

Study Guide

for

Desiring God

Meditations of a Christian Hedonist

with answers

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Questions
Only

Introduction

How I Became a Christian Hedonist

1. What does the author say is the aim of this book?
2. What text of Scripture does the author cite to prove that the issue of glorifying God relates to every area of life, including how you drink your orange juice at breakfast?
3. Evidently the author does not think that the Biblical meaning of “glorifying God” is obvious to everyone, since he writes a whole book about it. What do you think the word “glorify” might be taken to mean that the author would think is unbiblical? Hint: What if you took “glorify” in the same sense as “beautify” or “fortify” or “purify”?
4. The author thinks that by enjoying God we glorify him. To get on the author’s wave length you might try to think of some examples in your life where you “glorify” something or someone or some activity by enjoying it.
5. As the author describes the emerging of Christian Hedonism in his college days, two things seemed in conflict in his experience. One was an inherited moral principle and the other was an inescapable reality of the heart. What was this principle and this reality?
6. Pascal’s quote says that even people who commit suicide do it because they are driven by a longing for happiness. Can you state that fact in a way that overcomes the objection that it can’t be true because some people commit suicide without any knowledge of what lies beyond death?
7. In the quote from C. S. Lewis, where does he think the notion has come from that it is a bad thing to desire our own good and to earnestly hope for the enjoyment of it?
8. What evidence does Lewis cite that the human problem is not that we are all seeking pleasure but that we are seeking it in a half-hearted way?
9. How is the point which the author learned from Lewis an advance on the first point learned from Pascal?
10. What was the third insight the author gained in his emerging Christian Hedonism?
11. From the quote by Lewis what is the relationship between delight in the countryside and praise of the countryside?

12. In view of the preceding answer explain why Lewis' early idea about God was wrong -- the idea that when God commanded praise from his people in the Psalms he was like a "like a vain woman wanting compliments". In other words, if God is not vain to demand our praise, what is he in view of the preceding answer?
13. Would it be virtuous for you to imitate God and seek praise for yourself the way God seeks it for himself?
14. The author refers to "the most liberating discovery" he ever made. What was the discovery and why do you think the author calls it "liberating"?
15. Are we actually commanded to pursue our pleasure? Where?
16. The author distances himself from the health, wealth and prosperity gospel. How?
17. Why doesn't Christian Hedonism make a God out of pleasure?
18. If I am living for pleasure, why am I not putting pleasure above God?
19. The author is eager not to have his book seen as "another spin-off from modern man's enslavement to the centrality of himself". From what we have seen so far, why shouldn't it be?
20. What point in the definition of Christian Hedonism on pages 27-8 has not been touched on in the introduction?
21. What is the source that the author claims for his insight?

1

The Happiness of God **Foundation for Christian Hedonism** **(With Appendix One)**

- 1.1. The ultimate ground or basis of Christian Hedonism is the fact that God is uppermost in his own affections. Can you take the words, “God is uppermost in his own affections,” and say that in another way? Try several other statements that mean the same thing.
- 1.2. We will discuss below why it is that God’s happiness in himself (rooted in his sovereignty) is indispensable for our pursuit of joy, that is, why God’s happiness in himself is the foundation of Christian Hedonism. (See questions 7, 10, 11.) But at this point we need to establish two things: one is that God is indeed uppermost in his own affections (questions 2-13), and the other is that he is indeed sovereign (questions 14-20).

Based upon John Piper’s effort to get at a definition of God’s glory. Write out in your own words how you would try to communicate the glory of God to someone who knows nothing about the Bible.

- 1.3. Appendix 1 gives the Biblical basis for the claim that God delights in his glory above all things, in other words, that he is uppermost in his own affections. From this appendix, what other Biblical phrase means virtually the same as God’s doing something “for his glory”?
- 1.4. Explain how God’s creating man and woman in his own image was the same as creating them for his glory.
- 1.5. At the tower of Babel people said they aimed to “make a name for ourselves” (Genesis 11:4). God was very displeased with this. But when God called Abram he said, “I will make your name great” (Genesis 12:2). Basing your answer on God’s pursuit of his own glory, explain why God is displeased with the people at the tower of Babel having a great name, but he was not displeased with Abram having a great name.
- 1.6. Exodus 20:5 says that God is jealous. a) Define legitimate, healthy jealousy in ordinary human relationships. b) Then explain how God’s jealousy relates to his glory and his people.
- 1.7. Explain how it is that God’s all-surpassing passion for his own glory is the foundation of the gospel -- that God has mercy on sinners who look to him for mercy. The key to this explanation is found in texts like Ezekiel 20:5-9; Psalm 106:6-8; 1 Samuel 12:19-23; Isaiah 48:9-11; Ezekiel 36:22-33; Psalm 25:11. See question # 1.10 for a similar issue.
- 1.8. One important text not included concerning the reason Jesus came and died, is Romans 15:8-9. After reading this text, a) state the three reasons that Jesus came and b) put in your own words what it is that unites these three reasons.

- 1.9. After reading Appendix 1 what then is the goal of all God does in history?
- 1.10 A big question that rises after we decide that God is pursuing his own glory in all that he does is this: Is this a loving thing for God to do? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:5 that “love seeks not its own.” Yet it appears that God seeks “his own” praise in all that he does. Why is it loving for God to exalt himself in this way, but not for us to exalt ourselves like this?
- 1.11 A very closely related question is, Why is God’s happiness in himself (his glory) indispensable for our pursuit of joy? Or, why is God’s happiness in himself the foundation of Christian Hedonism?
- 1.12 Another way to get at this same point is to recognize that you can’t delight fully in an unrighteous God, and then to recognize that God would indeed be unrighteous if he were unhappy. Why would God be unrighteous if he were not fully happy in his own glory?
- 1.13 The author maintains that God can delight in his people and his works without contradicting the full delight that he has in himself, that is, in his own glory. State briefly why this is so.
- 1.14 Saying that God is uppermost in his own affections means that God’s happiness is based on himself. His own glory is what makes God glad. But for God to be infinitely happy in himself and what he does, something must be true about God’s ability. a) What is that? b) And why is this necessary for God’s happiness?
- 1.15 If we are expected to “rejoice always,” (1 Thessalonians 5:16; Philippians 4:4) even though we are not sovereign, why must God be sovereign in order to always be happy? (This question is not explicitly answered in the book. Think about it.)
- 1.16 Now we must return to the Biblical foundation of God’s sovereignty. We have spoken about the necessity of God’s sovereignty as the basis of his happiness. But we must now look at the Biblical basis of the doctrine of God’s sovereignty. Some texts are cited on pp. 33-7. The theological problem is also addressed.

What text from the Bible do you think shows most plainly that even in the sinful acts of men God’s plan is not thwarted but is fulfilled?

- 1.17 But surely Satan must be reckoned with as a significant cause in the evil and pain of the world. Using Satan’s involvement with Job in Job 1 and 2 describe how the will of God and the will of Satan inter-relate in bringing about misery like Job’s.
- 1.18 If God’s sovereignty means that in some sense he wills all things, then it seems as though he wills things that he disapproves of. This creates a major problem that we need to try to solve. One way to state the problem is to say God seems to be inconsistent, willing something that in Scripture he says he does not will. Another way to say it is that it seems to make God the author of sin. What is one way to solve this problem of God’s apparent inconsistency in seeming to will some things which he says he does not will?
- 1.19 This kind of problem inevitably raises the problem of why God saw fit to permit or ordain the existence of sin and evil. It is not adequate to say that all evil is owing to “free will”. If God knew what was going to happen and still chose to allow men to choose sin, then we must answer why. Some solve this problem today by saying that God did not know what was going to happen when he created man with a will. The author regards this “solution” as very wide of the Biblical mark. Others have said that God was willing to allow all the sin and misery in the world because there was no other way that he could make men free; and he values the freely chosen love of

people so much that it was worth the sin and misery of the world to get it. That may be part of the answer, if “freely chosen” does not mean “chosen without God’s decisive enabling grace.” But it is not the whole answer.

We have seen that God created all things and does all things for his glory. Therefore somehow the existence of sin and misery has to relate to this great overarching goal of God. Reflect for a moment on how the existence of sin and misery might serve to glorify aspects of God’s nature that otherwise could not have been displayed. What attributes of God might shine forth with greater glory because sin and misery exist?

- 1.20 As we become more and more confident that God sovereignly controls all things, we need to become more and more confident of two or three other attributes of God in order to maintain joy and peace. What would these other attributes be and why must we be sure of them?

2

Conversion

Creation of a Christian Hedonist

- 2.1. If you put Jeremiah 32:40-41 beside Romans 8:28 what emerges as the answer to this question: Who are the people in Jeremiah 32:40-41 whom God is going to do good to with all his heart? Or, to ask the question another way, how can you know that you are one of those whom God is rejoicing over to do them good? What would be the answer if, instead of Romans 8:28, you use Psalm 147:11 or Isaiah 64:4 or 2 Chronicles 16:9?
- 2.2. What are the two reasons the author gives for using the new terminology of Christian Hedonism in relation to conversion instead of simply saying the Biblical sentence, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31)?
- 2.3. The first answer to question #2.2 is based on an unstated assumption. What is it? It has to do with the relationship between faith and works. When you think you know what the assumption is, list some Bible verses that might support it.
- 2.4. On pages 55-64 the author unfolds one way of summing up the need for conversion and the way of conversion in six steps. Most Christians agree that in order to put saving faith in Jesus a person has to admit that he is a sinner and in need of forgiveness and change. But that means people need to have some understanding of what sin is. Sin is discussed in step 3. What is the essence of sin that makes steps 1 and 2 so important to make plain first? Or: how do steps 1 and 2 help get people ready to grasp what sin really is?
- 2.5. One popular notion about how the gospel should be presented is that most people today already feel so bad about themselves and about life that you don’t need to tell them the bad news that they are sinners as part of a gospel presentation. All you need to do is present Jesus as the solution to the misery they already feel. In view of the answer to #2.4 why is this mistaken?
- 2.6. Turning now to step 4, the consequences of sin must be addressed. It is not a loving thing to keep silent about impending calamity if a person can escape it. The calamity impending for sinners is hell (according to the texts gathered on these pages). Two objections to the historic view of hell as eternal punishment are raised. Let’s ponder them one at a time. One is this: it cannot be just to punish eternally a sin or series of sins that took only 70 years to commit. Hell is an unjust over-reaction to finite evil. In your own words what answer is given to this?
- 2.7. The other objection to hell is found in note 3 on page 59. It is given by the popular novelist of the 19th century, George McDonald. He says that God is bound by his justice to destroy sin in his creation -- that is, get rid of it, not just punish it. In fact ongoing punishment of sin gives a home in the universe to “victorious evil.” “God is triumphantly defeated” if there is a hell. What is the problem with this?

- 2.8. The foundation of the gospel is found in Romans 3:25-26. Answer the following questions on this text. a) What had happened that made it necessary for God's righteousness to be demonstrated? b) Taking your cue from the nearby verse 23, state the answer to "a" in terms of the glory of God. c) In view of your answer to "b" how would you define God's righteousness so as to make clear why it needed to be vindicated? d) Why does the blood (i.e. death) of Christ vindicate the righteousness of God? (For a hint see John 17:4; 12:27f. Keep thinking in the terms of Romans 3:23.) e) Why does your own hope depend on God's vindicating his righteousness?
- 2.9. After we see all that God has done to accomplish redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus we have to ask: What must we do to benefit from what Jesus did? The answer is that we must be "converted". What is the author's argument that true conversion involves faith and repentance?
- 2.10. What is true of about us as human beings that requires the event of conversion to be brought about by a miracle of divine grace rather than human achievement?
- 2.11. Cite some texts that show that conversion (repentance and faith) is a gift of God.
- 2.12. "Regeneration" is a technical word for being born again. Does the author think that we are born again (regenerated) by faith or that we are enabled to have faith by being born again? What verses would he use to show this?
- 2.13. The author believes that regeneration is the same thing as God's "effectual calling" or what some call "irresistible grace". What passage of Scripture would he use to argue that there is an internal and effectual call of God that is different from the general call that all people hear when a preacher preaches the gospel? What would he mean that this call or this work of grace is irresistible since the Bible says very plainly that we can quench (1 Thess. 5:19) or grieve (Eph. 4:30) or resist (Acts 7:51) the Holy Spirit?
- 2.14. What are two reason mentioned in 1 Corinthian 1:26-31 why God would call people in this sovereign way?
- 2.15. In pages 67ff. the author tries to show that what really happens in regeneration or in effectual calling (by irresistible grace) is the "creation of a Christian Hedonist". In other words, behind and before the act of saving faith and repentance something happens to the human heart by the grace of God that gives it the inclination to embrace Christ as all-sufficient for my needs and my longings. Where once there was no sense at all that Christ is beautiful and desirable, suddenly there is a sense that he is all of that and true. This change is the creation of a Christian Hedonist -- a person who now finds joy and peace in the beauty of Christ's perfections. Use Hebrews 11:6 and John 3:18-20 and argue in your own words that a new taste for Christ must be created before there can be saving faith.

