

Our Gift to You . . .



"When it comes to getting a good night's sleep, no mattress on the market can beat a mind at peace." —Anonymous

"Remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches." —Psalm 63:6

Slip into sweet dreams on the wings of these restful reflections.

A perfect way to end a busy day, this collection of short selections from Dallas Seminary chancellor Chuck Swindoll's sermons and best-selling books will bring:

- ✓ hope to your heart,
- ✓ serenity to your soul, and
- ✓ peace to your mind as you slumber in the loving arms of your heavenly Father.

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DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

DR. MARK L. BAILEY, PRESIDENT

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VERITAS

Equipping Christians to live by truth—veritas—from God.

Dallas Theological Seminary's mission is to prepare men and women for ministry as godly servant-leaders in the body of Christ worldwide. Part of such preparation is an exposure to various Christian leaders and their ministries in an attempt to glean from their fervor for the Lord. In October 2000, we were thrilled to have Dr. John Piper in a campus chapel to share a stirring message on the importance of "Desiring God." His pertinent words serve as a reminder to believers to live by God's truth and passionately long for His supremacy, for the joy of all people.



Dr. John Piper is director of Desiring God Ministries and has been the pastor of the Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis,

Minnesota, for the past 20 years. He did doctoral work in New Testament Studies at the University of Munich in Munich, West Germany, from 1971 to 1974. He is the author of several books, including *The Misery of Job and the Mercy of God*, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*, *The Pleasures of God*, and *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*. He and his wife, Noelle, have four sons, one daughter, and one grandchild.

Desiring God Guilt-Free Hedonism by Delighting in Your Creator

Dr. John Piper

One of the clearest and most central truths in the Bible is that God is infinitely glorious, infinitely beautiful, and infinitely majestic. And it follows that His supreme goal in all that He has done, is doing, and will do in creation and redemptive history is to uphold, display, and magnify that glory.

According to 1 Corinthians 10:31, you are to do everything to the glory of God—so that God looks glorious in your life, so that He looks beautiful in your life, so that He looks satisfying in your life. That is your reason for ministry and your reason for being.

So here is my life thesis: If God is infinitely glorious, and if God does everything that He does to uphold, display, and magnify that glory, and therefore calls you to join Him in that great enterprise of God-centeredness,

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then this is true: *God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in Him.*

Which means that you should make it your lifelong vocation to maximize your

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satisfaction in God above *all* things. That is your job . . . above all things, to maximize your joy in God.

Based on Philippians 1, I want to argue exegetically for that thesis. Verses 19 and 20 say, in the Greek, “For I know that this to me will fall out unto salvation,” or deliverance, “through your prayer and supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to the eager expectation and hope of me,” according to my eager expectation and hope, “that in nothing I might be ashamed, but in everything with boldness,” or openness or courage, “as always, also now . . .” Here is the key phrase, “Christ might be magnified in my body whether through life, whether through death.”¹

This is Paul’s high expectation and grand hope for his life; this is why he lives.

And this is the message I preached in 1980 when I candidated at Bethlehem Baptist Church, to say that this is what I’m about. “I want,” Paul says, “more than anything that Christ will be shown to be great. I want Him to be shown to be magnificent, glorious, beautiful, and

all satisfying in my life and in my death through my body.”

Now, how does that happen? How do you live and die in a way that makes Christ look great (which is the only reason we exist)?

That’s given in verse 21: “For to me to live . . .” Now correlate the word “live” there with the word “life” in verse 20. Paul says that he wants Christ to be seen as magnificent in his life, and now he says, “for to me to live is Christ,” and then he says, “and to die.” Correlate the word “die” with the word “death” in verse 21, “and to die is gain.”

“I want Christ to be seen as magnificent in my body when I die.” How does that happen? “For to me . . . to die is gain.” What is that saying?

Christ will be seen as glorious and magnificent and all satisfying even when you lose your family, your health, your job, and your future on earth.

Why will that show Christ to be gained?

Verse 23 says, “Much more exceedingly better.” When he dies, Paul says, he’s going to go to be with Christ, which is infinitely better than everything he loses here. Now, correlate these two great realities: the goal for Christ to be magnified in your body and the “heart” state of dying, which says that Christ is all. Christ is better to me than my wife, than my grandchildren, than ministry, than that longed-for retirement, than money. Whatever it is, if you can lose it at the moment of your last gasp and see the King, you

glorify Him. You get the gain, He gets the glory.

An Error Ruining the Church

Does that feel like a contradiction?

