

## **Figure Out What You Want and Find God**

### **March 11, 2012**

I was sitting in my porch office looking longingly out my window at the beautiful Spring day thinking, “I have to get working on this sermon.” Once again I dragged my thoughts back to what I want to write, and because I was procrastinating these thoughts naturally evolved from “What do I want to write about?” to “What do I want?” I spent the next twenty minutes daydreaming about what I want, and while I was doing that I remembered a movie I saw in 2010 which was forgettable in every way except for one line. It was a movie called “How Do You Know,” starring Reese Witherspoon.

It’s the story of a young woman who gets cut from her pro softball team, and without a back-up plan stumbles around until she eventually ends up in a therapist’s office. After five minutes she decides therapy isn’t for her, and as she’s leaving she asks the therapist, “If you had one bit of advice you could give somebody, what would it be?” After a pause the therapist responds, “Figure out what you want, and then figure out how to ask for it.”

I replayed that part over and over because the advice was so simple and clear.

“Figure out what you want, then figure out how to ask for it,” seems like a pretty good formula for moving forward in life.

While I was thinking about that line and procrastinating, I got a call from a man I’ve known a long time; a wonderful man who is a little down on his luck. He always has been just a step behind where he wants to be. I mentioned to him what I was doing on this beautiful day and he said to me, “You know, I really envy your life.”

I was surprised by this and asked him why. I drive an old 1994 sedan (which I got from my grandmother for free), I live in a very small house; I don’t struggle to make ends meet but I certainly don’t have buckets of disposable income. He said, “I envy your life because you get up in the morning and you hike with your dog for an hour or two, and you really define your own day. You’re the master of your life.”

I reminded him it wasn’t always this way. Several years ago I knew what I wanted my lifestyle to be like, so I did something that I really didn’t want to do -- I got a job. I accepted a position at Hunter College after being a freelance graphic designer for most of my career. I worked there for almost five years because I knew I wanted to buy a house and thought I probably wouldn’t get a mortgage with the unpredictable nature of freelance income. I worked there from Monday through Friday, from 9:00 to 5:00, applied for a mortgage, and bought a house. After moving in I continued to work at Hunter while I developed my hypnosis and psychic business. I had one foot in the job world and one foot in the self-employment world, and after about five years I was able to step out of the job world and devote myself to my own business full time.

I tried to explain to my friend that I'd unwittingly followed the formula in the movie "How Do You Know?" I knew what I wanted to do, so I figured out what I had to do to get there. And then I set about doing it -- for the most part without complaint.

If you know you're working for something it's easier to bear up under the sacrifice. I can't say I never complained about commuting to the city from Peekskill but most days I kept my goal in mind and managed to be cheerful though I was bored, felt constricted, and really didn't like having to report to a boss. I was doing what wasn't comfortable for me because I had a goal.

So I asked my friend, "What do *you* want?" and he said, "I don't really know." If you don't know what you want, days and weeks and years can go by and you take the job you happen to be working in and just live day to day.

After we hung up I started thinking more about that movie. (It's interesting how I get phone calls that have something to do with what I'm thinking about, that in turn have something to do with a message for myself or for someone else I'll be speaking to).

I thought, "What is it that most people want, or think they want?"

Some people want more money. Some people want a sweetheart, others a secure job, some want to have children. I started thinking maybe that's not the only aspect of our what we want. Maybe we want the feeling that those things give us.

Let's say you want more money. Is it possible you're asking for a feeling of security, freedom from anxiety or worry.?

What if you want a romantic partner? Might you really want a relationship in which you can be yourself; not have to hide your darkest secrets, craziest dreams, most hideous flaws... and be loved and accepted?

Maybe if you want a secure job, you really want assurance that you can plan for your future.

And maybe if you want children, what you want is to realize and express that amazing unconditional love for a child.

What if you took some time this week to think about what you want, and then drilled it down to how acquiring that would make you feel. You might then consider that *feeling* to be worth asking for.

It might sound easy, but consider my friend who hasn't really given what he *wants* much thought. Sure, he's probably aware of what he wants for lunch, or what he wants to do over the weekend, but clearly he hasn't really given the trajectory of his life-desires much careful consideration. Let the first step be figuring out what you want. Don't be shy about it. Pretend

nobody's looking. We're all supposed to want world peace, of course. Yes, I know you want these things. But if no one were looking, what would you really want?

