

The Dangerous Duty of Delight by John Piper, Multnomah Publishers, Inc., Sisters, Oregon, 2001. (42 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

Quotations from the following chapters:

PREFACE

CHAPTER ONE: TREATING DELIGHT AS DUTY IS CONTROVERSIAL

CHAPTER TWO: GLORIFY GOD BY ENJOYING HIM FOREVER

CHAPTER THREE: AFFECTIONS ARE NOT OPTIONAL

CHAPTER FOUR: PURSUING PLEASURE UNDERMINES PRIDE AND SELF-PITY

CHAPTER FIVE: PURSUE YOUR JOY IN THE JOY OF THE BELOVED

CHAPTER SIX: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR WORSHIP?

CHAPTER SEVEN: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR MARRIAGE?

CHAPTER EIGHT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR MONEY?

CHAPTER NINE: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR MISSIONS?

ENDNOTES

Preface

1. Awe and Wonder of Jesus Christ

...the human race does in fact crave the experience of awe and wonder. And there is no reality more breathtaking than Jesus Christ. He is not safe, but He is stunning. [Page 8]

2. The Heart Longs for Eternity

God has put eternity in man's mind and filled the human heart with longing. But we know not what we long for until we see the breathtaking God. This is the cause of universal restlessness. Hence the famous prayer of Saint Augustine, "You made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace till they rest in you."¹ [Page 8]

Chapter One: Treating Delight As Duty Is Controversial

3. Rejoice at His Glory

"The end of the creation is that the creation might glorify [God]. Now what is glorifying God, but- a rejoicing at that glory he has displayed?"⁹ [Page 13]

4. Rejoice in God

People are uncomfortable saying that we are duty-bound to pursue joy.

They say things like, "Don't pursue joy; pursue obedience." But Christian Hedonism responds, "That's like saying, 'don't eat apples; eat fruit'" Because joy is an act of obedience. We are commanded to rejoice in God. If obedience is doing

what God commands, then joy is not merely the spin-off of obedience, it is obedience. [Page 13]

5. In God Alone Is Fullness of Joy

Let it be crystal clear. We are [] talking about joy *in God* Even joy in doing good is finally joy in God, because the ultimate good that we always aim at is displaying the glory of God and expanding our own joy in God to others. Any other joy would be qualitatively insufficient for the longing of our souls and quantitatively too short for our eternal need. In God alone is *fullness* of joy and joy forever.

"In Your presence is *fullness* of joy, in Your right hand there are pleasures *forever*"(Psalm 16:11). [Page 15]

Chapter Two: Glorify God by Enjoying Him forever

6. All Display His Glory

"...[some of] the steps of our salvation: predestination, creation, incarnation, propitiation, sanctification, and consummation. At every step the Bible, says God is doing these things, through Jesus Christ, to display and magnify His glory.

- *Predestination*: "He *predestined* us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to *the praise of the glory* of His grace" (Ephesians 1:5-6).
- *Creation*: "Bring My sons from afar and My daughters a from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created *for My glory*" (Isaiah 43:6-7)
- *Incarnation*: "Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles *to glorify* God for His mercy" (Romans' 15:8-9).
- *Propitiation*:¹⁴ "God displayed [Christ] publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to *demonstrate His righteousness*, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed" (Romans 3:25).
- *Sanctification*: "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more ... having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, *to the glory and praise of God*" (Philippians 1:9, 11).
- *Consummation*: "[Those who do not obey the gospel] will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of

His power, when He comes *to be glorified* in His saints on that day, and *to be marveled at* among all who have believed" (2 Thessalonians 1:9-10). [Pages 17-18]

7. Satisfied in God

God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. This is the best news in the world. God's passion to be glorified and my passion to be satisfied are not at odds. [Page 20]

8. Christ Exalted in My Body

My earnest expectation and hope [is] that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:20-21). [Pages 24-25]

9. Our Duty Is Pleasure in Him

The common denominator between living and dying is that Christ is the all-satisfying treasure that we embrace whether we live or die. Christ is praised by being prized. He is magnified as a glorious treasure when He becomes our unrivaled pleasure. So if we are going to praise him and magnify Him, we dare not be indifferent as to whether we prize Him and find pleasure in Him. If Christ's honor is our passion, the pursuit of pleasure in Him is our duty. [Page 27]