3

Worship

The Feast of Christian Hedonism

- 3.1. The introduction to this chapter is a kind of exposition of John 4:1-38, the story of "the woman at the well." Jesus had been alone with the Samaritan woman while his disciples are in the town getting food. After they return they offer him something to eat (v. 31) and he responds, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." a) What is the food that Jesus was eating while they were away? (v. 34) b) More specifically, what is God's purpose (stated earlier in this chapter) that Jesus has been up to while the disciples were away?
- 3.2. Jesus offers the Samaritan woman a kind of water that enables a person never to thirst again! And even more amazing, he says this water actually becomes a spring of water welling up to eternal life (v. 14)! Evidently this is the sort of "bait" you use when you are hunting worshipers for the living God (v. 23). If so, what would be one of the simplest definitions of worship?
- 3.3. What is the water that Jesus gives? The author suggests two possibilities from other passages in the Bible and then shows that these two possibilities really fit together to give one answer. a) What are the two possible things that "water" is? And b) How do these fit together to give a full answer to what the "water" is?
- 3.4. In view of what you have just answered in 3.3b what kind of worship does the Father want in John 4:23 when it says, "True worshipers will worship Him *in spirit and truth*, for such the Father seeks to worship him"? That is, what does worship in "spirit and truth" mean?
- 3.5. Changing the metaphor, The author suggests that we can get a picture of worship with the following images. Put the reality beside the image.

The fuel of worship	=
The fire of worship	=
The furnace of worship	=
The heat of worship	=
- 3.6. Why does the author say that worship is "*gladly* reflecting back to God the radiance of his worth." Why not just say it is a reflecting back to God the radiance of his worth? Why add "gladly"?
- 3.7. But if worship can include the emotions of contrition and brokenness, how can we include "gladly" as a necessary part of the definition of true worship?
- 3.8. List the sequence of emotions that are included in worship and give at least one verse to illustrate each one.

- 3.9. The author argues that worship is "an end in itself." Strictly he means that worship cannot be performed as a means to anything else. Like fund-raising or missions or education or church growth. a) Does the author mean that worship will not have good effects in these areas? b) What does he mean? Illustrate from your experience.
- 3.10. Why does insisting that the emotions of worship are ends in themselves guard the God-centeredness of worship?
- 3.11. a) How does the author show the inadequacy of duty as a motive for true worship and b) how does he recover duty as a noble and helpful Christian concept?
- 3.12. It appears then that the pursuit of joy is an essential part of the duty to worship God. Or to put it another way, to the degree that we strive against our passion for happiness we will hinder our capacity for genuine worship. If the pursuit of my happiness is at the heart of worship, how can this be thought of as humble?
- 3.13. What are the "three stages of worship" and why do they all honor God?
- 3.14. What is the "moral enemy of worship"?
- 3.15. Define evil from Jeremiah 2:11-13.
- 3.16. A great danger of stressing the emotional essence of worship as the author has is that it might lead some people to try to manufacture the emotion in artificial ways (e.g. with music or lighting or incense or other rituals). What counsel from Jonathan Edwards will guard us from this mistake?
- 3.17. What two things are the "forms" of worship supposed to do in relation to the true emotional experience of worship?

4

Love

The Labor of Christian Hedonism

- 4.1. The author distinguishes between “vertical” Christian Hedonism and “horizontal” Christian Hedonism. What is vertical Christian Hedonism?
- 4.2. What is the thesis of this chapter?
- 4.3. What is one common view of how genuine love (or morality) and the pursuit of happiness relate to each other -- the view that the author is striving against?
- 4.4. Pages 90-93 deal with some passages of Scripture that seem to contradict the thesis of this chapter. For example 1 Corinthians 13:5; 10:24,33; Romans 15:1-3. Take 1 Corinthians 13:5 (“Love seeks not its own.”) and point out two clues in the nearer context that show Paul does NOT mean it is wrong to pursue joy in the obedience of love. Do you see any other clues besides the ones the author found?
- 4.5. Look at the last sentence (in parentheses) in the quote by atheist Ayn Rand on page 101. Now find the sentence on pages 115-6 that says almost exactly the same thing. It is a tragedy that Ayn Rand rejected Christianity, thinking that the view of morality she was attacking was truly Christian. What should we have said to Ayn Rand from what you have seen so far in this chapter? Another way to ask the question would be to say, What would Jonathan Edwards have said to Ayn Rand about the distortion of 1 Corinthians 13:5 that she was scorning?
- 4.6. What text would you cite to show that God not only does acts of love but that he loves to do acts of love? Should we try to be like him in this way?
- 4.7. If Jesus said, “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends,” (John 15:13), how can Paul say that it is possible to “give your life to be burned and have not love” (1 Corinthians 13:3)?
- 4.8. It is amazingly common to hear people say, “Love is not a feeling. Love is an act of will. Love is a deed of helpfulness.” The author concedes that there are at least two good intentions behind these statements. What are they?
- 4.9. But the author thinks it is misleading and inaccurate to talk this way, as though love does not have to have any component of feeling. What are some evidences in the context of 1 Corinthians 13 itself that love does involve feelings, including some and excluding others?

- 4.10. How feelings relate to love can be seen if we look at a living example of genuine love described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:1-8. According to this example of love in the lives of the Macedonian Christians, a) What is the ultimate source of genuine love? b) How does this produce love? c) What does love look like practically? d) What definition of love emerges from this text?
- 4.11. The definition of love on page 119 is not quite satisfying to explain the impulse of love. Something is missing. But that “something” is implied two paragraphs later when it says, Love “is first a deeply satisfying experience of the fullness of God’s grace, and then a *doubly satisfying experience of sharing* that grace with another person.” What impulse is implied in these words that is not explicit in calling love an “overflow”?
- 4.12. How does 2 Corinthians 9:7 confirm the point that mere acts of helpfulness are not necessarily genuine love?
- 4.13. Can you state in a few sentences now why the thesis of this chapter included the statement that if you forsake the pursuit of your joy you cannot love people or please God?
- 4.14. Another text that gives a real life example of love is 2 Corinthians 1:23-2:4. Show from these verses that when love is abounding between two people each is not merely seeking the joy of the other but, more than that, is seeking *his own joy* in the joy of the other.
- 4.15. What does the author mean when he says that if love is the LABOR of Christian Hedonism, it must also be the LEISURE of Christian Hedonism? What passage of Scripture illustrates each of these?
- 4.16. If love is the overflow of JOY that seeks to expand itself in the joy of others, how can there be weeping and “anguish of heart” in the life of a consistently loving person?
- 4.17. Compare the second full paragraph page 114 and the fifth paragraph on page 125. What words in 1 Corinthians 13:3 and Acts 20:35 make it very hard to accept the common notion that reward is a good *result* of love but a bad *motive*?
- 4.18. Explain from 1 Peter 5:1-2 and Hebrews 13:17 why it is unloving for a pastor to abandon the pursuit of his joy in the ministry.
- 4.19. What radical element of Christian Hedonism does Luke 12:33 make explicit?
- 4.20. In each of the three texts from Hebrews what is the key power of love? If we today want to be as radically loving as were the early Christians and Moses and Jesus, what must we labor to cultivate in our hearts?
- 4.21. How does the author show in his letter to Ronn that Jesus’ pursuit of joy in the cross was not mercenary but was in fact infinitely caring of us?
- 4.22. Is there joy in the conquests of mountain climbing that cost you to lose toes and fingers to frost bite? What might be the counterpart to this strange experience in the moral life? A fuller explanation of this powerful impulse to see our weaknesses overcome is given on p. 139. Use this to describe the real dynamic of how love is driven the way a mountain climber is driven.

- 4.23. One way of making the imaginary dialogue on page 136 real in your own life is to ask, “Do you feel more loved when you are visited in the hospital by someone who comes cheerfully (because they anticipate joy in your encouragement and healing) or by someone who comes dutifully (because it is part of their pastoral job and God’s expectation)?
- 4.24. What does the author mean that the nature of a loving act and the hoped for reward must be “organically related”? How is this illustrated in the reward we hope for in Romans 8:29 and Luke 6:35?

5

Scripture Kindling for Christian Hedonism

- 5.1. What are several Biblical evidences that every day with Jesus is not (in this life) sweeter than the day before?
- 5.2. If the life of joy in God is not one of steady, unremitting improvement, how would you describe the normal (Biblical) Christian life of joy in God ?
- 5.3. If you describe this normal Christian life of joy in God with two or three different metaphors, what role does the Bible play for the Christian in each of these metaphors? For example, if the Christian life is a “journey”, you might say the Bible plays the role of road map.
- 5.4. How would you answer someone who lived by another “holy book” contrary to the Bible and said that its teachings brought them joy and satisfaction?
- 5.5. Describe four different ways that “the Word of God is your life.”
- 5.6. On pages 145-8 we see that the reformer, “Little Bilney”, and the criminal Tokichi Ichii each pointed to a specific word of Scripture that God used to awaken spiritual life. Which texts were these? Did God use a specific verse to do this for you? Can you think of other historical persons who point to one specific word that caused them to be born again?
- 5.7. If someone comes to you in distress that their faith has wavered and they are full of doubts about the love of God and the reality of Christ and heaven and forgiveness, what might be one of the most helpful things you could do for them? Show from Scripture the basis of your answer.
- 5.8. What are two verses that show that the link between joy and the word of God is believing that word?
- 5.9. Since the fruit of the Holy Spirit is joy, we will surely want the fullness of the Spirit’s effects in our lives. Develop two different Biblical lines of evidence that filling our selves with the word is a crucial way to have the fullness of the Spirit and thus the fullness of joy.
- 5.10. At Bethlehem Baptist Church one of the signs says, “Hope in God.” Suppose someone read that sign and said, “How can you obey a command like that? I can’t just turn hope on and off in my heart.” How might you respond to that person to help them see how to obey that command?

- 5.11. The word of God frees. This can be thought about in two ways: 1) we may need freedom from confusion and ignorance about what way to go in life or what to think about an idea; or 2) we may need freedom from some bondage to a pleasure that is wrong and harmful. Explain how the Bible functions in those two different needs to give freedom.
- 5.12. What are three passages of Scripture that make explicit the link between the word of God and victory over Satan's power?
- 5.13. If the word of God gives and sustains life, if it begets and sustains faith, if it brings the Spirit of God, if it gives and sustains hope, if it makes us free and wiser than our teachers, if it gives assurance of salvation, if it conquers the great enemy Satan, and if it "*rejoices* the heart" (Psalm 19:8), why is it that so many professing Christians give it so little time in their lives? List (if you can!) some things that are more important to do than be in the Word for an extended time each day
- 5.14. What helpful insights for prayer and Bible reading did you find in the testimony of George Mueller?

6

Prayer

The Power of Christian Hedonism

- 6.1 What is the author's answer to the criticism that pursuing pleasure in all of life puts pleasure above God or puts the interests of man above the interests of God?
- 6.2 It is very close to the heart of this book to say, "Our interest and his glory are one". Be sure you can give an account of why this is so.
- 6.3 Explain from John 14:13 and John 16:24 how Jesus' view of prayer helps support the sentence in question 6.2 that "our interest and God's glory are one."
- 6.4 Why is it that when we pray the way Jesus taught us to we shift glory from ourselves to God.
- 6.5 In answering the question, "Is prayer self-centered?" the author admits that in all prayer we are seeking our joy, but he says that this is implied in the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." How does that prayer support his claim?
- 6.6 How can prayer be used to make a cuckold out of God and adulteresses out of those who pray? (A "cuckold" is a man whose wife is unfaithful.)
- 6.7 Express in your own words the explanation why delighting in and praying for things that are not God, does not dishonor God as the all-satisfying source of joy. Let St. Augustine and C. S. Lewis help you. (pp. 166-7)
- 6.8 In view of his endorsement of desiring things other than God, how does the author interpret the words "There is nothing upon earth that I desire besides thee" from Psalm 73:25?
- 6.9 Prayer calls attention to the surprising fact that it may not honor God to "serve" him. Describe the kind of serving that would dishonor God and cite two or three texts that warn us not to serve God in this way. (pp. 168-9)
- 6.10 How is God very unlike the gods Bel and Nebo? (p. 169-70)
- 6.11 Show from 2 Chronicles 16:9 that God's call into radical discipleship is not a "Help Wanted" adoption.
- 6.12 What would be one example of something you can give to God that won't belittle him as needy?

- 6.13 How then shall we serve God if it so belittling to him to treat him as needing us? Use Matthew 6:24 and 1 Peter 4:11 to justify your answer.
- 6.14 Now get your bearings in the flow of the chapter by reading the section: *Prayer As The Pursuit Of Our Joy* in the middle of page 174. Restate what two goals prayer holds together.
- 6.15 What is the first reason given why prayer leads to fullness of joy? Show how this is based on John 16:20-22.
- 6.16 “Prayer is a fountain of joy because it is the source of the power to love” (and love is the capstone of joy). The author argues for this by unpacking the logic of John 16:16-17. Be sure you get this (pp. 176-7) and then put the logic in your own words.
- 6.17 What conception of prayer does the author think is missing from many prayer meetings that make it malfunction?
- 6.18 Give several Bible verses to show that prayer is designed for advancing the mission of the gospel in the world.
- 6.19 What will be the final joy of God’s people? And how does prayer relate to that?
- 6.20 One last time, state how prayer holds these two great goals together: your quest for joy and God’s zeal for his glory.

