

Desiring God - Lesson 1

by John Piper

John Piper's sermon emphasizes the pursuit of joy in God as the ultimate purpose of life through the lens of Christian Hedonism.

Duration: 1:06:22

Scripture: Jeremiah 9:23-24, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the practical aspects of living a Christian life. They acknowledge that many people desire practical guidance on how to fight the spiritual battles they face. The speaker emphasizes the importance of being transformed into the likeness of Jesus and living in a way that brings glory to God. They also highlight the significance of studying specific passages of scripture and interpreting them correctly in order to build a solid foundation for life. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the weightiness of the topics discussed and a prayer for understanding and guidance.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.desiringgod.org A philosophy of life that encompasses everything in the universe, Christian hedonism or Desiring God, the pursuit of joy in life and ministry. And I want to begin with reading a few verses from Jeremiah chapter 9, verses 23 to 24.

Thus says the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him who glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me. Which is a very ego-centric thing of God to say. You certainly would be a real prig to talk like that, wouldn't you? Don't glory in anything except that you know me.

That would be an absolutely audacious way for any human being to talk. And we will talk about that way of talking that God has. But just for now, be aware that we glide over these things perhaps a little too hastily.

Let him who glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me. That I am Yahweh, I am the Lord, who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, says the Lord.

So there you have in the scope of two verses a summons to leave behind all glorying and exulting and being satisfied with wisdom and riches and power. And a summons to glory in God alone, that you can know him and understand him. And then you also have God himself saying that the reason he does the things that he does, like love and justice and righteousness, is for in these things I delight.

So this is a great conspiracy of delight. We called upon to leave all earthly delights and to know the true delight, God. And he himself exercising his own passion for the things that delight him.

Love and justice and righteousness in the earth. There are really profound things at stake here. This universe holds together by the power of delight.

This universe is created out of the overflow of God's delight. You can't get any deeper than delight. It's an awesome thing we're about to talk about here.

This is not a little simple interesting way of coming at the gospel. This is reality. This is universe.

This is ultimate weighty stuff we're going to be talking about here. And I want to pray that God would give us a sense of the weight of it, so that we have an appropriate demeanor in our minds and hearts as we begin. So let's pray.

Father, coming over here, I looked up and there in the west was the glory of God. Screaming, shouting, pouring forth. The heavens were telling the glory of God tonight for those who had eyes to see and time to look.

The firmament was declaring your handiwork and it was manifest that in that you delighted. You love your works and you offer them to us for our delightful ascendancy into your presence and your beauty. So thank you for your gift to us afresh tonight.

It's different every night. It's different every morning. Your mercies are new every morning in the sky and in the bedroom and in the kitchen and in the car and in our own beating heart.

Oh, that we might become a people who understand and know you and do not glory in power and wisdom and riches, but glory in this, that we understand and know you. Lord, come by your Holy Spirit tonight. I pray and quicken us to know these things, to see these things, to marvel at these things, to be transformed by a fresh glimpse of who you are and how you work and what our motives ought to be.

Lord, we are so keenly aware that apart from the eye-opening, heart-transforming work of your creative power, we will not see tonight. We won't see. The natural man cannot see or welcome the things of the Spirit, but the spiritual man assesses all things rightly.

And we're asking now that everybody in this room would be so wrought upon by the Holy Spirit that we would be spiritual people tonight with hearts and minds that are docile and that are alive to you and discern the deep things of God as they are revealed in the Scriptures. All this, Lord, to the end, that we might be transformed into the likeness of Jesus so that men might see our good deeds and render glory to you, for that is why we were made. So come and help me, Lord.

This is an awesome task to undertake, this much teaching in five hours. And I pray that you would govern what I leave out and what I put in and what questions are raised here and occupy our time. We ask for protection from the evil one who would confuse us and divert us.

And we ask for the presence and power of your Spirit. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

This is a class in the Bethlehem Institute, and it's part of a larger class called Pastoral Theology. And this is one of the several seminars in that. You don't have to take it for either.

I mean, you can just soak if you want, and that's just fine. You don't need to worry about any of these requirements. Everybody's welcome.

And I really meant what I prayed earlier, that the Lord would give me wisdom, because, frankly, we could spend on this outline here a hundred hours, easy. And we've got five. So I will have to be ruthless at times to move us on.

