

(Biographies) Jonathan Edwards

by John Piper

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Jonathan Edwards' theology and worldview in shaping a radical singleness of vision and purpose, and encourages pastors to apply Edwards' example in their own ministry.

Duration: 1:21:45

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Peter 3:18

Topics: "Spiritual Discipline", "Biblical Study"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of journaling and note-taking as a means to sustain a sequence of thought and deepen one's understanding of God's word. He draws inspiration from the example of Jonathan Edwards and his 30 volumes of journals. The speaker also highlights the need to be single-minded in our occupation with spiritual things and to prioritize studying the Bible. He encourages believers to redeem their time and live with all their might, using the power of grace to overcome distractions and pursue a life of purpose and productivity.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at www.desiringgod.org My topic is the pastor as theologian, reflections on the life and ministry of Jonathan Edwards. Multnomah Press recently reissued a paraphrase, if you can believe it, of *Religious Affections*.

They shouldn't have done it, and I don't recommend the book. I recommend the one that's downstairs that I'll show you in a minute. But they did get a good man to write the introduction for it, Charles Colson.

Here's what he writes. The Western Church, much of it drifting, enculturated and infected with cheap grace, desperately needs to hear Jonathan Edwards' challenge. It is my belief that the prayers and work of those who love and obey Christ in our world may yet prevail as they keep the message of such a man as Jonathan Edwards.

And I assume you're among the number who love and obey Christ and who long for your prayers to prevail in your churches and in your communities. And ultimately in this world, Lord willing, by the year 2000. And I believe that Colson is right that we very much need not only the message, that was his point, mine is the life and example of Jonathan Edwards as a theologian pastor.

Now, most of us do not know Jonathan Edwards. We might know that he was born in 1703 and that he went to Yale and became a pastor in Massachusetts for 23 years and then became a missionary to Indians for the last seven years or so of his life. And then a few months as president of Princeton before he died at the age of 54.

But we don't know this man. We do not know him. We all remember our high school lit classes or our American history classes in ninth grade.

I got my son's ninth grade history book the other day and looked up Edwards. He's not in the he's not in there, period. So I looked up awakening.

There's one paragraph on the Great Awakening in this textbook, and they define it as that heightening of religious fervor that split churches. That was the Great Awakening in my son's textbook. It's a great tragedy.

He's at a Christian school, too, so that they might straighten it out in the classroom. Here's what we read. If we get an excerpt, namely, sinners in the hands of an angry God.

And this paragraph, perhaps. The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loads, some insect over the fire abhors you and is dreadfully provoked. His wrath towards you burned like fire.

He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire. He is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight. You are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes than the most hateful, venomous serpent is in ours.

And so these young 10th graders are given the impression that Edwards was a gloomy, sullen, morose, perhaps pathological misanthrope. Who fell into grotesque religious speech the way some people fall into obscenity. Never are they asked the question.

Why did he write like that? What was he trying to do? What would you do in his place if you were trying to exposit Revelation 19:15? The Lord God Almighty will tread the wine press of his wrath with great fury. What language would you find 10th grader? They don't ask those questions. Nor do we know that he knew his heaven better than he knew his hell and that his vision of glory is more appealing than his vision of judgment is repulsive.

We don't know that he was the greatest thinker that this nation has ever produced. We don't know that most or rather, most of us don't know that not only was he God's kindling for the great awakening, but he was its most penetrating critic. We don't know that Edwards was driven by a great longing to see the missionary task of the church completed.

And that his influence on the modern missionary movement is incalculable. Do any of us imagine what an incredible thing it is for this man who was a rural pastor. Northampton was nothing.

A rural pastor for 23 years. There were 600 people in the church. It was the only church in the town.

A missionary to Indians for seven years. Being asked to leave his church. Who reared 11 faithful children.

Who worked without help of electric light or word processors or quick correspondence or even sufficient paper. Sometimes he would turn the paper sideways, having written on it one way and write on it the other

way, right over the words. He was so short of paper in Stockbridge.

Who lived only until he was 54 years old. Who had only 300 books in his library when he died. That this man was the greatest or was involved in producing the greatest spiritual awakening of modern times.

Wrote theological books that are still being read and ministering to this day. And did more for the modern missionary movement than anyone in his generation. Let me illustrate that last point.

He wrote the biography of David Brainerd. Young missionary who died in his house. Was in love with his daughter, Jerusha.

She died of the same disease just a few months later. A very sweet and tragic story. The list of missionaries who testified to the power of Brainerd's life that Edwards took time to write.

Is beyond our knowing. Let me list a few noteworthy. Francis Asbury, Thomas Coke, William Carey, Henry Martin, Robert Morrison, Samuel Mills, Frederick Schwartz.

Robert McShane, David Livingston, Andrew Murray. Some of the big names who say that Edwards' work on Brainerd made a difference in their lives. Jim Elliott, we all know.

Died at the hands of the Alcas. Eight days, I believe, before he died. Wrote confession of pride.

Suggested by David Brainerd's diary yesterday. Must become an hourly thing with me. So for 250 years, Edwards has been fueling the missionary movement with his biography of David Brainerd.

But who knows the man who wrote this book? Why he wrote this book, Mark Noel, who teaches history down at Wheaton and loves Edwards. Wrote these words about the tragedy of the disappearance of Jonathan Edwards from the scene. He said since Edwards, American evangelicals have not thought about life from the ground up as Christians because their entire culture has ceased to do so.

Edwards piety continued on in the revivalist tradition. His theology continued on in academic Calvinism, the Princeton School, for example. But there were no successors to his God entranced worldview or his profoundly theological philosophy.

The disappearance of Edwards perspective in American Christianity has been a tragedy. And frankly, I wish I could recreate for you, every one of you, what it has meant for me over the years to find my way little by little into the God entranced worldview of Jonathan Edwards. It began when I was in seminary.

