

## Direct Your Future with Desire

People are born dreamers. There is no limit to the possibilities in a child's mind. As the years go by, and life takes its toll on you, it is easy to lay aside extravagant dreams as impractical or even impossible. Don't do it. I am a published author with dyslexia. I make my living as a professional speaker despite spending years in speech therapy for a lisp. I was a slow, stiff, white kid from the suburbs whose love for football carried me to a twelve year NFL career including six Pro Bowl and three Super Bowl appearances. My dreams carried me beyond where others expected me to go, and continue to direct my day to day decision making.

A desire is a dream, passion, or mission. It has great power if you let it guide your decisions, goal setting, and way of thinking. In football there is a saying that "It doesn't matter how big or fast or strong you are, if you don't know where you're going you can't get there." If you have desires in life as targets to aim for, then you will get closer and closer to where you want to go. If you don't have a desire to pursue you will go through life without purpose, wandering aimlessly, unable to achieve regardless of your talent.

Every year NFL scouts are sent out to evaluate talent across the country. They go to every college with a football program and look at game film to find players they think can help their team win. They watch practices and go to games, all the while projecting how these young players could fit into their pro team's future. When they find a college player they are considering drafting scouts fly to the player's school and run a series of tests on them including intelligence, speed, agility, vertical jump, and strength tests. They also interview the player, his coaches, and other people in the player's life. They are very thorough with their inquiries and testing. I was picked in the last round of the draft and one of the Bronco scouts even interviewed my girlfriend. Imagine how hard they look at projected first round picks. Pro teams know without a doubt that a player they draft can help their team get better. The question is will he?

When I played, one hundred and ten players would start camp with the Broncos each year, and in the end forty nine would make the team. One of the main determining factors as to whether a player would make the team was that player's level of desire. They all had the talent to make it; the scouts had made sure of that, but every year qualified NFL players walked away from camp. No one made them leave. They just gave up under the pressure and left. We called them runners. There are cut-down days in the NFL when rosters are paired down by releasing groups of players. Ten or more are fired at once but each year if you watch the papers you will see a single player released sometime during camp. These are the runners. They say they saw the writing on the wall, they didn't see eye to eye with the coach, or they weren't getting a fair chance. Whatever excuse they use, the fact is that they quit and left because they gave up. Their dream was to go to an NFL training camp and see what happens, not to be the best player that ever played the game. They sold themselves short before camp even started, and as soon as things got tough or looked bad they ran.

Too often people settle for average dreams. They sell themselves short believing that they don't have the talent, or don't deserve to be successful. Even when others question you or things go wrong, if you have an extravagant passion you can overcome those obstacles. When the Broncos were scouting me they sent two different scouts to the University of Minnesota to check me out. One came back reporting that I was too slow to play linebacker in the NFL, but maybe I could play lineman. The other scout said that I was too small to be a defensive lineman, but maybe I could be made into a linebacker. I was drafted as the

310<sup>th</sup> pick of the draft. That was ten guys away from the last pick. My desire was not only to play in the NFL but to be the best player that ever played the game. It didn't matter what the scouts thought, or where I was picked, I was focused on my dream to be great. I would out work, out study, and out hit higher round picks who the scouts had loved, on my way to a long NFL career where I played both linebacker and defensive line at the highest level.

All three of my children have trained in Karate. One of the fun things that they each accomplished was breaking a board with a punch. The trick to accomplishing that feat is to strike through it by aiming beyond the board. By aiming beyond the board the Karate student doesn't slow down or stop on contact. They follow through and break the board without pain. If they focused on the board instead of beyond it, they would feel the contact and stop, hurting themselves and failing to break the board. This is the same principal that is accomplished with extravagant desires. If you are focused beyond the obstacles in your way, you will break through them with minimal pain and continue on to your dream. Our training camp runners were focused on getting to a training camp instead of focusing on achieving greatness beyond it. They hurt with each day's doubts and fears until they convinced themselves that they didn't belong.

Success is overcoming obstacles on the way to your dreams. Each of us should have dreams that focus our day to day decision making in many areas in our lives. My old desire of being the best football that ever played the game allowed me to have a long and successful NFL career. I retired from football sixteen years ago and have other desires now that guide my decision making. As a husband and father, I will give unconditional, uncompromising, sacrificial love to my family. As an author and speaker, I will inspire long term positive change in teams and individuals. As a Christian, everything I say and do will reflect God's love. These are extravagant, long term, and general. These desires define who I want to be. By setting goals in my desires direction, and by making decisions based on the knowledge that these are what is important to me, I will continue to move closer and closer to my target desires.

Make sure your desires use strong language. I have seen corporate mission statements or desires that were full of qualifying words. "We will be known as the company that strives to eventually be close to the top of our field." This is not extravagant and will not allow you to power through obstacles. Your desire needs to be strong and concise. It should also be short enough that it is easily remembered when you are making decisions. I use ten words or less as a guide.

It takes introspection, honesty, and time to develop desires. Many people think they want something, but if they were honest with themselves they would find that it really isn't important to them. I have also found that there are things in my life that are important to me and I wasn't acting on them. Once I went through the process of writing them out as desires and committed to them, I have found it much easier to act in a way that is consistent with my desires.

People set desires in many areas of their lives. Professional, relational, financial, health, educational, fitness, charitable, spiritual, travel, and any other area of personal accomplishment are possible to achieve if you identify them as important and pursue them with passion.

Brainstorming is a great way to remind yourself of what those dreams are. Take out a piece of paper and write down any wish that comes to your mind. This is for your eyes only so be extravagant. There is no commitment to these ideas yet. Once you get a list, take the time to sit down and think about what your

life will be like when you accomplish these things. Is it worth it to you to commit to pursuing these passions relentlessly because that is what it will take to accomplish an extravagant desire? You will find that you aren't willing to commit to many of the ideas on your list but there should be some that ring true with who you want to be. These are the dreams that make a big smile come to your face when you think about what your life will be like when you've accomplished them.

Write the final few desires down in ten words or less so you can remember them when you are making decisions. These are what you want to describe your life. Honestly evaluate where you are now in relation to these desires and set short term, reasonable, specific goals in the direction of your desires. Now you are on your way. Expect obstacles, but since you have identified desires that are extravagant, and have committed to pursuing them at all costs, you will shrug those obstacles off as you focus beyond the immediate to your vision of success.

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