But may the Lord come, and may he be our guide in this and our teacher. Number seven is all the practical, OK, if you're right, how do we fight this fight? So many times people get a little frustrated that it's all kind of theoretical and biblical exegetical, and we don't ever get down to, OK, now how can I become this kind of person? How can I do this? You've held up standards that seem unbelievably high. And that's what those fourteen points are about.

And I'll try to make those available, even if we don't get through all of them. But we won't begin to get to that tonight. That will be the last hour or hour and a half tomorrow.

So hold your breath if you feel like it's beginning to seem impossible, and you need some practical steps on how to become this way. That's what I've tried to prepare there. I have taught this many times, but this is the first time I've put it together like this.

As I prayed yesterday and today for a fresh way of assembling all this material, this is what I've come up with. So that's the strategy. We will be looking mainly at texts of the Bible, because I'm not interested in propounding a philosophy of life that's spun out merely by logical deductions from premises here and there, though I think logic is important.

I'm interested in looking at specific passages of Scripture, interpreting them correctly in their context and being fair to them, and letting them build a vision of life that will be a rock for you in the good times and the hard times of your life, and get you ready to die, and die well, and live, and live well, and meet God, and be glad that you live the way you lived. So, we begin with the mission statement of Bethlehem Baptist Church, and my life, and this course. We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things, for the joy of all peoples.

Now, every word in that is carefully chosen, and that is why I exist, and that's why this course is being taught, and as you can see from the banner up there on the wall, it used to hang right here when I was preaching through it, a phrase at a time for about eight weeks. That's what we're about as a church. We're a very spread-oriented church.

This is all about missions. We don't exist for ourselves here merely because we know, as good Christian hedonists, that if you try to exist for yourself, it backfires. It is more blessed to give than to receive, and blessedness is what I'm after, believe me.

I want to be a blessed person. Therefore, we're all about spreading, and we're about spreading a passion, not just an intellectual apprehension of God, but a passion for God, and specifically His supremacy, that God is great and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable. And this is true in all things, not

just in church on Sunday morning with preaching, but it's true in the kitchen with how you make meals and wash dishes.

It's true with little babies and how you change their pull-up pants. We're into pull-up pants right now, not diapers anymore, but pull-up pants. And it's all about driving a car, and whether you honk your horn a certain way, it's all about your work and how you handle the Internet and the pornography that's available on it.

It is all things. We exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things. Nothing was it Kuyper who said, There is not a square inch anywhere on planet Earth over which the Lord Jesus does not say, Mine.

And therefore, we want to cultivate that kind of mentality. And we want to spread this supremacy of God in all things for the joy, which is almost the same as this passion, the joy of all peoples. And the S on the end of peoples is very intentional because we believe with all of our hearts that the Great Commission implies not just winning as many individuals to Christ as we can, but seeing to it that the gospel is to be planted as a church Christian movement in every people group, every ethno-linguistic entity on planet Earth.

And I'm so happy that next weekend, this time, I'm going to be at a conference called the Finisher's Conference. Any of you going to the Finisher's Conference? One? Okay, I'm excited about this. It's a baby boomer, Urbana for baby boomers, kind of.

People like me are 40 plus, I suppose. And one of the things I'm going to say there is that down in the prayer room, a few, maybe it was just a week ago, I heard one of our young men pray for our missionaries. And he said, Oh God, help them when they get to the low point and they say, What am I doing here? Like in Guinea or Tanzania or Uzbekistan, China.

What am I doing here? And as soon as he said that, I just felt burn in my heart. Oh God, help me teach tonight and help me teach next weekend so that the people sitting in comfortable America will say, What am I doing here? When there are unreached peoples who have nothing of what we're about to talk about. And we soak and we soak and we soak and we timidly pass by unbelievers.

So one of our great passions is to see God unleash the church in reaching the peoples. And it would be a great delight to me if one of the effects of tonight's course is to finish the work of God in your life. Those of you who've been feeling unsettled recently with where you are so that you want to move on to a new chapter.

You see, these finishers, these baby boomers have made their money. They have their house in the suburb. It's almost paid off unless they refinanced it to get a six and a quarter percent loan.

And they've got their cars and they've got their toys and they've got their cabins. And they're 50 years old. And the next chapter is the last chapter.