Chapter Three: Affections Are Not Optional

10. Means of Rekindling Delight in God

I am often asked what a Christian should do if the cheerfulness of obedience is not there. It's a good question. My answer is not to simply get on with your duty because feelings don't matter. They do! My answer has three steps. First, confess the sin of joylessness. ("My heart is faint, lead me to the rock that is higher than I," Psalm 61:2.) Acknowledge the coldness of your heart. Don't say that it doesn't matter how you feel. Second, pray earnestly that God would restore the joy of obedience. ("I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart," Psalm 40:8.) Third, go ahead and do the outward dimension of your duty in the hope that the doing will rekindle the delight. [Page 30-31]

11. Dependence on a Sovereign God

Christian Hedonist is a miracle of sovereign grace. This is why Paul said that becoming a Christian is the same as being raised from the dead ("even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ," Ephesians 2:5). It's why Jesus said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to stop loving his money and start loving God (Mark 10:25). Camels can't go through needles' eyes--just as' dead men can't wake

themselves from the dead. So Jesus adds; "With people it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27). So Christian Hedonism breeds an utter dependence on the sovereignty of God. It teaches us to hear the command, "Delight yourself in the LORD," and then to pray with Saint Augustine, "Command what you wish, but give what you command."²⁰

Chapter Four: Pursuing Pleasure Undermines Pride and Self-Pity

12. Pride in Boasting and Self-pity

The nature and depth of human pride are illuminated by comparing boasting to self-pity. Both are manifestations of pride. Boasting is the response of pride to success. Self-pity is the response of pride to suffering. Boasting says, "I deserve admiration because I have achieved so much." Self-, pity says, "I deserve admiration because I have suffered much." Boasting is the voice of pride in the heart of the strong. Self-pity is the voice of pride in the heart of the weak. Boasting sounds self-sufficient. Self-pity sounds self-sacrificing.

The reason self-pity does not look like pride is that it appears to be so needy. But the need arises from a wounded ego. It doesn't come from a sense of unworthiness, but from a sense of unrecognized worthiness. It is the response of unapplauded pride.

Christian Hedonism severs the root of self-pity. People don't feel self-pity when suffering is accepted for the sake of joy.

"Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12, RSV)

This is the ax laid to the root of self-pity. When Christian Hedonists have to suffer on account of Christ, they do not summon up their own resources like heroes. They become like little children who trust the strength of their father and who want the joy of his reward. The greatest sufferers for Christ have always deflected praise and pity by testifying to their Christian Hedonism. We will see this especially in the lives of missionaries in the final chapter. [Pages 34-35]

13. Breaking the Impulse of Pride

Most people recognize that doing something for joy-even on the merely horizontal level-is a humbling experience. For example, a businessman may take some friends out for dinner. When he picks up the check, his friends begin to say how good it was of him to pay for them. But he simply lifts his hand in a gesture that says,

"Stop." Then he says, "It's my pleasure." In other words, if I do a good deed for the joy of it, the impulse of pride is broken. The breaking of that impulse is the will of God and is one of the reasons Christian Hedonism is so vital for the Christian life. [Page 37]

Chapter Five: Pursue Your Joy in the Joy of the Beloved

14. Come to an All-sufficient God

The only way to glorify the all-sufficiency of God is to come to Him because in His presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand are pleasures for evermore (Psalm 16:11) [Page18]

15. Genuine Love

The nature of genuine love can be seen in four things:

- First, its a work of divine grace. "We wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia" (2 Corinthians 8:1). The generosity of the Macedonians was not of human origin. It was a work of grace in their hearts.
- Second, this experience of God's grace filled the Macedonians with joy. "In a great ordeal of affliction their abundance' of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality" (2 Corinthians 8:2). Their joy was not owing to the fact that God had prospered them financially. He hadn't! In extreme poverty they had joy. Therefore the joy was a joy in God, not things.
- Third, their joy in God's grace overflowed in generosity to meet the needs of others. "Their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality" (2 Corinthians 8:2). Therefore the liberality expressed horizontal) *toward* men was an overflow of joy in God's grace.
- Fourth, the Macedonians begged for the opportunity to sacrifice their meager possessions for saints in Jerusalem. "Beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of saints" (2 Corinthians 8:3-4). In other words, way their joy in God overflowed was in the joy giving. They wanted to give. It was their joy!

