

“His Design, Our Desires”
Psalm 37:4–5
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In this study we’ll be looking at Psalm 37:4–5 and it’s probably a passage many are familiar with. I want us to dig into this truth, this emphatic statement that David makes in this Psalm he wrote. King David actually makes two emphatic statements that are promises to us from God. Then I want to look at some background from David’s life to see how he arrived at these statements and then how we can apply this to our lives.

This is the reading of God’s Word from Psalm 37:4–5 which says [4] *Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.* [5] *Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.* What a wonderful passage this is.

As I read this I become encouraged hearing these words of truth. God calls us to delight ourselves in Him and in return He will give us the desires of our heart. He tell us to commit our way to Him, trust Him and He will act. We know that God’s Word is true and without error. We know that God does not contradict Himself but yet sometimes in life we find that these verses don’t seem to play out in our life at times. We can look at these verses and it seems clear that these verses are if then statements where if I do this then this happens etc.

We may in our experience say we have delighted in the Lord and not every desire that I’ve had has been fulfilled. I have not been given every desire that I want and it seems like a contradiction but it isn’t. I think this is place where Satan tries to grab a foothold in our life. He tries to do the same thing he did to Adam and Eve in the garden and tell us that God is lying to us or God is withholding from us and this is not true. Satan tries to remind you that you have not received every desire that you want so that you won’t believe what He is saying in these verses. It seems like a contradiction because this crops up in those times of life that we feel pressed, exhausted, and meeting with trials and tribulations. I think we need to look at this and match this lie with the truth of God.

Before we do that, I want to classify desires. I want to put desires into three categories. Then I want to look at these examples in David’s life of these desires, because David writes this passage at an old age and we see this in the same chapter, Psalm 37:25 which says [25] *I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.* So everything that has transpired in King David’s life has happened by the time he writes this passage. There have been many desires, sins, successes and challenges that David has displayed in his life before he actually writes this text of Scripture.

So what are the three categories of desire? The first category are those desires that are clearly not in line with God’s will. These would be the desires of our flesh and our old man. The desires from our flesh and old man according to God’s Word clearly do not match up with God’s will. So these desires would obviously not fit into this passage in Psalm 37:4 and the reason is we delight in these kinds of desires more than we delight in God. These types of desires actually consume us and they motivate us, not to move towards God, but to move away from God. These types of desires prevent us from delighting in the Lord. So by the very essence of what they do we cannot delight in the Lord and have these desires.

A great example of a desire like this would be David’s desire of Bathsheba. God’s Word says that David was a man after God’s own heart and yet even David had a lapse, a moment where he allowed the old man, the desires of the flesh, to consume him. He delighted so much in

that desire that he went as far as to chase after Bathsheba. When he captured her he wanted to keep her to the point he created a situation where he even had her husband, Uriah, murdered. David paid dearly for this in his life. Bathsheba's first child died and David mourned greatly over that.

Later on in David's life we see that one of his other sons Absalom turned against him and tries to kill David. David goes out in exile for a period of time. The Lord graciously works through the situation but in all of that David clearly saw that, that desire was a desire that was against God and prevented him from delighting in the Lord. So here is just a few examples of this first category of desires.

The second category of desires are those desires that aren't inherently wrong. There is nothing evil about them. There are things that at times can crop up and there are things many of us think about quite often. For instance, one could be having a good relationship with your spouse or having a nice house or a good job or being able to provide certain things for your family or being able to do things with your friends. These are desires by nature are not evil but they require an extra measure on our behalf.

These desires require us to really dig into the motivation behind the desire, where is that desire motivated by something other than bringing glory to God? Does that desire bring me to a place where that motivation is outside that which God has called me to? Do I desire that good job so that I can prove to the world that I'm somebody? Do I desire that good relationship so that I can feel loved, outside of my relationship with God? Do I desire that nice home that I may say is for ministerial purposes but truly I just want to have a nice home so that I can have a nice home?

These types of desires really require an extra measure of study, self-examination and honesty before the Lord. Many times we'll find that if these desires had not been fulfilled when we feel like by nature they're not evil desires and we get to the motivation, we'll find that God's telling us we don't need it because that desire will take you to a different place of delight. It may seem innocent right now but ultimately you will not delight in the Lord if you have that desire. So this is the second category of desires.

