



## The Dangerous Duty of Delight: Daring to Make God Your Greatest Desire (LifeChange Books)

By John Piper

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Yet the longing remains. *Why?*

In *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*, John Piper turns our heart toward the one true object of human desire and happiness: God. Piper shows from Scripture that pursuing our happiness in Christ is not optional for the Christian, but essential.

Come along on a journey from desperate desire to infinite delight. Learn how you were created for ultimate satisfaction in Him, and how this new perspective will change your attitudes toward worship, relationships, material goods—and *everything*.

*“Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”*

--Saint Augustine

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## **Editorial Review**

### About the Author

John Piper is pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He has written more than forty books, including *Desiring God*, *A Godward Life*, *Don't Waste Your Life*, and *The Pleasures of God*. John and his wife, Noel, have five children and an increasing number of grandchildren.

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### **TREATING DELIGHT AS DUTY IS CONTROVERSIAL**

“Christian Hedonism” is a controversial name for an old fashioned way of life.

It goes back to *Moses*, who wrote the first books of the Bible and threatened terrible things if we would not be

happy: “Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart...therefore you shall serve your enemies” (Deuteronomy 28:47–48).

...and to the Israelite king *David*, who called God his “exceeding joy” (Psalm 43:4); and said, “Serve the LORD

with gladness” (Psalm 100:2); and “Delight yourself in the LORD” (Psalm 37:4); and who prayed, “Satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, that we may...be glad all our days” (Psalm 90:14); and who promised that complete and lasting pleasure is found in God alone: “In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever” (Psalm 16:11).

...and to *Jesus*, who said, “Blessed are you when people insult you.... Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven

is great” (Matthew 5:11–12); and who said, “I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full” (John 15:11); and who endured the Cross “for the joy set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2); and who promised that, in the end, faithful servants would hear the words, “Enter into the joy of your master” (Matthew 25:21).

...and to *James* the brother of Jesus, who said, “Consider it all joy...when you encounter various trials” (James 1:2).

...and to the apostle *Paul*, who was “sorrowful yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10); and who described the ministry of his team as being “workers with you for your joy” (2 Corinthians 1:24); and who commanded Christians to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4); and even to “exult in...tribulations” (Romans 5:3).

...and to the apostle *Peter*, who said, “To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation” (1 Peter 4:13).

...and to *Saint Augustine*, who, in the year 386, found his freedom from lust and lechery in the superior pleasures of God. “How sweet all at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose!... You drove them from me, you who are the true, the sovereign joy. You drove them from me and took their place, you who are sweeter than all pleasure.”<sup>4</sup>

...and to *Blaise Pascal*, who saw that “all men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end.... The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.”<sup>5</sup>

...and to the *Puritans* whose aim was to know God so well that “delighting in him, may be the work of our lives,”<sup>6</sup>

because they knew that this joy would “arm us against the assaults of our spiritual enemies and put our

mouths out of  
taste for those pleasures with which the tempter baits his hooks.”<sup>7</sup>

...and to *Jonathan Edwards*, who discovered and taught as powerfully as anyone that “the happiness of the creature consists in rejoicing in God, by which also God is magnified and exalted.”<sup>8</sup> “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?”<sup>9</sup>

...and to *C. S. Lewis*, who discovered “We are far too easily pleased.”<sup>10</sup>

...and to a thousand *missionaries*, who have left everything for Christ and in the end have said, with David Livingstone, “I never made a sacrifice.”<sup>11</sup>

Christian Hedonism is not new.

So if Christian Hedonism is old-fashioned, why is it so controversial? One reason is that it insists that joy is not just the spin-off of obedience to God, but *part of* obedience. It seems as though people are willing to let joy be a by-product of our relationship to God, but not an essential part of it. 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. The Bible tells us over and over to pursue joy: “Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart” (Psalm 32:11). “Let the nations be glad and sing for joy” (Psalm 67:4). “Delight yourself in the LORD” (Psalm 37:4). “Rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven” (Luke 10:20). “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).

The Bible does not teach that we should treat delight as a mere by-product of duty. *C. S. Lewis* got it right when

he wrote to a friend, “It is a Christian duty, as you know, for everyone to be as happy as he can.”<sup>12</sup> Yes, that is risky

and controversial. But it is strictly true. Maximum happiness, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is precisely what we are duty-bound to pursue.

One wise Christian described the relationship between duty and delight this way:

Suppose a husband asks his wife if he must kiss her good night. Her answer is, “You must, but not that kind of a must.” What she means is this: “Unless a spontaneous affection for my person motivates you, your overtures are stripped of all moral value.”<sup>13</sup>

In other words, if there is no pleasure in the kiss, the duty of kissing has not been done. Delight in her person, expressed in the kiss, is part of the duty, not a by-product of it.

But if that is true—if delight in doing good is part of what doing good *is*—then the pursuit of pleasure is part

of the pursuit of virtue. You can see why this starts to get controversial. It’s the seriousness of it all. “You really mean this?” someone says. “You really mean that *hedonism* is not just a trick word to get our attention. It actually says

something utterly, devastatingly true about the way we should live. The pursuit of pleasure really is a necessary

part of being a good person.” That’s right. I mean it. The Bible means it. God means it. It is very serious. We are not playing word games.

Let it be crystal clear: We are always 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).

From [AudioFile](#)

David Cochran Heath interprets the authors theory of Christian hedonism with a strong narration and attention to detail. He fully expresses Pipers discussion of how man can delight in God and bring satisfaction to his soul to quell inner restlessness. Man is not made for earth, Piper says, but for eternity. The foundation of Pipers concept is obedience to God, which leads to experiencing joy in ones relationship with Him. That joy results in an attitudinal change toward worship, marriage, and material goods, which also builds ones faith. Classic writers and theologians are quoted to support his theme. Heaths deft narration makes this audio easy to listen to. G.D.W. © AudioFile 2007, Portland, Maine-- *Copyright © AudioFile, Portland, Maine*

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#### **Judy Marinez:**

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