And it looks pretty thin. It looks real thin. Now I can play because I've got it all together.

And that looks real thin. Not a very happy way to prepare to meet the judge. So I hope that young and old here tonight will move.

Introduction and background. I won't tell the story. I've told it enough times and I've written it in enough places about my life and how I became a Christian hedonist, which is what we're talking about tonight and we'll define in a minute.

But I do want to say a few things about where did this come from? Where did this book come from? And this is a good place for me to put in the advertisement for the resources. This book and the others like Pleasures of God and Future Grace, which are the kind of the key three books that captured the vision that we're talking about tonight, plus a lot of tapes. And if you go in the bookstore, you can find a lot more.

So but the question is, where did this come from? This was a series of nine sermons back in 1983. And then it turned into a book in 1986. This is the 10th year anniversary edition with a new chapter and some other things.

God has blessed this book. We get a steady stream of mail in Desiring God Ministries of people whose lives it turns upside down. And I just marveled it's selling more now than it did 10 years ago when it first came out.

And it's just an amazing thing. I didn't have that in mind when I preached those sermons. But God has just taken it and blessed it.

And we are thankful for it. All the royalties for it are plowed back into Desiring God Ministries. I don't take those.

And they undergird the ongoing distribution of these resources for whatever people can afford if they can't afford the prices we put on them, which are the lowest prices for which you can get them anywhere anyway. Where did it come from? It came from struggles in my life, probably far back beyond what I can remember. But I remember some of them.

And they were largely struggles with motivation as a late teenager and an early 20-year-old person or in early 20s. And let me give you an example of what I mean by struggle with motivation. For example, take a text like this, Luke 14.

When you give a reception or banquet, Jesus says, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

And that little word for right there, for you will be repaid, is an argument. It looks like an argument. It looks like a support, a reason for why we should be willing to live a life that seems to be a dead-end street, money down a rat hole, doing things for people who can't do anything for you.

That's just a waste of your life, right? Unless you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. Now, the problem was, when I read text like that back in the late 50s, early 60s, when I was moving toward college and then on into college, I lived in a world where the atmosphere, and it still exists, the atmosphere said, that's a defective motivation. This is defective.

To be motivated, to invite the poor over to your house because you'll be repaid at the resurrection, is defective. It ruins the moral virtue of the invitation. Then I began to see it, after it wasn't just absorbed in the air that I was breathing, which it was, I began to see it in technical, ethical books.

For example, here's a quote from T.W. Manson, a deceased British New Testament scholar, quoting his comment about that verse. The promise of reward for this kind of life is there as a fact. You do not live this way for the sake of the reward.

If you do, you are not living this way, but in the old selfish way. That's almost universal in the ethical literature. If that's right, this book should be burned and banned as heretical.

Okay? Which a few would have it be. Not many, as I listen, but a few. If this is right, if T.W. Manson is right, John Piper is on a crusade to mislead tens of thousands of people.

And I frankly don't think Jesus is in the business of giving defective motivations. I don't think Jesus tantalizes you to ruin your virtue, and then pull it back and say, I told you, but you shouldn't listen to this. I told you you're going to get reward, but you shouldn't listen too carefully.

You should hear me say it, but don't want it. I don't think Jesus plays games like that. And we'll see a lot more places where he doesn't.

Now, this understanding of Christianity, that you ruin virtue to the degree that you seek some benefit in the pursuit of it, has sent many people to hell, including Ayn Rand, probably. I don't know whether she repented of her atheism in her latter years. I wrote her, having read a bunch of her books in the late 70s, pleading with her to reconsider her misconception of Christianity.

But she was a novelist and atheist philosopher, and this was her conception of what Immanuel Kant, who was a professing Christian, made of virtue. Listen to this. She is a stunning writer.

Atlas Shrugged, For the Intellectual, The Fountainhead, The Virtue of Selfishness, books like that. An action is moral, said Kant, only if one has no desire to perform it, but performs it out of a sense of duty, and derives no benefit from it of any sort, neither material nor spiritual. A benefit destroys the moral value of an action.

Thus, this is still her, this is not my princess, Thus, if one has no desire to be evil, one cannot be good. If one has, one can. That's the entanglement in which a T. W. Manson gets himself.