I first read, an unlikely place to begin, I think, the essay on the Trinity. And then I read, second, the freedom of the will. I read, third, the dissertation concerning the end for which God created the world.

I read, fourth, on a swing in the backyard of my wife's growing up home on a farm in Georgia in 1971, the nature of true virtue. And when I was done, I wrote a poem about the woods. And then I read in Germany the religious affections.

One of my seminary professors, Lewis Meads, you may have read some of his ethical works, said to us in a class on ethics, find one great and godly giant in the Christian church and make him your lifelong companion. I remember that just as clear as yesterday. And it rung true to me to have a companion of this stature.

Edwards has been mine. And it's hard to overestimate what he has meant to me theologically and personally in my vision of God and my love for Christ. Now, this was true when I was a teacher at Bethel for six years because Edwards posed and wrestled with so many weighty questions that I posed and my students posed and that were essential.

I've been a pastor now for almost eight years, and I can testify that the vision of Jonathan Edwards has made all the difference in the world. I'm deeply convinced that what our people need is God. God, they need a big vision of a holy, glorious, majestic, sovereign, just, wise and gracious God.

They need to see the whole panorama of his excellencies. They need to see a God entranced man on Sunday morning and at the Deacon meeting on Tuesday night. Robert Murray McChane, you all know, said, What my people need is my personal holiness.

But is not personal holiness simply a God besotted life? A God besotted life and our people need God entranced preaching. God himself needs to be the subject of all our preaching in his majesty and holiness and greatness and glory and beauty and grace. When I say that, I don't mean that we shouldn't preach on nitty gritty things like parenthood and divorce and AIDS, gluttony, television, sex.

We should take these up, but we should take them all the way up into the throne room of God and lay them bare to the roots of their Godwardness or their Godlessness. What our people need is not nice little moral or psychological pep talks about how to get along in the world. Most of our people have no one.

Have no one who is laboring to placard God before their eyes. And so many of them are starved and they don't know why they're starved. They don't know what to ask for.

They interview pastors for their churches and they don't know what questions to ask even. They don't know what's missing in their souls by and large. They need the infinite God, the God and trans vision of Jonathan Edwards.

About five years ago, during a January prayer week, I resolved to experiment. I wanted to preach a sermon on holiness of God. And so I said, I'm going to preach on holiness of God the first Sunday of prayer week.

And I'm going to talk about pursuing that holiness the second week. And in the first week, I'm not going to say one sentence of application. And I took the text year that King Uzziah died.

I saw the Lord high and lifted up seated upon a throne. And above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings with two.

They flew with two. They covered their eyes with two. They covered their feet.

And one said to the other, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the threshold shook.

And the temple was full of smoke. And I just took that one phrase at a time. And did my best with Edwardsian imagery to unfold it.

And sat down. Now, I didn't realize it at the time. But one of the young families in our church had discovered that week that a child had been sexually abused in their family.

By a close relative. An incredibly traumatic experience. They were there that Sunday.

Listening. And I can imagine the advisors of preachers today saying to John Piper. Piper, can't you see that there are hurting people in front of you? Can't you come down out of your ivory tower of theology and get practical? Don't you realize what kind of people come to your church every Sunday? Get practical, guy.

Some weeks later, as the story emerged, the husband of that family came up to me and said. After a Sunday service, John, these have been the hardest months of our lives. And you know what has gotten me through? The vision of the greatness of God's holiness that you gave me the first Sunday of prayer week.

Nobody can tell me. I mean, it's just like water off a duck's back when I read stuff on the pastoral ministry. Nobody can tell me that theology and a vision of God is not practical.

The same thing could be said about missions mobilization. We don't have time for this. We'll say much more about it, I'm sure, as the days go on.

But in a word, the young people of my church are not fired up about denominations. They're not fired up about agencies. They get fired up about the vision of a global God with an unstoppable sovereign purpose to reach the hidden peoples of this world.

They get excited about God in missions. And if you want your church to come alive about missions, preach God and his global purposes and his sovereign will to achieve those purposes. So I'm persuaded that the linchpin in the life of the church in pastoral care and in missions mobilization is a God entranced worldview.

And namely, the vision of Jonathan Edwards in particular. It is not the prerogative or the product of an academic theologian. It is the heartbeat of a pastoral ministry.

I want us to let Edwards this morning encourage us with his example. And I hope that you will all purchase some books. And I'm going to push him real hard because I ask him to bring a lot of them.

Get this biography, Ian Murray. In fact, get everything down there by Ian Murray. I've only read three books by Murray, *The Puritan Hope* and *The Forgotten Spurgeon*.

All three of them, dynamite. Get this book and read about Edwards. If you don't want to buy these, if these are too expensive, mine were blue.

They're brown now. Most of the stuff that's in print is in here. There are few little things that aren't.

These books, if you can stand the small print in the double column, are worth their weight in gold. And then if you want to just take one home, start with the *religious affections*. This paperback.

This is not abridged and not paraphrased. And that's the way you ought to read it. Now, I don't want you to misunderstand me as I get into Edwards as an example.

There's not a person in this room who will be a Jonathan Edwards. He is in a class by himself. To think any thought like that will result in deep discouragement, as I have experienced.

To think any thought of being like another person in this regard is deadly. Write over every book you read, over every seminar you attend, over every conference you go to. First Corinthians 15:10.

By the grace of God, I am what I am. I wish I could have the strategic genius of a Ralph Winner. I've almost shed tears that I can't do what that man is involved in doing.

I wish I could have the theological precision and articulateness of J.I. Packer. I wish I could have the intellectual power of a Jonathan Edwards. That's not going to happen.

And I just go back to the Bible and say, The eye of the body is not the ear, and the foot is not the hand. And by the grace of God, I will do what I can do. So please, do not think I am saying, let's all be little Edwardses.

Rather, let's just listen. Let's learn from this man's example what fits. And if it doesn't fit, then don't wear it.

Four exhortations I would like to give you from the life and ministry of this man in his theological labor. His theological labor. Admonition number one.

