

# Needs, Desires and God's Promises

**By Fern Horst**

**"Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."  
"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."  
(Psalm 37:4 and Phillipians 4:19)**

Who could ask for more assurance than these statements from God's Word itself regarding His fulfillment of our needs and desires? These two verses are both definitive statements that leave us with no doubt that we can trust God completely with all that we long for or feel in need of in our lives.

Why then do we so often feel as though God has somehow backed down on His Word or overlooked us with His blessings? Much of our emotional pain concerning our singleness is a result of believing that God has withheld the fulfillment of certain needs and desires in our lives which we believe could be fulfilled through marriage. Marriage is often portrayed as the main source for meeting our needs and desires for emotional and physical fulfillment and pleasure, and even for fulfilling God's purposes for us as men and women. But if this were true God would make sure that each person not only got married, but married someone perfectly suited for them in every way. This happens far less that we fantasize that it does! In his book, [Our Unmet Needs](#), Charles Stanley observes, "In most cases, marriage is not a need—it is a perceived solution to one or more needs." When is marriage a need? It is when it is essential for fulfilling God's purposes for us. But only He can determine that.

## "Need" and "Desire" Defined

There are many things we think we absolutely need. But a true need in God's eyes is anything *essential* for fulfilling His purposes for us and for making us whole people (spiritually healthy). A need is a true deficiency, lack or shortage of something essential in our lives.

A desire, on the other hand, is not something that is essential, but something which is *enjoyable* in the process of fulfilling God's purposes. It is a hankering, longing, pining or yearning for something that we would like to have to enrich our lives here on earth.

In addition to meeting our needs, God also delights in giving us our desires. But He will always give them within the parameters of what we need: if He sees that we need the freedom of singleness to fulfill His purposes, He will not fulfill our desire for sexual intimacy with another person. If He sees we need the partnership of marriage to fulfill His purposes, He will not fulfill our desire to be free of the responsibility of taking care of our family. If He sees we need the character building of suffering in our lives, He will not immediately fulfill our desire to be relieved of the pain of loss or of heartache or of physical ailment.

## Three Areas of Need and Desire

Each one of us has three areas in which we feel needs and desires. One of the most obvious is the physical part of us, through our bodies. Some of the needs and desires we feel physically are food, clothing, convenience, nice weather, a comfortable and pleasant place to live, the pleasures of touch from another human being, and healing from illnesses.

When these needs and desires are not met, we experience anything from physical discomfort to physical death. Some of these needs and desires must be fulfilled for carrying out God's purposes for us here on earth. But when God's purposes for us here have been fulfilled, we will no longer need this body and He will cease to fulfill our physical needs. Physical death results and we enter eternity, where as children of God we will exchange these bodies for new ones which will be whole and complete in every possible way. We will experience no lack of physical need or desire in heaven.

The second area, which I'll refer to as the psychological part of us, includes our mind, will, and emotions. It longs to feel loved, secure and significant in our human relationships and in our work, even though this is not where our true love, security and significance lies. We long for companionship and intimacy with others and we desire to see our loved ones come to know Christ; we desire to see our efforts at work and in ministry bear fruit and to know that we have made an impact on our world. When we experience a loss in human relationship or in our contribution, our feelings of love, security and significance are often shaken. This loss is significant, but not disastrous from the perspective of eternity. These needs are important to our emotional well-being which better enables us to give of ourselves to others. But ultimately if our psychological needs are not fulfilled here they will be in heaven.

The part of us which will live forever is the part of us that relates to God, which is our spirit. This is the core area of our real need as human beings. Only God can fill it, and He can only fill it when we accept His Son, Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord of our lives. When we make this choice we have tapped into the true source of love, security and significance and we have begun a journey in which we learn more what it means for Christ to live His life through us, giving us unconditional love, unshakable security, and changeless significance in Him. While human relationships make us feel loved, secure and significant (or unloved, insecure and insignificant as the case may be), they can never shake or change the truth of our being loved, secure and significant in Christ. Our spiritual needs are the most crucial of all of our needs; their fulfillment is absolutely essential in fulfilling God's purposes for us and in making us whole people. We cannot live eternally with God unless this need is met in our lives. If our spiritual need is unfulfilled we will experience spiritual death, which is loss of relationship with God here on earth and a total separation from Him throughout eternity.

Oftentimes Christians have their spiritual need met through accepting Christ as their Savior, but they don't make Him Lord of their lives. It has often been said that if Satan cannot stop us from accepting Christ's salvation for us, his next ploy is to render us ineffective in our service in God's Kingdom. Peter speaks of God giving us all that we need for "life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue". It is through the increase of our knowledge of who God is (through the reading and studying of His Word) that we gain what we need so that we are neither "barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ". Peter goes on to say that "he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (II Peter 1:3-12)

## **The Needs and Desires God Fulfills**

So how does God pick and choose which of our physical and psychological longings He is going to fulfill? Does He sit in His heaven and say, "This woman I'll bless with the comfort

of a loving marriage. I guess I won't allow this man to have loving and understanding parents. I'll bless this man over here with good business sense and plenty of financial resources. But this woman will not ever see the world in which she lives."

