

MORE THAN HAPPY
Enjoying God
Psalm 34:1-8

In this series, we have been learning that happiness is far less satisfying than joy, and that the GREATEST JOY of life is the ENJOYMENT OF GOD! It was a surprise to many of you to hear the FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENT OF FAITH from the Westminster Catechism: **The CHIEF END of man is to GLORIFY God and to ENJOY him forever!** That is such a SPECTACULAR statement! We can enjoy God and God actually ENJOYS US when we enjoy him! However, many people WONDER HOW you can actually ENJOY GOD. Really, how can you enjoy someone that you cannot TOUCH or SEE? Is it even possible? The answer is a resounding, joyful YES!!! You can enjoy him and even love him. Simon Peter said it this way: **1 Peter 1:8 NIV**
8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

That sounds so awesome, but HOW does this happen? I want to give you a few practical ideas that will help you to GET STARTED on the path to enjoying God. **But remember, no one else can enjoy God for you; you have to step toward that pleasure on your own! This is a DISCOVERY that can only be made in a REAL RELATIONSHIP!** Thankfully, God does not WAIT ON us to be the INITIATORS of this enjoyment; He always makes the FIRST MOVE. It is God who brings HIS PLEASURES to us for our enjoyment. **Our RESPONSE to his goodness will determine our ability (or our FAILURE) to enjoy him in INCREASING MEASURE!** This first key to enjoying God is simple and direct: **PRAISE GOD.**

Psalm 34:1-3 NASB

1 I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul will make its boast in the LORD; The humble will hear it and rejoice. 3 Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.

***THANK God!**

-Thankfulness must be a CONSTANT: “. . . at ALL times.”

*GRATITUDE is a KEY to locking us OUT of SELF-CENTEREDNESS and PRIDE!

[Bless = Kneel, Thank, Congratulate] “Way to go, God!!”

-Your GOAL in thanksgiving is to BLESS God; to bring him joy!

It gives him GREAT PLEASURE to see us enjoying HIM and his GIFTS to us! **[My kids]**

Thanksgiving firmly plants our enjoyment in God rather than in just the pleasure itself.

***BRAG on God! (Vs. 2)**

-Bragging on God gives him HONOR in the eyes of all who see our blessings.

*Staying silent allows people to assume that you are blessed because of your own work!

*Verbalizing your HEART for God allows/prompts others to praise!

-Bragging on God is the OPPOSITE of being ASHAMED of God! **[My joy on Prom night 1983]**

***SING to God!** God loves it when we sing TO him and FOR him! [Worship is for God; not us!] Thanking, bragging on, and singing to God are basic relational principles. **They increase joy in marriage, too! [This is why there are so many LOVE SONGS!]**

The second key to enjoying God is another element in all healthy relationships: **SEEK GOD.**

In nearly every New Testament letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to churches he had planted, he wrote a prayer that they would GROW in the KNOWLEDGE of God. Knowing God is the result of seeking God, but it requires something on our part. We will not know God better by some process of osmosis! **We have to SEEK HIM like we sought our SPOUSE when we were dating!** [CLEAVE= Never stop chasing!] **Are you passionately seeking God?** What do you really KNOW about God? King David gave us a glimpse of his intimate relationship with God:

Psalm 27:4 NIV

4 One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

These are the words of a man that was DEEPLY IN LOVE with the Lord. He LONGED for him. He wanted to take the necessary time to KNOW him better and better! He was willing to spend precious TIME with God so that he could be even more OVERWHELMED by his BEAUTY.

Beauty = Kindness, Delightfulness, Favor

There is NO SUBSTITUTE for spending TIME with God in order to know him better. You will NEVER know him well and ENJOY HIM FULLY by giving him ONE HOUR ON SUNDAY! Time with God for many people is a mystery. After a few minutes of reading God's word and praying some prayers, they seem to wonder what to expect next. If nothing remarkable happens in their emotions or in their mind, then they wrap up their truly QUIET TIME and move on to something more SUBSTANTIAL. What a shame! Time with God is much more than just waiting for an emotional experience. It is instead a time to TALK to God and to LISTEN to God as he speaks to you from his word. It is a time to SHARE your hopes and fears with him and gain his PERSPECTIVE on your trials and his HELP in your temptations.