Be radically single-minded in your occupation with spiritual things. Be radically single-minded in your occupation with spiritual things. Edwards wrote 70 resolutions as a young Yale student.

Let me read you two of them. Number 44. These are all in the double volume work here, by the way.

Number 44. Resolved that no other end but religion. Now, let me stop here.

Packer, last night, nailed religion. Religion in the 18th century, in the mouth of Jonathan Edwards, meant Christianity. Okay? You must be distinguishing and discerning at this point.

It did not have the negative connotations in the mouth of Edwards that it does in our language today. Resolved that no other end but religion shall have any influence at all in any of my actions, and that no action shall be in the least circumstance any otherwise than the religious end will carry it. Number 61.

Resolved that I will not give way to that listlessness, which I find unbends and relaxes my mind from being fully and fixedly set on religion, whatever excuse I may have for it, which I think is simply an application of 2 Timothy 2:4. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.

And I fear that what happens for many pastors is this. The ministry, after a few years, does not flourish with the dream that we had hoped. There isn't as much power.

There isn't as much joy. And in order to survive emotionally, they start to give way to amusements and diversions and hobbies. The ministry becomes a 40-hour-a-week job that you do like any other, and then the evenings and days off, you fill them up with harmless and enjoyable diversions.

And the whole feel changes. The radical urgency is gone. It fades.

The wartime mentality shifts to a peacetime mentality. The lifestyle starts to grow cushy. The all-consuming singleness of vision evaporates.

I just see it happening. And let me say again, what our people need is a God-besotted man. Now, it just comes to my mind here.

Many of you don't work in a church like this, in an urban setting surrounded by thousands of unbelievers. You're in a small town where people are pretty much lined up in their Catholic, Lutheran, Pentecostal, and Baptist church. That's where Edwards was, too.

The people were all lined up in his town. And so don't think you cannot be a radical, global, God-besotted, visionary pastor in a rural setting where people are already lined up in their churches. Read Edwards.

Our people need a God-besotted man. Even if they criticize us that we're not available on Saturday night for their potlucks, because we must be with God on Saturday night, they will value it on Sunday morning. How many people in your churches do you know that are laboring to know God, striving earnestly to study and pray to enlarge their vision of God? And we would all answer, precious few, probably.

And my question to you then is, what will become of the churches if the pastors, who are charged with knowing and unfolding the whole counsel of God, shift into neutral, quit reading, studying, writing, and take on more hobbies and more television? What becomes of the church when they're not doing it? And if the pastors don't do it? Edwards exhorts us to a single-minded occupation with God, in season and out of season. He calls this effort, by the way, to know God, divinity, not theology. I am not aware of one time in the works of Edwards where he uses the word theology.

I mistitled my talk in that regard. It should be divinity. Let me read you what the subject of divinity is.

Here's what Edwards writes. God himself, the eternal three in one, is the chief object of this science. Next, Jesus Christ as the God-man and mediator and the glorious work of redemption, the most glorious work that ever was wrought.

Then, the great things of the heavenly world, the glorious and eternal inheritance purchased by Christ and promised in the gospel. The work of the Holy Spirit of God on the hearts of men, our duty to God and the way in which we ourselves may become like God himself in our measure. All these are the objects of this science.

If the single-minded preoccupation with these things is left to academic theologians in the colleges and seminaries, while pastors all become technicians, managers, and organizers, there may be temporary superficial success while America gets excited about one program after the other, but in the long run, the gains will prove shallow and weak, especially in the day of trial. So, the first exhortation from Edwards is, be radically single-minded in your commitment to know God, in your commitment to spiritual things. Admonition number two, labor earnestly to know the scriptures.

Labor earnestly to know the scriptures. We're moving from the general, as you can see, to the specific. Don't get your vision of God from J.I. Packer or Jonathan Edwards.

Edwards sets a good example for us here. Serino Dwight, his first biographer, says that he came to his first pastorate, Northampton, quote, he had studied theology not chiefly in systems or commentaries, but in the Bible and in the character and mutual relations of God and his creatures from which all its principles are derived. He once preached a sermon entitled, The Importance and Advantage of a Thorough Knowledge of Divine Truth, which is short compared to the titles of his books.

In it, he said this, Be assiduous. I love that word. Be assiduous in reading the Holy Scriptures.

This is the fountain whence all knowledge of divinity must be derived. Therefore, let not this treasure lie by you neglected. And he set an amazing example for us in this regard in studying the Bible itself.

I was at Yale in October. You know that most of his unpublished works are at the Beinecke Library. And with my heart pounding and my hands sweating, I was taken to the cellar of the Beinecke Library and into this small room with two microscopes and special lighting and shoeboxes full of these sermons and books that are in manuscript form.

And I held in my hand, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, on about a dozen little brown pieces of paper with his almost illegible small writing. But the book that impressed me most was a book about that thick, about that tall and that wide. It was an interleaved Bible.

He had taken a Bible, cut every page out himself, taken a blank piece of paper, inserted it between every page and drawn a line down the middle of that blank page on both sides and sewn it himself back together. Or maybe Sarah helped him. I don't know.

But it was all done at home so that he could take notes on every passage of the Bible. And I just flipped through it, checking books like 2 Chronicles 1 to 9 and so on. And he had notes everywhere about the Bible.

In fact, if you take this second volume here, there are about 180 double column pages called Notes on the Bible that just go from one passage after the other as he wrote down his thoughts about the Bible. I think there's reason to believe that Edwards really did follow through on his 28th resolution as a student. Here's what he said at Yale, 1723.

He was 20 years old. Resolved to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly and frequently as that I may find and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same. I find myself greatly rebuked and motivated by that sentence.

