

**Ken Clarke,
BC pastor's CREST Testimonial:**

In his book, *The Journey of Desire*, John Eldredge writes: *There is a secret set within each of our hearts. It often goes unnoticed, we rarely can put words to it, and yet it guides us throughout the days of our lives. It is the desire for life as it was meant to be.*

As I have had opportunity to reflect on my own journey
There has been within my heart an emptiness -- something is missing
I have a nagging sense there is more to lay hold of
Perhaps just beyond my grasp but there to be taken

Ben Curtis and John Eldredge in their book *The Sacred Romance*, write about this. *Some years into our spiritual journey, after the waves of anticipation that mark the beginning of any pilgrimage have begun to ebb into life's middle years of service and busyness, a voice speaks to us in the midst of all we are doing. There is something missing in all of this, it suggests. There is something more.*

Shortly after coming to Christ I was encouraged to memorize Proverbs 3:5-6
Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and he will direct your paths.

I was young and spiritually naïve but I made a covenant with God
I'm going to trust God with all my heart and see if He would lead my life

Because of this covenant
I have lived with a curious kind of inner satisfaction
But also experienced an inner tension -- sensing there is something more

Early in my Christian experience the value of serving Christ
And His church was instilled in me
I came under the leadership and mentorship of a godly man
Who challenged me to discover a 'life verse'

In my reading I came upon 1 Corinthians 15:58 and immediately the text resonated deep within. ***Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.***

I have always sought to honor Christ by serving Him
I have followed a clear calling to serve in the local church
There have been times along the journey when I felt so alive
I would describe my life as being on a divine adventure

But, as Eldredge observes: *For many of us, the waves of first love ebbed away in the whirlwind of Christian service and activity, and we began to lose heart*

I began to feel more like a hired hand than a beloved child

Burying myself in ministry activity without ever asking, where is all this taking me?
Somewhere along the journey, I felt as if I lost my identity

I knew who Pastor Ken was and what he did but I had lost touch with who Ken is
And a deeper sense of what God wants to do with my life

Gerald May writes in *The Awakened Heart*: *There is a desire within each of us, in the deep centre of ourselves that we call our heart. We were born with it, it is never completely satisfied, and it never dies. We are often unaware of it, but it is always awake...Our true identity, our reason for being, is found in this desire.*

As I entered into the CREST experience, I found myself asking

What do you do in those quiet moments

When the truth comes crashing home—it's all a façade

I'm just going thru the motions, doing the drill; just doing laps in the game of life?

What do you do with that voice that cries from within

There is something missing; there is something more'?

This is the journey I have been on

Wanting to honour the covenant relationship I have with God

Wanting to be faithful to call of God in my life

Looking for a lost identity and for clarity

As I seek to discover what it is God has for me in the remaining days of my life

And desperately wanting to experience the fullness of life Christ offers.

I began this journey through CREST with a sense of both anticipation and skepticism

I knew I was outside my comfort zone

But in a strange way, it felt like a safe environment to explore

And coming with a searching heart had almost created a pre-determination

To embrace the journey and see what happens

My hope was to find greater clarity about myself

Who I am and how I want to invest my life with the time that remains

Let share briefly--my key points of learning -- I'll serve them up to you in five words

As I seek to put the pieces of the puzzle together

I have come to realize above all else, that my **heart** is the key

In my reading of God's Word, time and again this word 'heart' jumped out at me

It was as if the Spirit was saying – pay attention to your heart

In looking back on my journal entries, I noted how often I wrote about my heart

Jesus said we are to...**love the Lord your God with all your heart and will all your soul and with all your strength.** (Mark 12:30)

He called this the greatest of all the commandments

And I note that the heart comes first

Jesus also said, **where your treasure is there your heart will be also.** (Matthew 6:21)

One verse in particular spoke powerfully to me, 2 Chronicles 16:9

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

God is saying, listen to your heart -- and in the words of Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Eldredge writes: *What more can be said, what greater case could be made than this: to find God, you must look with all your heart. To remain present to God, you must remain present to your heart. To hear his voice, you must listen with your heart. To love him, you must love with all your heart. You cannot be the person God meant you to be, and you cannot live the life he meant you to live, unless you live from the heart.*

