

Galatians 5:13-6:10. Let's read.

Gal 5:13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Gal 5:14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Gal 5:15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

Gal 5:16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Gal 5:17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Gal 5:19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

Gal 5:20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

Gal 5:21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Gal 5:23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Gal 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Gal 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Gal 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Gal 6:1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

Gal 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

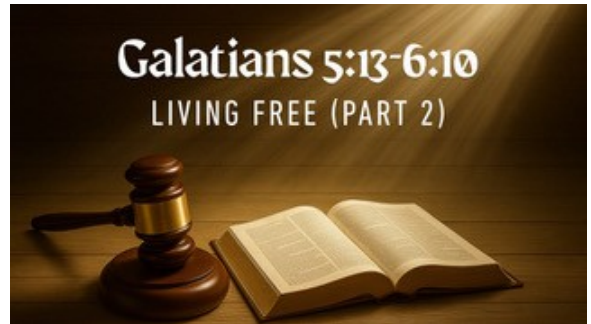
Gal 6:3 If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.

Gal 6:4 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else,

Gal 6:5 for each one should carry their own load.

Gal 6:6 Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.



Gal 6:8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Gal 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Gal 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Our focus this morning is on Galatians 5:16-18.

Gal 5:16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Gal 5:17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

That last verse, verse 18, emphatically repeats the central theme of this epistle: **If we are led by the spirit, we will not be trying to earn, or maintain, our salvation, by keeping the law.**

Now, last week, as we considered **Galatians 5:13-15**,

We learned that it is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Living free in Christ is to serve others humbly in love. To serve others humbly we are called to love others as ourselves.

1. **So the underlying sequence of actions is for us to love God because He first loved us.** So that means we would experience God's love for us and respond to His love in relationship and obedience. So, we have to love God because He first loved us.
2. **We have to love ourselves,**
3. **and then to love others as we love ourselves.**

This week, as we consider Galatians 5:16-18, here's the underlying truth to keep in mind, as individual believers, and as a church:

- ★ if our beliefs and actions are to be dominated by love and mutual service, it will be because -- and only because -- **we rely on the person and work of the Holy Spirit in us** individually and collectively.
- ★ The manifestation, the expression of godly love that identifies us as Christians -- as children of God -- that is made possible when we live by, when we walk by, when we are led by the Spirit of God.

So what does it mean to live by, walk by, and be led by the Spirit?

And how does being led by the Spirit keep us from gratifying or indulging the desires of our flesh, of our sinful nature?

Well, to live by the Spirit is to be born again into the new and eternal life that only Christ Jesus makes possible through His sacrifice -- payment for our sins. This is important for us to understand and to pay attention to. **We will be able to live by the Spirit only if we have received life from the Spirit.**



God -- and when I say God, I mean God the Father, Jesus the Son, the image bearer and the physical representative of the Triune God, our God in three persons, one God in three persons -- so

- **God the Father,**
- **God the Son, and**
- **God the Holy Spirit,** the spiritual presence of God.

***God gives us life, and He doesn't do it in some remote way.
He doesn't do it in some partial way.***

He says here, from the beginning of time itself, I have put in place this plan to give you eternal life. That was always my design -- that you would live with me for eternity. And I have put in place this plan of salvation executed through Jesus coming into this world so that even though you fell in sin, I have restored you to myself.

And when you believe, when you accept, when you receive this provision of mine, I will come and be with you in the person of the Holy Spirit. So God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit being completely involved in the plan of salvation for our benefit, to give us life.

By simply responding to the Lord we receive this new life. We are born again from spiritual death caused by sin. And now **God in His fullness is the very environment -- it is the context, it is the state of our being -- in which we exist.** So it is in that context that we can say "to live by the Spirit." Because we can't be outside of this new life in God and then say, "I'm attempting to live by the Spirit." It doesn't work.

We have to be in this relationship that the Lord has established.

- So to live by the Spirit is to recognize the source of life,
- to receive that life at new birth -- that initial work of the Holy Spirit,
- to live out that life on earth in an ongoing manner every day of our lives, and
- to live out that life in heaven with God for eternity.

That's the nature of the new life that the Lord is giving us. So to live by the Spirit is to experience all of that.

If you don't know what that means, or if you have any questions about that, or if you have any doubts about that -- that needs to be established first, so that we say, "Oh, I understand what it means to live by the Spirit."