2 Peter 3, 18 says grow. It's a command. Grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So Edwards resolved to study the Bible so steadily, constantly and frequently that he could see growth. Now, how many of us, let me ask you very honestly, how many of us have a plan for growing in our grasp of the whole terrain of the Bible? Don't most of us use the Bible to get sermons, devotions for meetings and personal devotional help? But how many of us labor over the Scriptures, apart from those preparations, in order that we might plainly perceive that we are growing and today understand something about this chapter that we did not understand yesterday or the day before that. And tomorrow we will make another step forward in understanding Bible verses that we did not understand yesterday so that on through our life we may plainly perceive that we grow in the same.

How many of us do that? I find myself rebuked in the pastoral ministry. I fear that many of us think growth, but you know what we do when we think growth? I've got to read more books. Read more books.

And so we read more paperbacks and more theology books and we buy more books. Thinking that we will grow thereby mainly. Edward's exhortation is this ought not to be so.

That is, we ought not to neglect the plan of faithful daily biblical study while tricking ourselves into thinking that we are growing by reading what other people have said about the Bible rather than studying it for ourselves. Study the Bible so steadily. Note these words.

He never threw a word away. So steadily, constantly and frequently that you may clearly perceive. Don't guess at it.

Don't say, I assume I've grown over the last eight years of my ministry. Do you see growth? Do you know things about God today that you didn't know five years ago? Is the vision clearer? That's admonition number two. Number three.

Edwards exhorts us to redeem the time and to do what our hand finds to do with all our might. Now I'm moving towards methodology. Edwards exhorts us to redeem the time and to do what our hand finds to do with all our might.

So you can see the progress. The first one was labor and be single-minded in your occupation with spiritual things and God. The second was do it in the Bible mainly.

And the third now is what kind of lifestyle and study procedures go in making this happen. Resolution number six, when he was a boy or a young man, Resolved to live with all my might while I do live. I remember reading that in seminary and just the fire went through my heart.

That just nobody seemed to be saying that to me. Don't coast. Get rid of the television.

Work. Come on. Life is short.

Do something. There's just so few people that seem to say that to us. Resolution number five was similar.

Resolved never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I can. Now he was a great believer in doing what you could do in the time you have to do it rather than putting things off to a more convenient time. Universal human disease.

Procrastination. Resolution number 11, I believe is the key to his theological accomplishments. Resolved.

When I think of any theorem in divinity to be solved immediately to do what I can towards solving it. If circumstances do not hinder. How many times in your devotional life have you bumped up against a problem in a psalm? Psalms, they're supposed to be prayerful and I just see so many problems to be solved in the psalms.

How many times do you get up off your knees, open your concordance, take a piece of paper or a journal and start writing possible solutions? We can develop terrible habits of neglect if we don't do that. We get used to unsolved problems and have no inclination or to just turn it over to the packers of the world. He's the problem solver and we'll read his book.

What a terrible habit for a pastor to form as a shepherd of a people. Edwards was not a passive reader. He read with a view to solving problems.

Most of us are cursed with a penchant toward passive reading. I just praise God for Dan Fuller at Fuller Seminary who taught me the difference between passive and active reading. We read the way we watch TV.

We don't ask questions when we read. We don't ask why this sentence follows this sentence. Of course, you never finish the book, right? And you're told by 10,000 teachers finish 20 books in this semester.

I rarely assign more than one book in a semester when I taught. I saw these teachers assigning stacks of books and I went up to the teacher and said, what are you doing? Do you realize what you're training those students to do? They didn't believe in it. I said, just take one great book and show them why one sentence begins with therefore and another begins with but and another begins with although.

If they don't learn to read like that, they'll be superficial their whole life long. We don't ferret out the order of thought. We don't ponder over the meaning.

We just hurry, get this through because I can tell the pastor at the next meeting, I've read Packer's latest work or Colson's latest work or and we feel like we've accomplished something because we can say we've read a book. We haven't read a book at all. We've looked at black marks on a page and pronounced syllables.

If we see a problem and we are habituated to leave it to the experts and not tackle a solution for ourselves, our people will know what sort we are. They'll know. That's why there's so many weak churches.

People don't respect their pastors. He's not thinker. It's so thin what we're getting on Sunday morning.

He hasn't spent any hours over that. I can think of five problems with what he just said and he doesn't pose any of them. But Edwards calls us to be active in our minds when we read.

A pastor will not be able to feed a flock with rich and challenging insight into God's Word unless he becomes a disciplined thinker. Almost none of us does this by nature. We have to train ourselves to do it.

You know the best way to train yourself to become a reflective reader of the Bible and other books? Read with your pencil in your hand. This was Edwards' key. He read with pen in hand.

From the time he was little, he did this. Let me read you Dwight's description. Even while a boy, he began to study with his pen in his hand, not for the purpose of copying off the thoughts of others, but for the purpose of writing down and preserving the thoughts suggested to his own mind.

This most useful practice he steadily pursued in all his studies through life. His pen appears to have been always in his hand. From this practice, he derived the very great advantages of thinking continually during each period of study, of thinking accurately, of thinking connectedly, of thinking habitually at all times, of pursuing each given subject of thought as far as he was able, of preserving his best thoughts, associations, and images, and then arranging them under their proper heads, ready for subsequent use, of regularly strengthening the faculty of thinking and reasoning by constant and powerful exercise, and above all, of gradually molding himself into a thinking being.

All that comes from a pen. Now, I will never be and never have been an Edwards, but I owe all of the clarity that I ever had to 30 volumes of journals began when I was a sophomore in college. Write, brothers, every day.

Write, write, write in your journals, in your notes, on envelopes. I was walking by the Twin Towers over here, coming over here the other day, thinking about Edwards and trying to sustain a sequence of thought about a psychological problem one of my parishioners had. It takes eight minutes to walk to this church.

I'm going to sustain this thought for eight minutes. I will pose a question and try to answer it. If a problem is posed by the answer, I will then try to answer that.

And if a problem is posed by that, I will divide it into two and try to answer those. I couldn't do it. I saw something on the ground and started thinking about that wrapper.

