, seductively, the lady in red. It works slowly, commonly, mostly unnoticed. In counselling John found a common pattern in his clients: First they experience a wonderful time when God shows up, the lights go on, hearts are lifted. Second, they return the next week, all is forgotten, that marvellous day a distant memory. Why did it slip away? Such is the work of forgetfulness. It cuts us off from our life so slowly, we barely notice, until one day the blooms of our faith are suddenly gone. Do you wake each morning with a rich and full memory of all God has done and spoken in the past? Or are you like Chuck Colson, who once said ‘that he's an atheist until he has had his cup of coffee?’

We need to be forewarned about forgetfulness. In scripture, the people of Israel show a pattern of forgetfulness so predictable we come to expect it. God operated in the life of his people Israel performing miracles regularly and within days they forgot what he had done for them. This went on for 40 years. God issued them a final warning 'Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your *heart* as long as you live.' They do of course. Unfortunately, things are not changed much in the New Testament. God shows up in person, and before he leaves, he reminds us not to forget all he has done.

If we are not to lose heart, what will we cling to? Life is a journey of the heart that requires the mind - not the other way around. The church sometimes gets this backward, and makes knowing the right things the centre of life. It's not; the heart is the centre of life. Desire is always where the action is. So we must bring truth into our hearts to guard and to guide our desire; *this is the other half of our mission*. With the recovery of our heart, we must be exceedingly careful not to 'follow our heart' as the popular saying goes, but to cling to truth for dear life. Our spiritual forbears urged us to bring both heart and mind together as did the

Benedictine monks, who brought the thoughts of the mind into the heart, so that one's whole person stood in the presence of God.

However, not all truths descend with the mind into the heart. There is a way of talking about the truth that can actually deaden the heart. We have come to believe that truth is best discovered by the scientific method - dissection. We've done the same thing with theology. We have dissected God and man, and we have millions of facts. All of which are quite dead. It's not that they aren't true; it's that they no longer speak. All the facts about God don't make you feel closer to Him-do they? How then do we get to know God and get closer to Him? It is through the stories of the Bible, through movies, great books and all of his creation. This is how you get to know God, for he is a living, feeling and thinking being who will use any medium to converse with us.

John says we must be more intentional about holding on to truth and that we are kidding ourselves if we think we can keep heart without a constant turning to the truth, so we need to do this if we are to keep our hearts with us to our journeys end. For we lose the story every day. It is continually being stolen from us by the evil one. Here is a suggestion of how to cling to the truth. We do not need not to adopt the practice of the Benedictine monks of having prayers and bible readings every three hours of the day, but we do need to reduce the constant noise in our lives to commune with God. Try turning off the television! Simply unplug from all clamour and make some room, regularly, for eternity in your life. Instead of reading 'The News' read 'The Eternities' as we don't have room for both given the pace of our lives. If you have not developed a way of seizing what God is speaking to you, begin journaling. A journal is about the interior life. Here you can record the central truths God speaks to you. Here you can return when you have forgotten. God is speaking to us much more than we imagine or know. These are the treasures we must hide away in our own hearts for the dark hours that may come upon us, for his word to us is both recoverable and precious beyond telling.

The main lessons from the Journey of Desire are:

1. *It Can't Be Done.* This is the hardest truth for us to accept. We must have life as it comes to us, good and bad. No matter how hard we try, how clever our plan may be, we cannot arrange for the life we desire or prize. This should not discourage us; quite contrary, it frees our heart from the grasping and plotting and fretting over life, which always accompany arranging. It reminds us to let go. It breaks the power of the spell the evil one is trying to weave around us.

2. *Life is a Battle and a Journey.* We are at war, and the bloody battle is over our hearts. John says he is astounded how few Christians see this, and how little they protect their hearts. Watch over your heart! Don't let just anything in; don't let it just go anywhere. Ask always-"what's this going to do to my heart?" and thinking of life as a journey reminds me to stop trying to set up camp and call it home. It allows me to see life as a process and journey, with completion somewhere down the road. We must learn how to cling to the truth.

3. *The story continues.* Whatever life brings to us on our journey on this planet we must have cemented in our hearts that the story will continue. There is all of eternity. John talks of his own struggle after Brent's tragic death, but says "several weeks after I was able to allow my heart to know it was not the end - that the story continues." He notes that our faith increases to the degree we are aware of, or are caught up in, enthralled by, participating in Gods and our story.

4. *It Is Coming*. John says “Oh, how I forget this most of all. How easy it is to slip back into the thinking that it's now or never; that if it's not here, it's not at all.” The life we prize is coming. Remember our life here is a dress rehearsal for the Grand Affair. That way your heart will not be trapped here. Be prepared to grieve as it is the hearts healer. Learn the spiritual grace of detachment which is waiting. This does not devalue desire nor the objects of desire, instead it frees us to live the life God wants us to have in him.

John finishes his book with the story of the meadowlark. The meadowlark returns to Colorado in spring about the same time as the unpredictably late winter snow storms. What courage to hear them sing to each other on a cold wintery day with the flurries whipping about your face. God began to speak through them to me. I heard him urging me to keep my own summer song, even though life's winter tries to throw cold snow and ice into my spring. To be sure life can still feel 'wintry' but the great thing is that the corner has been turned. We have the power of God within us, so it remains for us to follow or not, to die in this winter, or to go on into that spring and the summer that surely awaits us.

For Reflection 1 Cor. 2:9 'But it is written, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, not has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him'.

Q.1 Why is forgetfulness our worst enemy? Describe some of your own forgetfulness.

Q2. In your words why must we bring truth into our hearts? And what truths have you been clinging to for dear life? Do you have a plan for holding on to the truth? What will you do to cling to the truth?

Q.3 What is your approach to reading the Bible? Does it read like one of your favourite epic movies- (name a couple) - or does it feel like the yellow pages? Do you come away from reading scripture with tips and techniques, or do you find yourself swept up in the Great Drama, “a desperate quest through dangerous country to a destination that is, beyond your wildest hopes, indescribably good”?

Q.4 Why must we remind ourselves regularly that life is a battle and a journey?

Q.5 What are you using to interpret the events of your life, the unfolding drama? Can you make time to do it at least a few times a week?

Q6. Where is the adventure leading you next? Can you see it? For this to happen are there risks involved? Desires still to be pursued? Are there any changes in life you need to make?

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