

The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God's Delight in Being God

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The author of *Desiring God* reveals the biblical evidence to help us see and savor what the pleasures of God show us about Him. Includes a study guide for individual and small-group use.

Isn't it true—we really don't know someone until we understand what makes that person happy? And so it is with God!

What does bring delight to the happiest Being in the universe? John Piper writes, that it's only when we know what makes God glad that we'll know the greatness of His glory. Therefore, we must comprehend "the pleasures of God."

Unlike so much of what is written today, this is not a book about us. It is about the One we were made for—God Himself. In this theological masterpiece—chosen by *World Magazine* as one of the 20th Century's top 100 books, John Piper reveals the biblical evidence to help us see and savor what the pleasures of God show us about Him. Then we will be able to drink deeply—and satisfyingly—from the only well that offers living water.

What followers of Jesus need now, more than anything else, is to know and love—behold and embrace—the great, glorious, sovereign, happy God of the Bible.

"This is a unique and precious book that everybody should read more than once."
—J.I. PACKER, Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia

JOHN PIPER is founder and teacher of desiringGod.org and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For thirty-three years, he served as pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. He is the author of more than fifty books, including the contemporary classic *Desiring God*, and more than thirty years of his sermons and articles are available, free of charge, at desiringGod.org. John and his wife, Noel, have five children and twelve grandchildren.

Preface

It is therefore astonishing how little effort is put into knowing God. It's as though the president of the United States came to live with you for a month, and you only said hello in passing every day or so. Or as if you were flown at the speed of light for a couple of hours around the sun and the solar system, and instead of looking out the window, you played a computer game. Or as if you were invited to watch the best actors, singers, athletes, inventors, and scholars perform their best, but you declined to go so you could watch the TV season's final soap. If you have even picked up this book and read three paragraphs, it is a sign that you want more. God is at work stirring you to know him. Something is wakening. You sense that you are missing something. And it must have to do with God.

Or you may have gone deep with him for years. You may be a veteran flier. Your eyes are glued to the window of the spaceship. You take every evening to ply the president with questions. You sit, leaning forward on the front row of the theater. You want more. You have

climbed to the top and looked over the ridge of your knowledge, and the endless mountain ranges of God have taken your breath away.

If I can be of any help, it may simply be that I started climbing before you. I love to search into God's self-revelation. Just this morning I marked again in my Bible, "Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!" (Psalm 105:4, ESV). This is what I love to do. Seek him. Know him. And show him.

Where is he to be found and known? He tells us: "The LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD" (1 Samuel 3:21, ESV). God reveals himself by his Word. Himself by his Word. If we want him, we go through his Word. So I spend most of my time seeking the Lord by searching his Word.

If I can be of any help in showing you more of God, it will be only through what he has said in his Word. It will not be by ingenuity but faithfulness. Knowing the wonders of God happens by knowing the wonders of the Word.

The Pleasures of God is built on the truth that "the worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love." That's a quote from Henry Scougal. You will meet him in the Introduction.

What he means is that the worth and excellence of a soul is measured by the worth and excellence of what the soul enjoys most. So if I enjoy the sin of boasting most, I am a small, pitiful, sinful soul. But if I enjoy the greatness of God most, my soul has been rescued and is being made magnificent.

So I turned the whole thing around and asked, How worthy and excellent is God's soul? And to find out I asked, What is the object of his love? Not: What does he pity most or have compassion on most? (That would be us.) But: What does he enjoy most? What does he delight in? If Henry Scougal's principle holds, this question will reveal the worth and excellency of God. For "the worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love."

So my aim is to scour the Scriptures to find what God delights in. What are his pleasures? Not for curiosity, but for the sake of knowing the greatness of his worth and excellency. I want to peer with you into the mountain ranges of God's perfections as far as I can see. So I put this particular telescope to my eye: the perfections of God revealed through his pleasures.

I have been astonished at how much of God's glory is revealed through this telescope. I thank God for the day I read Henry Scougal's sentence: "The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love." Few lenses have proved to be more powerful for seeing the greatness of God's perfections.