7

Money

The Currency of Christian Hedonism

- 7.1. People often stumble over the statement in 1 Timothy 6:10, “The love of money is the root of all evils.” The NIV even paraphrases it very loosely to try to avoid the problem, “The love of money is the root of all *kinds* of evil.” There is another way of understanding this sentence that really does take the phrase “all evil” more literally. How does the author state this understanding? How does the love of money relate to “all evil”?
- 7.2. Paul deplores the “depraved mind” that treats godliness as a means of gain” (1 Timothy 6:5). In opposing this depravity does he attack the motive of gain? What does he do?
- 7.3. “There is great gain in godliness.” That sentence is subject to great misuse. What is the misuse, and how does adding the words “with contentment” protect against that misuse?
- 7.4. What Biblical sentence proves that it is “very profitable not to pursue riches”?
- 7.5. What similar activities should we *not* confuse with the wrong pursuit of riches? What precisely is Paul warning against when he points out the danger of wanting to be rich?
- 7.6. The first argument (from 1 Timothy 6:7) given on page 188 (to support the claim that there is great gain in godliness *with contentment*) is that “we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world.” But there is an assumption behind this argument without which it would not be compelling. What is the assumption? (Hint: why couldn’t someone argue just the opposite: “since ‘you can’t take it with you,’ get as much as you can now and live it up”?)
- 7.7. A second argument (from 1 Timothy 6:8) to support the claim that there is great gain in godliness *with contentment* is that we can and ought to be happy with the simple necessity of life. In a sentence for each, state the three reasons why it is possible and good for a Christian to be content with the simple necessities of life without needing luxuries?
- 7.8. Explain from 1 Timothy 6:9-10 why no Christian Hedonist wants to be rich.
- 7.9. It may sound like the author does not believe in the free market system of economics. But he says he does. In your own words what is the reason he gives?
- 7.10. From Matthew 6 and Luke 12 explain what Jesus’ investment strategy is.
- 7.11. How practically and specifically do you lay up treasures in heaven by using your money on earth? Give at least two specific Biblical supports.

- 7.12. One scholar objects on page 194 that “You do not live this way for the sake of reward.” What are two texts that seem to state exactly the opposite? If you wanted to make this objection be valid, what meaning would you have to give to the word “reward”?
- 7.13. Why is almsgiving or an act of mercy which is motivated by a desire for the promised reward not unloving or uncaring?
- 7.14. Explain how the way we use our money can lay hold on eternal life without this being a salvation by works. If we can forfeit our life by the way we use our money then how is the use of money *not* a way of earning eternal life?
- 7.15. Explain why there is such a close connection between riches and pride that Paul has to warn the rich “not to be haughty”?
- 7.16. What emotion (according to 1 Timothy 6:17) do riches tend to direct away from God to themselves? Why, according to Psalm 147:11, would this be a great mistake?
- 7.17. If God promises to “richly furnish us with everything to enjoy,” and if he promises to “prosper all that we do” (Psalm 1:3), then why does this not lead to a prosperity teaching which attempts to glorify God by displaying the tokens of the wealth that he has so graciously and powerfully given?
- 7.18. Why is “wartime lifestyle” a better term than “simple lifestyle”?
- 7.19. How does the author counsel a person who owns or is thinking of owning an extra “lake home” which sits empty part of the year?
- 7.20. Why has God given his people in America so much? (Use Ephesians 4:28 and 2 Corinthians 9:8)

8

Marriage

The Matrix of Christian Hedonism

Ephesians 5:25-30

(25) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, (26) that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, (27) that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish. (28) Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. (29) For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, (30) because we are members of his body.

- 8.1. What does the word “matrix” mean?
- 8.2. Using the text above (Ephesians 5:25-30) express what the aim of Christ’s loving self-sacrifice for the Church was. It is stated in two stages. Verse 26 gives one stage and verse 27 gives the next stage. In your own words state why this is an example of Christian Hedonism.
- 8.3. In verses 29-30 what reason is given why Christ nourishes and cherishes the church? Explain why this is an example of Christian Hedonism.
- 8.4. How do we know we should call this kind of nourishing and cherishing “love”?
- 8.5. What is the meaning of love between a husband and a wife in view of these verses and the observations you have just made? How can something that is so driven by the desire for joy be loving toward others?
- 8.6. How does this definition of love relate to the one given on page 96? Is there any disagreement or tension?
- 8.7. Why is there no contradiction between Ephesians 5:29 (“No man ever hates his own flesh”) and John 12:25 (“He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life”)? Is Revelation 12:11 (“They loved not their lives even unto death”) a contradiction of Ephesians 5:29?
- 8.8. When Paul says in verse 28, “Husbands should love their wives as they love themselves,” he is applying which command of Jesus?
- 8.9. What is the common modern understanding of this text about self-love which the author thinks is a misunderstanding? What is the proper meaning of self-love according to the author, and its relation to love for others?

- 8.10. From page 210 what would be a way to state the rule then that this understanding of self-love implies for the way a husband should love his wife?
- 8.11. Is there an argument in Ephesians 4:25 that would make you think we are on the right track here in thinking about the motivation of love between husbands and wives who are “one flesh”?
- 8.12. When God said in Genesis 2:18 that it is not good for man to be alone, did he imply that God’s own fellowship was insufficient to satisfy Adam? What was it that was not good?
- 8.13. In Ephesians 5:31 Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.” Then in verse 32 he says, “This is a great mystery, and I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.” In what sense is marriage a mystery?
- 8.14. What specific distinct roles for husband and wife does Paul choose to focus on which are implied in the mystery of marriage?
- 8.15. What do each of these roles correspond to in the relationship between Christ and the church?
- 8.16. Give two or three reasons why “leadership” is implied in the idea of headship.
- 8.17. Why does the author define Biblical submission as “disposition to yield and an inclination to follow”?
- 8.18. Why does the overarching principle of “mutual submission” not rule out the role distinction of the husband as head and the wife as the supporter of that headship?
- 8.19. The author thinks that in Ephesians 5:22-33 the effect of Christ’s redemption is applied to the effects of the fall on the marriage relationship. These effects are reversed. State the results of the fall that emerge between men and women in Genesis 3, and how Christ reverses these sinful effects of the fall.

9

Missions

The Battle Cry of Christian Hedonism

- 9.1. Many today believe that all people will be saved regardless of what they believe or what they do. Many others believe that any sincere religious faith, whether Christianity or any other, is a sure road to eternal life. But the author argues that people are cut off from eternal life unless the gospel reaches them and they believe. Write a sentence or two in your own words to explain how the following passages of Scripture show that what is at stake in the Christian missionary enterprise is eternal life. Acts 26:16-18; / 1 Corinthians 9:22; / Acts 13:46; / Acts 4:12
- 9.2. If people cannot be saved without hearing and believing the gospel of Jesus Christ, how can God be just to condemn people who have no access to the gospel because they live among peoples who have never been reached with the gospel?
- 9.3. Why, in general, do liberal churches and denominations put *little emphasis on frontier missions*?
- 9.4. Would the author approve of the statement, “We are all missionaries?” Why or why not?
- 9.5. In Romans 15:23 Paul said, “I no longer have any room for work in these regions.” He was referring to the part of the world from Jerusalem northward and westward to the northern part of Greece called Illyricum (Romans 5:19). He even said that in this region he had “fulfilled the gospel of Christ.” How can Paul say that there is no more room for work and that he has fulfilled the gospel in an area where there are still thousands of unbelievers who could be converted to Christ and saved from judgment?
- 9.6. How then would you define “frontier missions”?
- 9.7. a) What new insight and emphasis in missions thinking would explain this statement: “The remaining task of Frontier Missions is no longer conceived mainly in geographic terms”? b) Another way to ask the question would be to ask, When Jesus said, “This gospel will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations,” why might the English word “nations” be misleading?
- 9.8. The gospel has made progress and there is a growing consensus today about what a people-group is. Read through pages 229ff. and jot down what may be encouraging and what may be disappointing about these figures.
- 9.9. A new way of describing the process of world evangelization has been developed since the publication of *Desiring God*. Read through the tables and the chapter and then jot down in your own words why this is very good news for Great Commission Christians.

- 9.10. The story of the Rich Young Ruler from Mark 10:17-31 teaches two powerful incentives for engaging in frontier mission work. They are described on page 194-198. a) What's the verse in Mark 10 that contains this incentive? b) But if you read carefully you will see that this incentive really has two distinct parts. Can you put each of these parts in a sentence?
- 9.11. In what sense does Jesus mean that it is impossible for the Rich Young Ruler to be saved (Mark 10:25-27)?
- 9.12. The first part of this first incentive is contained also in John 10:16, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice." There are three clauses in that verse. Take each one and paraphrase it in your own words to make clear how it is a great incentive for hopeful frontier missions.
- 9.13. How did God use this text to create the Africa Inland Mission?
- 9.14. The second part of the first incentive found in the story of the Rich Young Ruler is expressed in texts mentioned on page 235. How do passages like these keep a faithful missionary from boasting in his own heroic courage?
- 9.15. The second incentive found in the story of the Rich Young Ruler is unfolded on pp. 198ff. What *displeased* Jesus about Peter's readiness to sacrifice for Christ when Peter said, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you"?
- 9.16. What clue is there *in the text* (Mark 10:28-30) that we should NOT take the promise for 100 houses to mean that Christ will make all his obedient disciples wealthy real estate magnates?
- 9.17. In Mark 10:28-30 is Jesus contradicting the teaching on self-denial in Mark 8:34-35? Peter seemed ready to deny himself to follow Jesus, and Jesus seems to correct him with the promise of reward? What then does he mean by self-denial?
- 9.18. Read the quote from the missionary David Brainerd on p. 252. He shows that there is a good kind of self-love and a bad kind. Put in your own words what the difference is. Then in the very last line of this quote he says "hope of self-interest" is bad. How can hope of self-interest be bad in view of the definition he has just given for the good (regular) self-love?
- 9.19. What did David Livingstone mean when he said, "I never made a sacrifice"? Chapter Ten is written to make sure this question gets answered correctly.
- 9.20. If our trusted doctor says that we need to spend a week in the hospital for special treatments, we may have to deny ourselves some previously made appointments. We may have to be away from our family. We may have to tolerate some unpleasant smells. But one thing is for sure, we are in the hospital to get well -- and to let the doctor show his wisdom and skill. We are *not* there to pay back a debt to the doctor. Daniel Fuller (pp. 247-8) applies this analogy to the missionary (patient) going to the mission field (hospital). What's the point of this analogy? Why do "people who regard themselves as invalids make excellent missionaries"?
- 9.21. Does William Carey's motto, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God," contradict Daniel Fuller's statement above about invalids? Why or why not?

9.22. Why did Elisabeth Elliot not regard the murder of her husband Jim as “a nightmare of tragedy”?

10

Suffering

The Sacrifice of Christian Hedonism

- 10.1 What is the difference between Paul's answer and the abbot's answer to the question: "Is the Christian life a good life even if it proves to be based on a falsehood in the end?"
- 10.2 Why does Paul think his life of joy would be pitiable if there were no resurrection from the dead?
- 10.3 How are persecution and sickness different kinds of suffering? But give an example of how one's obedience to a Christian ministry can result in suffering without persecution.
- 10.4 What is the common threat in all suffering?
- 10.5 When we speak of suffering "with Christ" and "for Christ" we usually think of the persecution that was similar to Christ's. But the author says that all suffering in the path of our Christian calling is "with Christ" and "for Christ." Describe two ways that our sufferings can be "with Christ" and two ways our sufferings can be "for Christ" even if it is not from persecution.
- 10.6 What is Satan's design in all our suffering?
- 10.7 Give one or two illustrations that show how the suffering of sickness and the suffering of persecution are not always distinguishable.
- 10.8 When Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:32, "Let us eat and drink," what does he mean? In view of this, what are we called to in the Christian life?
- 10.9 When Paul calls suffering a gift (Philippians 1:29) what did he have in mind? How can something so painful be a "gift"?
- 10.10 What evidence is there that the promises of Jesus that his disciples would suffer also apply to later Christians and not just the original 12?
- 10.11 What is God's universal purpose in all the suffering of his children?
- 10.12 Explain from 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 how suffering can serve to magnify the grace of Christ.
- 10.13 Show how the illustration of Euphrosynus in Philippians 2:27-30 explains the meaning of Paul's words in Colossians 1:24, "complete what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ."