Now we can give a definition of love that takes into account and also includes the feelings that shout accompany the outward acts of love: Love is *the overflow and expansion* of joy in God which gladly meets the needs of others. Love not merely the passive overflow, but the aggressive extension and expansion and completion of joy in God, reaching even to the poor Jerusalem. [Pages 43-44]

16. Extend God's Joy to Others

Love is the overflow and expansion of joy in God! It is not duty for duty's sake, or right for right's sake. It is not a resolute abandoning of none's own good whit a view solely to the good of the other person. It is first a deeply satisfying experience of the fullness of God's grace, and then a doubly satisfying experience of extending this joy in God to another person. [Page 44-45]

17. Not Giving Joy Is Sin

If love is the overflow and expansion of joy in God that gladly meets the needs of other people, and if God loves such joyful givers, then this joy in giving is a Christian duty, and not pursuing it is sin. [Page 45]

18. What Is Compassion?

Christian joy reveals itself as dissatisfied contentment whenever it perceives human need. It starts to expand in love's to fill that need and bring about the joy of faith in the heart of the other person. But since there is often an obstacle, or a time lapse, between our perception of a person's need and our eventual rejoicing in the persons restored joy, there is a place for weeping in that interval. The weeping of compassion is the weeping of joy impeded in the extension of itself to another. [Pages 46-47]

9. Love Is a Passionate Pursuit of Our God Longings

If we took no pleasure in the good of others, we would feel no pain when the good is impeded. So make no mistake, love is on a passionate pursuit to satisfy our deepest longings in the God-centered good of the beloved. [Page 47]

20. Pursue the Reward of Joy

I do not see how anyone can honor the word *remember* in Acts 20:35 and still think it is wrong to pursue the reward of joy in the ministry. On the contrary, Paul thinks it is necessary to keep the joy set firmly before us, "*Remember! It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"

One reason Paul spoke this way is that the cost of love is so high in this life we could never survive it without the hope of Christ-centered joy *in* this life and beyond the grave. Paul said, "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19). In other words, a life of love, with all the pain and risk involved, would be a fool's life if there were no recompense beyond the grave. [Page 48]

21. Love Is Costly

Love is costly. It always involves some kind of self denial in this world. "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life *in this world* will keep it to life

eternal" (John 12:25). Love costs you your life in this world. But in the world to come the joys of eternal life are more than sufficient reward. [Page 49]

22. There Is Pain.

The soul would have no rainbow if the eye had no tears." ²² [Page 49]

23. Christians Have a Better Possession

Where does compassion on prisoners come from when the cost may be the seizure of your property? Here is the answer from the first century church: "You showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one" (Hebrews 10:34).

In the early days of their conversion, some Christians had been imprisoned for their faith. The others were confronted with a difficult choice: Shall we go underground and stay "safe," or shall we visit our brothers and sisters in prison and risk our lives and our property? They chose the way of love and accepted the risk. "You showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property." The key to love was joy.

But where did this joy come from? Answer: "Knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one." This word *knowing* functions just like the word *remember* in Acts 20:35- "*Remember* the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" It was *knowing* that God offered them a *better* and *lasting* reward that freed the Christians to risk the cost of love.

The power to love was sustained by the pursuit of better and lasting joy. [Pages 49-50]

24. He Endured the Cross for Joy

What sustained the greatest act of love that has ever been performed in the history of the world-the agonizing death of Jesus in our place? The answer is the same: "[Fix your] eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who *for the joy set before Him* endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2).

The greatest labor of love that ever happened was possible because Jesus pursued the greatest imaginable joy, namely, the joy of being exalted to God's right hand in the assembly of a redeemed people. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross! [Page 51]

Chapter Six: What Does It Mean for Worship?