The third category is what I want to spend more time on in this study because I think it's the toughest to discern when it's not fulfilled in the way we feel it should be fulfilled in our life. These are desires that are Christ-centered, Biblical desires where we look at what we desire and we look at God's design for our life and we say 'I have the confidence, capacity and capability to do this so God I want Your call to do this. Give me Your call right now.' But we don't receive that call in the way we think we should receive that call. It doesn't flesh out like we think it should flesh out.

We see the same example with David. That is why I find this Psalm 37 so fascinating is because of the author of this passage. In II Samuel 7 David comes to the prophet Nathan and he tells Nathan that he wants to build God a beautiful house. David says he has a beautiful house and he wants to build God a beautiful house, a temple. That's a Christ-centered desire, right? Then Nathan tells him to do it. Later that day God says to Nathan to tell David not to do it because it was not for him to do. Yes God has been dwelling in the tent all this time but who had God told that He had needed a house?

Later in the passage God reminds David how He has blessed him and then He prophetically announces through Nathan how David is going to be able to fulfill this desire he has but it will be in a completely different way than David could have imagined. So it seems as if David hears God say 'no' to this desire to want to build God a house and then what does David

do with what he hears? I want to show you what David does with that. Let's look at I Chronicles 28.

In I Chronicles 28 we have David at the end of his life and he is transitioning out of being king. He is bringing along Solomon and there have been some moving parts to this with some of his other sons trying to claim his kingship. He is finally at this place where he will transition his kingship to Solomon and he brings in the whole assembly of Israel.

I Chronicles 28:1–7 says [1] David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the officials of the tribes, the officers of the divisions that served the king, the commanders of thousands, the commanders of hundreds, the stewards of all the property and livestock of the king and his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty men and all the seasoned warriors. [2] Then King David rose to his feet and said: "Hear me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD and for the footstool of our God, and I made preparations for building. [3] But God said to me, 'You may not build a house for my name, for you are a man of war and have shed blood.' [4] Yet the LORD God of Israel chose me from all my father's house to be king over Israel forever. For he chose Judah as leader, and in the house of Judah my father's house, and among my father's sons he took pleasure in me to make me king over all Israel. [5] And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. [6] He said to me, 'It is Solomon your son who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. [7] I will establish his kingdom forever if he continues strong in keeping my commandments and my rules, as he is today.'

To the biggest audience David could possibly assemble, we see him very clearly tell them all that it was his desire to build a temple for God but that it was not going to be him who builds it. He could very easily said 'This is how the transition will take place. My son Solomon has been blessed by God to build a temple for God' and could have left out the other part about it being his desire to build it. I think there is a clear reason why he did it the way he did. I think he was speaking clearly to his people like God speaks clearly to us now.

As we turn this back to how we can apply this to our lives let's look at what David does in response to this situation. How does David deal with God saying 'no' to something that he feels like was his desire and he was equipped to do? The Psalm 37 text has a formula associated with it and this formula shows itself in I Chronicles 28. The first action step David tells us to take is to 'delight in the Lord' and not just in general. The second action step he tells us to take is to commit our way to the Lord and the third step is to trust in Him. So the formula is to delight, commit and trust. So I want to show you how David does this formula in I Chronicles 28.

I Chronicles 28:3–4 is an important transition and it one we can see quite often with David. David could have stopped after I Chronicles 28:3 and said 'God, in order for me to be king I had to do that.' He could have justified his actions before the Lord but he didn't because he knew the Lord knows his heart, his history, that God is sovereign, truthful and right. How does David respond to that? He responds with delight and thankfulness for we see this in how he pivots to verse 4, 'yet the Lord God' and then he lists all the things that he is thankful for. David delights in the fact that God chose him.

So how does David make that pivot? He doesn't make that pivot unless he has a deep relationship with the Lord. When things happen in your life and you think it's going left but it turns right or vice versa and then all of sudden you're at this crossroads of trusting the Lord and

abiding in Him when things don't pan out the way they should, unless the Holy Spirit infuses you with the supernatural ability to do it, you don't just start thinking of all your blessings. It is something that is created through a deep relationship with the Lord – getting in His Word, praying, partaking of the means of grace and then when you get to that place you can look at those things that the Lord has blessed you with.

David does something that I think we all can learn a lot from. He does what I call the 95-5 rule where he lives in the 95 and not the 5. For instance, there was a time in my life where I struggled with being hyper-critical and 15 good things could happen in a day with one bad thing that happens and I focus on the one bad thing where it would pre-occupy my mind to make me think how I could change it or how it affected me. I was easily offended because I was living in the 5 percent and not the 95 percent. David calls us to live in the 95 percent because we are blessed beyond measure.