Everywhere I go, people say that's a contradiction, that to pursue your gain is unbiblical. I just read it again from a notable American theologian whose name, if I said it, everybody in this room would know. He says, "The

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fundamental motive of Christian obedience is always the heart of gratitude and never the hope of gain."

Wrong!

And it's ruining the church. It hangs in the air of America like a gas, that to pursue your own joy contaminates virtue and ruins worship. And I'm here to say the exact opposite is the case. To the degree that you undertake to deny this pursuit of gain in Christ, you will

ruin worship, destroy your church, and contaminate virtue.

Now, to defend that, I have several points. What I want to do, first of all, is let Jonathan Edwards have a say here. This is a quote from *Miscellanies*:

So God glorifies Himself toward the creature in two ways. One, by appearing to their understanding. Two, in communicating Self to

their hearts and in their rejoicing and delighting in and enjoying the manifestations which He makes in Himself; God is glorified not only by His glory being seen but also by its being rejoiced in. When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it. His glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart. God made the world that He might communicate and the creature receive His glory and that it might be received both by the mind and heart. He that testifies his idea of God's glory doesn't glorify God so much as he that testifies also his approbation of it and his delight in it.²

In other words, you give God *half* the glory He is due when you only understand and preach Him accurately. The other half comes from the exuberance of your soul's delight in His glory. Therefore, preaching is expository exaltation; you exalt over a text. That's what preaching is.

God Commands You to Pursue Joy

So here are my points. **First, this truth—the truth that you are to pursue your joy to the end that God would be glorified by your satisfaction in Him—is taught by the fact that we are commanded to pursue our joy.** Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the LORD." Psalm 100:2 says, "Worship the LORD with gladness." This is not an option; this is a command.

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Second, the Bible “threatens” us if we will not be happy in God.

Deuteronomy 28:47–48 says, “Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart . . . therefore you will serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you.” *If you do not serve the Lord your God with gladness, you will serve your enemies.* “He threatens terrible things,” theologian Jeremy Taylor said, “if we will not be happy in Him.”

Third, the nature of faith. What

is faith? Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him.” And people deny that that’s the nature of faith. Faith is coming to God for reward. You cannot please God if you don’t come to Him for reward. *He is the reward.*

I can defend that from the book of Hebrews because the new covenant coming to fulfillment in this book describes, “I will walk among you,” “I will be your God,” “You will be My people.” The essence of this reward is God with us. At His right hand are pleasures forevermore. The nature of faith is also found in John 6:35, where Jesus says, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger and he who believes in Me will never thirst.” What is *believing* in that verse? It is coming to Jesus so as to be satisfied with Him, or in the full

picture of John’s theology, so as to be satisfied with all that God the Father is for us in Jesus. So my third point is that the nature of faith commands that we pursue our joy in God as a means of honoring God.

Fourth, the nature of evil. What is evil? Jeremiah 2:12–13 says, “Be appalled, O heavens . . .” Be shocked. God is calling the whole universe to be appalled, “. . . for My people have committed two evils:

They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters. They have hewn for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

If you do not serve the Lord your God with gladness, you will serve your enemies.

What Is Worship?

Jesus holds out a fountain of living water. He means for you to come and fall on your face and drink from Him, and spend

eternity drinking, so that when you look up every now and then, you’ll say “Ahhh.” *That is worship.*

Worship is not bringing “buckets” of your labor into the church service on Sunday morning and dumping them into the fountain, as so many pastors say you should. “The reason we don’t have life in the service is because you don’t come here to give. That’s the problem. You just come here to get.”

Wrong! That is *not* the problem.

The problem is that people have gotten up and watched television and stuffed their faces with the white bread of secularism so they’re not hungry for God when they come, and

you have to spend the first half of the sermon with an emetic. It's called conviction: trying to get them to vomit out the world so that they're hungry for God. Because when people are hungry for God, and they drink in God, taste God, and are satisfied with God, He is mightily glorified.

Fifth, the nature of discipleship. Consider Matthew 13:44: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who found a treasure hidden in a field and covers it over . . .," now I'm going to leave out a phrase, "and he goes and he sells everything he has and buys that field." What phrase did I leave out? "From joy." From *joy* he goes and sells everything that he has.

So here's a call to discipleship: "Leave everything for the sake of the kingdom." What is your motive? "I want joy, God. You've made me to long for joy. Thank You for not telling me that I have to deny that in order to get to You, but rather presenting the kingdom—the King, Jesus—to me so that from joy in Him I can count everything as rubbish." That's the way Paul paraphrases it in Philippians 3, "for the surpassing value of knowing Jesus, my Lord."