I saw this new building over here and started thinking about the challenge there. I couldn't do it. I can't.

Only a few geniuses in the world can sustain a sequence of thought longer than a minute without a pencil. With a pen, I can sustain it for an hour because it's there on paper. If the phone rings, I can go back to it.

The answer that I wrote and the question that I had and the three questions that came from that answer are there on the paper. I can work. You can begin to go deeper and deeper.

You can pick it up tomorrow where you left off without a pen. I don't know how anybody is anything but superficial. Dwight tells us how he used his days as he rode on horseback.

It took you a long time in those days to get where you were going. He would begin to think. Now, he had trained himself in this way to a conclusion.

And then he would take a piece of paper. You've heard these stories, I think maybe. He would pick a spot on his coat and identify the spot and the paper with the conclusion and the sequence of thought and pin it on his coat.

Because he couldn't write on horseback very easily. Pin it on his coat. And he'd have these things when he'd come home over his coat.

And he would go to his study and take them off one at a time. This one is for... And he would write down. That's what he meant by saving or redeeming the time.

He studied 13 hours a day sometimes because he had decided not to visit his people regularly but to go when he was called for. He did sometimes preach in neighborhood groups. And he catechized the children.

And he invited people to come to his home. And my guess is that we ought not to follow him in this regard as though we could. It probably was not good for him either.

He was not an ideal pastor. And that's one of the reasons I said at the beginning don't even worry about trying to copy Edwards in every regard. He may have been wrong in this regard.

But those of us who love what he wrote will not fault him too deeply. He rose early even for those non-electrical days when people went to bed early. In fact, he was probably totally serious when he wrote in 1728, I think Christ has recommended rising early in the morning by his rising from the grave very early.

Now, it's not easy to know what his family life looked like under these circumstances. Dwight tells us in the evening, this is a quote, he usually allowed himself a season of relaxation in the midst of his family. But in another place, Edwards himself says, he was 31 years old when he wrote this, I judge that it is best when I am in a good frame for divine contemplation or engaged in reading the scriptures or any study of divine subjects that ordinarily I will not be interrupted by going to dinner but will forego my dinner rather than be broke off.

In other words, he so valued the frame that he could get in at a particular time when things were really flowing that he wouldn't go to dinner. I think it would be fair to say that the reason he was able to rear 11 believing children is because he had an uncommon, and I recommend to you Marriage to a Difficult Man by Elizabeth Dodds, which is about Sarah Edwards. She was an uncommon woman.

Pace yourself, brothers, according to the kind of woman you have. Study to know her. With regard to his eating habits, not only was he willing to skip dinner for the sake of study, if things were really flowing, here's what he says, Dwight tells us, he carefully observed the effects of the different sorts of food and selected those which best suited his constitution and rendered him most fit for mental labor.

He had set this pattern early on. Listen to what he wrote in his diary as a young man. By sparingness in diet and eating as much as may be what is light and easy of digestion, I shall doubtless be able to think more clearly and shall gain time.

One, by lengthening out my life. Two, shall need less time for digestion after meals. Three, shall be able to study more closely without injury to my health.

Four, shall need less time for sleep. Five, shall more seldom be troubled with the headache. He really was serious about redeeming the time.

And I commend for your consideration whether such care to maximize time and effectiveness in devotion to the ministry of the word is what Paul meant by redeem the time for the days are evil and what the preacher meant when he said whatever your hand finds to do do it with your might. One more admonition, number four. He exhorts us to study for the sake of heartfelt worship and practical obedience.

Study for the sake of heartfelt worship and practical obedience. And here he is wonderfully exemplary for those of us who have a bent to study. Mark Knoll, you remember, said Edward's piety continued on in the revivalist tradition.

His theology continued on in academic Calvinism. But there were no successors to his God-entranced world view. The sweet marriage of reason and affection, thought and feeling, head and heart, study and worship that took place in the life of Jonathan Edwards is very rare in academia and in the church.

So the final exhortation is to recover that logic on fire, as the Puritans called it. The fire of joy and obedience. Edwards pursued a passion for God.

He was as intent on this pursuit as he was on all the other pursuits. But he did not pursue a passion for God because it was icing on the cake of Christianity, of decision, of commitment. For him, faith, saving faith, was grounded in a sense of God which reason alone could not mediate.

Let me read you a key quote from a sermon entitled Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. A true sense of the glory of God is that which can never be obtained by speculative reasoning. And if men convince themselves by argument that God is holy, that never will give a sense of His amiable and glorious holiness.

If they argue that He is very merciful, that will not give a sense of His glorious grace and mercy. It must be a more immediate, sensible, that word doesn't mean reasonable, it means sensed, felt, sensible discovery that must give the mind a real sense of the excellency and beauty of God. In other words, it is to no avail merely to find out and believe that God is holy.

That is of no spiritual avail. That belief to have any saving value must have in it a sense, a spiritual sense of the beauty and delightfulness, he said, amiableness of God's holiness and mercy. We must have a true delight in what we believe is true for it to have any spiritual value.

Otherwise, our knowledge is no different from the devil's. Now, does this mean that all of his study and all of his thinking was in vain? That the accumulation of theological truth through rigorous study is in vain? Not at all. Listen to this explanation that Edwards gives.

The more you have of a rational knowledge of divine things, the more opportunity will there be when the Spirit shall be breathed into your heart to see the excellency of these things and to taste the sweetness of them. In other words, you can't taste the sweetness of what isn't there. You must stock your mind with truth that the Holy Spirit, when He comes upon you, will have that with which He can feed you and give you that spiritual quickening and taste.

But, the goal of all this is the spiritual taste. The goal is not just knowing God speculatively or rationally, but delighting in Him and savoring Him and relishing Him. So for all his intellectual might, Edwards was the furthest thing from a cool, detached, neutral, disinterested academician.

