

Heart's desire

By [Beth Merrill Neel](#)

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For months, at the urging of my spiritual director, I have been praying to find my heart's desire, to find that thing (not a person—I have those) that inspires me, energizes me; my flow. But you pray for something long enough, and the prayer goes unanswered, and eventually you stop praying for the thing.

The last few months have found me in the doldrums. (Excellent word, by the way, with possible origin in the words *dull* and *tantrum*.) Yes, you could say I've been having a dull tantrum for a season, the result of an unusually warm summer, a not-fun spring at church, and continued physical pain as my hip heals more slowly than I would like. Plus sometimes I'm just a big baby.

And then I got an idea. I would write a book, a novel, about a church, because I am the First Pastor Ever to think about writing a novel about a church. I thought about it all spring, and I thought about during our first week of vacation, and I thought about it some more the week our kid was at sleep-away camp. And then I went away for a week, to the lovely shores of Lake Tahoe with a plum assignment of leading worship once a day.

In my free time, I powered up the ol' laptop and started writing.

I am having a ball.

Today when I met with my spiritual director I told her I had started writing my book and she commented that light was bouncing all around me. She noted my energy and joy. And then she said, "I think you found your heart's desire." I will note that God took God's sweet time answering my prayer, but a thousand years are but a day, etc. etc.

Here's the thing: writing this puppy is cathartic, and in 20 years of ministry I have met amazing people who have done strange and wonderful things that inspire the characters. There's swearing and liturgy. Twists and turns. Recipes. Lists. Thwarted romance. A Yorkie Poo. It is so me.

Back in high school, I aspired to be a writer, but college and theatee and then seminary and ministry got in the way. To be truthful, my daughter's own love of writing has inspired me, and maybe some day we will write a book together. (I can just hear her saying, in about eight years, "As if.")

This book will never see binding or a spine or a listing on Amazon. I'm pretty clear about that. It might show up on this blog. It might be a Christmas present to my friends and family. But maybe one's heart's desire doesn't have to have a purpose or action plan. Maybe one's heart's desire doesn't have to lead to success, fame, or fortune. Maybe one's heart's desire is simply the thing that leads out of dull tantrums to joy.

That's all for now—chapter 19 awaits.

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