She's right. In other words, if you have no desire to be evil, but only a desire to be good, the performance of good will satisfy your desire and thus keep you from doing good. It will ruin it.

But if you do have a desire to do evil, and therefore you must do what you don't want to do, namely good, then you can be good. That is so evil. That is so evil that it has, she looked at that and she said, that's Christianity, and she rejected it out of hand.

People like this are going to have a big accountability before God for teaching things like this, because it is so diametrically opposed to what Jesus taught when he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. So, here I was as a young person with this incredible longing in me to be happy, or to be content, or to be satisfied, or to be fulfilled, or whatever word you like to use, and in the air, and in the philosophical, ethical literature, I was only hearing, you can't give vent to those desires. You got to stuff them.

You got to crucify them. You got to not have the desire to be fulfilled and happy and satisfied. That can't drive any of your pursuit of virtue or worship.

And so, I stood there thinking, I remember lying in my bed in St. Hall at Wheaton saying, Lord, then what? What motive? Because, I hadn't yet read this quote from Pascal, but this is the way I felt, this seemed intuitive to me. Pascal, the French mathematician and philosopher says, All men seek happiness. This is without exception.

Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. And the cause of some going to war and others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step, but to this object.

This is the motive of every action of every man, even those who hang themselves. When I read that in 1968, that seemed so obvious to me, that I've never been able to question it. And I have found biblical warrant for not questioning it.

Ephesians 5, where Paul says to husbands, No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it. And that's the way you should love your wife, because you already love yourself that way. That's what Jesus meant when he said, Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

None of this psychological mumbo-jumbo about learning to love yourself first, so that you can learn to love others. That's not at all what he meant. Everybody, by nature, loves himself.

That is, nobody walks out in front of a truck. And if you do walk out in front of a truck intentionally to kill yourself, you know why you do it? To escape misery. It's all the same principle.

Everybody is driven by a longing for what they perceive will bring them some kind of satisfaction. So here I was, trying to figure out my motivations, and that drive was leading me toward Christian hedonism. So let me summarize this philosophy of life, this theology, this biblical worldview, which I call Christian hedonism.

And please, I don't give one rip whether you accept this or reject this title, this name. I have no stake in it as far as trying to push it on anybody. That's just fine with me if you reject this and call it something else because you don't like the word hedonism.

I have a lot of people who love my book and wish I hadn't called it that. And maybe we'll talk about why, but I don't regard it as a very important issue. So don't worry about it.

If it bothers you, just forget it and try to understand the substance of it. Here are the five summary statements of what I mean by Christian hedonism, which is what we're talking about in these five hours. Number one, the longing to be happy is a universal human experience, and it is good, it is good, not sinful.

I think the longing to be happy is the moral counterpart to a growling stomach at lunch, and it is inevitable, and it's good. God made you that way. He wired you that way.

The desire to be happy is the same as the need to breathe. Number two, and these are all right out of the front of the book, verbatim. You don't need to write all these things down if you buy the book.

We should never try to deny or resist our longing to be happy as though it were a bad impulse. So here I'm going diametrically opposed to Kant and Manson and the air that we breathe. Don't try to resist the longing to be happy as though it were a bad impulse.

Instead, we should seek to intensify this longing and nourish it with whatever will provide the deepest, deepest, and most enduring. Those are absolutely crucial qualifiers. Satisfaction.

Most of the world does not live for the deepest and most enduring. They live for shallow and temporary, shallow and temporary satisfaction. Third, the deepest and most enduring happiness is found only in God, and I mean God, not His gifts.

Those are good, but they are not the place where our satisfaction finally reposes. Fourth, the happiness we find in God reaches its consummation when it expands to meet the needs of others in the manifold ways of love. That was a crucial discovery.

This you could call vertical Christian hedonism, and this you can call horizontal. In other words, once we've stated the fact that the only happiness ultimately that will last and go deep is found in God, vertically, we have to ask, well, is the task of virtue and love, family rearing and witnessing and missions and ministry and service in competition with God, because certainly it brings delights. It's more blessed to give.

Is that a competition with God? And my answer is, it is joy in God spilling over and expanding itself, enlarging itself in the good done to another. And the ultimate good done to another is to bring them into the enjoyment of the same God. And therefore, there's no competition here between my delighting in God and my delighting in others being done good because the ultimate good for them is delight in God.

