



Module Four



Module 4: Wanderlust, Desires, and Dreams

Learning Points:

- How to practically realize a non-specific desire for greatness
- The desires of the world's wisest man
- Integrate our desires with God's desires
- Banish common fears and fallacies
- Clarify desires to find the deepest ones
- The greatest regrets of the dying...and what we can learn from them
- St. Ignatius's instantly effective tool for finding your next step



Video 1

Learning Points:

- The desires of the world's wisest man
- My desires vs. God's desires: which is which?
- The mindset shift that'll allow you to be content right now

Welcome to Module four! Can you believe we're here already? So far in this course you've done a ton of background work. In module one you learned how the eternal is greater than the temporal, prioritizing, and what's in your control and what's not. Then in Module two you focused on how we see God and surrendering to him. In Module three you examined your relationship with yourself and how to heal untrue paradigms.

And now let's move on to one of my favorite parts: Wanderlust, desires, and dreams. When people ask me questions about discernment, there's often a stress and a struggle there that isn't necessary. I know you can way overthink decisions or stress out about them, and I'm looking forward to identifying and banishing those fears. The long and short of it is that God's will is not a trigonometry problem! If you're confused trying to figure out God's desires, your desires, and the interplay between them, you are in the exact right place in this module.

Avoiding Extremes

The first thing to do is to avoid extremes. That's easier said than done. On the one hand, American culture teaches you that everything is about getting what you want. Go for your dreams at all costs, quit when your marriage doesn't feel fulfilling, etc. There's an expectation that you should feel happy at every moment and even that you deserve to feel that way. Taking that to the extreme means that you end up navel-gazing, pleasure-seeking, and leaving the people who rely on you. The number one priority is you.

On the other end of the spectrum, I've seen people wrongfully begin to believe that God's will is for you to be miserable. You should be a martyr and deny everything you want if you want to get into Heaven. If you want to be holy, choose misery! In reality, nothing could be farther from the truth.

Virtue is the mean between two extremes, and the right answer about your desires is somewhere in the middle. You should choose the path you like the best, provided that it's morally good. If you marry someone you don't like spending time with, that's a huge mistake. I've said this earlier in the course, but God's will is not for you to wake up hating your life every day. And as I said before as well, suffering will find you in any path you commit to. There will be plenty of opportunities to offer up your sufferings even when you choose the path you most want.

Ultimately, if you don't feel happy every moment it doesn't mean you're missing the boat. The takeaway principle is that you should choose the path you like the best and not feel guilty or selfish. Once you've made the commitment, God's will is for you to follow through and stick with it when there's suffering. And he will give you the grace to do that.

The Desires of the World's Wisest Man

You may be thinking, "Okay, I'll avoid going to extremes about what I want, but how can I even know what I want?" Great question. I have some inspiration for you from the desire of the wisest man in the world.

Let's take it back a couple thousand years. In 1 Kings chapter 3, King Solomon had just inherited the throne of Israel from his father David. He had big shoes to fill. King David's reign was legendary. David also left a complex, competitive family in his wake that made the most sensational reality TV show cast look tame and agreeable. Solomon knew there would be many difficult decisions ahead in governing his family and his kingdom. In that time of novelty for Solomon, had a dream where God offered him anything he wanted. Here's the text:

Solomon said, *"Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. (Side note: didn't he hit the nail on the head there? I've rarely ever felt qualified to make a life choice in front of me. I do feel like a child who needs guidance!) Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So, give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"*

Then the Lord replied, *"The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in*

obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.”

This is exactly in keeping with the Navigation Model from Module one. Solomon asked for wisdom, the Eternal quality that became part of his character forever. Solomon focused on WHO rather than WHAT. This is the exact model to imitate. Your goal isn't just right discernment; it's a discerning heart possessing wisdom. It's seeking the ability to see the big picture in truth and clarity as God does. His goal wasn't to deny his desires, but rather to order them properly and lean on God for understanding.

What's beautiful too is that in the following verses, God promised wealth and honor and a long life exactly because Solomon didn't make them his highest priority. This is echoed in Matthew 6:33: *“But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.”* The more you pray for wisdom and desire it, the more your will is oriented toward God's will. And he does want a life of passion and joy for you! As we covered in Module two, right discernment begins with surrendering your desires and allowing God to re-orient your heart.