To walk by the Spirit is to keep pressing forward in the path, the way of life set before us. So I have been brought into, I have been given new life, I am born again, and I am now here. But now set before me is the way of life, is the path that tells me, that shows me how I can move forward in this life.

Walking -- the very word, the idea of walking -- it is an activity that moves us from one point to another. Now of course, if you want to get technical and say, "I can walk on a treadmill and I don't get from one point to another" -- put that aside -- the walking that the Bible is describing -- when there were no treadmills -- is clearly speaking about moving from one point to another.



Walking by the Spirit is a moment-by-moment reliance on the Spirit in all of our life's activities, and in the habits and speech and reactions and everything else that we would be involved in, so that we are moving from one point to another. We are moving in this path of life that the Lord has set before us.

And our lifestyle as a disciple of Christ matches and is consistent with our new life in Christ. We've been called into a new life in Christ, and now **as we walk in that way we are demonstrating that we are in that path of life.** We are giving testimony that we have been born again.

We are saying to the world: there is a purpose to my life, there is a meaning to my life, there is some destination that I'm getting to, there is a waypoint along this journey that is meaningful. **I'm not just living my life aimlessly.** I'm not living my life to indulge my own desires -- and we'll come to that in just a minute here -- but I am living my life with purpose. I'm on this way of life.

So to walk by the Spirit means that we know the way.

Joh 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

So it is. But to walk by the Spirit means that we know the way, and that we are deliberately moving along that way, that path, to the intended destination -- **walking in the way of God, walking with God in this way that is described throughout the Scriptures.**

In **Deuteronomy 5:32-33** it says this:

Deu 5:32 So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left.

Keep that phrase in mind. We'll come back to that in the next point that we look at. But he says "do not turn aside to the right or to the left." :

Deu 5:33 Walk in obedience to all that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

Walk in this way.

Ephesians 5:1-2 says:

Eph 5:1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children

Eph 5:2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

- So to live by the Spirit is to be born again.
- To walk by the Spirit is to press forward in the way of the Lord.
- To be led by the Spirit is to be continually guided by the Spirit.

The Spirit actively directs God's children – primarily, now, being transformed by the renewing of our minds to be like Christ, but also in each and every situation we find ourselves in, the Spirit provides guidance. So it's not that we just have a way before us and we're not quite sure how to move forward.



- The Spirit initiates our journey and
- gives us our destination,
- shows us the path, and
- then guides us through every step of the journey.

He is leading us. He is asking us to follow Jesus who has gone before us, and we see His footsteps there.

So there's this comprehensive work of the Holy Spirit

- ★ to bring us into life,
- ★ to show us the way, and then
- ★ to lead us in the way --
- ★ to be continuously guiding us in this way.

And so here in **Isaiah 30:21** -- keep in mind that phrase from Deuteronomy -- but in **Isaiah 30:21** it says this:

Isa 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

This is the completeness of God's provision for us. He's not just saying, "Okay, I want you to be a Christian, and now go figure it out. I want you to be a Christian, and maybe you'll get some of this right and maybe you won't, because I've shown you three steps and you've got to figure out the tenth step." No. He says,

"I will guide you. I will be speaking to you.

You will hear a voice that says, 'This is the way. Walk in it.'"

- When you're tempted to go to the right or to the left, he will keep you in the straight path.
- When you are stumbling or you have encountered some kind of obstacle, he will clear the way.
- He will do what is necessary to lead and to guide you consistently."

And that's the example that we see in the life of Jesus. Jesus, in **John 5:19**, He said,

Joh 5:19 ..."Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

Is He trying to imply some kind of separation between the Father and the Son? No.

He's setting the example and giving us the direction to say: we need to be receiving guidance.

- "What should I do, Lord, in my family?
- What should I do, Lord, at work?
- What should I do as I'm driving my vehicle?
- What should I do, Lord, when I'm volunteering?
- What should I do, Father, in those things that seem spiritual or Christian or of the church, -- and those things that seem entirely unchristian or secular or ordinary things?"

In everything, that I would say,

"Lord God, I need your guidance. I need you to tell me what to do."

That's what Jesus is saying. He didn't say, "I got it. I know what to do." He knew from whatever age of understanding it may have been -- but clearly at age twelve He says to His parents, "Don't you know that I should be about my Father's business, that I should be doing what the Father has told me?" (**Luke 2:49 implied**) He knew what He was supposed to do.

But He says, "I don't do anything. I don't say anything." **John 12:49-50**, He says,

Joh 12:49 For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken.

