

November 6, 2011  
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Brentview Baptist Church  
'Soul Cravings'  
Getting To Know Your Neighbour

Intro: Video ( 0.09-3:35) The man you heard on the video was Erwin McManus, the Lead Pastor at Mosaic Church in Los Angeles, who has been struggling with something that has also been on my mind for a while now. I believe with all my heart that Jesus Christ is the answer to the hearts cry of every person in our world. That as Jesus enters our lives, he not only changes our eternal destiny but he changes what can happen in the here and now of our lives. From my experience I have found that as I let Jesus direct my life, He changes not only the direction of my life, but also the color and vibrancy of it. And yet as I look around Calgary and Canada and I see that the majority of people, while giving 2 thumbs up to the 'idea of spirituality', are not embracing Jesus. In a survey McManus took on the streets of Vancouver, he found that when he asked people to rate different words with a positive or negative value, that when he said Canada, they replied positive, Spirituality: positive, Church: negative and Jesus was a mixture of negative and positive.

I know that his polling results ring true with what I see as I walk around my neighborhood. For as I speak to friends, what I find is that so many are missing having a relationship with Jesus. I wonder if McManus' conclusion is right, that the strategy that we have been using to move people into a relationship with Jesus is not only outdated, but not all that biblical. Our key strategy has been one of reward and punishment. That if a person gives their heart to Jesus, the reward is they will have eternal life, and if they do not become a Christ follower, then the punishment is you do not go to heaven when you die. Maybe what we have missed is that while once you are a Jesus follower the fact that we can stand at a grave side and have hope is an amazing thing. However, when you are only 22 and think you are bullet proof and will never die or you are so busy getting ahead in life, eternal life isn't a large enough issue to draw a person to spend much time considering faith.

Because God knew that, he placed within every one of us what McManus calls Soul Cravings. Cravings which are in every person's life which are meant to nudge us toward a God who desperately wants us to know him. Jesus said in (John 10:10) that he was the 'way, the truth and the life'. In other words, God has placed within us cravings, which in some way are as deep and as real as our need for oxygen or water which keep tugging us God's way. Which, when filled, bring us into greater health as people. If left unfilled, will leave us always trying to make sense of our lives until the day we die. (Matthew 5:6) Puts it this way 'that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness (a right relationship with Jesus), will be filled (have their inner most desires and cravings filled and met)'. Let me list these soul cravings and explain.

## I. Our 3 Deepest Soul Cravings (See if they don't resonate with you!)

**1. The Need for Destiny:** This is the idea of wanting to make a difference with our lives. It is the idea of wanting a sense of purpose, finding out what our story should be all about and finding the Hero within us. It is finding our significance or purpose for our lives. Whether you are striving for success, trying to create a better world through what you do at your job or in the way you raise your kids or becoming a better person, there is that drive within all of us. You see that need to be noticed, or to leave an imprint on the world, every time you see graffiti painted on a wall or a train car. You see that pull toward a need to improve, to progress, when your baby starts to roll over and then can't help itself as it needs to learn to crawl, then walk and then to run. You hear it expressed every time you watch a Star Trek show and hear Captain Kirk say 'To boldly go where no man has gone before'.

Even our mid-life Crises speaks to this, for if you haven't reached your goals, or have reached your goals by 40, there is that need within all of us that asks, 'have you or will you make a difference with you life?' Here is the secret: All of us have within us a deep rooted longing, not only for our lives to make a difference, but to make a difference in the lives of others. Why has God placed that within you? It is because everyone matters to God. It is because He wants you to realize that in order to make a difference you can't do it by yourself. For your destiny is what God already created you for. One of my favorite verses is (Ephesians 2:10) 'For we are God's workmanship, created by Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do'. Here is the point: Steven and Rebecca McCready were doing wonderful things in Ireland with Youth for Christ. But as they became Christ followers, even before they felt a call to 'the colonies' God had a plan for their lives.

Part of that plan was to bring them across the ocean to serve with us here at Brentview. How long ago was this in God's mind? From before they were born. How has God unwrapped that for them? Through connections with Ken Castor then our Ireland Mission trips then Steven's trips to speak to our Hub community, then there was a 'chance lunch' last October which Steven and I had. But they will also tell you that for years they have felt this stirring within them to come to Canada, it made no sense, but it was very real and it was quietly nudging them our way. Why? Because as Steven said to me the other day 'the Lord hasn't brought them here just to help maintain Brentview, it is because God has something special in mind for them and us to do together'. That is God.