A second key word that captures what I'm learning these days

Is the word **refresh** -- I sense God is taking me into a season of refreshment

I feel like I'm coming alive again; the joy factor is increasing

I'm working through some things, and enjoying life and ministry more these days

David reminds me in the 23rd Psalm, **He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.** (Psalm 23:2-3)

Another word, that I noted frequently my synthesis is the word **alignment**

To have a clear purpose and values and see the alignment of gifts and strengths

To see how it all fits together as been a key element of both learning

And in coming alive again

I sense I'm where God wants me to be and that He is at work in my life

Preparing me for that which still lies ahead

Out of all of this, I am also sensing a desire to me more **intentional**

More aware of what is happening in my life and ministry / how I am responding

The final word that captures what is coming about

As result of my journey over the past 15 months -- is the word **confidence**

In many ways, people would look at me and see an outward confidence

And I am confident in what I do

But I have struggled internally with my own sense of self-worth

I often feel like I'm on the edge of my own strength and ability

A self-identity exercise I have been working on through Jim's coaching / with his input

As been a source of blessing – a huge factor in providing this confidence

I'm learning again that my confidence is not in self

But in the God I love and serve -- who is at work in my life

As I think about how God has prepared me

I can see through my story how He has led and been at work in my life all along

This gives me a greater sense of confidence that He will continue to do so

... being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in me will complete it. (Philippians 1:6)

As I seek to discern what God has for me to do -- I keep hearing within, 'stay faithful'

To His calling in my life – to proclaim His Word, to pastor His people

And to be a leader in the church and community

I believe the message 'finish well' is one God has given me to share

I also have a growing sense that Hospice, Palliative, End of Life Care

Is an area in which God wants to use me to bring a Christian influence

Into the lives of people who are nearing the end of their journey

In all that I have embraced with CREST

And with what I am sensing as a leading from God

I have tried to wrestle with my commitments

Not wanting to just put down words that might look good on paper

But seeking to identify those commitments with a level of integrity

This is an honest reflection both of what I will do and believe I need to do.

1 – Janice and I will be driving to Ontario at the end of July

And on that journey we will be discussing my experience at CREST

I'll be seeking her input and affirmation as we go forward together

2- I will be sharing a message on August 17th at Valley entitled 'A Journey of the Heart'.

I will be sharing some of my experience and what I'm learning

With those who have supported me / allowed me to enrol in CREST

3- I am committed to stay faithful and remain where I am

Unless / until I get a clear sense of leading from God to move

4 – I will review / update key elements of this synthesis / and my commitments

To further clarify who I am -- what I am learning

And where I sense God is leading -- by January / then again next June

5 – I will read *The Advantage* and the *Power of Habit* this summer

As far as core disciplines to help me stay on track
I will continue to journal and be in the Word of God

As previously committed I will add an exercise component (once head-ache free)

I am setting up for myself a regular alignment check and a check of my 'gauges'
Spiritual, mental, emotional / physical -- I can work this into my current rhythms

I will check my monitors and then interact with my prayer partner
And Janice and possibly one of our Elders, as a means of being accountable

Frederick Buechner observes...**If we keep our hearts and minds open as well as our ears, if we listen with patience and hope, if we remember at all deeply and honestly, then I think we come to recognize, beyond all doubt, that, however faintly we may hear him, (God) is indeed speaking to us, and that, however little we may understand of it, his word to each of us in both recoverable and precious beyond telling.**

I believe God has spoken; He has prompted and led during
This 15 month journey through CREST

Jesus said... ***The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*** (John 10:10)

God's offer is life in all its fullness but right now that life is opposed
There is an enemy with a different agenda
One who wants to steal away the fullness of life Christ promised
One who assaults the very heart of those who follow Christ
Who knows what my life could be and trembles

So I must stay on the journey; on the path God has laid out for me
And along the way I must guard my heart and contend for it
There is a battle but...

What then shall I say to these things? If God is for me, who can be against me?

Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (Romans 8:31, 35)

I know as deeply held conviction the answer is a resounding 'NO'!

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)