This brings us to the North Star Quote for today: Nothing and no one can make you truly happy except God. If you have God, you have everything already. My challenge for you is to pray for wisdom and to let the Creator of the universe be enough for you. After all, that's what Heaven is- being face to face with him.

Today's worksheet will help you identify what you want. As I said, that's not selfish! This worksheet is one of my favorites in the whole course because you're going to imagine that there are no limiting circumstances whatsoever. Get in touch with your very deepest desires. Those “high as the sky” dreams that you barely dare to even acknowledge. Don't hold back! Dig deeper and don't judge those dreams- they were put there for a reason. And then in tomorrow's video you'll begin unpacking what to do with those dreams.



Video 2

Learning points:

- Why the heart's desires are too little, not too much
- Identify temporary vs. lasting desires
- How to manifest an unspecified call to greatness
- "Don't deny: ally"

I have a question for you: Have you ever worried that you were too much? Have you ever worried that God is a little ashamed of your adventurous side, or that he doesn't like the version of you that's impulsive and fun, as much as he likes the quiet, demure self you are in church? Or does a part of you think that your dreams are too much- that if you were truly holy, you wouldn't want anything?

If so, let's make that fallacy walk the plank right now. Your heart could never be too much for God. Think about how Jesus's heart is depicted in art: it's literally on fire, burning! Jesus has the hungriest, most ambitious heart in the world. He's hungry and zealous for the love and salvation of every person ever created. Think about the prayer to the Holy Spirit that says, "come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of thy love."

My boy C.S. Lewis wrote something so good and true that it's the North Star Quote today: *"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."* — C.S. Lewis, [The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses](#)

Mary and Jesus are meek and humble of heart, but that doesn't mean emptied of desire. Emptying yourself of desires is nowhere in the Catholic faith. Your hungry heart is good. God doesn't want to kill your ambition; he wants that ambition to grow and be channeled for the glory of his Kingdom. Writing your desires on paper in yesterday's worksheet is an excellent way to begin understanding to what they point.

Sorting Through Layers

I'm an expert on one subject- myself- so here's a little of my experience of learning to direct my heart's desires to the deepest desires. As long as I can remember I've always, always believed that I was supposed to do something great with my life. I've always had a hungry heart that longed for deep connection and for meaningful work. I love having a mission and being a part of something bigger than myself.

Between ages fifteen and twenty-four I thought I was destined to be a Broadway actress. To "have my name in lights," as they say. To me, that was the greatest way I could think of to spend

my life. I was so happy when I went to the theater- it expanded my imagination, it inspired me, and it lifted me up. I remember seeing the musical *Company* on Broadway and being set on fire by the depth and beauty of the song "Being Alive." I wanted to make people happy, I wanted to inspire them, I wanted them to come to a show I was performing in and leave hopeful and inspired.

My ambition wasn't particularly holy. It was just the way I thought I was meant to contribute to the world at that point. You couldn't have told me anything to dissuade me from my desire at that point. I latched on to what I believed was the mission for my life and I went all out.

It was difficult and disappointing to discover at age twenty-four, after achieving success performing in two Broadway National Tours, that Broadway wasn't enough. Sure, I made people happy at each show, but what real change was I effecting in the world? Playing a dancing place setting and the Mayoress of Munchkinland weren't enough. It makes a great story, right? But my hungry heart was still hungry.

When I realized I had to change direction I was worried about wasting time. I'd devoted nine years of my life to my Broadway career. Was it all a waste? I was thinking in temporal terms, not eternal. Beneath my desire to be a Broadway star was a deeper layer of desire. At first it was extremely disorienting to discover that what I thought was the deepest layer, wasn't.

My deepest desires were for connection, for greatness, for making other people's lives better, for fulfilling a noble mission, and for empowering others. All of those desires remained, but how they would be lived would take a different form than I originally thought.

For what felt like eternity I had to hang in that middle place of uncertainty. I explored joining religious life before discovering my vocation as a wife and mother. Being a middle class American housewife sounded boring in my early twenties, but now I've lived enough to know that it's a far more exciting and fulfilling adventure than performing on stages. And my stage training isn't wasted; I find much greater fulfillment using them as a speaking minister. I don't have that question "is this all there is?" any more.