I know we all have our own struggles but at the end of the day we have something to be thankful for. We have a relationship with our Lord and Savior and it's called salvation. If you live in a western context you have so much to be thankful for. Yes there are trials, tribulations, challenges and things that are difficult to explain or understand and by no means do I discount those things but God does not call us to focus on those things. Time and time again in the Word of God we are called to be thankful and that very foundation of thankfulness is what propels us through those difficult times.

There is something else we see with David here. We see him commit in I Chronicles 28:11–19 which says *[11] Then David gave Solomon his son the plan of the vestibule of the temple, and of its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and of the room for the mercy seat; [12] and the plan of all that he had in mind for the courts of the house of the LORD, all the surrounding chambers, the treasuries of the house of God, and the treasuries for dedicated gifts; [13] for the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, and all the work of the service in the house of the LORD; for all the vessels for the service in the house of the LORD, [14] the weight of gold for all golden vessels for each service, the weight of silver vessels for each service, [15] the weight of the golden lampstands and their lamps, the weight of gold for each lampstand and its lamps, the weight of silver for a lampstand and its lamps, according to the use of each lampstand in the service, [16] the weight of gold for each table for the showbread, the silver for the silver tables, [17] and pure gold for the forks, the basins and the cups; for the golden bowls and the weight of each; for the silver bowls and the weight of each; [18] for the altar of incense made of refined gold, and its weight; also his plan for the golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD. [19] “All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD, all the work to be done according to the plan.”*

Even though David wasn't going to build the temple we see how he spent his life building up resources for the house. He was committed to God. Even though things didn't pan out the way he wanted them to, he was still committed to doing what he could, in the way that God had designed him, to maximize those things that the Lord had blessed him with. He didn't sit back and take his hands off just because it didn't go his way. No, he basically said 'how can I be a part of this? How can I faithfully, delightfully commit myself to the Lord?' That is what he does here by using his resources to set up his son for success. Some would think 'well obviously he would do that for his son' but I would say David would have done it for anybody that God had called to follow him and build the temple, because that was the type of man he was. So he

makes that commitment and follows through even when things weren't working out the way he thought they would work out.

Finally we see a deep trust with David. We see this deep trust in I Chronicles 28:20–21 and particularly verse 20 which says [20] *Then David said to Solomon his son, “Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished. [21] And behold the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God; and with you in all the work will be every willing man who has skill for any kind of service; also the officers and all the people will be wholly at your command.”*

Even though God told David ‘no’ David goes and tells Solomon ‘you have been picked to do this. You know your dad’s desire, you know what I wanted but the Lord has chosen you for this and He is going to fulfill this through you and you can be confident of that.’ When it says ‘be strong and courageous’ it’s the same language that is used with Joshua. Have courage, why? It is because Satan doesn’t want you to delight but he wants you to doubt. Satan doesn’t want you to commit, he wants you to quit. Satan doesn’t want you to trust, he wants you to leave. He wants you to take it all and own it yourself. David tells Solomon not to do that but to be strong, courageous and follow the Lord in this.

So what can we take away from this? Before we dive into this part I want to ask some questions to see where you land on this formula. Think through and process these questions. Perhaps you don’t know if you’re really delighting in the Lord, then what is your view of life? Are you a pessimistic person? Are you a realistic person? Are you an optimistic person? If you fall on the pessimistic scale you’re probably not delighting in the Lord. So how do you delight in the Lord?

Be honest with the Lord. Take everything you have, bring it before Him and say ‘Lord, this is where I am and I need Your help.’ Perhaps you don’t really know how to pray right now then pray ‘Father, I’m trusting in You, please help me, direct me, guide me, lead me.’ Read God’s promises. Get in His Word. Remind yourself of His promises and then that delight of what God has done for you will well up within you. If you have the gift of the Holy Spirit within you and you have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior then that Holy Spirit, even though it may seem like an ember now, will become a flame within you and you’ll delight. You will be a flame of the Light.

Perhaps you’re not sure if you’re committed and you feel like you’re a ship in the middle of the ocean with no direction or a sailboat with your sails down. What is the Lord giving you the gift to do? How has He wired you up? I encourage you to discover the design that the Lord has blessed you with. What are your spiritual gifts? What are your abilities? What are the things you are passionate about? I’d love to help you out with this in some way. There are so many who would love to help you find out how the Lord has designed you. When you find out what the design is then you commit to what the Lord has blessed you with and follow Him in the capacity He has given you. Trust Him in His call.