Joh 12:50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

Can you think of that? Every time we open our mouth we would say, "I will speak only what the Father tells me to say." So there's going to be a little bit of a lag. You'll have to be patient, right? You have to hear it first, and then you have to speak it.

What do we do? We are quick to come up with whatever we want to say. Would we be able to say, "I say only what I hear the Father say"? That's what Jesus said. That's what He's saying it means to be led by the Spirit, to walk by the Spirit.

So the question is, when we live and walk and are led by the Spirit -- or actually not the question, but the statement -- what these verses that we read are telling us:

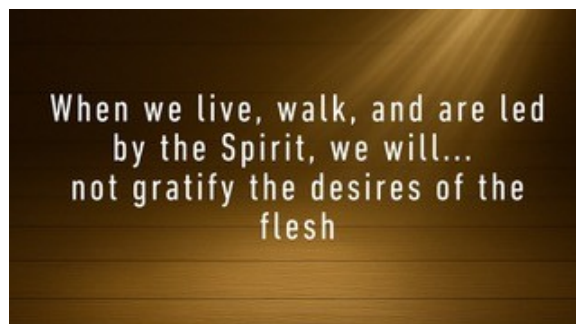
***When we live, when we walk, when we are led by the Spirit,
we will not gratify the desires of the flesh.***

Now, as soon as you read that phrase or hear that phrase, you may be reminded of **James 1:13-15**, which says:

Jas 1:13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

Jas 1:14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.

Jas 1:15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.



Our desires can lead us to self-indulgent sin.

So the question is: what is desire? What does it mean to say, "our desires"?

Well, our desires -- or **our desire** -- **is such a strong feeling of wanting something, of wishing for something, of now your mind being filled with that particular thing.**

You start to obsess over this. You say, "Oh, if only I had..." -- whatever it may be -- that sports car. "If only I had that great vacation that this YouTube influencer seems to be posting videos of. If only I had a million dollars in the bank, because the Powerball lottery is at a billion right now. If only I had..." and you start to desire, and you say, "This is what I want. If only I had this," and **you start to crave for something.**

Our desires can range widely. It can be normal, sort of necessary, physical desires for food and drink and shelter and so on. But we also, in our bodies, start to desire pleasure and pain.

By the way, we do sometimes desire pain because it stimulates the same place in our brain as pleasure does. And so even though -- which is why all these, whatever, ultra-marathoners submit themselves to all these incredible things -- because even as they are going through that pain, there's a pleasure. There's a desire fulfilled. There's a dopamine rush that's taking place. And they're like, "Oh, I want to do this."

- We could have intellectual desires -- curiosity and interest.
- We could have emotional desires -- for love and friendship and others to do what we want them to do, and so on.
- We could have material desires -- for success and significance and possessions and wealth, materialism, consumerism, all of these things that come in. And
- we could have spiritual desires -- we may even desire to have something that is truly of the Spirit, not of the flesh.

But these are all fundamental motivations. These **desires are fundamental longings in human beings that direct our attention and our actions toward gaining, toward attaining that desired outcome.** We are now then able to spend whatever we need, and to spend whatever time and resource and money and everything else to try to get that. We will pursue it. **Our desires become a powerful motivator that compels us in that direction.**

And the Bible, without knowing anything about dopamine -- or the authors at the time -- without knowing anything about neurobiological aspects and all of these things -- it was very clearly telling us: **desires, that's where it all starts.**

And so you need to be aware that if your desires are not submitted to the Lord, it will entice you. It will tempt you. It will lead you astray. So this is important. It is necessary.

And here's what modern neurobiological and neurological kind of research has determined: it's not just a successful fulfillment of a desire that is often accompanied with pleasurable feelings or with some sense of fulfillment and dopamine rush and everything else.

But sometimes, desiring what you want, itself, gives you this dopamine rush.

And so what happens? And by the way, you may have experienced this. **You desire something, and then you finally get it, and it's a letdown.** It doesn't seem to be as satisfying as you thought it would be, because the buildup has been so high. You've been hyped up about this. You're like, "Oh, if only I could do this. If only I could do this. All my friends told me that I should do this. I want to do this." And you get hyped up with it. You finally achieve it, and it doesn't seem to live up to any of the expectations.

