

DEFINITION

A strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen.

SYNONYMS: wish, lust, passion; to long for, to yearn for, to crave

Taking It Home:

Activity: Watch Where Your Mind Wanders

Take a week and keep track of where your mind joyfully leans. Catch yourself daydreaming. Notice when you say to yourself, “I really have to remember to...” Pay attention when the voice in your head says, “I wish I was doing X instead.” And when you notice it, write it down. Keep track of it for a week. Then pay attention to what this week’s worth of wandering is telling you.

Books:

Anatomy of Desire: How to be Happy Even When You Don’t Get What You Want by Gina Lake

Article:

“Forever Incomplete: Alanis Morissette, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Bats of Austin, Texas” by Reverend Teri Daily
<http://www.jesusjazzbuddhism.org/forever-incomplete-alanis-morissette-gregory-of-nyssa-and-the-bats-of-austin-texas.html>

Video:

Objects of Desire (12 TED Talks)-

https://www.ted.com/playlists/61/objects_of_desire#

These materials are part of the small group ministry program at Jefferson Unitarian Church. For more information on using them, or to set up your small group, please contact Rev. Eric Banner.

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Jefferson Unitarian Church

February 2016

Small Group Session: Desire 1.0

**Opening/
Chalice
Lighting:** It is exactly through desire that we discover what animates and moves us.— David Whyte

Check In: Up to 2 minutes per person to share what they bring with them since the last time the group met

Reading: ... I fear adulthood is the discipline of being above desire, cultivated after years of learning what you want and where and how, after insisting that you will one day have it. I don't ever want to stop noticing a man like the one at the bar in his loosened tie, reading the Star Tribune. I don't want to eat my cake with a baby spoon to force small bites, as women's magazines suggest. And you don't want to either, do you? You want a big piece of this world. You would love to have the whole thing.
— Katrina Vandenberg

**Resting in
the
Silence:** Take 2 minutes to just sit. If your group is up to it, go longer, as long as you let people know how long the silence will be.

**Questions
and
Quotes
From The
Common
Bowl:** Share the quotes and questions for today's session in the way that is customary in your small group. You can pass the sheet, you can select them randomly from a bowl after having cut them into individual pieces. Or whatever works well for your small group.

**Sharing/
Deep
Listening:** Allow each person up to five minutes to share what has come up for them about today's topic. If someone does not use the full five minutes, make sure you count to ten full breaths before moving on to the next person, in case the speaker is not truly finished.

**A Second
Share:** If time allows, you may have a brief second share from those who have found they have more to say, keeping in mind your commitment to going no longer than ninety minutes.

**Closing
Reading:** When it's over, I want to say: All my life I was a bride married to amazement. I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms — Mary Oliver

**Extinguish
the
Chalice:** Join hands and say the following together:
May our hearts desire guide us in love and justice until we meet again.
And then, extinguish your chalice until you meet again.

What Does It Mean To Be A People of Desire?

Is it possible that this month is really about heartbreak? We may be able to indulge some desires without much cost, but we are fooling ourselves if we think we can pursue spiritual desires without suffering a broken heart. The desire for a better world. The hunger for deep connection. The longing to actualize our full potential. Leaning into these desires is to let yourself care deeply for what can't ever be fully attained. When it comes to the most beautiful and noble of our desires, it's all about loving and pursuing that which will always be out of reach.

And of course we reach anyway. We can't help ourselves. It's what it means to be human. Plato puts it this way: "We are fired into life with a madness that comes from the gods and which would have us believe that we can have a great love, perpetuate our own seed, and contemplate the divine." Notice the implicit plea to be grateful. It comes "from the gods" he says. This madness, this dis-ease, these unstoppable desires for great love, great change and great connection are a gift! The prize is not the moment we are finally quenched; it's that first moment when we were wonderfully cursed with thirst! Heartbreak and heartache are not dangers to be avoided; they are signs that we are living fully and leaning into the holy dis-ease that makes us most human.

It's why Rumi says "fall in love with the agony of love." He knows many of us avoid pursuing our deepest hungers because of fear. No one's deepest longings ever come true. Better to play it safe and keep those deep hungers at a distance. But in this case, playing it safe also means going numb. And we were not created to go numb.

So friends get out there this month and get your heartbroken. It won't feel good, but you will know you are on the right path. And remember Rumi's promise: somewhere in that agony you will feel yourself loved by and deeply connected to life.

Not a bad deal.

Fall in love with the agony of love, not the ecstasy; then the beloved will fall in love with you — **Rumi**

Is life calling you to nurture someone else's desire? How can you help another lean in to the hungers and hopes budding inside them?

"If you want to know where your heart [desire] is, look where your mind goes when it wanders." — **Bernard Byer**

When was the last time you let yourself fall freely and fully into desire? Are you ready to go all in?

"Maybe prayer doesn't mean talking to God at all. Maybe it means listening to our dreams and paying more attention to what we really want from life." — **Gary Kowalski**

Is it possible that God speaks to us in and through our desires? Is it possible that prayer doesn't mean talking to God at all, but instead simply listening to our dreams?

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life. — **Proverbs 13:12 (ESV)**

Are you muting the voice of desire because you're afraid of what it is asking of you?

There are seasons, in human affairs, of inward and outward revolution, when new depths seem to be broken up in the soul, when new wants are unfolded in multitudes, and a new and undefined good is thirsted for. There are periods when...to dare, is the highest wisdom. — **William Ellery Channing**

What do you want to be remembered for? What do you long (desire) to leave behind?

the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars." — **Jack Kerouac, On the Road**

When was the last time you showed your love that you enjoyed them, not just loved them? Sometimes the way we want to be desired most is to simply be the one you most enjoy to be with. (A good thing to remember on Valentine's Day.)

"To burn with desire and keep quiet about it is the greatest punishment we can bring on ourselves." — **Federico García Lorca, Blood Wedding and Yerma**