A very clear evidence of not committing is living in the future or living in the past. So if you live in the future, always hoping for something to change, always thinking that just around the corner is your lottery and think that will bring you happiness and joy then it means you’re not committed to the here and now. If you live in the past, in regret and you can’t move past the mistakes you’ve made then that means you’re not committed to the here and now.

A good example of living a committed life is being in the here and now. It's not, not looking at the future but truly understanding what the Lord has called you to do to maximize the here and now. When you do that it's amazing what the Lord will do through you for His Kingdom and that's maximizing the here and now.

Finally, do you trust the Lord? Perhaps you feel like you do trust the Lord but it seems like an abstract term to you. How do you put your hands around that? How do you deal with that? Trusting the Lord is not an abstract term. Trusting the Lord can be exercised in many ways. There is evidences everywhere as to whether or not you are trusting the Lord. One is when things are rough in life what is your first inclination? Is your first inclination to try and figure things out on your own or to pray? That's a very simple evidence of trusting the Lord in life.

There have been times in my life, and I have been incredibly convicted about this, even to this day I reminded at times just how quick I am to rely on my own capacities before I pray. When we trust in the Lord, we pray first. We pray for guidance and for God to give us His design because God's design is static, unchanging, and immutable like He is in His character and our desires are all over the place. So in order for us to truly trust in the Lord we have to take all these desires, lay them before the Lord and run them up against the grid of His design.

In Psalm 37 when it says to commit your way to the Lord, the Hebrew language for commit literally means to lay out your thoughts before the Lord and that's what pray is all about. It's not about us trying to line God up with our will but we're supposed to line up ourselves with His will. Seriously, when we pray God is calling us to His throne room to look at His plan, His design, and our heart's desire should be to be lined up with His, to have discernment and clarity on His plan and His design. When we are in harmony that it's amazing the peace that will cover us.

We see that in II Samuel 12 when David's son dies. The officials are afraid to go to David because he is mourning so greatly over this that they are afraid he might hurt himself. The officials were blown away at how David responded once the child had died. The account reads in II Samuel 12:19–23, *[19] But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead. And David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They said, "He is dead." [20] Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. [21] Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." [22] He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' [23] But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."*

Now that David's son was gone he was going to continue working out and advancing His Kingdom as he faithfully trust Him because obviously it wasn't in God's design to allow the child to live. That is not some theoretical, hypothetical or clinical response. That is a real life heart for the Lord. He was trusting the Lord and that even though that terrible thing happened with a lot of emotion behind it, David still understood that God knew what was best, God had the best design and David wanted to line up with that.

In conclusion, the foundation of all of this is that if you don't have a foundation with Christ then all of this will seem like nonsense. You have to have a foundation with Christ. If you don't trust in Christ for your salvation and rest on Him and Him alone in His merit for your

salvation then all of this other stuff is not going to set on a firm foundation. So I would encourage you today that if you have never come to a place where you have put your trust in Christ then say 'Lord Jesus, I commit my life to You because I know at the end of the day Your design is the best design and You have saved me when I couldn't save myself. Lord, You have given me a gift that I could never own on my own.'

If you made that commitment today and want to pray with someone please call us here at Briarwood at (205)776-5200 because we would love to help you get started in your walk with the Lord. Today can be your best day, your greatest day to start that foundation with Christ, the Cornerstone, to build the rest of your life of trusting in Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your Word and the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the 'if then' statements that we can rest on. Lord, our flesh and mind can muddy up the water at times and I know that You know that Father for You know how we're designed but Lord, I'm so thankful for Your graciousness and grace. We come before You today Lord asking that You would give us a holy delight in You and that You would continue to show us how we can be committed to the here and now in serving You, Father. Help us to trust You with all of our desires and if there is anything that falls out of line of what You have called us to do, Lord, than I pray You would give us the eyes to see it and the ears to hear it. Convict our hearts Lord by the Holy Spirit so that we would truly pursue You and Your truth. Father, just like You did with David, where you fulfilled his desire in the spiritual realms with a spiritual temple in Christ, show us when You give us a holy desire and it may not come out the way we think it will but You will fulfill that which You have placed on us and called us to. I ask these things in Jesus' holy and precious Name, Amen.