Christian Hedonism— No Apologies!

Sixth, what about self-denial? You might be saying, "This is really

weird. This sounds like hedonism." It is pure, unadulterated Christian hedonism. No apologies.

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I define hedonism as a life devoted to the pursuit of pleasure—in God. What about self-denial? Mark 8:35 says, "Whoever would be My disciple and deny himself, come after Me. For he who seeks to save his life will lose it." What does that mean? The way Jesus says this in John 12:25 makes His meaning a little clearer: "He who loves his life loses it. But he who hates his life in this world guards it for eternity."

What is Jesus arguing in these two texts? He's arguing, "You want your life? You want it forever? You want maximum joy? Then lay down your life." That is all my "hedonism" means because Jesus is appealing to that. Hate your life, students. Go to the hard places. Lay down your life for your congregation so that you will keep it forever.

Seventh, where does love come from? It says in 1 Corinthians 13:5, "Love seeks not its own." I think it means, "Love seeks not its own immediate gratification, its own material pleasure, its own earthly enhancement, but, oh, love seeks its own eternal joy, big time." And I'll give you a couple of texts that'll prove it.

In Acts 20:35, Paul is saying farewell to the Ephesian elders, "It is necessary as you serve the weak to remember the words of the Lord, how

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He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

When I was doing my doctoral dissertation on the motivation of love, I fell out of love with scholarship and fell in love with the Bible. Isn't that strange? God is so good. He opened the Word to simply say, "If it says in the Word, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' don't you let any New Testament scholar or any ethicist with lots of degrees after his name tell you that to do something for the blessedness there is in it contaminates the love and turns it into selfishness and not love." And here is the key word: *remember*. Paul is saying, "When you serve—toiling with your own hands—the weak, remember the words of the Lord, how He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Paul says, "Keep the blessedness in your mind" as you go to make a hospital visit, wishing you were at home playing with your kids, and it's late at night and you're tired and you need rest. You're wondering what should motivate you, and if you try to deny your desire for joy, you *will* contaminate virtue. But Jesus says, as Paul says, "Remember the blessedness you will receive."

And so you walk into that hospital room, and you take that dear woman by the hand who has just had cardiac arrest, and you look into her

eyes, and she says, "Oh, Pastor, you didn't need to come. You're so busy." Now if I said, "I know I didn't have to, and I didn't want to, but it's my duty, and I'm here," she would be hurt. But if I said, "I know, and it's late, but you know, as I was driving here I was praying, and the Lord reminded me of the blessing I'm going to get here. And as I look into your eyes, there's no place I'd rather be than here giving you a word of encouragement and receiving back echoes of appreciation, love, and faith from you." And when you tell her, "I'm here because I delight to be here," she feels honored. Love is not contaminated by the pursuit of joy in love and, ultimately, in God above.

I will end with this final word. The goal of all things is to glorify God, that is, to show

Him to be magnificent in your life whether by death or by life. And the way to do that is to be maximally satisfied in Him and to pursue that satisfaction in everything you do.

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¹ Scriptural quotations are the author's own translation.

² From *Miscellanies* by Jonathan Edwards (1731-1740)

What Life Is All About

John Piper's stirring call to *desire God* reminded me once again how important, and how inseparable are the pursuit of God and our satisfaction in Him.

As Dr. Piper said, God's Truth in His Word aims us ultimately toward an encounter with the Giver of that Truth *Himself*.

That is the whole point!

God created you—and then went to greater lengths to redeem you—for the purpose of having a relationship with you. What a thought! Relating to you gives *God* great joy!

And it is unscriptural—indeed, undermining of our faith—if we fail to see that relating to God should give *you* great joy.

Do you have that joy today?

I hope so.

Unashamed, passionate, settling, established, ongoing, unbroken satisfaction and happiness in simply knowing Him—and translating that into the joy of knowing and serving others who are “in on” this great family relationship with God and each other. That's what it's all about.

By the way, when you start to see things this way, your faith will become infectious to others who may wonder, “What's gotten into this person?” And they'll learn it's not “what” but “Who.”

God's Truth in His inerrant Word and God's desire to relate to humankind are what life is all about. And . . . they're what Dallas Theological Seminary is all about.

That's why your financial gifts and prayers mean so much.

When you pray or give, you help equip an army of skilled leaders to remind the church and announce to the world these great and exhilarating realities.

So thank you for helping spread the desire for God, and the joy of knowing Him!



DR. MARK L. BAILEY
President
Dallas Theological
Seminary

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Bailey".