

*Gospel*  
**INFLUENCE 2.0**  
ASKING INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS



**(Theme Slide)**



**What a delight to hear of 120 youth, four teams of 30, joining together for the great launch event last Sunday night at the Big Rapids campus.**

**-- As I thought about all these young men and women, I considered what common denominator could be found in probably all their hearts.**

**-- It couldn't be Jesus, because I'm sure not all of them have decided to follow Him.**

**-- So, what could it be that was popping up in my mind?**

**TR: I am fairly certain that all the youth are filled with . . .**



**. . . great desires.**

**-- Desires for relationships, meaning, purpose, recognition, love, acceptance, direction . . .**

**-- . . . among many other things.**

**-- As we consider how to be more Gospel Fluent, our guidebooks encourage us to intentionally ask about others' desires.**

**-- Specifically, "What is the best gift God could give you?"**

**-- It seems to make sense to think a bit about what God says about our desires to get us ready for such discussions.**

**-- Back to our youth . . . would it have been OK for each of them to write out their top two desires and then go to the foot**

**of the cross and ask for them?**

**TR: Perhaps some of them and us have come across Psalm 37, when it says . . .**

**Psalm 37:4-5**

Delight yourself in the LORD,  
and he will give you  
**the desires of your heart.**

<sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the LORD;  
trust in him, and he will act.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: In light of this Holy Spirit inspired text of God's Word . . .**

*Is it OK to ask for the  
desires of our hearts?*

**. . . READ SLIDE**

**-- This is a verse some parents want to ban from their teenaged children . . . because they remember what they desired as a adolescent.**

**-- This is a verse that some older Christians want to explain away, because they asked for what they desired and then were disappointed.**

**-- EX: Young wife with desire to be a mom . . . what would you say?**

**-- EX: Young man with the desire to be rich so that he could give away lots of money to others . . . what would you say?**

**TR: READ SLIDE (repeat)**

*Is it OK to ask for the desires of our hearts?*

*Yes, if we also ask God to change our desires if He so wishes.*

**READ SLIDE**

- Psalm 37 says, “Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.”
- Our delight in Him will change our desires to become more and more like His desires for us.
- As we delight in Him, He will implant His desires in our hearts and therefore He will be very willing to give us those desires.
- EX: Praying in Jesus’ name – not a magic incantation, but as an expression of praying in line with the character and purpose of Jesus.
- Did Jesus always receive the desires of His heart? Yes, because He always did what He saw the Father doing, as He said in John’s Gospel account.
  
- So, if it is OK to ask God for the desires of our hearts, is it OK

**for the youth, and all of us, to have GREAT DESIRES?  
TR: Let's look at how Jesus addressed this question.**



**Mark 9:30-31 p. 937**

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, <sup>31</sup>for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise."

ESV

**Turn in your Bibles to Mark 9, page 937 in the Handout Bibles**

**-- READ SLIDE**

**-- As He makes His way to Jerusalem and cross, Jesus pulls more and more away from the crowds, spending more time with His disciples.**

**-- He makes clear what will happen to Him . . . and will refer to this after the resurrection, as we read in Luke 24 a couple of weeks ago:**

***-- "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."***

**TR: What happens after this time of prophetic teaching is amazing, and certainly an example of how . . .**

# AUTHENTIC

**... AUTHENTIC the Bible is.**

**-- Some folks imagine that the early church made up a lot of these stories.**

**TR: But, would you write yourself into a story the way verse 32 and following read?**

**Mark 9:32-33**

**But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.**

**<sup>33</sup>And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?”**

*ESV*

**READ SLIDE (verse 32)**

- These guys, including the authors and authorities behind our gospel accounts, were blockheads.**
- They make Charlie Brown look sharp.**
- They didn't understand and they didn't have the courage to ask for clarification.**

**-- That doesn't mean they didn't talk among themselves, as verse 33 reads . . . READ SLIDE (verse 33).**

**TR: Either Jesus overheard part of the conversation or He was prompted by the Holy Spirit to ask. But, the answer was a deafening silence.**

**Mark 9:34**

But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about **who was the greatest.**

*ESV*

**READ SLIDE**

- Jesus gets done saying He would delivered in the hands of those who would kill him . . .
- . . . and their follow up discussion is about who was the greatest.

**TR: Verse 35**

Mark 9:35

And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Jesus then adds an illustration to the point He has just made . . .**

**Mark 9:36-37**

And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup>“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- Children in that culture we of little consequence.
- Remember the account when even the disciples pushed away folks trying to bring their kids to Jesus?
- Jesus challenges these ladder-climbers to look to the lower rungs, where the kids are.
- Jesus say that our ministry to even the lowly, done in His name, is an expression of relationship with Him . . . AND with the Father.