And therefore, when they are delighting in God, my delight in God is enlarged by their delight in God. The corporate dimension of delight in God is the ultimate joy. Not individual, privatized, swooning experiences with God, but the corporate dimension of seeing reflected back to you in a converted, transformed person the glory of God and delight in that glory.

There's where your joy comes to climax and consummation. Which is why Christian hedonism is not like Buddhism. We don't go away and cross our legs and sit under a tree and repeat phrases over and over again until everything disappears except us and God.

Rather, we go into the middle of Calcutta and we lay down our lives so that others might taste something of what we've seen. I was walking over here just, what, 45 minutes ago or an hour ago now. As I came down beside the Elliott twins, here's an old man with a cane.

I've seen him before and he walks like this. And he was standing at the curb, looking down at it. And I was about a block away.

He put his, he leached over and put his cane in the curb. And then he went, and he almost lost his balance. And then he put his other leg down, almost lost his balance.

He started across the street. And I looked at that man. I said, someday I'm going to be there and my joints are going to be just like that.

Can barely move. He's living probably by himself in one of those rooms over there. And I asked myself as I walked by him, what's this got to do with that? What's this, what's this overhead and this teaching got to do with that? And here's what came to my mind and I want to stress it.

What that has to do with this is that 95% of you should not spend your life doing what I do. Namely, studying 90% of the time and teaching 90% of the time. But rather, you should absorb a vision of God through your own reading of the Bible and some study.

And spend 90% of your time pouring out your lives for people like that. So that the truth becomes lived out and the glory of God becomes beautiful. The church of Jesus Christ should have a layer of people.

It's a risky life, I'll tell you. A layer of people who spend a lot of time studying and praying and teaching. Though it's very hard for me at times to have a clear conscience not to be doing more of that than I do.

But you're free and you should find people among unreached peoples. People across the street. People just before I passed him.

I passed a little apartment building just before you get to Mona's Mini Mart. And a man was getting out of a car with a big turban on his head. He's probably Hindu.

I've seen him, his wife, his little children. Little red mark here on her head. And I thought to myself, oh Christ, they don't know you.

They don't know you from Adam. Their conceptions, what I'm about to talk about here, are so distorted and so wrong. Who is going to teach them? Who's going to get out of the house and out of the church and knock on a door and do something? And so I just want to stress, don't become a person who spends all of your time doing what I do.

Otherwise my life is in vain. If I just go around reproducing people like me, the world will not be reached. The manifold ways of love is where the church ought to spend its time and pour out its life.

And fifth, therefore, to the extent we try to abandon the pursuit of our own pleasure. To the extent that we try to abandon, which is what so many people are telling us we should do for the sake of virtue. We will necessarily fail to honor God and love people.

This whole book is written to defend this thesis. We will fail to honor God and we will fail to love people if we abandon the pursuit of our own pleasure in God. Or to put it positively, the pursuit of pleasure in God is a necessary part of all worship, that's honoring God, and virtue, that's love.

A necessary part. So if you forsake it, you don't have that part and therefore you don't have love. And that will take some defending tonight and tomorrow.

Now, I want to give you time to ask questions here and there. And I do it with fear and trembling because I know that the questions, some of them that you would ask right now, are contained here. That is, the answers are here.

But I do want to pause here and there just to make sure, for clarification's sake, let's say at least that. Now, I've scared you all from asking any questions, probably. But let me pause here just to see whether anything I've said is just unintelligible at this point.

You may not agree or you may agree, but you want me to re-say anything or clarify anything at this point? Because everything is going to be to defend these things. Anything, is it clear enough to move ahead with? Nobody's totally in the dark about what I'm contending for? Absolutely. It is okay, the question one, I'm saying it's okay to go for the carrot.

Yeah. So your second question is, does that imply therefore that altruism does not exist? Now, that's a fuzzy question. Yeah.

Yes. If Pascal is right that all men pursue pleasure, then practically a philosophy of life that says you should not do that, but should do what's right for right's sake, because it's right and not because there's any delight or joy in it, that philosophy exists. That's why it's a fuzzy question.

That philosophy exists, but in fact, I don't think anybody acts that way. They put words on it, but they are really being driven by the same longings that everybody else is being driven for, either sanctified or unsanctified. All right.