25. Delight Yourself in God

Worship is nothing less than obedience to the command of God. “Delight yourself in the LORD” (Psalm 37:4) [Page 55]

26. Satisfied with All God Is

Every Sunday at 11 A.M., Hebrews 11:6 enters combat with popular conceptions of selfless virtue. “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who see Him.” You cannot please God if you do not come to Him for reward! Therefore, worship that pleases God is the hedonistic pursuit of God. He is our exceedingly great reward! In His presence is fullness of joy, and at His right hand are *pleasures* forevermore. Being satisfied with all God is for us in Jesus is the essence of the authentic experience of worship. [Pages 55-56]

27. Be Starved for God

People *ought* to come to corporate worship services to get. They ought to come starved for God. They ought come saying, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God" (Psalm 42:1). God is profoundly honored when people know that they will die of hunger and thirst unless they have God. And it is my job as a preacher to spread a banquet for them. I must show them from Scripture what they are really starving for -God- and then feed them well until they say, "Ahhh." That is worship. [Page 56]

28. Nothing Satisfies Like God

Nothing makes God more supreme and more central than when people are utterly persuaded that nothing-not money or prestige or leisure or family or job or health or sports or toys or friends-is going to bring satisfaction to their aching hearts besides God. [Page 57]

29. Pursuit of God Is Worship

Nothing keeps God at the center of worship like the biblical conviction that the essence of worship is deep, heartfelt satisfaction in Him and the conviction that the pursuit of that satisfaction is why we are together. [Page 57]

Chapter Seven: What Does It Mean for Marriage?

30. Seek Your Joy in the Joy of Your Spouse

The reason there is so much misery in marriage is not that husbands and wives seek their own pleasure, but that they do not seek it in the pleasure of their spouses. The biblical mandate to husbands and wives is to seek your own joy in the joy of your spouse. [Page 61]

31. Love Seeks Its Happiness in the Beloved

There is no way to exclude self-interest from love, but self-interest is not the same as selfishness. Selfishness seeks its own private happiness at the expense of others. Love seeks its happiness in the happiness of the beloved. It will even suffer and die for the beloved in order that its joy might be full in the life and purity of the beloved. [Page 63]

32. Pursue Your Joy in the Holy Joy of Your Beloved

“Husbands and wives, recognize that in marriage you have become one flesh. If you live for your private pleasure at the expense of your spouse, you are living against yourself and destroying your joy. But if you devote yourself with all your heart to the holy joy of your spouse, you will also be living for your joy and making a marriage after the image of Christ and His church.” This is what God intended for marriage: Put the glory of Christ on display by pursuing your joy in the holy joy of your beloved. [Page 64]

Chapter Eight: What Does It Mean for Money?

33. Be Content

1 Timothy 6:5-10 is so crucial that we should meditate on it in more detail. Paul is warning Timothy against those:

...who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. [Page 66]

34. Be Content with the Necessities of Life

Christians can be and ought to be content with the necessities of life. When you have God near you and for you, you don't need extra money or extra things to give you peace and security. Hebrews 13:5-6 makes crystal clear:

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

No matter which way the market is moving, God is always better than gold. His promises of help sever the cords of bondage to the love of money. [Page 70]

35. Where Your Treasure Is, Your Heart Will Be

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:32-34)

So the answer to how to store up treasure in heaven is to spend our earthly treasures for merciful purposes in Christ's name here on earth. Give to those in need—that is how you provide yourself with money belts in heaven. Notice carefully that Jesus does not merely say that treasure in heaven will be the unexpected result of generosity on earth. No, He says we should pursue treasure in heaven. Store it up! "Make yourselves money belts ... an unfailing treasure in heaven!" [Pages 71-72]

36. God Prospers Those to Spread the Gospel

God is not glorified when we keep for ourselves (no matter how thankfully) what we ought to be using to alleviate the misery of unevangelized, uneducated, unmedicated, and unfed millions. The evidence that many professing Christians have been deceived by Western commercialism and materialism is how little we give and how much we own. And by an almost irresistible law of consumerism have bought bigger (and more) houses, newer (and more cars, fancier (and more) clothes, better (and more) meat, all manner of trinkets and gadgets and containers devices and equipment to make life more fun.