*LEARN TO MAKE EVERY PLACE YOU GO A "BETHEL."

-Like Jacob, we may be in the presence of God and not even know it!

Ultimately, the only way to TRULY know God is by REVELATION. God wants you to DISCOVER him in the course of life as he REVEALS HIMSELF to you. **[This is how you got to know your spouse as well!]** It is so sad to me when people just try to INVENT God in their own minds. God is not the creation of the mind of man. He is a PERFECT, SELF-EXISTENT BEING who must be DISCOVERED. Thankfully, he has already given us the TOOLS we need to grow in our knowledge - and thus of our ENJOYMENT - of him.

***Seek to know him in his CREATION.**

God has revealed certain things about himself in CREATION. Just paying attention to the wonder, beauty, and brilliance revealed in creation will draw you to God. **Remember, the GOAL is to ENJOY GOD in his creation.** This means that it will lift your heart and bring you gladness. How have you enjoyed God in creation this week? **[Summer thunderstorms, Singing birds, etc.]**

***Seek to know him in his WORD.**

-His word is DEEPLY CONNECTED to joy! **Psalm 119:111 NIV**

111 Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.

-God's Word is compared to HONEY! [How Rabbi's taught God's word to children.]

*God's Word brings joy because in it God offers us WISE DIRECTION for life!

*God's Word brings joy because in it God reveals precious PROMISES to us.

-Have you discovered any promises of God that have become precious to you?

***Seek to know him through PERSONAL EXPERIENCES with him!**

*The knowledge of God that we find primarily in Creation and in our INITIAL time in the Word may simply be a type of UNDERSTANDING. You are growing in your awareness of God's power and the consistency of his nature and character. But that is INCOMPLETE by itself. The knowledge of God that you truly seek is an EXPERIENTIAL knowledge. **True joy comes when we experience INTIMACY with God. Psalm 34:8 NIV**

8 Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

In fact, ALL of Psalm 34 is a testament to DAVID'S EXPERIENCE with God in all kinds of situations and circumstances. David KNEW that God was his greatest joy because of all that he had been through WITH God. **He had taken REFUGE in God and so he KNEW that God was FAITHFUL.**

He KNEW that God was GOOD. He RAN TO GOD when he had failed, so he KNEW that God was MERCIFUL. This is why David prayed the heart wrenching prayer of **Psalm 51:12 NIV**

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

-Even if you FAIL him, you do not have to stay bound to your failure!

Are you paying attention? Have you so EXPERIENCED the mercy, goodness, faithfulness, and power of God that you cannot help but WORSHIP and ADORE and ENJOY God? What was your last experience with God, and how did it affect you?

Enjoyable experiences with God ultimately come as the result of the final key to enjoying God that I want to share with you this morning: **OBEY GOD.**

Biblical joy is an ACT OF FAITH before it becomes an ACTUAL EMOTION. All of the truths and promises and directives found in Scripture are only INFORMATION until they are transformed into PERSONAL EXPERIENCE through OBEDIENCE. This is the kind of joy that Jesus was talking about in **John 15:10-11 NIV**

10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

You will never enjoy God to the max if you are not faithfully committed to him. Relationship with Jesus is an EXCLUSIVE relationship. You do not love him along with all of your other lovers! I challenge you to truly DEVOTE yourself to God as your sole SOURCE of satisfaction.

*You only discover the JOY OF HOLINESS in obedience!

-God offers PLEASURES in intimate relationship with him like no other! **Psalm 16:11 NIV**
11 You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

You don't have to run away from God to experience the greatest pleasures. They are always available IN HIS PRESENCE!

Let's pray.