Now, we are at number four on your outline. The foundation of Christian hedonism, God's joyful passion for his own glory. And here I could spend easily two hours on this, which I do in a perspectives lecture, because I have here about ten overheads on texts to show God's zeal for his own glory.

But I'm not going to take an hour on it, let alone two hours on it. I'm going to flash these things really fast because there's an appendix in the book. And in fact, if you get the book on missions, the green book in the first chapter, there are three times as many texts as in this appendix here.

And what I have here are more than that. So as I find them, I add them to my list of texts that show God is passionate for his own glory. Now, this transition may not be clear to you why I'm doing this, so let me see if I can step back a minute.

As a young boy, I knew God commanded me to live for his glory. First Corinthians 10, 31, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. I also knew that I had, along with Pascal, this passion to be happy or to be satisfied or to be fulfilled or to be content or whatever you want to describe it as.

Now, those two things, my desire to be happy and God's passion for his name to be glorified, were jockeying for ascendancy and some kind of relationship. And how to bring them together is what this book is all about. How to bring together God's ultimate command to be glorified and my ultimate desire to be satisfied.

Is it possible that they can be brought together? Are they in conflict? How are they to be ordered in our lives? But what helped me get a handle on the meaning of the universe was not just seeing that God commands us to give him glory, but God himself lives for his glory and does everything he does for his own glory. And that's what these texts are designed to show. That puts a booster behind the command that I should live for his glory.

That was very revolutionizing for me. So, let's move really quickly through these texts. I may pause in a few places just to make sure that you see that the texts are really there.

You see, what I've got is, I've got a statement, God chose his people for his glory and then I've got a text to support it and then I've got another one. But if I took time to read all these texts to you, we wouldn't do much else tonight. But I do want you to feel the tidal wave of this truth.

So, I'm just going to flash them before you and pause here and there to show you that it is so. God chose his people for his glory, Ephesians 1. God created us for his glory. Bring my sons from afar, my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory.

So, you were created for the glory of God. God called Israel for his glory. You are my servant Israel in whom I will be glorified.

God rescued Israel from Egypt for his glory. God raised up Pharaoh to show his power and glorify his name. God defeated Pharaoh at the Red Sea to show his glory.

When I have gotten glory over Pharaoh. God spared Israel in the wilderness for the glory of his name. I acted for the sake of my name that it should not be profaned.

That's why he spared them. God gave Israel victory in Canaan for the glory of his name. God did not cast away his people for the glory of his name.

Let me stop on this one. This is 1 Samuel. Samuel responded to the people after they chose for them a king.

A human king rejecting God as their king. Fearing now that they have ruined their future because that's a sin. And Samuel in great mercy says, Fear not.

You have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord. For the Lord will not, will not cast away his people.

Why? For his great namesake. Your perseverance, God's ongoing keeping of you is owing to his commitment to his name. In other words, what we're seeing here is the beginnings of the news that the gospel of love to me is grounded in a deeper thing.

Namely, God's love for God. Until we discover that God's passion for God is the support for his passion to save people. We will be an anthropocentric man centered people.

I'll point this out in several other places. God saved Jerusalem from attack for the glory of his name. God restored Israel from exile for the glory of his name.

For my namesake. This is Isaiah 48. For my namesake.

I did delay my wrath for the sake of my praise. I restrain it for you in order that I may not cut you off. You see how much good news comes to us because God is committed to God.

Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver. I have tested you in the furnace of affliction for my own sake. For my own sake, I will act.

For how can my name be profane? My glory I will not give to another. That's the driving force of his rescuing Israel from exile and us from the exile of sin. Now, over to the New Testament.

God sent Jesus so that the nations might glorify God for his mercy. For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God. Now, become a servant to the circumcision simply means he became a Jew.

He was incarnate as a Jewish teacher, Messiah. He did it on behalf of God's truth. He came to vindicate the truthfulness of God and to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs.

That's why Jesus came. He came for God's sake and for the Gentiles to glorify God. He came as a servant to the circumcision so that the Gentiles, the nations, would glorify God for his mercy.