But what happened -- **what science is telling us** -- is that **that process that you went through, where desire was heightened, that in itself, starts to create such an expectation, such a rush in you, that now you keep craving those kinds of things.** You don't just say, "Oh, the fulfillment of my desire was not as satisfying, let me go figure out, in the Lord, what my desire should be." **You just start craving something else. You just start directing your attention to something else.**

Because you're getting this reward in your head like rats in a lab, where our brains start to respond. And then we say, "Oh, I gotta go after that. If only I had this. **If only I had that. Then I'll be happy.**"

So. It's important for us to understand that it matters what kind of desires we have, what the source of those desires are -- that it desires -- what the source is, and how our desires are shaped, how they grow, and where and how we seek fulfillment of our desires.

So now, returning to **Galatians 5:17**, it says "the conflict between the Holy Spirit -- God -- and ourselves, our flesh. The conflict, that is the conflict between the desires of the Spirit and the desires of our flesh."

If we are living, walking, and being led by the Spirit -- if we are abiding in Christ, if Christ is in us, all around us -- and in Him we live and move and have our being -- there is no room for sinful, self-indulgent desire. There is opportunity only for godly, biblically-sound spiritual desire. And so...

What do we do?

How do we allow for these desires that are coming at us and are fostered by the world, the flesh, and the devil? How do we keep those desires from drowning us, from overwhelming us, from crowding out the things of God, and the desires of God?

Well, in the Bible there are multiple ways, multiple references to what it means to have our desires come into -- or align with -- the desires of God, with the heart of God. In **Psalm 37:4** -- by the way, I encourage you to read all of **Psalm 37**; it's a beautiful psalm, lots of different truths and insights in there -- but in **Psalm 37:4** it says this:

Psa 37:4 Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

That doesn't mean your desire for the sports car, or the this, or the that. What He's saying is -- what the Word is saying is -- **take delight in the Lord, and your desires will start to align with the desires of the heart of God, and He will give you those desires.** He will give you what is necessary for the path of life that you are in. He will give you what is necessary so that you can walk and make progress in this path that He has called you to.

Delight yourself in the Lord.

Take great joy in spending time with Him, in praying, in reading the Word, in fellowshiping with the saints, in saying to all that you would encounter, "The Lord is good to me," to testify of His goodness and grace. Delight in the Lord. Be filled with the awe and the joy of what the Lord would do for you and say for you, so that you will see that He starts to transform your heart and your desires.

In **Psalm 73:25-26** it says,

Psa 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

Psa 73:26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

When that's the way we think about life, when that's the way we think about God, when that's the way we think about ourselves, our desires start to change. Now it's like the Word says, "As the deer pants for the water." Now I just want to be with God. I want to be with the people of God. I want to do the things of God. I want to say, "Look, Lord God, show me. Show me what You want me to do. I want to be quick to obey." We desire to do what the Lord has intended for us as we delight ourselves in the Lord, as we desire the Lord.

And in **Psalm 145:19** He says,

Psa 145:19 He (the Lord) fulfills the desires of those who fear him (who are in awe of Him, who respect and honor Him, who obey His Word. “He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him); he hears their cry and saves them.

So, in all these different ways the Bible is showing us how we may desire the Lord, and the presence of the Lord, and the goodness of the Lord, in our lives.

And then when we get to **1 Corinthians 14:1**, it says,

1Co 14:1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

Now, there’s a whole lot more that can be said about the other things that follow once you are in the presence of the Lord, and how you would desire the things of the Lord, and then all the different ways to desiring to spend time, and to do things. But I want to just take a minute to make this comment about desiring -- **eagerly desiring -- the gifts of the Spirit.**

In a few weeks we’ll be coming to the fruit of the Spirit and considering what it means to not just know about the fruit, but eagerly desire for the fruit to be borne in our lives -- the fruit of the Spirit to be borne in our lives. But we also must eagerly desire -- even as much as there are all these other desires -- we would eagerly desire, each one of us, **we would desire for the gifts of the Spirit to be given to each one of us and to be operating, to be exercised in each one of us for the benefit of others.**

Remember what we studied as we studied **1 Corinthians 14** in that series: that **we are not desiring gifts so that we may boast of ourselves.** We’re not desiring gifts so that we can point to what we do. We are desiring gifts so that we may serve one another, so that we may serve one another humbly, **so that we may serve one another humbly in love.** That’s what we’ve been reading. That’s what we’ve been talking about.

In the coming weeks, as we get to **Galatians 5:22, and 25** that admonish us to bear the fruit of the Spirit and to stay in step with the Spirit, we will continue to expand on these themes of living and walking and being led by the Spirit.