- 10.14 Be sure you see *how* Paul intended to “complete what was lacking in the afflictions of Christ.”
- 10.15 Show from Revelation 6:11 that God’s intention is to complete the Great Commission through the suffering of his people.
- 10.16 How does Joseph Tson sum up one key difference between our suffering and Christ’s suffering?
- 10.17 Why does the author think that calling suffering a “sacrifice” in this chapter is *not* a contradiction of the quote from David Livingston on page 243 where he says, “I never made a sacrifice”? (p. 280)
- 10.18 From Philippians 3:8 and 1:21,23 explain why Paul’s choosing to suffer was still Christian Hedonism.
- 10.19 Why does cherishing the glory of Christ above all things not allow a person to be indifferent to whether perishing sinners are converted?
- 10.20 Explain how Christ can be Paul’s joy and yet he can also call his converts his joy.
- 10.21 Why does the author think that it is all but blasphemy to say that the obedience of suffering for Christ may be pursued but not the joy of suffering?
- 10.22 What is the basis of the joy that Christ commands in suffering according to Matthew 5:11-12?
- 10.23 What is the reason Paul rejoices in suffering according to Romans 5:3-4? Don’t just quote the text. Explain the connections between the parts.
- 10.24 Show how the logical connection between the two halves of 1 Peter 4:13 teaches that joy in suffering now is the way of attaining joy in the presence of Christ when he comes.
- 10.25 Explain from Hebrews 11:25-26 why choosing to suffer *the way Moses did* does not glorify our courage, but God’s worth.
- 10.26 If the essence of Christian Hedonism is the truth that “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him,” explain why Christian Hedonism is most vividly expressed when God’s people rejoice in suffering for the sake of the Name.

Questions with Answers

Introduction

How I Became a Christian Hedonist

1. What does the author say is the aim of this book?

The book aims to persuade the reader that the chief end of man is to glorify God BY enjoying him forever.

2. What text of Scripture does the author cite to prove that the issue of glorifying God relates to every area of life, including how you drink your orange juice at breakfast?

1 Corinthians 10:31 -- "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

3. Evidently the author does not think that the Biblical meaning of "glorifying God" is obvious to everyone, since he writes a whole book about it. What do you think the word "glorify" might be taken to mean that the author would think is unbiblical? Hint: What if you took "glorify" in the same sense as "beautify" or "fortify" or "purify"?

The word "glorify" might be taken to mean: "make glorious" or "add more glory to". This is way we use the words "beautify" and "fortify" and "purify". They mean: "make beautiful" and "make strong" and "make pure". It will become evident as we go on that the author is very concerned that "glorifying God" NOT be taken to mean, "make God more glorious". He believes that would be blasphemous to attempt, since God is infinite in glory before and without his creation.

"Glorify" means reveal or show or reflect or declare the glory of God. It means thinking or feeling or saying or doing things that give evidence of God's infinite glory.

4. The author thinks that by enjoying God we glorify Him. To get on the author's wave length you might try to think of some examples in your life where you "glorify" something or someone or some activity by enjoying it.

You compliment (glorify!) someone's cooking by manifestly enjoying their food. You honor (glorify!) a symphony and its composer by enjoying the music. You pay tribute to (glorify!) your spouse if you delight in being together.

5. As the author describes the emerging of Christian Hedonism in his college days, two things seemed in conflict in his experience. One was an inherited moral principle and the other was an inescapable reality of the heart. What was this principle and this reality?

The inherited principle was that the goodness of a moral action was lessened to the degree that we are motivated by our desire for happiness.

The inescapable reality was that the desire for happiness was overwhelming and could not be denied.

6. **Pascal's quote says that even people who commit suicide do it because they are driven by a longing for happiness. Can you state that fact in a way that overcomes the objection that it can't be true because some people commit suicide without any knowledge of what lies beyond death?**

Pascal would probably say that even if a person is ignorant of what lies beyond death, the person feels as though things are so terribly miserable here and now that anything that they can imagine would be better than what they are going through. In that sense they are acting on the basis of a longing for happiness in that they so desperately want to be free of the unhappiness of their present situation. Or it may be that in the moment of deepest depression there is no ability to even think beyond the misery of the moment, and that misery is simply too great to bear. Suicide seems like relief.

7. **In the quote from C. S. Lewis, where does he think the notion has come from that it is a bad thing to desire our own good and to earnestly hope for the enjoyment of it?**

Lewis thinks this notion crept into Christianity from Kant and the Stoics.

Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher who lived from 1724 to 1804. He is famous for the emphasis he put upon "duty" as the essence of morality. He said, for example, "Now an action done from duty must wholly exclude the influence of inclination and with it every object of the will, so that nothing remains which can determine the will except objectively the law and subjectively pure respect for this practical law. . . Thus the moral worth of an action does not lie in the effect expected from it, nor in any principle of action which requires to borrow its motive from this expected effect." (Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals, translated by Thomas K. Abbott, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1949, p. 18)

The Stoics were practical philosophers who emphasized freedom from external threats and rewards and sought mastery over their passions and desires. The most famous Stoics were: Seneca (4 BC - AD 65), Epictetus (AD 55 - 135), and Marcus Aurelius (AD 121 - 180). According to Acts 17:18 Paul interacted with Stoics in Athens.

8. **What evidence does Lewis cite that the human problem is not that we are all seeking pleasure but that we are seeking it in a half-hearted way?**

He cites the evidence of the Gospels -- that the promises of reward are so unblushing and staggering that Jesus must regard our desires too weak not to strong if we will not obey his commands in order to have the reward. He says that nearly all the commands to deny ourselves and follow Christ contain an appeal to desire.

9. **How is the point which the author learned from Lewis an advance on the first point learned from Pascal?**

Pascal had said that all men seek happiness. Lewis said that all men ought to.

10. **What was the third insight the author gained in his emerging Christian Hedonism?**

Pascal showed him that all men do in fact seek happiness. C. S. Lewis showed him that this is not wrong in principle but was in fact the assumption of the of the New Testament. Our insatiable desire for happiness should be glutted on God. God alone would satisfy the void in our heart and to pursue that satisfaction in God is the root of genuine praise.

11. **From the quote by Lewis what is the relationship between delight in the countryside and praise of the countryside?**

The praise is not just added onto the delight as though it were something totally distinct. The praise is the consummation -- the completion -- of the delight itself.

12. **In view of the preceding answer explain why Lewis' early idea about God was wrong -- the idea that when God commanded praise from his people in the Psalms he was like "like a vain woman wanting compliments". In other words, if God is not vain to demand our praise, what is he in view of the preceding answer?**

God is not vain in demanding our praise because our praise of him is the consummation of our joy in him and therefore he is really demanding that we settle for nothing less than ultimate -- consummate -- joy. And that is not vain; it is loving.

13. **Would it be virtuous for you to imitate God and seek praise for yourself the way God seeks it for himself?**

It would be vain for us to seek praise, because we are not all-satisfying to behold, and so we would not be loving to draw attention away from God to ourselves.

14. **The author refers to "the most liberating discovery" he ever made. What was the discovery and why do you think the author calls it "liberating"?**

The discovery was that the highest end of man, worship and of God, is also at the same time the consummation of man's deepest joy. This was liberating because it freed him from the fear that his highest duty might not be his highest joy and that goodness might bring boredom. It freed him to pursue the longings of his heart without fear of offending God, but with the assurance that this very pursuit was pleasing to God because it peaked out in divine praise.

15. Are we actually commanded to pursue our pleasure? Where?

Yes. "Delight yourself in the Lord!" (Psalm 37:4).

16. The author distances himself from the health, wealth and prosperity gospel. How?

He stresses that the pleasure pursued by the Christian Hedonist is not worldly or material. It is God himself, and fellowship with him, not even the good things he may give us.

17. Why doesn't Christian Hedonism make a god out of pleasure?

Christian Hedonism says that it is a misuse of words to describe as a god the emotion you render to whatever you idolize. A god is what you prize so highly that you govern all your behavior to maximize your enjoyment of it. So you have already made a god out of whatever you find most pleasure in. If you find most pleasure in God and pursue him, then he is your God. If you find most pleasure in money and pursue it, then money is your god. Pleasure is not a god, it is the intensity of love for or delight in your God.

18. If I am living for pleasure, why am I not putting pleasure above God?

The best way to clarify this is to say that I am living for pleasure in God and therefore I am putting my pleasure not above God but in God. God is not insulted or belittled by my starving for the joy of his fellowship.

19. The author is eager not to have his book seen as "another spin-off from modern man's enslavement to the centrality of himself". From what we have seen so far, why shouldn't it be?

It does not at all make man central. It makes God central. God is made the treasure. Man is merely the hunter. God is the physician. Man is the sick patient. God is the fountain. Man is thirsty. Everything in this philosophy is designed to exalt the worth of God not man. Everything is designed to cause dependence on God not man. It is anything but a spin-off of our contemporary exaltation of self.

20. What point in the definition of Christian Hedonism on pages 27-8 has not been touched on in the introduction?

Point four. The author has not yet addressed the issue of how love for other people is part of our quest for joy. He has only spoken of what we might call "vertical Christian Hedonism" -- the quest for joy in God directly, in praise and worship. The reason for this is simply autobiographical. The understanding of "horizontal hedonism" came much later than these initial discoveries. It will be dealt with in the chapter on love (Chapter 4)

21. What is the source that the author claims for his insight?

He claims that his ideas come from the Christian Bible and for that reason alone are worth considering.

1

The Happiness of God Foundation for Christian Hedonism (With Appendix One)

- 1.1. The ultimate ground or basis of Christian Hedonism is the fact that God is uppermost in his own affections. Can you take the words, "God is uppermost in his own affections," and say that in another way? Try several other statements that mean the same thing as "God is uppermost in his own affections."**

God is God centered.

God is not an idolater.

God has a supreme allegiance to himself.

God is righteous.

God loves himself above all things.

God delights in his own glory above all things.

- 1.2. We will discuss below why it is that God's happiness in himself (rooted in his sovereignty) is indispensable for our pursuit of joy, that is, why God's happiness in himself is the foundation of Christian Hedonism. (See questions 7, 10, 11.) But at this point we need to establish two things: one is that God is indeed uppermost in his own affections (questions 2-13), and the other is that he is indeed sovereign (questions 14-20).**

Based upon John Piper's effort to get at a definition of God's glory. Write out in your own words how you would try to communicate the glory of God to someone who knows nothing about the Bible.

Glory is like beauty. It's like greatness and magnificence and wonder and awesomeness. The sun's glory is its brightness. A basketball team's glory is the display of their great skill as they win the final game. A debater's glory is the excellence of his speech and logic. A judge's glory is his faithfulness to the law and his noble mingling of justice and mercy. Glory is the shining out of greatness and excellence. God's glory is the shining out, the radiance, of his greatness and perfection. He is perfect and infinitely great in all that he is. His glory is the beauty of his infinitely wonderful and great and perfect attributes.

- 1.3. Appendix 1 gives the Biblical basis for the claim that God delights in his glory above all things, in other words, that he is uppermost in his own affections. From this appendix, what other Biblical phrase means virtually the same as God's doing something "for his glory"?**

His doing it "for his name's sake."

- 1.4. Explain how God's creating man and woman in his own image was the same as creating them for his glory.**

To be given God's image is to be assigned the role of imaging-forth God in the world. Therefore God's aim in creating man in his image was to have his own image, his own nature and glory displayed in the world. Being "like God" was to be a mirror of God so that people could see God in the creature. But Satan's temptation to be "like God" was that we cease to be mirrors of God's radiance and become independently radiant -- to get glory for ourselves and not for God.

- 1.5. At the tower of Babel people said they aimed to "make a name for ourselves" (Genesis 11:4). God was very displeased with this. But when God called Abram he said, "I will make your name great" (Genesis 12:2). Basing your answer on God's pursuit of his own glory, explain why God is displeased with the people at the tower of Babel having a great name, but he was not displeased with Abram having a great name.**

The people of the tower are eager to be seen as glorious themselves. Their name will therefore be accomplished by relying on their own skill and strength and intelligence and resources. They want glory for themselves. But in Abram's case it is God who promises to do the work and give Abram a name. Abram's response to God's promise is FAITH. And Romans 4:20 says that faith glorifies God. The reason it does is because it looks away from our own strength and skill and intelligence and resources and banks on the all-sufficiency of God to do for us what he promises. So faith humbles us and exalts God. Since God loves to act for his glory, therefore, he acts on behalf of those who trust him and is willing to give them a great name since it will simply bounce back to him as the all-sufficient God of glory.

- 1.6. Exodus 20:5 says that God is jealous. a) Define legitimate, healthy jealousy in ordinary human relationships. b) Then explain how God's jealousy relates to his glory and his people.**

a) Jealousy is the feeling of anger or indignation that, say, a husband feels if affection or allegiance that belongs to him is shared with another man.

b) God's jealousy is his zeal that his glory be loved and cherished above all the glories of created things. When his people's hearts begin to go after other things because they seem to satisfy their desires more, then God's glory is scorned and his love of that glory responds with jealousy.

- 1.7. Explain how it is that God's all-surpassing passion for his own glory is the foundation of the gospel -- that God has mercy on sinners who look to him for mercy. The key to this explanation is found in texts like Ezekiel 20:5-9; Psalm 106:6-8; 1 Samuel 12:19-23; Isaiah 48:9-11; Ezekiel 36:22-33; Psalm 25:11. See question # 1.10 for a similar issue.**

What we see from each of these texts is that the motive that restrains God from pouring out wrath on his people is his concern for his own name and his own glory. He acts for his own name's sake, in mercy. In other words the ground of our hope for mercy is not our worth but the worth of God's glory. The root of God's mercy is God's righteousness, that he is utterly committed to upholding the value of his glory and his name and not letting it be scorned. Therefore, all who are willing to cast themselves on God for mercy and count his value theirs, will find God on their side, because he will uphold all who are called by his name, lest his name be dishonored.