I'll start: I wish I could eat anything I want and still look great in a bathing suit this summer. I want toned arms and flat abs, but I don't want to diet or spend hours in the gym. I want people to look at me, especially this one particular gal, and say, "Damn, she looks good for fifty!"

**If I don't look any deeper than that, here's what happens:**

I *do* eat anything I want, and then I beat myself up for it. Every time I put on anything resembling a bathing suit, I berate myself. I don't go to the gym, because I lie to myself and tell myself I'm too busy. I sabotage myself, then I feel bad and treat myself to dessert. I look at that one particular gal and I don't like her very much, so I harbor envy or distrust in my heart. I feel self-conscious and I dishonor and disrespect myself. If I don't go any deeper than that first level of "want," if I stop there, I'm not moving forward.

**If I *do* look deeper and craft that "want" into how I want to feel, I see that what I want is:**

to feel nourished and satiated; I recognize that there is a hole in me somewhere that I want to fill up. I want my body, my temple, to reflect my inner health -- toned, lean, strong, supple, flexible, relaxed, and athletic. When I say I don't want to diet or spend hours in the gym, I mean that I don't want to limit my self-love, or portion it out, or punish myself. My spirit knows deep inside that I am eternal and limitless. When I say I want to be noticed, and admired, I see that what I really, truly want is to feel valuable, to feel like I have as much right and reason to be here as everyone else.

If I distill those refined "wants" down to one sentence, I can say what I truly want is to *experience and express total love, life, and presence.*

Here's another example, a little less silly. Those of you who have heard me speak here before know that I've had a difficult relationship with my mother, God bless her. (Recently I decided that whenever I mention her I'm going to follow it with the words, God bless her. Try it with someone you have a challenging relationship with, I think it's helping).

**Here's what I want, on the surface:**

I want to get along with my mother. I want to have comfortable, mother/daughter lunches. I want to confide in her when I feel blue. I want to know I can always go home if I have to, that there will always be a place for me where she is. I want her to celebrate my victories with me. I want to feel support from her, not criticism. I want to know that even though I'm wrong, or broken, she still loves me.

**Here's what I really want when I say all those things:**

I want to know I matter to my mother. I want to experience and express acceptance.

One more example. This one concerns my purpose or work.

**On the surface:**

I want to be the best medium in the world. Famous, with more work than I can handle. I want every single one of my clients to leave our session and *know* that they have been in the presence of a loved one in spirit. I want the skeptics to leave, believing. I want everyone to know what I know -- that life continues after death.

**Drilling this down, what I really want is:**

to free myself and the world of fear.

Think about the things that you want, and then see if you can get down to the essence of that want. How the object of that want would make you feel. Drill down to feeling behind it and from there combine those wants if you can, into one thought.

Using my own examples, one silly -- but true -- personal “want,” one relationship “want,” and one career “want,” I come up with this:

**I want to fully give and receive love and acceptance. I want to know that I’m okay, just as I am. I want to know that I will always be okay, so that I can be free of fear.**

That’s what I want. Every other thing I say I want is just another way of saying this.

Now, back to our formula:

I figured out what I want. Now I have to figure out how to ask for it.

Or maybe a more appropriate question is, *whom* do I ask for this?

Because this want of mine sounds awfully familiar. In fact, it sounds like a prayer.

And I already know the answer to this prayer. Because God has promised me, and each and everyone of you -- every single son and daughter ever born -- that we are worthy of love. We are made to love. We are perfect, just as we are. And everything, everything, will be okay -- always, even after we die. Even after our loved ones die and leave us here to carry on without them, we are okay.

(The 4th principle in the Spiritualist Declarations affirms the existence and personal identity of the individual after the change called death; the first main tenet of Spiritualism is “the survival of the spirit after death.” We know that we believe this.)

In Psalm 23:4 is written: *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”*

**I wonder, if every want *you* have, has at its root, a desire for union with God?**

Could it be possible, that every want is some shallow reflection of a deep yearning for communion with Love itself?

Imagine that! Resting in true faith, a faith that is so complete you can wake up every morning *free of fear* and say to yourself:

Give us **this day** our daily bread

and not feel anxiety about tomorrow's bread, or is this bread gluten-free, or can I eat this bread on a low-carb diet? Give us *this day* our daily bread.