The benefits of knowing God more fully and deeply in this way are many. This is what our minds and hearts are made for—to know and love God. Nothing compares to the mind's

illumination and the heart's awakening to the realization: This is why I exist. Seeing God like this with my mind, and savoring God like this with my heart, is like no other experience. All others are leading here.

And it gets very practical. Seeing and savoring the glory of God like this changes us profoundly. And when we are changed like this, all our attitudes and actions are affected. Here's the way the New Testament says it: "We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18, ESV). Beholding glory we are being transformed. That is what I pray will happen as you read this book. I don't recommend that you read it quickly. Beholding glory begs for lingering.

The modern, fast-paced world will tempt you to rush and skim. This kind of life will make you shallow. The world does not need more widely read, shallow people. It needs deep people. I don't mean complex. I don't mean highly educated. I don't mean you know big words. I don't mean you know historical background. I mean you have seen glory—the glory of God in his Word. You have pondered it and felt its relation to all the parts of your life. You have been steadied and satisfied by it. You have come home. You are not frantic anymore. You are at peace in the presence of God. This is what I mean by deep. This is what the world needs.

It has been just over twenty years since the first edition of *The Pleasures of God* appeared. I am deeply thankful to God that he has mercifully made it helpful to many. And I am thankful to Multnomah Books that they still believe in the value of this book and are willing to give it new life. I have tried to bring any dated material up to date or rewrite things so they are less dependent on temporal change. I have removed chapter 10 of the second edition because it grew to be an entire book: *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God* (Crossway, 2010). And I have removed the Appendix from the second edition ("Are There Two Wills in God? Divine Election and God's Desire for All to Be Saved") with the intention of making it a stand-alone booklet. These changes make the book shorter and more focused, as in the original 1991 edition.

I owe more to my wife, Noë I, for what I am able to write than anyone knows (but God). There are ways a wife sustains and shapes a man that even he does not realize. This is one of God's mercies in marriage. Forty-three years has been a good season for shaping me deeply. I am thankful. Eternity will reveal the debt I owe her.

Thank you, Noë I, for the early morning walks down Atlanta Street in the summer of 1990 as this book was being written. And thanks for standing by me in the multiple revisions, including this one. I love you and say again that these lines are as true today as when I wrote them on our twentieth anniversary:

Although the fig tree blossom not,
And all the vines of our small plot
Be barren, and the olive fail,
The sheep grow weak and heifers frail,

We will rejoice in God, my love,
And take our pleasures from above:
The Lord, our God, shall be our strength
And give us life, whatever length
On earth he please, and make our feet
Like mountain deer, to rise and cleat
The narrow path for man and wife
That rises steep and leads to life.

Finally, a word to my sons. The book is dedicated to you, Karsten and Benjamin and Abraham and Barnabas. Things have changed since 1991. None of you was married then. Now you are all married and have children. And all of you have a sister now, Talitha Ruth, a remarkable gift of God to our family.

My goal for you all has not changed in these twenty years. If there is any legacy I want to leave you, it is not money nor house nor land; it is a vision of God-as great and glorious a God as one could ever see. But more than that, I want to leave the legacy of passion for this God. He bought you with a great price. You are precious to him. And to me. I pray that your passion for him will be a passion far beyond what any human can produce-a passion for God flowing from the very heart of God. Never forget that God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him. But even more-and this is my prayer for you-in God's time, may your satisfaction in him be without measure, as it becomes the very pleasure of God in God.

Other Books

The Hero: How The Story of God Shapes Our Life Together, Who's your hero? We each have this propensity to view our life as our own independent story, with ourselves in the starring role. We live as our own saviour, overcoming our challenges and living for our glory. How's this working out for us?The Gospel of Jesus calls us to flip the script and find our place in the story of God. We are minor characters in his grand and glorious story. We find true meaning, forgiveness, purpose and joy as we find our place in God's story, shaped by the gospel of Jesus.Whether you have never opened a Bible or have been a Christian your entire life, The Hero calls us to truly know and be defined by the gospel story, and to experience life as God intended it to be.

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