- 1.8. One important text not included concerning the reason Jesus came and died, is Romans 15:8-9. After reading this text, a) state the three reasons that Jesus came and b) put in your own words what it is that unites these three reasons.**

a) 1] He came to show God's truthfulness ("on behalf of God's truth"). 2] He came to confirm God's promises which he had made to the patriarchs. 3] He came in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

b) What unites these three reasons is that they all are for God's sake. God's truthfulness, God's promise-keeping faithfulness, God's glory shown in mercy. Jesus came to glorify God in the salvation of sinners. We need to keep the Godward focus in glorying in our salvation. Otherwise we will be out of sync with Romans 15:9 and we will lose the very foundation of the gospel (see question #9).

- 1.9. After reading Appendix 1 what then is the goal of all God does in history?**

His goal is to uphold and display his glory for the enjoyment of his church, redeemed and gathered in from every tongue and tribe and nation and people. This last phrase is taken from Revelation 5:9. The missionary implications of God's zeal for his glory are obvious -- he will be glorified from all the peoples!

- 1.10. A big question that rises after we decide that God is pursuing his own glory in all that he does is this: Is this a loving thing for God to do? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:5 that "Love seeks not its own." Yet it appears that God seeks "his own" praise in all that he does. Why is it loving for God to exalt himself in this way, but not for us to exalt ourselves like this?**

God is infinite and all-glorious but we are not. Because God is so great, and because the "glory of his grace" (Ephesians 1:6,12,14) is the "living water" which satisfies the human heart, therefore it is not unkind of God to make much of his greatness and glory. It is what we need and what we long for. For God to seek to make it known is a very loving thing to do.

Not only that praise is the consummation of our joy in what we value. It is not added onto the enjoyment of the glory of God like a second duty. It is the completion of the joy. So when God

seeks our praise for his glory he is seeking for us the experience which is the our greatest happiness. So God's passion to be glorified and our passion to be satisfied come to simultaneous fulfillment.

So God is the one Being in the universe for whom self-exaltation is the most loving thing to do. It could not be otherwise if he is all-glorious and his glory is all-satisfying.

1.11. A very closely related question is, Why is God's happiness in himself (his glory) indispensable for our pursuit of joy? Or, why is God's happiness in himself the foundation of Christian Hedonism?

Christian Hedonism, the pursuit of joy in God, would crumble if God were not all-satisfying to the human soul. But you cannot take full-satisfaction in an unhappy God. Unhappiness implies some deficiency in God -- that he is not strong enough to do what he wants or that he is not great enough to be what he wants. But you cannot take full-delight in a deficient God. You can't take full delight in a glory that God looks upon as inadequate.

1.12. Another way to get at the same point is to recognize that you can't delight fully in an unrighteous God, and then to recognize that God would indeed be unrighteous if he were unhappy. Why would God be unrighteous if he were not fully happy in his own glory?

Righteousness is the rectitude of valuing supremely what is supremely valuable. God is supremely valuable. Therefore if God did not value supremely (i.e. fully delight in) what is supremely valuable, namely, himself, he would not be righteous. Therefore God must be fully happy in his own worth and beauty in order to be fully righteous because any failure to be fully satisfied in perfect glory would be a dishonor of that glory, or a failing to value it. And that is unrighteousness.

So the happiness of God is the foundation of Christian Hedonism because you cannot fully delight in an unhappy and therefore unrighteous God.

1.13. I wonder if it is clear at this point why God can delight in his people (Zephaniah 3:17) and his works (Psalm 104:31) without contradicting his aim to do all things for his own glory. State briefly why this is so.

Because God delights in his people and his works in so far as they are reflections of his own handiwork. He delights, for example, "not in the strength of the horse, nor in the legs of a man, but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love" (Psalm 147:10-11). Why? Because those who hope in him, show that he is glorious (1 Peter 4:11); but those who boast in strong legs or mighty horses, are glorifying themselves and not God. They are forgetting that "the horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord" (Proverbs 21:31); and that "it is the Lord who gives you power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18).

1.14. Saying that God is uppermost in his own affections means that God's happiness is based on himself. His own glory is what makes God glad. (His delight in his people and his works is

not a contradiction of this, as we will see below in question 1.15.) **But for God to be infinitely happy in himself and what he does, something must be true about God's ability. a) What is that? b) And why is this necessary for God's happiness?**

a) What must be true about God's ability is that it is infinite and beyond restraint from outside. God must have the ability to do as he pleases and be what he wants to be. We call this God's sovereignty, or his sovereign freedom.

b) The reason this is necessary is that God's happiness could be frustrated by some power outside himself if he did not have control over all things. Without sovereignty things might not go the way he wanted, and that could result in the abortion of God's great plans. If God were not able to accomplish all his purpose, he would not be the fully admirable God that he is and the delight that he has in himself could not be supreme.

1.15. If we are expected to "rejoice always," (1 Thessalonians 5:16; Philippians 4:4) even though we are not sovereign, why must God be sovereign in order to always be happy? (This question is not explicitly answered in the book. Think about it.)

Because God has no powerful help to look to outside himself to cause things to turn out right when things are painful, but we do. We look to God to work all things together for our good. So our happiness is based on God's sovereign ability to work all things for our joy. If God is not sovereign, then neither he nor we can "rejoice always" -- we can't because God is not able to turn affairs for our good, and God can't because he is not able to turn affairs for his glory.

1.16. Now we must return to the Biblical foundation of God's sovereignty. We have spoken about the necessity of God's sovereignty as the basis of his happiness. But we must now look at the Biblical basis of the doctrine of God's sovereignty. Some texts are cited on pp. 33-7. The theological problem is also addressed.

What text from the Bible do you think shows most plainly that even in the sinful acts men God's plan is not thwarted but is fulfilled?

Acts 2:23f. The crucifixion of Jesus. Add to that Isaiah 53:4,10; Hebrews 2:10. See Judges 14:4; 1 Kings 12:15.

1.17. But surely Satan must be reckoned with as a significant cause in the evil and pain of the world. Using Satan's involvement with Job in Job 1 and 2 describe how do the will of God and the will of Satan inter-relate in bringing about misery like Job's.

1:11 -- Satan tells God to take away Job's possessions.

1:12 -- God tells Satan, "All that he has is in your power; only upon himself do not put forth you hand."

1:16 -- the report comes back: "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep."

1:19 -- "a great wind came across the wilderness, and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are all dead." (Psalm 135:7 God rules the wind)

1:21 -- Job worships and says, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

1:22 -- "In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

2:3 -- God says to Satan, "You moved me against him to destroy him without cause."

2:5 -- Satan tells God to take Job's health.

2:6 -- God tells Satan, "Behold, he is in your power; only spare his life."

2:7 -- "So Satan went forth . . . and afflicted Job with loathsome sores."

2:10 -- Job says, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil? In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

Conclusion: Satan did afflict Job. But Job saw behind this the permissive will of God so distinctly that he said God had sent the affliction.

(Cite here the story of Minka Hanskamp and Margaret Morgan and the quote from F. B. Meyer about the permissive will of God.)

- 1.18. If God's sovereignty means that *in some sense* he wills all things, then it seems as though he wills things that he disapproves of. This creates a major problem that we need to try to solve. One way to state the problem is to say God seems to be inconsistent, willing something that in Scripture he says he does not will. Another way to say it is that it seems to make God the author of sin. What is one way to solve this problem of God's apparent inconsistency in seeming to will some things which he says he does not will?**

The key is to realize that we speak of willing in at least two different senses. God can will something because in and of itself, considered absolutely, it is agreeable to his nature and pleasing to him. But he may also will that something happen which in and of itself, considered absolutely, is NOT agreeable to his nature and not pleasing to him. In this second case the reason God may will that this evil or painful event happen is not because of the beauty or pleasantness of itself, but because of its relationship to all other things. A piece of a mosaic may be ugly by itself and not pleasing to the eye of the artist; but when it is seen as part of the overall mosaic the effect is beauty and the artist's wisdom and ability is glorified.

So when we say that God wills what he does not will (i.e. that he wills sin) we are using "will" in two different ways: one is the displeasure that God has in the evil in itself and the other is the approval of having this evil exist for the greater good and glory that will come. (The death of Jesus, and the experience of Joseph in Egypt, and numerous other incidents illustrate this.)

God is not schizophrenic when he grieves over some of what he ordains. He is infinitely complex and has the ability to see the pain and evil through a narrow lens and be grieved at the evil in itself; but also to see the evil through a wide-angle lens that gives him a sense of profound approval and joy that all things are working together so wonderfully in his wisdom to display all his glory for the maximum enjoyment of the maximum number of people.

- 1.19. This kind of problem inevitably raises the problem of why God saw fit to permit or ordain the existence of sin and evil. It is not adequate to say that all evil is owing to "free will". If God knew what was going to happen and still chose to allow men to choose sin, then we must answer why. Some solve this problem today by saying that God did not know what was going to happen when he created man with a will. I regard this "solution" as very wide of**

the Biblical mark. Others have said that God was willing to allow all the sin and misery in the world because there was no other way that he could make men free; and he values the freely chosen love of people so much that it was worth the sin and misery of the world to get it. That may be part of the answer, if "freely chosen" does not mean "chosen without God's decisive enabling grace." But it is not the whole answer.

We have seen that God created all things and does all things for his glory. Therefore somehow the existence of sin and misery has to relate to this great overarching goal of God. Reflect for a moment on how the existence of sin and misery might serve to glorify aspects of God's nature that otherwise could not have been displayed. What attributes of God might shine forth with greater glory because sin and misery exist?

It is a proper and excellent thing for infinite glory to shine forth; and for the same reason, it is proper that the shining forth of God's glory should be complete; that is, that all parts of his glory should shine forth, that every beauty should be proportionably effulgent, that the beholder may have a proper notion of God.

It is not proper that one glory should be exceedingly manifested, and another not at all; for then the effulgence would not answer the reality. For the same reason it is not proper that one should be manifested exceedingly, and another but very little. It is highly proper that the effulgent glory of God should answer his real excellency; that the splendor should be answerable to the real and essential glory, for the same reason that it is proper and excellent for God to glorify himself at all.

Thus it is necessary, that God's awful majesty, his authority and dreadful greatness, justice, and holiness, should be manifested. But this could not be, unless sin and punishment had been decreed; so that the shining forth of God's glory would be very imperfect, both because these parts of divine glory would not shine forth as the other do, and also the glory of his goodness, love, and holiness would be faint without them; nay, they could scarcely shine forth at all. If it were not right that God should decree and permit and punish sin, there could be no manifestation of God's holiness in hatred of sin, or in showing any preference, in his providence, of godliness before it. There would be no manifestation of God's grace or true goodness, if there was no sin to be pardoned, no misery to be saved from. How much happiness soever he bestowed, his goodness would not be so much prized and admired, and the sense of it not so great, as we have elsewhere shown. We little consider how much the sense of good is heightened by the sense of evil, both moral and natural.

And as it is necessary that there should be evil, because the display of the glory of God could not but be imperfect and incomplete without it, so evil is necessary, in order to the highest happiness of the creature, and the completeness of that communication of God, for which he made the world; because the creature's happiness consists in the knowledge of God, and sense of his love. And if the knowledge of him be imperfect, the happiness of the creature must be proportionably imperfect; and the happiness of the creature would be imperfect upon another account also; for, as we have said, the sense of good is comparatively dull and flat, without the knowledge of evil. ("Concerning the Divine Decrees," Works, Vol. 2, p. 528)

1.20. As we become more and more confident that God sovereignly controls all things, we need to become more and more confident of two or three other attributes of God in order to maintain joy and peace. What would these other attributes be and why must we be sure of them?

We must be sure of God's infinite wisdom and justice and love to us. Why? Because if he is all powerful and can do whatever he pleases, then there are still three possible obstacles to my joy as I trust him. One is that he might not be wise enough to use his power for my good. Another is that he might not be just enough to see that all persons in the world are treated with justice (in which case he would not be an admirable God able to satisfy my longing to worship perfect glory). And finally he might not be loving and kind enough to me to want to use his power and wisdom for my good.

So if I am to be joyful and peaceful amid all the miseries of this age I must not only be confident that God is sovereign but also that he is infinitely wise and perfectly just and full of saving love to all who trust him.

2

Conversion

Creation of a Christian Hedonist

- 2.1. If you put Jeremiah 32:40-41 beside Romans 8:28 what emerges as the answer to this question: Who are the people in Jeremiah 32:40-41 whom God is going to do good to with all his heart? Or, to ask the question another way, how can you know that you are one of those whom God is rejoicing over to do them good? What would be the answer if instead of Romans 8:28 you use Psalm 147:11 or Isaiah 64:4 or 2 Chronicles 16:9?**

Romans 8:28 says that the people God works for are those who love him and are called according to his purpose. So the people God has covenanted with to do them good are the people whom he has called and who therefore love him. You can know if you are being treated this way by God if you love him.