Listen to his 64th resolution. Resolved, When I find those groanings which cannot be uttered, of which the Apostle speaks, and those breathings of soul for the longing at hath, of which the psalmist speaks, I will not be weary of earnestly endeavoring to vent my desires, nor of the repetitions of such earnestness. In other words, he was intent on cultivating a passion for God as well as a knowledge of God.

He strained forward in the harness of his own flesh, longing not only to have more truth, but more grace. Listen to the 30th resolution. Resolved, To strive every week to be brought higher in religion and to a higher exercise of grace than I was the week before.

Same thought of growth that we saw in the knowledge area. And that advancement for Edwards was intensely practical. He said to people what he sought for himself.

Quote, Seek not to grow in knowledge chiefly for the sake of applause and to enable you to dispute with others. Seek it for the benefit of your souls and in order to practice, practice according to what knowledge you have. This will be the way to know more.

According to Psalm 119, I understand more than the ancients because I keep thy precepts. The great end of all study, all theology is a heart for God, a life of holiness, the mission of the church, the great goal of all Edwards' work was the glory of God. And I think I could tell you what the most important thing is I ever learned from Edwards.

It's in the book, Desiring God. Let me put it in a sentence. The most important thing I ever learned is that God's purpose in the universe is to be glorified and that what glorifies Him is delighting in Him.

Let me read it for you. I didn't know this quote existed when I wrote the book. I found this in studying last fall in one of his miscellanies.

It's just excellent. So, God glorifies Himself toward the creatures in two ways. One, by appearing to their understanding.

Two, in communicating Himself to their hearts and in their rejoicing and delighting in Him and enjoying the manifestations which He makes of Himself. God is glorified not only by His glories being seen, but 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 the 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.

That's the most important thing I've ever learned in my life. And so the final and most important exhortation to us from the life and work of Jonathan Edwards is in all your study and in all your pastoral labor, seek to glorify God by enjoying Him forever. A final quote.

The enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven fully to enjoy God is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands and wives or children or the company of earthly friends are but shadows.

God is the substance. These are but the scattered beans. God is the sun.

These are but streams. God is the ocean. With all of His imperfections, Father, Jonathan Edwards has been to us a great example of apostolic intensity and delight.

And I pray that you would take the words, the visions, the pictures of this man's life and apply it to us in measure. Guard us from becoming workaholics if we're already bent in that direction and call us back from lackadaisical indifference and hobby riding and TV watching and too many sports and other things that might be jeopardizing the single-mindedness of a wartime mentality. Grant, I pray, that we would love our people, that we would lay down our lives for them through study, prayer, preaching and counsel.

To that end, use this man continually, I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. We have half an hour to talk about these things, if you would like.

Or if you're tired, we will break. But I will throw it open for questions of any sort regarding Edwards or the things we've just related about Edwards. Do you have any comments or any questions you'd like to ask? And if I can't, there are probably some others here who can answer them.

Well, I don't continually. In other words, I think the reason there are conferences, books, Bible and friends is to call each other back to the line of balance again and again. Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, means tomorrow we're likely to fall off balance.

And so my first answer is, I don't keep it in proper balance and I need help. I need to be admonished. But another way to answer it would be that the Bible has both things in it and if you do like Edwards and continually give the Bible its whole hearing, you will hear both sides.

Come away and rest a while and redeem the time. And so the Bible will itself function to bring you back from laziness or from workaholism again and again. A third thing that comes to my mind is to ponder the theological nature of grace.

I'm sure we heard a lot last night and let me just reemphasize it. Many of us today, many lay people, I think most today, conceive of grace as leniency. It is a non-active word.

If somebody does a bad thing, grace lets it alone and doesn't smack anybody, doesn't kick them in the teeth. That's grace. Biblically, from the text that I quoted, 1 Corinthians 15:10, His grace to me was not in vain.

What does that mean? That means the power of grace produced something. So I just remind myself, grace is not the condoning of sitting in front of the television. Grace is the power to get up and go to my study.

And when I get there, to thank God that I had the will to do it. And so reflecting on the nature of grace, not as the tolerance of carnal indulgence, but rather the power to overcome it, has been a great help in my life. But probably the most basic thing, Mark, that we need to hear is, we just need to constantly help each other, check each other, remind each other, on both sides of the issue.

Oh, that's right. We're supposed to repeat the questions. I blew the first one.

The question was, can I shed any light from my own experience on how it works itself out in the pastoral ministry to keep a schedule that is productive and fulfills the command to redeem the time? Well, my schedule is always changing. I mean, if I were to describe what I have now, somebody would write that down and say, this is the way Piper does it. In a year, it wouldn't be the same anymore.

So, I can just talk from where I am and what I shoot for. Basically, I think, we were just interviewing a fellow the other day for some work here with Laotians, and we were trying to talk about hours, hours in the ministry. It's impossible.

I don't think about hours, you know. I look for people who are so radically committed to the ministry that they don't think in terms of hours, they think in terms of how to survive and be maximally useful, which is what all of my staff are barely doing. And I probably need to be admonished about that.

So, what I meant when I said, know your wives, know your wives and set your pace, is that every wife is different. Children are different at different ages. I think I'm going to have to do things different now that my boys are becoming teenagers.

I have four sons. Not eleven, but four. And I think it was a piece of cake while they were under eight, because my wife is so super.

But I've got all boys now, and one's a teenager and one's twelve, and they're different, real different. The demands are very different. So, my life is going to change.

Let me sketch a week for you and then stop. I could talk all day on schedules. We all have different ones.

Monday is Administration and Staff Day here at Bethlehem, by and large. I write my newsletter on Monday morning, usually, and then come over at noon, and we meet all afternoon as a staff, praying and talking about the ministry. And Monday could be a meeting time, could go to hospitals, could be at home with the family.

Even when I'm at home, I have always had a block of time, including dinner and then about an hour to an hour and a half after dinner, which is playtime. We call it playtime. And I'm at my boys' disposal.