In Matthew 6:26-34 we read: *“Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ ... for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself.”*

Figure out what you want. And then figure out how to ask for it. Figure out if your wants are 21st century, day-to-day, substitutes for a deeper desire.

You'll be surprised at how easy it is to solve your problems, when you realize you have only one, and not one hundred. How easy it is to fulfill your wants, when you have only one, not one thousand.

If you should happen to see, like I did, that the root of all subsidiary desires is a longing for the fearlessness and peace that comes from knowing God is alive in me, loving me, my only want is for a fuller, more complete understanding and experience of this.

The first of the Ten Commandments reads: *Thou shall have no other gods before me.* I don't think God gave us this commandment for His benefit. I think He gave it to us for ours. I don't think He's worried about other little gods; I think He wants to make sure we don't miss the point. If we make gods of these subsidiary things, if we deify money, or possessions or a partnership, we're missing who the real source of our joy, comfort, security, peace, and our love is.

It was amazing to me to realize that I have just one want. I figured out what I is while I was procrastinating about what I was going to write today. I want to live in the Kingdom of God. I want daily awareness of God's presence.

So I don't waste my energy anymore, wanting a skinny body, or a fantasy relationship, or to be the most famous successful medium in the world. I'm going to follow the 1st Commandment and I have no other desires before the one big Desire with a capital "D." I'll listen to Matthew and believe that my heavenly Father knows that I need all those things. But if I seek *Him* first, those things will come to me.

I used to worry that if I just sought God or prayed for communion with God, to see how He sees and love as He loves, then I'd turn into one of those people for whom money doesn't matter because they live off the kindness of strangers. I didn't want to be someone who didn't care about money, because I thought that meant I wouldn't care about living a comfortable life. If I got just God, that I'd be okay living a life of financial lack. So I held a little bit back from putting God first, seeking first the Kingdom of Heaven, because I didn't want to be poor, or worse, be okay with being poor!

I didn't understand until it hit me this week, that if I put God first, and want God first, that's really what it is that I'm looking for when I'm looking for a healthy body, a tranquil relationship, or fame as a medium. Or wishing I had more money. Because all more money does is make me feel safe and secure, peaceful and serene. Well, I can say a prayer and feel that way, and God will take care of everything else.

If I seek those other things first, even if I should get what I want, without God in my heart I will still feel unsatisfied.

A Course in Miracles says, if you have one prayer, make it: *"Release me from my sense of vulnerability so that I may perform miracles."* Release me from the idea that I don't have enough, or that I'm not good enough, and I will recognize you in myself and I will be able to recognize you in everyone else. And that's miraculous.

Another source says, *"If your only prayer today is 'thank you,' that's enough."* If you are able to recognize on a day-to-day basis that there are things to be thankful for, you're connecting with God and you don't need to ask for anything else.

So I know what I want: I want a connection with God, communion with God. To see as God sees and feel as God feels, and I want to know that God is alive in me.

How do I ask for what I want? I can always rely on my favorite saint, St. Francis and his divinely-inspired words: *"O great and glorious God. I pray to you to illumine the darkness of my heart. Instill within me a correct faith, a firm hope and a perfect love."*

What a beautiful thing to ask for! So I'm asking God, "Please reveal yourself to me! Instill in me a correct faith, a firm hope, and a perfect love, just like Yours."

If I go to the refrigerator because I'm bored or depressed or lonely, or I've had a fight with my guy and I feel like I'm not good enough and dig into the junk food because I'm mad, instead of wishing I had a different body or starving myself or berating myself for not going to the gym, I say, "God, remind me of your presence. Fill me up."

If I feel sad because of my broken relationship with my mother, I ask for what I want now by saying, "God help me to know *Your* love every day."

If I find myself trying to save the world or myself from fear, I ask for what I want by saying, "God please comfort me. Let me know that you're here in my heart so I don't have to be afraid."

When you figure out what you want, when you discover what you really, truly want, deep down inside of your heart and soul, whatever you think is empty or broken or unsafe, is easily fixed with just one request. Now all you have to do is ask for it, in faith, because the Creator never turns away from the creation.

What I want for you is this: may you recognize that God is always with you.

Amen.