I'm not a finished product and I never will be. There are many seasons of life I've passed through, and some are easier than others. But those underlying, deep desires never change. And pursuing the deepest layer of desire rather than comfort will lead you to the most authentic life possible this side of Heaven.

Finding Your Call to Greatness

So, how to begin directing your hungry heart toward its call to greatness? The principles are not very different than what we've been doing in previous modules. I've divided them into four simple steps:

1. First, own your desires and don't judge them. Let them be what they are for now. That's what you did yesterday in your worksheet.

2. Second, pray the Prayer of Surrender and give your desires to God. Here's a little rhyme to help you remember what to do: Don't Deny: Ally. What that means is own your desires and tell God, like King Solomon did, that you want to align your will with his. Make God your ally in making decisions. It is such a precious gift to the Lord when we offer the deep desires of our hearts to him. God will channel your ambition and desire for something great in his plan.
3. Ask yourself how you can use your desires and talents a gift to others. Pope Francis wrote beautifully in *Christus Vivit*: (286) *"These questions should be centered less on ourselves and our own inclinations, but on others, so that our discernment leads us to see our life in relation to their lives. That is why I would remind you of the most important question of all. "So often in life, we waste time asking ourselves: 'Who am I?' You can keep asking, 'Who am I?' for the rest of your lives. But the real question is: 'For whom am I?'" Of course, you are for God. But he has decided that you should also be for others, and he has given you many qualities, inclinations, gifts and charisms that are not for you, but to share with those around you."*
4. Fourth, there's no need to freeze. Go ahead and live out your desires in the most authentic way you know how to right now. When I was pursuing theater, I wasn't doing anything wrong objectively. I was pursuing what I loved best, in the best way I knew. When you're seeking your deeper desires and you're simultaneously surrendering them to God, he'll show you if and when to pivot. For me, a simple and totally honest prayer is sometimes best. I'll say, "Lord, you gave me this passionate heart that desires greatness. What shall I do with it?"

And that's it for today. In today's worksheet you'll brainstorm how to direct your deepest desires to make a gift of yourself. This will be a good one. Enjoy, and see you back in the next video!



Video 3

Learning Points:

- Find your WHY
- Identify common but insufficient motivations for living your purpose
- St. Ignatius's one-minute "gut reaction" rule for finding deepest desires

Insufficient Motivations

Welcome back! The topic of the day is motivations. This is a big one, so let's dive in. Right off the bat let's set the bar for motivations high, where it should be. Love of God is the highest motivation for doing anything. If you're going to live out your call to be in heaven, no other motivation other than love of God will cut it in the long run.

St. Thomas Aquinas explains desire and motivation beautifully. He talks about how we each have an infinite desire. We have desires of means and desires of ends. Desires of means are finite because only so much of them is needed to achieve an end or goal. Desire for ends can be infinite however, because they could always be better. Any desire could be either type. I could have a finite desire for money if it is ordered toward the final end of meeting my temporal needs. Or, my goal could just be to amass as much wealth as possible, and then the desire for money would be infinite. I could desire health as a means to being able to serve God, or I could desire health as an end unto itself, and then it could be infinite. Anything other than God that we place as our end will not fulfill us. As St. Augustine says, "*Our hearts are restless until they rest in You, O Lord.*" This is because *only* God is actually infinite.

Think back to module one about the goal you set and the answer you're seeking.

Some potential other motivations for what you do are:

- ***False necessity:*** A feeling that you have to do this or that thing. In reality, there are actually very few things that you have to do. You have to pump blood and breathe, but you don't have to go to work. You don't even have to eat, up to a certain point. You don't have to take care of your kids or your house. No one is forcing you. The natural consequences if you don't do your duties are highly undesirable, but you still do get to choose.

When you stop saying "I have to do this or that thing," and instead say "I get to do this or that thing, and I'm going to do it for love of God," you have the power to transform your ordinary duties into beautiful acts for love of your deepest why. False necessity is often a cover-up for this motivation:

- ***Pleasing someone else.*** All my fellow people-pleasers, where you at?? If you know you have this tendency, ask yourself this revealing question: Who will be pleased by my doing

this or that thing? My parents? My friends? An idea I hold in my mind of the person I'm "supposed" to be? Or me- the real me?