Kickball, softball, basketball, probe, password, trucks, whatever. And then about 7:30 or so, I will either go up to my study and work, or Noelle and I will sit and read together in the living room, if we're not out at a

meeting or something. Tuesday, for me now, is an at-home writing day.

This wasn't the case up until a year ago, when I wrote the book, I asked the deacons, I said, should I do more of this or shouldn't I? And they said, take a day a week. I have not used it for that for the last five months, because we got this building program going on here, and I just said, well, I haven't had the discipline. It's not good, but I've just done all kinds of catch-up stuff on Tuesday with this building stuff.

And writing lectures like this, you know, I've done a bunch of this stuff this year. So that's Tuesday. Write, think, hopefully.

And then Wednesday is study in the morning, and then come to church and be available to the people on Wednesday afternoon for appointments. And this would always include necessary visits to hospitals if there's nobody signed up. I didn't mention that right now, from 10 to 12 on Monday mornings, I'm also available for appointments.

Thursday is my day off, and Friday and Saturday are sermon preparation days, and I don't come to the church at all. I work all day and into the evenings. On the Friday evenings, I try to keep free for doing things with people.

So probably 10 hours on Friday and 12 to 14 hours on Saturday. And then Sunday is here and getting ready for Sunday evening all Sunday afternoon. Greg, Dr. Packer has a page.

Oh, just holler every time. How do I know when I am exercising grace in some discipline or using, availing myself of grace rather than acting in the power of the flesh? I wish I had brought that book, Keep in Step with the Spirit, because the staff were reading Dr. Packer's book and there's a page in there, and we all got so excited and we wrote the word Aptat right across the top of the page. A-P-T-A-T, Aptat.

Because I developed a little acronym here to answer that question for our people and Dr. Packer spelled it out almost word for word. I was just thrilled when I found my own ideas confirmed by somebody better than I. I'll tell you what Aptat is. Aptat is a little procedure for walking in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It goes like this. When you face a decision or a challenge or an act of discipline that needs to be performed, A, admit that you cannot do it without Christ. John 15, 7, Without Christ I can do nothing.

P, pray for assistance and help and enablement. Psalm 50, verse 15, Call on me in the day of trouble and I will answer you and deliver you and you shall glorify me. T, trust in a particular promise of God to give you what you need for that situation.

Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication. Let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God will keep your hearts and minds. And trust the gift of peace or strength or power or whatever the need is.

A, act. Get up, do it. You've got to act.

There's no passivity here. You don't wait until the Holy Spirit kicks you in the behind or some strange emotion comes over you. You get up and you turn off that television.

And then you get up to your study and the final T is what? Thanks, Lord, that I had the wherewithal to do it. Now, it feels like you're doing it, but you've admitted you can. You've prayed for help.

You've trusted enablement and you've thanked him for it. And that is walking by the Spirit if you're sincere when you do those. So, it's nothing you don't know, Greg, but that's the best I can do.

I think the most significant question in the Christian life is how to walk by the Holy Spirit. How do you fulfill a strange command like 1 Peter 4, 11? Let him who serves, serve in the strength that God supplies, that in everything God may get the glory. How do you serve in another person's strength? What does that mean? I mean, that's the genius, that's the mystery of the Christian life.

And when you read a Calvinist like Edwards, I wrote it down somewhere, but see if I can remember, he said something like, labor to be brought closer to God. Do you catch the mood, I mean, the voice of the verb? Labor to be brought closer to God. That's the way Calvinists talk who understand their Bible.

There is labor, but it's to be brought. And if you discover more than Aptet, just call me up, Greg, and tell me, because I want to know more how to walk by the Holy Spirit. I want to know how to live in another person's strength.

It's a great mystery to me, and I'm still learning. You want to follow up on it? Okay, that's true. How does the intellect relate to walking by obedience and holiness, and specifically the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Does the Holy Spirit and His work have to go through the intellect in order to reach the will in the heart, or can He short-circuit that process? That's my prejudicial description.

He can. He can, I suppose, but it isn't His practice, and it shouldn't be sought, because there is no virtue in doing that for which you have no spiritual ground. That would be an automaton.

That would be a robot. To act unreflectively, to have no understanding about God that informs your virtue would mean that you are acting like a sleepwalker, like twitches, like ticks in your life. So, if God were to make a practice of circumventing our thought process, He would turn us into robots.

And so, I think Edwards is right, and virtually all Christians would say, I think, that God normally, and this should always be pursued, guides us and inspires us and leads us through a mental handling of spiritual truth. Now, the reason I said mental handling is because the difference between a non-intellectual and an intellectual is not that one doesn't think and one thinks, but that one likes to think and thinks better, and the other one doesn't like to think and may think worse. But he must think.

He must have a reflective process when a person is doing something and you ask them why to do it. Edwards has a long section in the Religious Affections on a spiritual nature that is developed in simple saints that guides them like an aroma. They're just guided towards righteousness, like this.

And if you ask them, explain, explain to me all of the principles and reasons for why you're acting this way, they would have such a hard time explaining. I mean, why... If you took an ordinary, simple, young fella, or I don't know who, I don't want to sound... Any ordinary person and said, give me reasons why you think homosexuality is wrong. And they would say, well, just... It's not right.

It's just... They would have a hard time putting into words, perhaps. They might say, the Bible says so. That would be all right.

And so, I do believe that people do have mental processes going on that yield righteous behavior that are very hard to articulate for them sometimes. And these mental processes have been informed by biblical principles over the years. And to the degree that they haven't, to that degree is this virtue probably not

spiritual.

David... I forgot to end the question. Let me make a suggestion about reading Edward's sermons. In the two-volume work, in the second volume, there is a section called Five Discourses or something.

Edward says these sermons were the sermons that God used to bring about the Great Awakening. I'd go to those sermons, those five, and start there. But there are a lot of sermons in the second volume, dozens of them.

Any sermon. I've never read a sermon of Edward's that didn't help me. You've got to understand, this man is hard to read now.