Is this how God chooses which needs and desires to fulfill? If He did, I doubt that any of us would want to serve Him. We couldn't trust that He truly loves us and has our best at heart. Sadly, many people do conclude this because they don't understand what God's highest purpose and concern is for us. God has a long view of our lives – He sees eternity and the fact that our earthly lives are just a drop in a bucket in comparison. We tend to have a short view of just this earthly life. The longings we feel so strongly revolve mainly around the physical and psychological aspects of who we are. Satan's ploy since the Garden of Eden has been to tempt us to fulfill these physical and psychological needs and desires through a myriad of ways in which God has said we may not. God puts these loving limits on us because He knows that to adopt Satan's ways of fulfillment would cause a lack in our spiritual needs being fulfilled, and He knows this would be disastrous not only for this life but for eternity. It is more important to Him that we find our love, security and significance in Him than we find such things as emotional and sexual fulfillment in human relationships or physical comfort and healing.

The longings which God guarantees to fulfill (if we allow Him to), are those of our spiritual needs and desires. Any of our physical and psychological longings which are essential for fulfilling the spiritual, He will also fulfill. Since God is the One who has created us He determines what our purpose is and what we need to fulfill that purpose. God is not responsible for answering prayers to meet any need or desire which does not further His plan and purpose to make us whole spiritual beings.

"But He promised to give me the desires of my heart!" we often lament. Yes, but on what condition? When we delight ourselves in Him. The root meaning of the Hebrew word translated "delight" in this verse means "to be soft or pliable". When we desire more than anything else to have what God wants for us, we can be sure that He will fulfill that desire. We need to continually ask ourselves the question as we make our petitions to Him: "Am I expecting God to fit into my agenda, or am I fully surrendered to fitting into His, whatever that may be?" Our limitation as humans is that we don't know which of our physical and psychological longings are the ones which are essential to God's purposes. This is why we need to delight (be soft and pliable) in the Lord.

## **Getting Our Needs and Desires Fulfilled Our Own way**

The opposite of delighting in the Lord is taking the fulfillment of our needs and desires into our own hands, which is rebellion. When we do this we attempt to get our most crucial need for love, security and significance met psychologically (through our work and our relationships with others) and physically (through the pleasuring of our five senses).

It is interesting to note that these are the same areas of desire which the serpent tempted Eve to fulfill by eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), and which Satan tempted Jesus to fulfill in the wilderness (Matthew 4). They are the temptations of Pleasure, Power, and Knowledge.

Eve was tempted to have her physical appetite (Pleasure) fulfilled when she "saw that the tree was good for food"; to have her desire for Knowledge fulfilled by knowing good and evil; and to fulfill her desire for Power (the serpent told her that "ye shall be as gods").

When Eve gave into these temptations to take the fulfillment of her desires into her own

hands, she experienced separation from God, physical pain (through child birth), and the loss of her beautiful home (she was banished from the Garden of Eden).

When we attempt to get our needs met through Pleasure, Power, and Knowledge (physically and psychologically rather than spiritually), we experience inferiority, insecurity, inadequacy, guilt, worry, uncertainty, fear – because through rebellion we lose connection with our true Source for our needs, Jesus Christ.

## **Resisting the Temptation to Fulfill Our Needs and Desires Our Way**

Satan used the same three alluring desires to tempt Jesus in the wilderness. He tempted Jesus to fulfill His desire for physical fulfillment (Pleasure) by turning the stones into bread; to fulfill His desire for Knowledge by testing God's promise to protect Him; and to fulfill His desire for Power by giving Him all the kingdoms of the world. In each case Jesus would have had to compromise a spiritual need in order to fulfill His physical or psychological desires. He counteracted these temptations by referring to the Word of God which gave Him direct guidance in knowing the wrongness of fulfilling these desires by His own hand. He alluded to the fact that God's promises meant the fulfillment of His spiritual needs, not necessarily His physical and psychological needs. God did not mean for us to live by bread alone, he said, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Through Jesus' example we learn that the fulfillment of our spiritual needs, which is eternal, supersedes the importance of the fulfillment of our physical and psychological needs, which are temporal. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever". (I John 2:15-17)

## **Key to Claiming God's Promises**

So that we don't continuously hanker for desires which we do not fit into God's purposes, or wait forever for a "need" to be met which is not a true need in God's eyes, we need to keep this nugget of truth in our hearts: our **need** is to find the *truth* of our being completely loved, unshakably secure, and unchangeably significant spiritually because of our relationship with Christ. Our **desire** is to *feel* loved, secure and significant physically and psychologically.

Those needs which are essential to fulfilling God's purposes for us, and which make us whole people spiritually, are the ones which God has promised to fulfill in abundance. Those desires which fit into the parameters of the needs He has promised to fulfill He also delights in fulfilling.

Only God can determine which of our needs are important to fulfilling His purposes, and only He knows whether the fulfillment or the lack of fulfillment of our desires will aid in fulfilling His purposes.

If we delight (are soft and pliable) in Him, His desires will mesh with ours, and we will learn to be happy and contented in His plan, whatever that is, and we can be sure that He

will bring it to pass. The Apostle Paul realized this truth when he wrote to the Philippian church:

*But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need [physical and psychological]. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me....But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Philippians 4:10-20)*