Some Christians may object: Does not the Bible promise that God will prosper His people? Indeed! God increases our yield so that by giving we can prove that our yield is not our god. God does not prosper a man's business so that he can move from a Ford to a BMW. God prospers a business so that thousands of unreached peoples can be reached with the gospel. He prospers a business so that 20 percent of the world's population can move a step back from the precipice of starvation. [Page 72-73]

37. Let Your Joy in God Overflow

Do not desire to be rich: be content with the wartime necessities of life; guard yourself from pride; and let your joy in God overflow in a wealth of liberality to a lost and needy world. [Page 75]

38. Where the Sacrifices Are the Greatest, the Joys Are Deepest

...the battle cry of Christian Hedonism is world missions-sacrificing the comforts and securities of home for the unreached people of the world. Paradoxically, here where the sacrifices are the greatest, the joys are deepest. And the pursuit of these joys is the driving engine of world evangelization. [Page 76]

39. The Church Becomes Your Family

"Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life." (Mark 10:29-30)

This does not mean you get materially rich by becoming a missionary. If you volunteer for mission service with such a notion, the Lord will confront you with these words: "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Luke 9:58).

Instead, the point is that if you are deprived of your earthly family in the service of Christ, it will be made up a hundredfold in your spiritual family, the church. Yes, but what about the solitary missionaries who labor for years without being surrounded by hundreds of sisters and brothers and mothers and children in the faith? Is the promise true for them? [Page 77]

40. Christ Makes Up for Every Sacrifice

"...what Christ means is that He Himself makes up for every sacrifice. If you give up a mother's nearby affection and concern, you get it back one hundred times in the affection and concern from the ever-present Christ. If you give up the warm comradeship of a brother, you get back one hundred times the warmth and comradeship of Christ. If you give up the sense of at-homeness you had in your house, you get back one hundred times the comfort and security of knowing that your Lord owns all the houses and lands and streams and trees on earth. To prospective missionaries, Jesus says, I promise to be with you (Matthew 28:20). I will *work* for you and *be* for you so much that you will not be able to speak of having sacrificed anything. [Pages 77-78]

41. God-centered Value of Self-denial.

The gift of eternal life in God's presence is glorified if we are willing to hate our lives in this world in order to lay hold of it (John 12:25). Therein lies the God-centered value of self-denial. [Page 79]

42. Give What Cannot Keep to Gain What Cannot Lose

On January 8, 1956, five Auca Indians of Ecuador killed Jim Elliot and his four missionary companions as they were trying to bring the gospel, to the Aucas. Four young wives lost husbands and nine children lost their fathers. Elisabeth Elliot wrote that the world called it a nightmare of tragedy. Then she added, "The world did not recognize the truth of the second clause in Jim Elliot's credo":

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. ²⁸ [Page82]

Endnotes

1. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin Books, 1961), 21 (I, I).

9. Jonathan Edwards, *The "Miscellanies" (Entry Nos. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500)*, ed. Thomas Schafer, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol.13 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), 199 (Miscellany #3)

14. *Propitiation* is a rare word today. It has been replaced' in many translations with more common words (*expiation, atoning sacrifice*). I keep it in order to stress the original meaning, namely, that what- Christ did by dying on the cross for sinners was to appease the wrath of God against sinners. By requiring of His Son such humiliation and suffering for the sake of God's glory, He openly demonstrated that He does not sweep sin under the rug. All contempt for His glory is duly punished, either on the cross, where the wrath of God is propitiated for those who believe, or in hell where the wrath of God is poured out on those who don't.

15. Jonathan Edwards, *The "Miscellanies," a-500*, ed. Thomas Schafer, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 13 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), 495. Miscellany #448; see also #87,251-2; #332,410; #679 (not in the New Haven volume). Emphasis added. These Miscellanies were the private notebooks of Edwards from which he built his books, such as *The End for Which God Created the World*. I have changed some punctuation from the Yale edition.

20. Augustine, *Confessions*, 40 (X, xxix).

22. A Native American proverb. See Guy A. Zona, ed., *Soul Would Have No Rainbow if the Eye Had No Tear, And Other Native American Proverbs* (New York Touchstone Books, 1994).

28. Elisabeth Elliot, *Shadow of the Almighty. The Lift and Testament of Jim Elliot* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 19.