He loves every one of us, places within us a need to live with passionate urgency, which empowers us to make a difference. So just below the surface of our consciousness is this craving that tells us that we have a destiny in which we need to be engaged. For God never intended that any of us should live hopeless lives. God knew that only he could take us to the deepest level of our personal calling concerning our destiny. So that inner craving is to not only to help us be fulfilled as individuals, but to make a difference in the lives of others, but to draw us toward the heart of Jesus who knows the full story of what our destiny is.

**2. The Need for Intimacy:** Every generation writes about love, every generation tells stories about love (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Brigitte Jones Diaries*). Every one of us desperately wants to be loved. We are driven to love, driven from love and driven by love. From our very first breath all of us are on a quest to find love and be loved. What I find amazing is that this need to be loved even keeps rising within people who have been hurt in terrible ways by others. The miracle of intimacy is that despite how dangerous it is we keep choosing to go there because life without love is not much of a life at all.

Where does that craving find its roots? I believe in the heart of God. That is why across our world people want to somehow become connected with a 'God', and be loved by him. (1 John 4:19) 'We love because he first loved us'. So the next time you feel that pull toward having or holding a baby, toward wanting to find that person you can spend the rest of your life with, that time you may be snuggled close to your spouse on the couch or having fun around a meal with friends. Don't miss that God placed that need within you, so that soon you would want to get to know the source of love in a deeper way. That craving for intimacy is the pathway with which Jesus wants you to meet him and know him.

**3. The Need for Meaning:** Simply trying to make sense of the meaning of life. There are times when things come our way that shake us to the core and leave us almost gasping for air and wondering how we will make it through them. And trying to make sense of how this suffering, this struggle, this disappointment or sorrow can make sense. At times we wonder if we can make it through it in one piece. The bible is full of those moments; we find Lazarus' sister meeting Jesus and Lazarus' tomb and asking why this has happened and Jesus pulls off a miracle right in the middle of this life altering mess. We find the disciples sitting in a boat in the middle of a storm wondering if Jesus can make some kind difference and with a word somehow calm enters their lives as well.

We see the disciples in the Upper Room trying to figure out what to do after Jesus has seemingly been defeated by death and he walks through the wall, into their situation and adds a profound meaning to their lives, and the situation they were in as he says 'Peace be with you'. All of us will face those kinds of situations where we can't make sense or find meaning in what we are going through. Those are times when we are forced to go beyond ourselves, to seek answers outside ourselves. Those are times, I feel, which God has placed within us (that need to make sense of those situation) so we will have to connect with the only one who can help us walk through those kinds of problems.

What I can say from experience is that even when life doesn't make sense we can connect to the one who makes sense out of life, Jesus says 'come unto me all you who are weary and you will find rest for your soul' (Matthew 11:29). Somehow he will make sense of it for you or he will be there for us to lean on during our struggle. I believe that our soul was created to need hope to survive and at times it is in the struggle when we encounter God in a way we would never experience him in the good times of life, which for our life is that pull toward finding the kind of hope that keeps us going even during the tough times of life. I believe that within every human being are 3 soul cravings that just like the need for air or water are cravings which demand filling.

Soul Cravings: Cravings which are in every person's life, that are meant to nudge us toward a God who desperately wants us to know him.

## **II. Can I remind you of what you already know?**

If these 3 soul cravings are placed by God in us, in order to help you and I and our neighbor who is yet to find Jesus, find God and go deeper into God, that means that we need to maybe change our way of sharing our passion for Jesus with others. I say this because I feel that my calling as a Christian is to love my neighbor. That neighbor is not only the person next door but it is possibly that person who is another parent on my kid's soccer and or band practice, or they may be people who we work with or friends that we share some common interest with. We are called to love them, just to love them. We don't become friends so we can tell them about Jesus; we become friends because God calls us to be a friend to those he places in our lives. We are friends, because Jesus is part of our lives. We know that Jesus will come into our conversation and I hope shine through your eyes to them. Can I remind you what you already know?

### **1. We believe that People's souls are turning toward God even before they know it.**

There is this great verse that has this idea that is kind of hidden in the text that talks about this. Turn to (John 2:42-48) Here is Jesus calling men to be his disciples. He has called Peter and John, then he tells Philip to "Follow me" and then Philip tells a man named Nathanael about Jesus. And Nathanael's response was 'can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Now look at (Vs. 47, 48). Nathanael had not even been aware that Jesus knew about him or knew the kind of person he was, and had been keeping an eye on him. In other words, long before Nathanael had been thinking about Jesus, Jesus had been thinking about and caring for Nathanael. When you chart your faith journey I'll bet you can (in retrospect) see those moments in time where Jesus was watching out for you, bringing people and situations into your life which moved your heart toward faith.