Psalm 147:11 says that the people whom God rejoices in are people who "hope in God." So you can know that you are among those God is pursuing with goodness and mercy if you love God and hope and in him, and thus make your calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).

According to Isaiah 64:4 God works for us if we "wait for him." And according to 2 Chronicles 16:9 God shows his power for us if our heart is whole toward him.

- 2.2. What are the two reasons the author gives for using the new terminology of Christian Hedonism in relation to conversion instead of simply saying the simple Biblical sentence, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31)?**

a) The call to believe on Jesus is so misunderstood today that more needs to be said. People who are manifestly unconverted say they believe. We need to find words to talk about the nature of conversion so as to shake people out of their deadly security.

b) The Bible itself has many more ways of speaking of the nature of conversion than this one in Acts 16:31. We should be ready and willing to use any and all of Scripture that is helpful.

- 2.3. The first answer to question #2.2 is based on an unstated assumption. What is it? It has to do with the relationship between faith and works. When you think you know what the assumption is, list some Bible verses that might support it.**

The assumption is that you can say you have faith and not really be saved; that is, you can think you have saving faith but be wrong because your faith is not confirmed by your works. The point

here is not that we are justified by works. No. We are justified by faith (Romans 3:28; 4:5; 5:1). The point is that saving faith always changes us so that new works of faith begin to appear in our lives when we are converted.

The Biblical evidence for this would include James 2:20,26; Galatians 5:6, 21, 24; 6:8; Matt. 7:21-23; 18:2-3; 24:12-13; John 5:28-9; 14:15; 15:2; 3:36; Rom. 2:6-10; 6:14; 8:13; Hebrews 5:8-9; 12:14; 1 John 1:7; 2:4, 17; 3:14; 4:8, 20. See my letter to Bob Jacks for many more.

- 2.4. On pages 55-64 the author unfolds one way of summing up the need for conversion and the way of conversion in six steps. (By the way these six steps are now available in an attractive pamphlet format for you to use in spreading the gospel and sharing Christ! It's called "Quest for Joy".) Most Christians agree that in order to put saving faith in Jesus a person has to admit that he is a sinner and in need of forgiveness and change. But that means people need to have some understanding of what sin is. sin is discussed in step 3. What is the essence of sin that makes steps 1 and 2 so important to make plain first? Or: how do steps 1 and 2 help get people ready to grasp what sin really is?**

Sin involves falling short of God's glory, that is, not loving or valuing God's glory above all things. It is an exchanging of God's glory as our treasure for things that God has made (Romans 1:23). Sin cannot be understood merely as doing things that make us feel bad, or doing things that other people regard as wrong or things that will have dire consequences for us. Sin must be seen as an offense to GOD. And our sorrow for it must be a sorrow for the injury we have done to God's glory. Otherwise we will not ask for forgiveness for the true offense and charge that is being held against.

This is why steps 1 and 2 are so important. They prepare the way for understanding sin by focusing on our duty to glorify God and grounding that in God's great purpose to be glorified in his creation by giving himself to us for our soul's delight and satisfaction. If we don't know that God made us for his glory, it will be hard to grasp the meaning of Romans 3:23 which says we have fallen short of his glory.

- 2.5. One popular notion about how the gospel should be presented is that most people today already feel so bad about themselves and about life that you don't need to tell them the bad news that they are sinners as part of a gospel presentation. All you need to do is present Jesus as the solution to the misery they already feel. In view of the answer to #2.4 why is this mistaken?**

Because most of the bad feelings people have today are not owing to the offense they have rendered to God, but simply to their failures to live up to some standard of man. People can feel very miserable and admit it without ever admitting that their greatest problem is the wrath of God which justly hangs over their head because of their untrusting and disobedient hearts.

Therefore to say that they do not need to hear that they are sinners, is like saying that they do not need to know the true diagnosis of their disease when seeking a cure. I people are really going to trust God's grace to solve their problems, the need to know that the fundamental problem is the broken fellowship with God because we have heaped so much scorn on his glory by not trusting him.

- 2.6. Turning now to step 4, the consequences of sin must be addressed. It is not a loving thing to keep silent about impending calamity if a person can escape it. The calamity impending for sinners is hell (according to the texts gathered on these pages). Two objections to the historic view of hell as eternal punishment are raised. Let's ponder them one at a time. One is this: it cannot be just to punish eternally a sin or series of sins that took only 70 years to commit. Hell is an unjust over-reaction to finite evil. In your own words what answer is given to this?**

The heinousness or gravity or blameworthiness of a crime increases in proportion to the dignity and worth of the being against whom it was committed. Or another way to say it, the duty to give honor to a person increases in proportion to the greatness of their worth and dignity.

So the duty to honor an infinitely worthy person is a duty with infinite claims. And the failure to do that duty an infinite crime. God is infinitely worthy and honorable. Not to render that to him is infinitely heinous. The blameworthiness of a crime is not based merely on its length, but also on the nature of the being it was committed against. Giving a repeated vote of no confidence to God is an insult of unspeakable proportions because God is unspeakably worthy of trust.

- 2.7. The other objection to hell is found in note 3 on page 59. It is given by the popular novelist of the 19th century, George McDonald. He says that God is bound by his justice to destroy sin in his creation -- that is, get rid of it, not just punish it. In fact ongoing punishment of sin gives a home in the universe to "victorious evil." "God is triumphantly defeated" if there is a hell. What is the problem with this?**

1) The scripture picture hell as eternal and not temporary. There are sins God is never going to forgive.

2) There is not Biblical ground for the definition of justice that says it must destroy sin out of existence. Justice includes the proper correlation of offense and punishment.

3) No one will look on the torments of hell and say that here evil is triumphant. Rather hell will be an everlasting testimony to the awesome reality that God hates sin and is infinitely holy and just. (See the answer to question #1.19 for an explanation of how God's goal to glorify all that he is brought forth the decree of just punishment.)

- 2.8. The foundation of the gospel is found in Romans 3:25-26. Answer the following questions on this text. a) What had happened that made it necessary for God's righteousness to be demonstrated? b) Taking your cue from the nearby verse 23, state the answer to "a" in terms of the glory of God. c) In view of your answer to "b" how would you define God's righteousness so as to make clear why it needed to be vindicated? d) Why does the blood (i.e. death) of Christ vindicate the righteousness of God? (For a hint see John 17:4; 12:27f. Keep thinking in the terms of Romans 3:23.) e) Why does your own hope depend on God's vindicating his righteousness?**

a) He had passed over former sins.

- b) God had suffered his glory to be assaulted without proper recompense.
- c) His righteousness is his unwavering commitment to uphold the worth of his glory. So if his glory has been belittled and he has done nothing, then he must do something to vindicate -- show his commitment to the worth of -- his glory.
- d) Because Jesus came into the world precisely to glorify God (Romans 15:9; John 7:18; 12:27f; 17:4). He did this by suffering a loss of glory so great in his incarnation and suffering, that he demonstrated the infinite worth of God's glory and thus repaired the injury done to the glory of God by all the sins of all who take refuge in him.
- e) If the passing over past sins demands a vindication of God's glory, then the passing over of my sins will demand this as well. And I am a sinner! My hope does depend on God's passing over my sins. Therefore my hope depends on the great vindication of the glory of God which my sin has scorned. Thus the death of Jesus is the foundation of my hope because it is the vindication of the glory of God.

2.9. After we see all that God has done to accomplish redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus we have to ask: What must we do to benefit from what Jesus did? The answer is that we must be "converted". What is the author's argument that true conversion involves faith and repentance?

He points out that in Acts 15:3 Paul and Barnabas reported the conversion of the gentiles, and then shows from Acts 11:18 that this conversion consisted in repentance unto life, and in 14:27 it consisted in faith.

Texts on the necessity of repentance

Luke 3:3, John the Baptist "went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."

Mark 1:14-15, "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'"

Luke 3:8, "Bear fruits that befit repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children of Abraham."

Luke 5:32, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Luke 13:1-3, "There were some present at that very time who told Him of Galileans whose blood Pilot had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.'"

Luke 15:7, "Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Luke 24:46-47, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

Acts 2:38, "And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

Acts 3:19, "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

Acts 5:31, "God exalted Him at His right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

Acts 11:18, "When they heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also, God has granted repentance unto life.'"

Acts 20:21, "Testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

2.10. What is true of about us as human beings that requires the event of conversion to be brought about by a miracle of divine grace rather than human achievement?

We are blind (2 Cor. 4:4); hard (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26); dead in sin (Eph. 2:3); unable to submit to God (Romans 8:7-8); unable to grasp spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14f); unable to come to Christ (John 6:44,65); by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:3).

2.11. Cite some texts that show that conversion (repentance and faith) is a gift of God.

Acts 11:18 - "God has granted repentance unto life."

Acts 14:27 - "God opened a door of faith to the Gentiles."

Acts 16:14 - "The Lord opened Lydia's heart . . ."

Eph. 2:8; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Deut. 30:6; Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26-27.

2.12. "Regeneration" is a technical word for being born again. Does the author think that we are born again (regenerated) by faith or that we are enabled to have faith by being born again? What verses would he use to show this?

He thinks that the new birth precedes and enables faith. He cites 1 John 5:1; 2:29; 3:9; 4:2,3,7. He would also say that this is implied in the texts cited in the answer to question #2.11.

2.13. The author believes that regeneration is the same thing as God's "effectual calling" or what some call "irresistible grace". What passage of Scripture would he use to argue that there is

an internal and effectual call of God that is different from the general call that all people hear when a preacher preaches the gospel? What would he mean that this call or this work of grace is irresistible since the Bible says very plainly that we can quench (1 Thess. 5:19) or grieve (Eph. 4:30) or resist (Acts 7:51) the Holy Spirit?

He would use 1 Cor. 1:23-24, where the call of God is clearly distinguished from the general preaching of the gospel. By irresistible he does not mean that men can offer no resistance, but that God is able to overcome that resistance in anyone that he chooses. He may suffer himself to be resisted, quenched and grieved. But he is sovereign still and in those whom he chooses he overcomes every obstacle to faith.

2.14. What are two reasons mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 why God would call people in this sovereign way?

Verse 29 - So no one can boast in God's presence. (4:7)

Verse 31 - So that people might boast only in God.

2.15. In pages 67ff. the author tries to show that what really happens in regeneration or in effectual calling (by irresistible grace) is the "creation of a Christian Hedonist". In other words behind and before the act of saving faith and repentance something happens to the human heart by the grace of God that gives it the inclination to embrace Christ as all-sufficient for my needs and my longings. Where once there was no sense at all that Christ is beautiful and desirable, suddenly there is a sense that he is all of that and true. This change is the creation of a Christian Hedonist -- a person who now finds joy and peace in the beauty of Christ's perfections. Use Hebrews 11:6 and John 3:18-20 and argue in your own words that a new taste for Christ must be created before there can be saving faith.

According to Heb. 11 saving faith has two components: believing that God is and that he is a rewarder of all who come to him. I take this to mean that before saving faith can be exercised the heart must have a desire for the true reward of those who come. I don't think you can believe that God is the rewarder of those who seek him if the reward you believe he gives is unsatisfying. That would be like saying he is not really a good rewarder. But if you already sense a sufficient longing to come for the true reward of the glory of God, then a profound change has already been worked in your heart. (See 2 Cor. 4:4-6 to see that it is precisely the glory of Christ/God that we must come to see by divine miracle in order to be saved.)

According to John 3:20 the reason people do not come to the light of Christ is because they love the darkness. In John's language coming to the light means believing on Jesus (John 6:35;44). So people do not believe because of a deep antipathy for the light of Christ. This means that a change must in what you hate and love must precede your coming to Christ. Specifically you must stop hating the light and start loving the light. Then you will be inclined to come to the light and walk in the light and be saved.

It is utterly crucial to realize that becoming a Christian is more than a mere decision to do a thing or believe a doctrine. It is a miracle, a new creation, a new taste for God. This is why a changed life is simply inevitable when we come to faith in Jesus. He has now become our treasure chest of holy joy (Matt. 13:44).

3

Worship The Feast of Christian Hedonism

3.1 The introduction to this chapter is a kind of exposition of John 4:1-38, the story of "the woman at the well." Jesus had been alone with the Samaritan woman while his disciples are in the town getting food. After they return they offer him something to eat (v. 31) and he responds, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." a) What is the food that Jesus was eating while they were away? (v. 34) b) More specifically, what is God's purpose (stated earlier in this chapter) that Jesus has been up to while the disciples were away?

a) His food is to do the will of the One who sent him. He delighted to do the will of the Father (Psalm 40:8) and so it brought a deep satisfaction and joy and strength (like food) to his heart. Loving obedience was his food.

b) God's purpose is to seek worshipers. V. 23, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him." So Jesus has been "seeking" or hunting a true worshiper for God. This is evangelism.

3.2 Jesus offers the Samaritan woman a kind of water that enables a person never to thirst again! And even more amazing, he says this water actually becomes a spring of water welling up to eternal life (v.14)! Evidently this is the sort of "bait" you use when you are hunting worshipers for the living God (v. 23). If so, what would be one of the simplest definitions of worship?

Worship is thirsty drinking of the living water that Jesus has to give. Worship is not so much giving to Jesus. It's drinking the eternal satisfaction that Jesus gives us. The reason this is worship is that drinking with zest shows the worth and deliciousness of the drink.