Now, sometimes when people ask about the ultimate purposes of God in history, and they hear me and others answer the ultimate purpose of God in history is to exalt the glory of God, to magnify his own glory,

to see to it that everybody bows the knee and glorifies him. Every knee, what does it say? Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord with the last phrase, to the glory of God the Father. We're going to all bow, either willingly or unwillingly, to the glory of God the Father.

Sometimes they will say, no, I don't think that's the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is love. Now, how to order the love of God for people and the love of God for his glory is a profound question that we'll be answering.

We are answering it. Right here we're answering it. Look, Jesus came as a servant to the circumcision in order that, that's what this means, in order that the Gentiles, now here's mercy, this is the love of God for sinners, and here's the glory of God.

How are they ordered? They are ordered with this, the glory of God, being the goal of this, that they might glorify God for his mercy. Mercy comes and the effect of mercy should be glory to God. So I don't think there's any question that the love of God for people is penultimate and the exaltation of his glory is ultimate.

That's what that means here. And we'll see it elsewhere. Jesus sought the glory of his Father in all that he did.

Jesus told us to do good work so that God would get glory. Let your light so shine that then would see your good deeds and give glory to your Father. That's what your life is about.

You are a walking prism of the light of the glory of God meant to be refracted out through your peculiar personality called spiritual gifts for everybody to benefit from to the glory of God. Jesus warned that not seeking God's glory makes faith impossible. How can you believe who seek glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? You can't.

Faith is not even possible until this is recognized. Jesus said that he answers prayer that God would be glorified. Prayer is all about the glory of God.

Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Every prayer you ever pray is answered for God's glory. And you should pray it for that motivation.

Jesus endured his final hours of suffering for the glory of God. In Gethsemane, now is my soul troubled. What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.

No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. What purpose? Father, glorify thy name. And the voice came out of heaven.

I have glorified it. And I will glorify it again in just a few hours. Father, the hour has come.

Glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee. Oh, what was at stake in those hours of Gethsemane and Calvary morning? The whole purpose of the universe hung on the God-centeredness of Jesus in those hours. Will He persevere in love with the glory of His Father? God gave His Son to vindicate the glory of His righteousness.

This may be the most important text in the Bible in Romans 3, 25 and 26. God put Christ forward as a propitiation by His blood to demonstrate God's righteousness. It was to prove at the present time that He is righteous.

The cross, before it is a blessing and rescue to us, is a vindication of the righteousness of God. And if it were not that, it would be no blessing to us. God forgives our sins for His own sake.

I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake. And so we should pray, for thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt. You do know, don't you, and you should teach your children this, that the little phrase, in Jesus' name, at the end of your prayers, is not a throwaway phrase.

It means, I'm not deserving of anything I have now asked for you. Jesus alone is deserving of it. And He has purchased for me everything you intend good to give me.

And therefore, it is for His sake, on the basis of His merit and for His glory, that I have just prayed these prayers. That's what we should teach our kids. They mean when they say, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Which my two and a half year old now says, not having a clue, I'm sure, what she means. But we will fill up the words for her as she gets older. Jesus receives us into His fellowship for the glory of God.

Welcome one another, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. That's what church life is all about, welcoming and accepting one another. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Son.

Jesus says, He will come and He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. The Holy Spirit exists to glorify the Son. God instructs us to do everything for His glory.

1 Corinthians 10.31, I read that already, or quoted it. God tells us to serve in a way that will glorify Him. I'm coming back to that, so I won't read it.

Jesus will fill us with fruits of righteousness for His glory. All are under judgment for dishonoring God's glory. The definition of sin, you see, when you share the gospel, I was lying in bed the other day just saying over and over again to myself, so I'd have it clear during the day in case any occasion arises, the gospel has four pieces, four pieces, and you need to hang it on four words, And then, after you've memorized the four words, add a few words to them.

God, His holiness and glory, sin, its guilt and punishment, cross, Jesus incarnate dying to take our place and bear our sins, faith, the only way with repentance to appropriate what God has done. And once you've added a few words, you can go back and add sentences to them until you've got a full-blown presentation of the gospel. But get it down to four things, and I'm stressing it here because people have to know God before they can get the gospel.

You can't just start and say, things are going to go good for you if you believe. You can't start like that. They won't have a clue what their problem is, which is condemnation from a holy God.

