

DECEMBER 2004—*What Do You Desire?*

One of the most important things about a person is what he or she most deeply desires in life. The reason this is so is because our desires shape our choices, and then our choices shape us.

C.S. Lewis understood well the importance of desire and lamented the fact that many of us have a stronger desire for the things of this world than for the things of God.

If you asked twenty good men today what they thought the highest of the virtues, nineteen of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you had asked almost any of the great Christians of old, he would have replied, Love. You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive, and this is of more than philological importance. The negative idea of Unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point. I do not think this is the Christian virtue of Love. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire. If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.¹

How strong do you think the Lord finds your desires for Him and His kingdom? Are you being too easily pleased by other things?

As we reflect on God's love for us in sending his Son into the world to be our Savior, let us also earnestly pray that in the year ahead, God will greatly increase holy desire in our hearts and deliver us from all that competes with our desire for Christ and His kingdom, from all lesser desires and half-heartedness. When our desire for Christ increases, our choices will follow suit, shaping our lives increasingly into the image and likeness of the One we love.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
Matthew 5:6 NASB

¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), pp. 25-26.