3.3 What is the water that Jesus gives? The author suggests two possibilities from other passages in the Bible and then shows that these two possibilities really fit together to give one answer. a) What are the two possible things that "water" is? And b) How do these fit together to give a full answer to what the "water" is?

a) One answer is that the water is Jesus' teaching. Proverbs 23:14 says, "The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life." And Jesus said, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). So the water wells up to eternal life and the words of Jesus give life. So the water may well be the word, or the truth of Jesus.

The other possibility is that the water refers to the Holy Spirit. John 7:37-9, "Jesus stood up and proclaimed, 'If anyone thirst let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive." So in all likelihood the water that Jesus gives is the Holy Spirit.

b) The way these two fit together is indicated by John 14:26, "The Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said." So the Spirit and the word of Jesus are not separate. The Spirit ministers to us through the word of Jesus. He is called, in fact, the "Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). So the water Jesus offered is not just word or just Spirit, but the Spirit empowered word, or the word bearing Spirit. Without the Spirit the truth has no power. Without the truth the Spirit has nothing to glorify.

3.4 In view of what you have just answered in 3.3b what kind of worship does the Father want in John 4:23 when it says, "True worshipers will worship Him in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him"? That is, what does worship in "spirit and truth" mean?

It probably corresponds to the two things that water refers to, namely, the truth of Jesus and the Spirit of Jesus. That is God wants worship that is based on the truth and he wants worship that is empowered and fired by the Holy Spirit. Dead orthodoxy and unthinking enthusiasm are not pleasing to him. (See John 3:6 for how the Spirit of God and our spirit are related -- if our spirit is in view here in 4:23 it is our spirit awakened and born anew by God's Spirit.)

3.5 Changing the metaphor, the author suggests that we can get a picture of worship with the following images. Put the reality beside the image.

The fuel of worship = Truth
The fire of worship = Holy Spirit
The furnace of worship = the spirit of man
The heat of the furnace = worship

3.6 Why does the author say that worship is "gladly reflecting back to God the radiance of his worth." Why not just say it is a reflecting back to God the radiance of his worth? Why add "gladly"?

First because Matt. 15:8 says that some try to worship while their heart is far from him. So real worship is not just an outward act but an affair of the heart. It involves the emotions. To say that it involves the "will" is not enough, because it take the will to even perform the worthless external acts. The heart signifies the hearty engagement of the emotions.

Moreover the word "gladly" is needed because wonderful inanimate objects that God made reflect back to him his greatness (Psalm 148:7,9). And not only that even rebellious men and women will reflect God's glory in a negative way and the wrath of God will praise him (Psalm 76:10).

3.7 But if worship can include the emotions of contrition and brokenness, how can we include "gladly" as a necessary part of the definition of true worship?

Because in true contrition there is not hopelessness and despair but at least the flicker of joy that "God revives the spirit of the contrite" (Isaiah 57:15). If there is no element of gladness, then the act does not qualify as worship. It may lead to worship. But it is not yet worship. Worship, like faith, believes that God is and that he is the rewarder of those who seek him (Hebrews 11:6). Without that mustard seed of confidence that here in the presence of God there is hope and joy, God is not pleased, for there is no reflection of the worth of his grace.

3.8 List the sequence of emotions that are included in worship and give at least one verse to illustrate each one.

silence - Habakkuk 2:20

awe - Psalm 33:8

dread - Isaiah 8:13

brokenness - Psalm 51:17

longing - Psalm 42:1-2

glad gratitude - Psalm 30:11-12

hope - Psalm 42:5

delight in God himself - Psalm 37:4

3.9 The author argues that worship is "an end in itself." Strictly he means that worship cannot be performed as a means to anything else. Like fund-raising or missions or education or church growth. a) Does the author mean that worship will not have good effects in these areas? b) What does he mean? Illustrate from your experience.

a) NO. Worship will have powerful effect for good in every area of life.

b) He means that genuine emotion is an essential part of all worship and genuine emotion cannot be calculated. It cannot be performed as a means to something else. Authentic fear and grief and desire and awe and gratitude and confidence are not performed in order to accomplish something else. I do not cry at the news of my mother's death in order to get pity or stay healthy or encourage my father. If I could manufacture crying for purposes like that it would simply not be regarded as genuine grief. Genuine emotions are not performed by design. They are not purposeful. They do not have other ends in view than the spontaneous reflection of the reality we see.

3.10 Why does insisting that the emotions of worship are ends in themselves guard the God-centeredness of worship?

Because if we could manufacture emotional responses to God for reasons other than the greatness of God's qualities then the thing we are manufacturing them for would become central.

3.11 How does the author show the inadequacy of duty as a motive for true worship and b) how does he recover duty as a noble and helpful Christian concept?

a) He shows that an act of love done out of duty is not as honoring to the beloved as an act done out of delight. (Example: roses for wife and kiss good night.)

b) He reclaims the concept of duty by defining it so as to include the duty to delight (Psalm 37:4). In other words he radicalizes the concept of duty to say that it is our duty not just to do external things that we feel are in our control, but also to have internal emotions toward God that we feel are very much beyond our control.

3.12 It appears then that the pursuit of joy is an essential part of the duty to worship God. Or to put it another way, to the degree that we strive against our passion for happiness we will hinder our capacity for genuine worship. If the pursuit of my happiness is at the heart of worship, how can this be thought of as humble?

A thirsty person is not a proud person. His hands are empty. He admits that he does not have the resources in himself to be happy. He is on the quest for joy from outside himself. If God is the end of his quest God will be exalted not the thirsty soul. The proud stance toward God is not the one that seeks to get what it so desperately needs, but the one that seeks to give what it thinks God may be deficient in.

3.13 What are the "three stages of worship" and why do they all honor God?

1. Overflowing delight in the glory of God.
2. Longing for this experience of overflowing delight.
3. Sorrow at not even feeling the longing.

God is honored by these because there is in each of them an echo of his worth and excellence. This is obvious in 1 and 2. But it is also the "spark of anticipated gladness that give rise to the sorrow we feel when our hearts are lukewarm". We would feel no true sorrow for our coldness if we were not echoing the worth of what we have temporarily lost sight of.

3.14 What is the "moral enemy of worship"?

The notion that the virtue and moral worth of an act diminishes to the degree that you do it for the joy it brings, and increases to the degree that you attain disinterestedness in the performance of the act and do it solely as a duty or solely as a requirement of an authority or "because it's right."

3.15 Define evil from Jeremiah 2:11-13.

Evil is the insanity of leaving God as a source of satisfaction and trying to find it in the broken cisterns of human creation.

3.16 A great danger of stressing the emotional essence of worship as the author has is that it might lead some people to try to manufacture the emotion in artificial ways (e.g. with music or lighting or incense or other rituals). What counsel from Jonathan Edwards will guard us from this mistake?

The counsel is that we only try to move the affections with truth and that we only try to engender affections that are agreeable to the nature of the truth they are affected with.

Further query: Does this rule out any considerations of musical sound or architectural effect or artistic communications? No. But it forces the question of "truth" in art. Not all truth has to come through the spoken or written word. But controlling the truth of sound and sight are much more difficult. A combination of word and sound and sight can be very powerful and appropriate when the true Biblical word is shepherding the soul among the rocks and trees and ripples and thunders of the arts.

3.17 What two things are the "forms" of worship supposed to do in relation to the true emotional experience of worship?

Express and inspire that genuine experience. The forms should be vehicles of truth and glory coming from God's word and Spirit. And they should be vehicles of the array of proper emotions that arise in response from our hearts.

4

Love

The Labor of Christian Hedonism

4.1. The author distinguishes between "vertical" Christian Hedonism and "horizontal" Christian Hedonism. What is vertical Christian Hedonism?

Vertical Hedonism is the pursuit of joy directly in God through worship. It is delighting in God for who he is in himself and for what his personal fellowship with us brings to our souls. It is the opposite of Horizontal Hedonism which is described in the next answer.

4.2. What is the thesis of this chapter?

The thesis of this chapter is that "the pursuit of pleasure is an essential motive for every good deed. Or, to put it another way, if you aim to abandon the pursuit of full and lasting pleasure, you cannot love people or please God."

4.3. What is one common view of how genuine love (or morality) and the pursuit of happiness relate to each other -- the view that the author is striving against?

The view of morality that the author is opposing is that an act is morally valuable to the degree that is pursued with disinterestedness, to the degree that it is pursued without a view to any benefit that might come to the doer. The view says that the moral worth of an act of benevolence is reduced to the degree that we are aiming to be rewarded for it. Reward is OK to get (unexpectedly) as a result of a good deed, but it is not OK to make reward the motive of a good deed. That is mercenary. This is the view the author says is unbiblical and is opposed to love and does not please God.

4.4. John Piper deals with some passages of Scripture that seem to contradict the thesis of this chapter. For example 1 Corinthians 13:5; 10:24,33; Romans 15:1-3. Take 1 Corinthians 13:5 ("Love seeks not its own.") and point out two clues in the nearer context that show Paul does NOT mean it is wrong to pursue joy in the obedience of love. Do you see any other clues besides the ones the author found?

The clues in the context of 1 Cor. 13 are, first, that Paul appeals to the desire for gain in the act of love in verse 3. The second clue is that love is said to "rejoice in the truth." So love cannot be indifferent to what is true and right. If there is not rejoicing in what is right to do and true to say, though it be painful, love is compromised. Another clue might be "love hopes all things." This

shows that love is to some degree an affection of hope. Love is not raw action or raw will power. It hopes. It rejoices. It looks for gain. Not material gain! See below.

- 4.5. Look at the last sentence (in parentheses) in the quote by atheist Ayn Rand on page 101. Now find the sentence on pages 115-6 that says almost exactly the same thing. It is a tragedy that Ayn Rand rejected Christianity, thinking that the view of morality she was attacking was truly Christian. What should we have said to Ayn Rand from what you have seen so far in this chapter? Another way to ask the question would be to say, What would Jonathan Edwards have said to Ayn Rand about the distortion of 1 Corinthians 13:5 that she was scorning?**

Ayn Rand said that Christian morality proceeds along the lines of absolute self-denial, so that if you get any benefit out of what you do for others it is bad, and if you don't then it is good. She summed this up with the words, "If one has no desire to be evil, one cannot be good; if one has, one can." In other words, the more you dislike doing good, the more good you can be because the less personal kicks you will get out of doing good. And the more you really enjoy doing good, the less good you can be because you will inevitably get the kickback of delight from your good deeds.

What we should have said to Ayn Rand is that there is no such thing as absolute self-denial in Biblical Christianity.

The self-denial called for in 1 Cor. 13:5 (Love seeks not its own) is a denial of pursuing private material gain at the expense of other people. If what we love, and what gives us the greatest degree of fulfillment is the actual doing of good to others there is not evil in wanting that satisfaction. In fact virtue consists in being the kind of person who takes most delight in righteousness. No private pleasure is as great in the heart of a virtuous person as the pleasure of seeing our labor lead to the salvation of another person.

- 4.6. What text would you cite to show that God not only does acts of love but that he loves to do acts of love? Should we try to be like him in this way?**

Jeremiah 9:24 -- the Lord "delights" to practice love and justice and righteousness. I can think of no reason why we should not try to imitate God in this. It means trying to become so transformed to Christ by the power of the Spirit that we delight in what He delights in.

- 4.7. If Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends," (John 15:13), how can Paul say that it is possible to "give your life to be burned and have not love" (1 Corinthians 13:3)?**

Because love is more than a mere act. It must involve a certain kind of heart or motive or set of desires. What that kind of heart is can be shown in the following questions.

- 4.8. It is amazingly common to hear people say, "Love is not a feeling. Love is an act of will. Love is a deed of helpfulness." The author concedes that there are at least two good intentions behind these statements. What are they?**

Feelings can never replace good deeds when the deeds lie in our power to do them (James 2:16; 1 John 3:18). 2) The efforts of love must be made even in the absence of the joy that one might wish were present. But one does not proceed as though the absence of feeling is ideal or especially virtuous. One proceeds with repentance and with the prayer that in the act the right affections will come.

- 4.9. But the author thinks it is misleading and inaccurate to talk this way, as though love does not have to have any component of feeling. What are some evidences in the context of 1 Corinthians 13 itself that love does involve feelings, including some and excluding others?**

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 says that love is not jealous and not easily provoked, and that it rejoices in the truth and hopes all things. These are all emotions that must be included or excluded. Love is defined with reference to emotions as well as deeds.

- 4.10. How feelings relate to love can be seen if we look at a living example of genuine love described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:1-8. According to this example of love in the lives of the Macedonian Christians, a) What is the ultimate source of genuine love? b) How does this produce love? c) What does love look like practically? d) What definition of love emerges from this text?**

a) The ultimate source of genuine love is the grace of God poured out in the hearts of the believers. God is the source. b) It produces joy in God which overflows in liberality to others. Joy is the link between grace and love. c) It looks like benevolence and generosity that is even willing to suffer loss for the good of others. d) Love is the overflow of joy in God that gladly meets the needs of others.