You've only got one shot at life- this is it. Living up to someone else's idea of what you're supposed to do won't ultimately be a deep enough motivation.

Of course there are many times where I choose to do things I don't want to do, for the sake of my husband or family or someone else I love. Love requires sacrifice for others and that's a choice you make. However, there's a difference between being a people-pleaser and choosing to do things for the sake of love, and it's this: Choosing to sacrifice for another person means that you're living your own life and taking responsibility for that choice. It's proactive. Making your choices to please someone else leads to resentment because you're not living your own life. You're living reactively, essentially abdicating your rights and choosing to let someone else's will dominate yours.

- **Safety.** While the security of marriage and family life are wonderful, it would be wrong to get married just for the sake of safety and stability. Any perceived safety or comfort in this world is ultimately an illusion. In my life, marriage requires John and me to lay our lives down for one another. As we discussed in module three, marriage and motherhood don't fulfill me, nor are they meant to. They're meant to be my gift to others, not the other way around.
- **Escape.** Becoming a nun or a monk could be motivated by a desire to run away from the world. Getting married could be motivated by a desire to escape from loneliness. Both are reactive rather than proactive choices. You don't want to make your choices as a reaction to something.
- **Comfort.** Being comfortable is a natural desire. But staying in your comfort zone will stunt your growth in the long run.

This is a great moment to do an honest heart check and ask yourself, "Do I notice those motivations at work in my current habits and choices?" Pause this video to reflect, and write down on today's worksheet if you do.

Find Your WHY

Think for a moment about the last question you answered on yesterday's worksheet. That question is, what do you want your greatest contribution to humanity to be? What are you willing to sacrifice for it? Go back and look at what you wrote. Hopefully this gives you a window into your current motivations and a starting place for reflection.

I draw great comfort from Jeremiah 29:13 reads, "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*" When you pursue the Lord with all your heart, he has promised to make himself known to you and become your deepest motivation.

When I was discerning religious life and I came across a quote by Pedro Arrupe called "Fall in Love." I love it so much that it's today's North Star quote: "*Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your*

imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything."

Let your hungry heart be moved by God, and he will become your WHY.

Consolation and Desolation

Let's bring all this into a very practical realm. I have a quick and effective tool from St. Ignatius of Loyola for you called Consolation and Desolation. You can use it right now to help discern where God is moving in your soul. What I love about this is that you don't have to memorize the Summa Theologica to understand it; rather, you just tune into your gut instinct. Listen to the descriptions St. Ignatius wrote here:

SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION. *"Some interior movement in the soul is caused, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord; and when it can in consequence love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but in the Creator of them all. Likewise, when it sheds tears that move to love of its Lord, whether out of sorrow for one's sins, or for the Passion of Christ our Lord, or because of other things directly connected with His service and praise. Finally, I call consolation every increase of hope, faith and charity, and all interior joy which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, quieting it and giving it peace in its Creator and Lord."*

Reflect on where you experience consolation into your life. Where do you experience joy, a sense of being lifted upward, challenge, invitation, being part of something greater than yourself, a deep peace? The opposite is desolation:

SPIRITUAL DESOLATION. St. Ignatius describes desolation as, *"All the...darkness of soul, disturbance in it, movement to things low and earthly, the unquiet of different agitations and temptations, moving to want of confidence, without hope, without love, when one finds oneself all lazy, tepid, sad, and as if separated from his Creator and Lord."* It is the exact opposite of consolation.

Look at this description and reflect. Where do you feel a deep sense of disquiet, or separation from yourself, of shrinking, of turning inward, of being crushed, or of sadness?

As an example, you could apply consolation and desolation to discerning whether a relationship is heading toward marriage. Imagine yourself in ten years with that person. When you do, what's your immediate gut feeling? Joy, excitement, challenge, and peace? Or is it the opposite? You may want to pause and write down whatever comes to mind for your decision.