Like the folk that were walking on the Road to Emmaus just after the resurrection when Jesus slid in beside them and walked with them 'they felt their hearts burning within them'. (Luke 24:32). For some of you, as I speak you are feeling that same burning within you, where Jesus is saying 'What Dave is saying is true, I love you and care about you, I have been turning your heart toward me for a long time, because I love you'. For many of us it took a time like (Luke 8:45) when our lives were falling apart for us to somehow realize that we needed a touch from Jesus. In this case a lady who had such severe blood issues and had no where else to turn to except for God. So she sneaks into a crowd (it is like sneaking into a church and hoping that no one would speak to you) and hoping that mid sermon Jesus will somehow use something to meet that need of your heart.

You had this word or you felt like the preacher was speaking right to you and you knew God actually loved you. All these are examples of the fact that God loves us enough to slowing keep moving into our lives and our neighbors lives because he loves them. I believe that God brings into my life people whose walk toward Jesus began before they drew their first breath.

That means that I don't have to wrestle or argue anyone toward faith. What I need to do is to come along side of those inner Soul Cravings and expect that God has already been at work in the other person's life. That if I allow Jesus to shine through my care and eyes, Jesus will whisper from their inner being and say intimate words that he loves them.

## **2. That means I need to be open to conversations not arguments.**

I have a GPS and it has what are called a bread crumb trail on it. When I push a 'Go to' button it will follow that bread crumb trail right back to camp. It is a trail already laid out; all I need to do is follow it. I say that because when I was younger I would argue about creation versus evolution, believing that if I won the argument I would win a persons soul. What often happened instead was I showed the other person that I was a narrow minded twit. One day it struck me that because God was great enough to create the world in 6 literal days or 60 billion years. The point was not winning an argument over how God created the world but introducing them gently to the God who had created and loved them. I believe Jesus is at work in the lives of those he brings into my life. I need to look for the bread crumbs of their Soul Cravings and as they bring up the conversation show them by my actions and words that Jesus has loved them for a long time. Let them see Jesus in your eyes not your arguments.

## **3. We need to stop making people sign the pledge card before they take their plunge of faith.**

Let me explain what I mean. It is so easy for the church of today to fall into the very trap the Pharisees fell into in Jesus' time (the same trap that you will find in most religions all around the world). They believed that if you want to feel the love of God, you have to keep 'a certain list of rules'. For example, if you want Allah to care for you then you have to pray 7 times a day facing toward Mecca. While as Christians we will say that we believe Jesus' love is free, often subconsciously we have not lived that way. To be honest many of us grew up with a long list of things we couldn't do, like going to a movie, a dance or having a sip wine. And of course there were things we had to do, like dress a certain way on Sunday and you had to love organ music (smile).

What happens is that we subconsciously set a trap for anyone who wants to find Jesus. Because we all have this inner soul craving for God to love us and yet from personal experience and subtle church teaching we felt we had to keep long lists of rules for God to love us. We have led others to believe that God's love is conditional, on our keeping a certain number of rules. Can I remind you what we believe? (Romans 5:6) But God demonstrated his love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us, while we didn't care if he existed or not, he came all the way from Heaven to die on the cross for us. Now this is important, if the issue was that all he needed from us was that we could be loved by him was our keeping a long list of rules. Then he could have simply sent anyone with that list of rules. The issue was that he wanted to have a relationship with us; he had to come himself, even though it meant dyeing on a cruel cross. You see, we believe that Jesus loves us, no strings attached, that means that as a church we need to make sure that the good news about Jesus' love doesn't come with strings attached as well.

If you are a Christ follower remember this:

Your job is to help others connect with the Jesus who loves them so much that he placed Soul Cravings within their heart which will pull them toward God until they find him. That he came all the way from heaven because the issue is not keeping rules to please him, but because only they can have a relationship with him

If you are sticking your foot in the water concerning faith this morning and you are feeling that inner tug from within and it seems to make sense that those Soul cravings from within are very real. And you feel maybe they are a sign that God may be real and trying to get your attention. Can I encourage you to turn around in your mind? For as you do, I think you will run into the God who has always been seeking you.

Here is the kicker; if you study most religions in the world you will find that what they teach is that God's love is conditional. That it is one sided, unless you do certain things, God won't love you or at least stop picking on you. At times that is exactly what the church of Jesus Christ has taught on a subconscious way. We have taught that God will love you only if you keep the rules.