So if the gospel is to be known, we must define sin the way Paul does. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

And the falling short of the glory of God is why it is sin. Herod is struck dead because he did not give glory to God. Immediately an angel of the Lord, you remember he gave this speech and he made a big deal about how great he was.

Immediately an angel of the Lord smote him because he did not give glory to God. Which means, by the way, that every political speech given everywhere in the world, not followed by an execution of the one who gave it, is mercy. Unless it is given for the glory of God, which hardly any is.

Do you realize how much mercy there is in the world? Clinton's alive. Khomeini is alive. There's a lot of mercy in the world.

You're all breathing tonight. We haven't been cast out. Jesus coming again for the glory of God.

When he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at, that's why he's coming. He's coming, I'll say it like a Christian hedonist, to give you the pleasure of enjoying him forever and thus magnifying his glory. Jesus' ultimate aim for us is that we see and enjoy his glory.

John 17, 24. Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am to behold my glory. This is his prayer for you.

This is the ultimate prayer of the Son of God in love for you, which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world. Jesus prays that we will behold the glory of God. Even in wrath, God's aim is to make known the wealth of his glory.

Desiring to show his wrath and to make known his mighty power, he endured with much patience the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. In order that he might make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory. God's plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory.

Everything that happens will redound to God's glory. From him, to him, through him are all things. To him be glory forever and ever.

Well, that's the end of the survey. And my hope is that you will see that this is not peripheral to the Bible. Oops, that's not the end.

I had one more, sorry. In the new Jerusalem, the glory of God replaces the Son. But my hope is that this tidal wave of texts will grip you to the effect that God does everything he does for the glory, for the display and the magnifying of his excellence, his beauty.

If you ask me to define the glory of God, I cannot define the glory of God any more than I can define beauty or excellence. It is the manifold perfections of God in their sum and beauty. It is what we were designed to see, be caught up into and be satisfied by.

Here's Jonathan Edwards' conclusion from all these texts. The great end of God's works, which is so variously expressed in Scripture, is indeed but one. So the great end of God is one.

The great goal of God is one. And this one end, this one goal, is most properly and comprehensively called the glory of God. And I called it on the outline there, number four, God's joyful passion for his glory.

I hope that's obvious, simply because God would not be God if he were under some external constraint to live this way, though he didn't want to. You know, if you tried to construct a God to say, OK, I have just seen that God does everything for his own glory, but he really doesn't want to. He takes no pleasure in it.

He's doing it because the because would be blasphemy. If there is a power outside God that constrains him to do what he does not delight in doing, then he's not God. That thing outside him which can constrain and control him is God.

But I added this text just to make it explicit, the one I quoted for devotions. Let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me. God says that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for I delight in these things.

God delights in doing what he does. Things like loving kindness, justice, righteousness, all to the glory of his name. If all those texts mean what I think they mean.

And another text that makes explicit this happiness of God, this gladness of God in being God. Paul refers to the gospel of the glory of the blessed Macario, who that's the same word used in the Beatitudes. Blessed are the meek, blessed are the poor in spirit that is happy, contented, satisfied.

Great well-being is upon them. The gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. So the good news, the gospel is the good news of glory, the glory of God.

We see this also in 2nd Corinthians 4, 4 and 6. And what is glorious here is that he's blessed. He would not be a glorious God if he were a moody God or a somber God or a morose God or an unhappy God who's out of sorts and who smacks his children when they come because he had a bad day. God is not that way.

He is a Vesuvius of joy. The question then is, is this thoroughgoing self-exaltation of God a loving way to be? So here you see me struggling at this point with this question in relating these massive things that we believe as Christians. But he's a God of love.

He's a God of love. The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, keeping covenant to thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. That's what he said on Mount Sinai, Exodus 34, 6 and 7. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten sons that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.

He's a God of love. Hearing his love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and gave his son as a propitiation for our sins. God demonstrates his love to us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God loves sinners. And yet, when a lot of people hear what I've just developed for the last 15 minutes or so, they don't hear love. And there's this biblical problem that love seeks not its own.

And I've just told you with about, what, 30 texts or so, that God devotes all of his energy to seeking his own glory. Love seeks not its own, at least when spoken among men. That's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, 5. So the question we need to ask is, how does the self-exaltation of God, the pursuit of his own glory, God's passion for his glory, relate to our being loved? Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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