If I could go back and give myself life advice a decade ago, I would tell myself that my gut instinct is almost always right. Basically, quit overthinking. It sounds too simple in a way, right? Shouldn't everything you decide be rational? Yes, but your intuition is sometimes more rational than your

brain. It's easy to underestimate that part of yourself. But God put that part of you there for a reason. An opportunity that looks great on paper may still be an imprudent choice.

Any time I've made a decision from my gut instinct, I've never regretted it. It's a deeper part of me that knows what the right thing is. When I decided I wanted to marry my husband, I decided from a place of consolation. It just "felt right." I felt a sense of challenge, growth, joy and excitement with him that went beyond words. I was excited about the idea of being with him in ten, twenty, or thirty years, and raising a family together. In the opposite realm, before I met my husband, I dated men who it would have been imprudent of me to marry. My intuition, that small voice, told me that they weren't mature enough, had serious unresolved issues, or had self-destructive habits. And the number of times I rationalized their faults away, telling myself that I could live with those glaring issues- *oh girl!* Those relationships were never going to work.

As you take this tool of consolation and desolation into your decision-making, it's important to note that there is a natural rise and fall of phases of consolation and desolation in the spiritual life. Sometimes it's easy to feel connected to God for weeks at a time, easy to keep to healthy habits, and easy to offer God everything. But desolation will come too for all of us. It may also last days, or weeks. When in desolation you feel the weight of life, you feel dryness in prayer or maybe you feel like you're slogging uphill getting nowhere. IT'S NORMAL to go through those phases.

One of St. Ignatius's rules for applying consolation and desolation is: Don't make a change in times of desolation. Making a decision when your soul is in a sad or desperate state likely won't lead to the best decision. Don't give up your prayer life. Persist, and in fact St. Ignatius says to double down on prayer! Consolation will come back eventually. Hunker down and do what you know is right. Hold off on making any big decisions in those times.

Today's worksheet will make all this good stuff actionable and practical for your decision. Hop to it and I'll see you again soon.



Video 4 ***An Authentic Life***

Learning Points:

- Three common fallacies: the arrival fallacy, the time-wasting fallacy, and the originality fallacy
- Overcome fear of suffering
- How to avoid the most common deathbed regrets

Hello there! Today's video is about living an authentic life. We all want that, right? In case you haven't noticed, much of what I've been doing here in True North is addressing many untrue mentalities and beliefs surrounding discernment. You have to clear out the weeds before you plant seeds. Let's start by clearing making a few untrue beliefs walk the plank.

The Arrival Fallacy

I remember being in high school lying in bed at night, wanting to be in college. I couldn't wait to gain more independence from my parents, to go to a big city out of my hometown, and to pursue my passion of Musical Theater. I was sure I'd be happy then. And then I got to college. I used to lie in bed at night wishing I could have a Broadway career in New York. I wished with all my heart that I could just be done with school and get to where I could finally be happy, which was New York.

Then I got to New York, and I discovered it wasn't going to be easy. There were thousands of people at every audition. But I was determined, and I dug in. After I booked two Broadway tours, I still hadn't arrived. I remember wondering "Is this all there is? Why am I not happy?" I had been thinking all along that when I got to the next milestone, I would feel like I'd arrived. But I never, ever have. The truth is, none of us ever will. There's always another milestone to hit.

When I wanted so badly to find my vocation, I thought, "Once I find my vocation I'll be happy." But that was the beginning of another journey! I invite you instead to embrace the lifelong adventure and sign on for the reality that the road goes ever on and on. Don't put your happiness in a future event. Real life isn't elsewhere. It's right here where you're living it, no matter how much you may wish those circumstances to change. C.S. Lewis wrote, "*Never, in peace or war, commit your virtue or your happiness to the future.*"

The Time-Wasting Fallacy

Another fallacy that's easy to fall into is the worry that time will be "wasted" if you change direction. When I knew that theater life wasn't for me any more, I was so scared to go in a new direction because I'd spent nine years of my life investing in my theater career. If I stopped, I'd be a failure and all that time would be for nothing. I want to tell you, right here and now, that it's completely okay to change direction! No one who's worth their salt will think less of you for

doing it. Again, embrace the adventure and trust that God will use those talents, passions and skills you've invested in. If you think he can't use them, you don't know our God.