**TR: So, in light of this . . .**

*Is it OK to desire  
to be great?*

**. . . READ SLIDE**

- Be careful how you answer . . . remember, Jesus said in verse 35, "If anyone would be first," . . .**
- . . . NOT "desire to be last."**

**TR: As we think about this authentic struggle with great desires, we only have to go to the right one chapter to find out how authentic the Bible is with the denseness of the disciples. They are so dense . . . they would have dulled a carbide saw blade in seconds.**



**Mark 10:32**

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him,

ESV

**Pick it up in Mark 10:32 . . . READ SLIDE**

**-- It was always UP to Jerusalem.**

**-- Jesus was ahead of them, perhaps they were amazed or astonished at the way He was setting His face like flint toward Jerusalem.**

**-- Perhaps the rest of the pilgrims were afraid, sensing that the ministry of the man was marching to some kind of climactic confrontation.**

**-- As in the previous chapter, Jesus pulls the twelve apart for some small group instruction.**

**TR: He then gives a six point outline of what would soon happen.**

**Mark 10:33-34**

saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. <sup>34</sup>And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

ESV

**Jesus said . . . READ SLIDE**

- Those who come with only skepticism to the Bible say that this must have been written after it all happened.
- And they are right, IF there is no such thing as prophecy and Jesus isn't really the Messiah.
- If the disciples were making this up, why would they leave in the description of their hard-headedness?
- Don't we usually take out the bad pictures before we post something to social media or attach it to a text, let alone hang it on our walls?
  
- So, like in chapter 9, Jesus presents challenging truth to the disciples.

**-- Of course it would be hard to accept. Jesus was the One who healed their infirmities, Who raised the dead, Who had authority over demons, Who feed thousands, Who commanded the wind and the waves.**

**-- How could He NOT lead them to victory over the Romans in Jerusalem?**

**TR: Looking through only their own filters of triumphalism, it is not that hard to imagine how the conversation took such a sharp turn.**

**Mark 10:35-36**

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." <sup>36</sup>And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?"

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- These Sons of Thunder, who may have been cousins of Jesus, push their way to the front of the line.
- They ask for Carte Blanche but Jesus wisely asks them to be a bit more specific.

**TR: And they said to Him . . .**

Mark 10:37

And they said to him, **“Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”**

ESV

**READ SLIDE (yellow only)**

**-- These are the positions of greatest authority and power.**

**TR: Jesus responds . . .**

**Mark 10:38**

Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

-- the **CUP** refers to the cup of God's wrath . . . the cup that Jesus would ask the Father to take from Him but then says, "Nevertheless, your will be done."

-- the **BAPTISM** speaks of the flood of turmoil that we crash into Jesus in the days ahead. It refers to His suffering and death.

**TR:** Thinking that Jesus was asking whether they were ready to fight by His side in triumph in the battle that they imagined would soon begin, they answer in youthful arrogance . . .

**Mark 10:39-40**

And they said to him, **“We are able.”**  
 And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, <sup>40</sup>but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.”

ESV

**. . . WE ARE ABLE.**

**-- Jesus goes on . . . READ SLIDE**

**-- Yes, they too would face suffering on behalf of others.**

**-- James would become a martyr in Acts 12.**

**-- John would be exiled to Patmos in his old age.**

**-- Having said all that, Jesus then shows great humility by not usurping His Father’s role and authority . . . it was not His to grant.**

**TR: When you and I consider if we should have “great desires,” it would do us well to remember that when we desire greatness as the world defines . . . it leads to . . .**

Mark 10:41

And when the ten heard it, they began to be **indignant** at James and John.

ESV

... indignation.

-- READ SLIDE

TR: A different James, the half-brother of Jesus, would later write . . .



**James 4:1-3**

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your **passions** are at war within you? <sup>2</sup>You **desire** and do not have, so you murder. You **covet** and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- The ten were indignant with the brothers, because they asked . . .
- . . . and perhaps because they got there first . . .
- . . . (remember the discussion a chapter earlier that ALL were involved in).

**TR: Again, like in chapter 9, Jesus pulls the 12 into a huddle.**

**Mark 10:42-43a**

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered **rulers** of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their **great ones** exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup>But it shall not be so among you.”

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- Desiring to sit at Jesus' left and right hands was an expression of desiring to be rulers, to be a “great one.”
- In the world, folks with these GREAT DESIRES lord it over others, they exercise authority.

**TR: But Jesus says that life in His kingdom is different.**

**Mark 10:43b-44**

**“But whoever would be great among you must be your **servant**,<sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be **slave of all**.”**

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- Again, the Master does not give them a hard time about wanting to be great or first.
- Rather, Jesus changes the definition, doesn't He?