He's not a Swindoll. I mean, that's no criticism of Swindoll. If we wrote like Edward did, nobody would read our books.

Period. Which writings of Edward's are most useful and which are not so useful? The most useful one in the whole issue of predestination is the Freedom of the Will. The most useful one in laying bare my heart and changing me was the Religious Affections.

The most useful one for giving me a vision of redemptive history and what God's up to in the world is the Dissertation Concerning the End for which God created the world. I've never read anything better on Original Sin than the book on Original Sin. Not useful.

Well, I would send you to the Nature of True Virtue last probably, but it's good. I don't know. Carrie, you had... The question is, when there are other people putting pressures on our lives to conform to their vision of what the pastoral role should be, that doesn't conform to ours, how do we communicate to them the rigor that we want to pursue and, I suppose, what is that balance and that rigor? I think you communicate it in the way you preach on Sunday morning.

You earn your right to set your pace as a pastor. When you come to a church, there are a hundred expectations that are different. And I think there will be a season in which you will yield to many of those in the beginning.

I did things in the beginning that I don't do now because I didn't want to offend, I didn't want to ask for total change and I don't think you can ask people to trust you without a good bit of effort. And so, I think there's a flow in the pastoral development in which you yield to what you need to in order to win their affection and their trust, all the while giving them the very best they could possibly get on Sunday morning so that they walk out saying, thank you and we appreciate it and we're growing. And as that increases, you can begin to call the shots in your schedule with more authority and more integrity.

Because if I told my people like I did last Sunday night, don't ask me to come to your parties on Saturday. I didn't get any sneers. Nobody came up to me afterwards and said, you're such a withdrawn pastor, why don't you get out and hobnob? Now, there might be some thinking that, I don't know.

But by and large, I think the fruit of the labor has earned my right to say that to their face. Call me on Friday, I said. I'll go to any house on Friday night.

Now, that's the second part of the answer. Find ways to do double duty in your duties. Funerals at Bethlehem are an incredible opportunity of fulfilling these sorts of things.

If you just say, here is a time of ripe emotional openness. You talk. You may have a group this size or half this size.

And then you have this little dinner afterwards. And you're there. And they see you.

And they see you talking. I think we should try to go to as many things as we can that cover a lot of people. There will always be people in the church, individuals, who can't get enough of you.

They will just sap you for all you're worth. They make appointment after appointment after appointment because they are cleaning vines. And they live off of your authority.

They have a vicarious enjoyment of your position and so on. And I think you can guard yourself from those in certain ways with your schedule and setting up. If you don't have a secretary, you've got one of those little crazy machines they use on the phone now.

I don't know if that's helpful, but that's the best I can do. The beginning of the ministry, yield. And as the ministry goes on, earn the trust.

But try to know your people and be among them as much as you can with the demands that you have. I don't know who... Go ahead. What's a plan? What's a plan for working in the Scriptures daily so that you can see that you grow thereby? I think taking a book that you are fairly unfamiliar with or haven't worked through and begin to work through it from beginning to end.

I'd love to talk about computers. If Edwards had a computer, a word processor, good night what we would have had. But with hard disks and computers these days, what you can do in terms of Bible study and note taking is just phenomenal.

But I haven't had one up until the last four years and still made it my effort to take a book. Ken, I'm working on 2 Corinthians right now, one of these years I'll preach on it. But I don't know the argument of 2 Corinthians half as well as I know Romans, a third as well as I know Romans.

So I'm just starting and I copy the text down. I arc. I'm just going to talk about arcing here.

There's a bunch of us who know what this arcing is, but I write the text down proposition by proposition. And as I go, I think of questions. I'll make a little circle in red over one of the words and turn to another page and put that one and get out commentaries and read or think or get out my concordance.

The concordance, Mootman and Geden, Greek concordance, most important book after the Bible in my library. And Englishman's Hebrew concordance, second. I do more work in those than commentaries and getting ready for sermons and studying.

So you take your book and then you start writing. And what comes to your mind when you write is just phenomenal. I mean, you grow so much.

Things come to your mind and you write them down. And then you keep writing this text. And then you try to put the propositions together at the top of the page in this little device we have.

But you don't need to know this device in order to just write. Writing out the text is probably the most practical thing I can say. So that you take a page like this and you take the first six verses of 2 Corinthians and you write each proposition on a separate line.

And as you write, you ask questions. Why this word? Why that word? Why that? And if you know Greek, which I hope most of you do, you do it out of the Greek. You make your own translation.

And you take another page and you make notes about what you've written here. And you coordinate it with colors and with numbers and things. And you draw lines all over the page connecting words up here to down here and so on.

So I would work through books. That would be my procedure. The question was, what's in a nutshell Edward's criticism of the Great Awakening and what's his view of saving faith? Well, my time is up.

So I will send you to a couple of books and make a comment. The Religious Affections is his mature criticism of the Great Awakening, positive and negative. His question was, how do you recognize a true work of grace in the heart? And his main criticism of the Great Awakening was that there was a false work of grace, a false enthusiasm that was being depended on that didn't have any real evangelical humiliation in it, any real sight of God, any real reliance upon the Savior, and any real spiritual obedience.

It was form and emotional. That would be his main criticism. And he unfolds it with incredible precision and frightening insight into our hearts in the Religious Affections.

With regard to saving faith, in the second volume, he has a long essay called On Faith. And I suppose it's as much that as anything that made me want to have the topic here to be faith. Faith to be saving must be, I don't know whether he'd say rooted in exactly, or having as part of its essence a spiritual sense of divine things, a spiritual feeling in the heart that is not parallel to chill bumps and sweaty palms or a fast beating heart, but a spiritual delight in the beauty of holiness.

That's essential. And that's what's so hard to discern in converts. And that's why I asked Dr. Packer to wrestle with us about these things, about what do you look for in a convert? How do you go about imparting a spiritual relish for divine things? Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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