It's hard to enter into a season of uncertainty where you don't know "the plan." But remember our Navigation Model from Module one: Your identity is first and foremost a child of God. The eternal is greater than the temporal. Your primary and most important job isn't to have the perfect career trajectory; your most important job is to be the person God created you to be. And no job change can take away from that.

In my life, it's amazing to me how God has shown me that my time in theater wasn't wasted. I had to lay it aside in the early days of motherhood for a season, but really only for a short time. I've worked my theater talents into my life as a speaking minister now, and even doing little shows for my children to entertain them! I get to use my skills in a transformed way. God shows me constantly that he can use my passions, and even the waiting time too!

Today is never a waste even if you don't know your next step. This time, right now, has value. And that leads us to Today's North Star Quote: Don't keep going on a path you know is wrong, for the sake of looking to others like you know where you're going. Be unafraid to waste time for God.

The Originality Fallacy

Anyone who sets out to try something new will experience self-doubt. They'll likely feel like it's all been done before. It's so easy to write yourself off as unoriginal. You think, "There are tons of people out there doing what I want to do already and they have a huge following and are better at it...I might as well quit while I'm ahead."

Nothing could be farther from the truth. That's basically saying that God made a mistake when he created you, which you didn't. Learning begins with imitation. You should watch and learn from the people you admire. You should be bad at first. But that doesn't prove you're unoriginal; it just proves you're a beginner. As you improve, you should observe what works for other people and adapt it for yourself. You don't have to reinvent the wheel!

Creative entrepreneur Seth Godin says, "*When you ignore your calling, you are stealing from the world. You're stealing from the people who need to hear your message.*" The angel Gabriel said, "*With God ALL THINGS are possible.*" So quit discounting yourself. In fact, it's exactly like God to plant possibility where the world sees none. He used David, the youngest and smallest of his brothers, to kill Goliath. No one would have expected that.

Let it sink in for a moment that you are the one and only you there will ever be. No one has your DNA, fingerprints, looks, personality, talents, or mission. You have something unique to contribute, and that is going to be your most authentic life.

Fear of Suffering

The biggest thing that held me back from going all in on discovering God's will is fear of suffering. I've heard this from many, many other young people. What if I give God everything and he takes it away? After all, every time I go into a church, I see a huge depiction front and center of Jesus crucified!

Here are three reasons not to fear suffering:

1. First, because God wills your good. Hopefully you arrived at a deeper understanding of that in Module two.
2. Second, because suffering is a part of life. No matter how much you seek comfort and safety, it's going to happen to you.
3. Third, suffering becomes bearable and can even be a joy precisely when it's fueled by love. Here's a little illustration:

When we go out for dinner, my husband almost always lets me pick the place. He does that because he wants to see me happy more than he wants to have his preference of cuisine. So, any sacrifice of the type of food he'd like is more than made up for by seeing me pleased. He tells me it's not a sacrifice at all because he would genuinely rather see me happy. He wants that more than getting what he wants. And that is the mark of a good husband right there, but also it's the perfect lead-in to discussing authenticity.

This may sound extremely strange, but when Jesus was dying on the cross for us, in the most terrible pain, he was getting what he really wanted. He didn't like the suffering, but he wanted you. He was thinking about you and saying, "You're worth it." And by suffering, he was getting what he most wanted, which is opening the gates of Heaven and paving the way to be with you forever.

This is why women go through the most awful pain to bring children into the world! Because their children are worth it. So if your hunger and motivation are for God, then any suffering for his sake is worth it and may not even feel like suffering at all.

If you're like me, my fear of suffering is often this unnamed, looming, "worst case scenario" fear that almost never comes true. When I articulate my fear, I can then face it and it often shrinks down to a manageable size. I can look it in the eye and make a plan of what to do if that worst case happens. As my friend Erin Ingold says, "*Let fear come along for the ride, but don't let it sit in the driver's seat.*" The fear of suffering is usually worse than the suffering itself, and you get to decide not to let it rule you.