**TR: He radically changes it by casting a glance back at His prophecies of what awaited Him in Jerusalem. The disciples thought it would be GLORY. But the glory that would be revealed would be in the form of humiliation.**

**Mark 10:43b-45**

“But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup>and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup>**For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**”

ESV

**READ SLIDE (Yellow text, verse 45, only)**

- Jesus says, Follow My lead . . . be great by being a servant . . . even a bond slave of all.
- The Son of Man, a favorite title from the OT that Jesus uses for Himself, came to serve and to give His life to make a ransom for many people.
- The price paid that required for their redemption, being bought out of the slave market of sin.
- The price was paid to the Heavenly Father, turning aside His righteous and holy wrath.

**TR: So, with such a powerful rewriting of their expectations, the question remains before us, as I think it was before them**

...

*Is it OK to desire  
to be great?*

**READ SLIDE**

- We said it was OK to ask God for the desires of our hearts, IF we also ask Him to change those desires.
- What would make it OK to have desires, even, dare we say, ambition to be great?

**TR: READ SLIDE (repeat)**

*Is it OK to desire  
to be great?*

*Yes, if we accept Jesus'  
definition of "great."*

**READ SLIDE**

-- Our Lord seems OK with drive, zeal, passionate desire, even to be great . . . if we accept His definition of who is great.

TR: In like of verses 43-45, perhaps we could write a sentence something like this . . .

*Great \_\_\_\_\_ humbly  
serve, and even suffer, to  
give others what they  
need most.*

**READ SLIDE**

- Jesus came to humbly serve.
- Jesus asked the brothers if they were ready to take the cup of wrath and the baptism of death . . . to suffer.
- But, it wasn't just suffering for suffering's sake. It was to provide a ransom for many.

**TR: It is OK to desire to be great, even to ask God for this desire of our hearts, IF we accept Jesus' definition of "great."**



*Great parents  
serve their kids.*

*Great teachers  
serve their students.*

*Great leaders  
serve their teams.*

**Thus, it is fantastic that at our campuses and online there are folks who want, desire, to be great parents, great teachers, great leaders, great employees, great friends, great church members, great neighbors, great administrators . . .**

**-- But, we need a warning here . . . being great by serving people is not always giving people what they want.**

**-- Being an enabler is NOT being like Jesus.**

**TR: We have to remember what Christ's example teaches us in the full . . .**

*Great \_\_\_\_\_ humbly  
serve, and even suffer, to  
give others what they  
need most.*

**READ SLIDE**

-- We don't serve others so that they can respect us, appreciate us, even love us . . .

-- . . . for that is nothing but bribery. I serve you so I can get something from you.

-- Rather, we serve, even suffer, to give others what they need most.

TR: Definitions are so important . . . we are to serve others by not withholding any good thing, as God says in Psalm 84 of Himself . . .

**Psalm 84:11**

For the LORD God is a sun and shield;  
the LORD bestows favor and honor.

**No good thing does he withhold**  
from those who walk uprightly.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

-- Isn't it all in the definitions . . .like: what is a good thing?  
Who are those who walk uprightly?

-- To give others what they need most may not be giving  
them their hearts' desires . . . if those desires are wrong.

-- The good thing may not be money . . . because you may  
begin to trust in your wealth for security.

-- The good thing may not be health . . . because it may make  
you begin to feel independent of God and think only of this  
world and the here and now.

-- The good thing may not be a promotion . . . because it may

**make you prideful and open to foolish and presumptuous choices.**

**-- Cf. Guidebook back cover: Questions to uncover idols . . . .  
mis-directed desires when we aren't convinced that Jesus  
is BETTER.**

**TR: In light of these two incredibly authentic glimpses into  
Jesus being truly Gospel Fluent with His disciples, let us  
consider interacting with others and reflecting on our own  
desires.**

**Psalm 37:4-5**

**Delight yourself in the LORD,  
and he will give you  
the desires of your heart.**

**<sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the LORD;  
trust in him, and he will act.**

ESV

**God desires us to be great . . . and desires us to DESIRE to be great, to be first, He wants us to be passionate and ambitious . . . but according to His definitions and directions.**

**WE are to be . . .**

- great people of consequence for the good of others,**
- great people who clearly carry the fragrance of Jesus wherever they go,**
- great people who consistently bring honor to Jesus, never allowing themselves to besmirch His name.**
- Someone who is great in the kingdom of God has learned to die to self so they can pray in their closets, where only God sees.**

**-- Someone who is great in the kingdom has died to self so they can quietly be generous with others, not letting their right hand know what their left hand is doing.**

**-- What a great question to ask ourselves and others . . .  
what really are the desires of your heart?**

**-- And, am I willing to have God change them if they do not align with His?**