This week, our point of application is to respond and apply the Word of God we have heard by living, walking, and being led by the Spirit in practical, publicly evident, God-glorifying ways.

And we’ve got to be asking the Lord,

“Lord, what do You want me to do?”

Again, as I said last week and in almost every week when I talk about these kinds of practical applications, it is going to look different for you than it will in your brother’s life, in your sister’s life, in somebody else’s life. The way that the Lord has to deal with each one of us is going to look different. The desires that I have in me, or the desires that tempt me to be straying away from the Lord, are different from the desires that are in your life and the desires that are tempting you to stray away from the paths of the Lord. So, you’ve got to ask the Lord and to say,



“Lord, what are the desires in me that need to be replaced -- that need to be replaced by Your desires? What are the things in me in which I am so aligned to the world and the pleasures of this world that I need to now replace them by aligning myself in You and being delighting -- or being filled -- with Your joy and Your presence and who You are, that as I align myself in that way, my desires are transformed, my mind is changed, I am renewed, and therefore my desires are granted because they are in line with God’s will, God’s plan?”

I’ve mentioned **Romans 8** before. I encourage you: read all the other Scriptures that bring these things up. But I want to, this morning, I want to go back to **Colossians 3:1-17**. Again, longer passage – it talks, it resonates very much with all these kinds of points that are made here in the book of Galatians about the things that are part of the sinful nature, or the earthly nature, the obvious sins, and it talks about what it means to be -- for our new life, which is now hidden with Christ -- our life is now hidden with Christ -- because we have been made new creatures in Him, and what it means to now not live for ourselves but to live for the Lord, putting on the new self, and so on. But in the middle of all of those truths that are expressed in **Colossians 3:1-17**, in **Colossians 3:2** it says this:

Col 3:2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Now, what does that mean?

Does that mean that you don’t take care of your taxes, and don’t care about the maintenance of your car, and don’t make sure the insurance is paid? No -- you’ve got to take care of all of those kinds of things. You’ve got to be responsible for all of that. So what does it mean that you would set your mind on the things above, not on earthly things?

There is a priority. There is an understanding. There is a realization of “what is my source, what is the means by which all those other things can be added unto me?”

- **Because when I seek first His kingdom,**
- when I seek first the King of Kings,
- when I seek first His goodness and His righteousness
- when I align myself with God’s desires
- **then all these other things will be added.**
- They will be taken care of.
- The Lord will give me wisdom.
- He will give me favor.
- He will give me the strength that I need.
- He will help me to navigate all those other earthly things that are necessary.

That’s the testimony that we heard even this morning:

- that when we are delighting ourselves in the Lord, oh, He takes care of all that is necessary.

So this morning, the question for us -- each one of us -- is not, “Well, I don’t know what to do.”

The question is: How quickly will you go to the Lord? And then say:

“Lord God, reveal my heart. Show me where my desires need to change, and bring me in line with Your heart, with Your desires. Let my life be transformed. Let my

mind be set on things above. Lord God, I am struggling with who I am, and what is happening around me, and to me, and I am constantly burdened by the things of this world. Let me, Lord, be set free.”

That’s what we’re living -- this whole mini-series is all about living free.

We would be set free so that we’re not consumed with the desires that would tempt us, that would entice us, that would lead us into sin, **but rather we are wholly and completely devoted to the Lord, with His desires being paramount, being primary in our lives, so that we may live for Him.**

- **That’s a life worth living.**
- **That’s a life that we should encourage one another to live.**
- **That’s a life that we want to pray for -- for each other --**
- **that we would live free in these ways.**

Heavenly Father, we thank You so much that, Lord, Your Word is just a wonderful reminder. It’s also a wonderful guide. But, Lord, we thank You that, Lord, Your Word gives us just enough for us to come and depend on You.

It’s not giving us, Lord -- as an instruction manual would -- with “the four steps that we now need to take -- that every single person will just do those four steps and all of a sudden everything will be okay.”

But rather, Your Word points us to You.

Your Word tells us what we need to consider.

Your Word shows us that, Lord, we need

to live by the Spirit,

to walk by the Spirit,

to be led by the Spirit.

But, Lord, each one of us have to come to You to make that happen.

We are entirely dependent on You to make this a reality in our lives.

And so we pray: this week, Lord, this coming month, in the rest of the year, in the rest of our days, Lord God, we will indeed, Lord, have our desires aligned with You, so that, Lord, You will grant all our desires. We pray that **in Jesus’ name. Amen.**