Authenticity

Now that we've cleared away those weeds, let's chat a little about authenticity. Bronnie Ware was a hospice nurse who sat by the bedsides of hundreds of dying people. She helped them process their lives in their final days. In her blog and book *Five Regrets of the Dying*, Bronnie shares these gems of wisdom about authenticity:

1. The number one regret of the dying was, “I wish I’d had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.” Bronnie says, *“This was the most common regret of all. When people realize that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled. Most people had not honored even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made.”*
2. Another of the most common was, “I wish that I had let myself be happier.” She says, *“This is a surprisingly common one. Many did not realize until the end that happiness is a choice. They had stayed stuck in old patterns and habits. The so-called ‘comfort’ of familiarity overflowed into their emotions, as well as their physical lives. Fear of change had them pretending to others, and to themselves, that they were content, when deep within, they longed to laugh properly and have silliness in their life again. When you are on your deathbed, what others think of you is a long way from your mind. How wonderful to be able to let go and smile again, long before you are dying. Life is a choice. It is YOUR life. Choose consciously, choose wisely, choose honestly. Choose happiness.”*
<https://bronnieware.com/blog/regrets-of-the-dying/>

It’s incredible to find synchronicity between writers you admire. St. Ignatius recommended imagining yourself on your deathbed and asking yourself, “What would I regret not doing?”

I love Fr. Mike Schmitz’s words on this: “Action purifies desire.” You will unquestionably make mistakes along the way if you do the scary things that are calling to you. But you will not regret trying, and you will learn irreplaceable lessons along the way.

The word “courage” comes from the French “coeur,” meaning “heart.” To live wholeheartedly means that you’ll have to walk away from jobs, relationships, and situations that appear on paper to be perfect, but that the deeper part of you knows are not authentic. It also means that you’ll have to take risks that may not work out. But again, you won’t regret them.

It’s difficult to know which desires are truly lasting and authentic. Of course you don’t want to jump at every single opportunity because your time is limited. Here’s a quick strategy I use when I’m discerning whether to purchase something I want, (and it can translate into discerning other areas as well.) If I’m standing in front of the item in the store but I’m not sure I really would use it or need it, I hold off and I don’t buy it. I tell myself that if I still want it in a month, I’ll buy it. Ninety-five percent of the time, I’ve forgotten about the thing that seemed so important a month ago. As a side bonus, it also helps my savings and credit score a lot!

You can use a similar tool to discern your lasting desires. Think about the things that keep coming back. The things people often ask your advice about. The desires that you dream about doing over and over again. If that desire doesn’t go away, chances are you’re supposed to pursue it.

And maybe when you pursue it, you’ll discover that the idea was better than the reality, but that’s still good because now you have data to make an informed decision. That thing won’t be

your dream any more and that'll clear the path for new dreams. Likely you don't have to sell the farm and quit your day job either. You can just dip a toe in the water and start moving and see how you like it.

A record of my lasting desires is my journal. I've kept a journal for years and I date each entry. As I look back to five or ten years ago, I can see the desires and dreams I had back then that I still have now. They've morphed and grown as I grow, but there's a continuity there that helps me see myself more clearly.

It's already been said, but it's worth repeating that you don't discern evil choices. As we discuss living authenticity, remember that your most authentic life is going to be your most moral life. This is because your true self, as we established in Module three, is your most moral self.

There may be ideas or projects knocking on your heart as you hear this. Things you realize that you would regret not doing. Dive wholeheartedly into your worksheet today and make a plan to get started. And that is a wrap for Module four! Wowza! Congratulations on making it this far. Let's do a quick review:

1. In video one we discussed praying for wisdom like King Solomon. We discussed aligning our wills to God's will for us.
2. In video two we discussed how our hungry hearts are probably actually not hungry enough! Jesus has the ultimate zealous heart, and our desires to do something great with our lives are good. We began brainstorming how our desires and talents can be directed as a gift to others.
3. In video three we covered motivations. We looked at insufficient motivations such as false necessity, pleasing others, escape, and comfort. Then we used St. Ignatius's tool of consolation and desolation to tap into our deeper motivations and find where God is working in them.
4. In this fourth video we discussed authenticity. We busted three fallacies that we fall into: time-wasting fallacy, originality fallacy, and the arrival fallacy. We discussed how to banish fear of suffering, and also how to avoid some of the most common regrets people have on their deathbed.