- 4.11. The definition of love on page 119 is not quite satisfying to explain the impulse of love. Something is missing. But that "something" is implied two paragraphs later when it says, Love "is first a deeply satisfying experience of the fullness of God's grace, and then a *doubly satisfying experience of sharing that grace with another person.*" What impulse is implied in these words that is not explicit in calling love an "overflow"?**

The impulse implied is in the word "doubly satisfying". This implies that when we extend God's grace to others it increases our enjoyment of that very grace. We see the grace enlarged in the life of another and therefore our joy in grace is enlarged. Therefore there is not just an overflow of joy in the act of love, there is also a pursuit of joy -- the doubled joy of another person's joy. The problem of the first definition on page 103 is that it does not stress adequately the desire of what does not yet exist, but only stresses the joy that does exist.

4.12. How does 2 Corinthians 9:7 confirm the point that mere acts of helpfulness are not necessarily genuine love?

2 Corinthians 9:7 says that God loves a cheerful giver. This shows that mere will-power giving is not pleasing to God. What pleases God is not mere acts, but acts done in the pursuit of holy joy.

4.13. Can you state in a few sentences now why the thesis of this chapter included the statement that if you forsake the pursuit of your joy you cannot love people or please God?

If God loves -- is pleased by - a cheerful giver then to try to abandon the pursuit of joy is to try to abandon the pursuit of pleasing God. And if love is the overflow of joy in God's grace, then to be indifferent to the pursuit of joy in God's grace is to be indifferent to loving others. And not to want the doubled joy of another's joy is not to love them. People feel more loved when our acts of benevolence for them are not begrudging but cheerful.

4.14. Another text that gives a real life example of love is 2 Corinthians 1:23-2:4. Show from these verses that when love is abounding between two people each is not merely seeking the joy of the other but, more than that, is seeking *his own joy* in the joy of the other.

Verse 2 implies that his joy rises and falls with their joy. Verse 3 implies that their joy consists largely in his joy. Verse 4 says that all this is love.

Love is finding joy in each other's joy.

4.15. What does the author mean when he says that if love is the LABOR of Christian Hedonism, it must also be the LEISURE of Christian Hedonism? What passage of Scripture illustrates each of these?

"Labor" means love works to extend its joy to others. It could not be otherwise than that the joy others take in God or in our joy should also be our joy. We delight to take delighted leisure in the fruit of what we delighted to produce.

4.16. If love is the overflow of JOY that seeks to expand itself in the joy of others, how can there be weeping and "anguish of heart" in the life of a consistently loving person?

The weeping of love is the weeping of joy implied in the extension of itself to another.

4.17. Compare the second full paragraph on page 114 and the fifth paragraph on page 125. What words in 1 Corinthians 13:3 and Acts 20:35 make it very hard to accept the common notion that reward is a good *result* of love but a bad *motive*?

In 1 Corinthians 13:3 the hope of gain is made the incentive of love. In Acts 20:35 the reward of blessing for giving is to be remembered. So both texts make the hope of reward a consumers motive.

4.18. Explain from 1 Peter 5:1-2 and Hebrews 13:17 why it is unloving for a pastor to abandon the pursuit of his joy in the ministry.

The eagerness and joy of ministry is required both to be obedient to the apostle and to be a "benefit" to the church. If it is a benefit to the church then it is unloving not to pursue it.

4.19. What radical element of Christian Hedonism does Luke 12:33 make explicit?

That the pursuit of treasure in heaven involves a radical simplification of life-style here. The pursuit of joy that lasts is the opposite of pursuing possessions and riches.

4.20. In each of the three texts from Hebrews what is the key power of love? If we today want to be as radically loving as were the early Christians and Moses and Jesus, what must we labor to cultivate in our hearts?

Hebrews 10:32-35; 11:24-26; 12:1-2.

The key power of love is the sure hope of far greater joy and blessing and life and riches in heaven if we love here and lose our lives than if we don't love and keep our lives. Loving becomes the pursuit of that surpassing joy; and the strength of love is the zeal for that hope.

4.21. How does the author show in his letter to Romn that Jesus' pursuit of joy in the cross was not mercenary but was in fact infinitely caring of us?

The joy Jesus pursued was the joy of leading us to glory and showing us the Father and being exalted among us as preeminent for our enjoyment.

4.22. Is there joy in the conquests of mountain climbing that cost you to lose toes and fingers to frost bite? What might be the counterpart to this strange experience in the moral life? A fuller explanation of this powerful impulse to see our weaknesses overcome is given on pg 139. Use this to describe the real dynamic of how love is driven the way a mountain climber is driven.

a) yes

b) The risky conquest of the precipices of hate and prejudice and resentment and addictions in our lives. (Remember Jesus said gouge out your eye).

c) Mountain climbers love the exhilaration of conquering hard rock faces. Christian Hedonists love the exhilaration of God's conquering hard rock faces of selfishness in their lives. Christian Hedonists love the power of grace to flow!

- 4.23. One way of making the imaginary dialogue on page 136 real in your own life is to ask, "Do you feel more loved when you are visited in the hospital by someone who comes cheerfully (because they anticipate joy in your encouragement and healing) or by someone who comes dutifully (because it is part of their pastoral job and God's expectation)?"**

I feel more loved when someone visits me for the joy of seeing me encouraged.

- 4.24. What does the author mean that the nature of a loving act and the hoped for reward must be "organically related"? How is this illustrated in the reward we hope for in Romans 8:29 and Luke 6:35?**

The hoped for reward must be attractive because it has in it the moral traits of the act we do to get it. Money is not a proper reward for rescuing a child from starving. But being with Jesus who is that kind of person is a proper reward. Also a proper reward would be the joy of seeing people whole and happy and alive for ever in love with God.

Romans 8:29 - the promise of hope is conformity to Christ and Christ's being exalted in the midst of a people like him. So our acts which we do here and which are motivated by that hope, should conform to that holiness. 1 John 3:1-2.

Luke 6:35 - The reward of not seeking money but loving is being sons of God and that means likeness to God who is merciful. So acts of mercy are motivated by a desire to be with and be like a God of mercy.

5

Scripture Kindling for Christian Hedonism

5.1. What are several Biblical evidences that every day with Jesus is not (in this life) sweeter than the day before?

First there are the texts that speak of the saint's soul needing to be revived (Psalm 23:2-3; 19:7), which implies that once it was more alive to the sweetness of Christ than it is today. That is why it needs reviving.

The apostle Paul considers it part of his calling to be a "worker for your joy" (2 Cor. 1:24). This implies that joy is not a simple steady ascent.

5.2. If the life of joy in God is not one of steady, unremitting improvement, how would you describe the normal (Biblical) Christian life of joy in God?

The life of joy in God is vulnerable to Satan's attacks. It is a warfare. Joy is an essential part of spiritual life that is constantly under attack (Eph. 6 and 1 Peter 5:8). It is a fire that is constantly being doused by Satan every day. And there is an old nature in us that tends to cool down our delight in God. This old nature must be constantly "reckoned dead" (Romans 6:11) and "put off" like old clothes (Eph. 4:22) and "put to death" (Col. 3:5).

So normal Biblical Christian living is a warfare with the cooling (Matt. 24:12; Rev. 3:16), choking (Luke 8:14), assaulting (Eph. 6:16; 1 Peter 5:8) forces.

5.3. If you describe this normal Christian life of joy in God with two or three different metaphors, what role does the Bible play for the Christian in each of these metaphors? For example, if the Christian life is a "journey", you might say the Bible plays the role of road map.

The life of joy in God is warfare -- the Bible is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).

The life of joy in God is a fire in threat of being doused and growing cold -- the Bible is kindling to keep the fire hot.

5.4. How would you answer someone who lived by another "holy book" contrary to the Bible and said that its teachings brought them joy and satisfaction?

I would say that the Bible is true and any book contrary to it is false, and I would try (with my appendix two) to persuade them that this is so. I would also try to show that without a credible truth claim the joy you get from your holy book is superficial and will not last. Reality (truth) will eventually take over and all that is not based on it will crumble (1 John 2:15-17). Truth matters, not just subjective emotional responses. A Christian Hedonist is so serious about the pursuit of deep and LASTING joy that no unsure foundation will suffice. The ground of our joy must be TRUE to bring the happiness we want.

5.5. Describe four different ways that "the Word of God is your life."

1. Our physical life was created by the Word of God (Psalm 33:4; Hebrews 1:3).
2. Our physical life is sustained moment by moment by the Word of God (Heb. 1:3).
3. Our spiritual life is begotten by the word of God (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23)
4. Our spiritual life is sustained by the word of God (Matt. 4:4)

5.6. On pages 145-8 we see that the reformer, "Little Bilney", and the criminal Tokichi Ichii each pointed to a specific word of Scripture that God used to awaken spiritual life. Which texts were these? Did God use a specific verse to do this for you? Can you think of other historical persons who point to one specific word that caused them to be born again?

I cannot remember one for myself. But Phaitoon Hathamart told the staff on Monday Nov. 6 that he pinpoints his regeneration at the point of reading Matthew 11:28. Jonathan Edwards pointed to the powerful awakening of love to God that came on reading 1 Tim. 1:17. Saint Augustine experienced awakening to God's reality and his great sinfulness on reading Romans 13:13. Martin Luther pointed to Romans 1:16f.

5.7. If someone comes to you in distress that their faith has wavered and they are full of doubts about the love of God and the reality of Christ and heaven and forgiveness, what might be one of the most helpful things you could do for them? Show from Scripture the basis of your answer.

Since "faith comes by hearing the word of God," (Rom. 10:17) and since the word of God is written "that we might believe" (John 20:31), it would probably be helpful both to direct the person to extensive reading of the Bible, but perhaps even more powerful would be to spend time quoting and reading it to them. Urge them to memorize it. Get them into a group where it is cherished and applied in the context of love and prayer. Show them how to read it as a part of prayer. Show how it works in your own spiritual warfare.

5.8. What are two verses that show that the link between joy and the word of God is believing that word?

5.9. Since the fruit of the Holy Spirit is joy, we will surely want the fullness of the Spirit's effects in our lives. Develop two different Biblical lines of evidence that filling our selves with the word is a crucial way to have the fullness of the Spirit and thus the fullness of joy.

1. Galatians 3:2 says plainly that the Spirit is received by the hearing of faith. Hearing implies a word to hear. Therefore getting the word into us to constantly hear will surely be a means to constantly receive all that the Spirit has to give. (Note the context in Galatians where the point is not merely the first receiving of the Spirit, but the ongoing miracle working power of the Spirit.)

2. Eph. 5:17 says that we should not get drunk with wine but be full (drunk as it were) with the Spirit. How do you get drunk with something? Answer: drink a lot of it. How do you drink the Spirit? By setting the mouth of our spirit constantly at the cup of "spiritual things" (Romans 5:8). What are the things of the Spirit? Paul in 1 Cor. 2:13f implies that they are his Spirit-inspired teachings. Therefore, we should constantly drink the word in order to be drunk with the Spirit.

5.10. At Bethlehem Baptist Church one of the mottoes (on the literature and the signs) is "Hope in God." Suppose someone read that sign and said, "How can you obey a command like that? I can't just turn hope on and off in my heart." How might you respond to that person to help them see how to obey that command?

You would agree with them that hope cannot be turned on and off at will. But then you would point them to Romans 15:4 and Psalm 78:5-7 which show that the word of God is designed to kindle hope. The word of God is living and active and can create hope in a heart that does not feel any. That is why God has spoken. So obedience can be pursued indirectly through meditation on the Bible, especially the promises.

5.11. The word of God frees. This can be thought about in two ways: 1) we may need freedom from confusion and ignorance about what way to go in life or what to think about an idea; or 2) we may need freedom from some bondage to a pleasure that is wrong and harmful. Explain how the Bible functions in those two different needs to give freedom.

1. Simply, the Bible gives many clear commands that will show us the way to go like a light on the path in front of us (Psalm 119:105). But not only that, immersing our mind in the Bible shapes our mind into a "wise" mind (Psalm 19:7-8; 119:98) that can judge the good and right way even when the Bible does not give explicit guidance on a particular issue.

2. Bondage to a wrong pleasure is broken when we are deeply persuaded (note the word deeply, not merely with intellectual assent) that the pleasures of righteousness and obedience will be greater and longer than the temporary pleasures that now hold us fast. Therefore the way the Bible works is by its promises it weans us away from inferior, fleeting pleasures. This is the point of 2 Peter 1:3-4 and 1 Peter 2:1ff. The Bible (under the blessing of the Holy Spirit) lures us away from the deception of sin's pleasures to the reality and truth of the pleasures of righteousness (2 Thess. 2:10f).

5.12. What are three passages of Scripture that make explicit the link between the word of God and victory over Satan's power?

Ephesians 6:16-17

1 John 2:14

Matthew 4:1-11

5.13. If the word of God gives and sustains life, if it begets and sustains faith, if it brings the Spirit of God, if it gives and sustains hope, if it makes us free and wiser than our teachers, if it gives assurance of salvation, if it conquers the great enemy Satan, and if it "REJOICES the heart" (Psalm 19:8), Why is it that so many professing Christians give it so little time in their lives? List (if you can!) some things that are more important to do than be in the Word for an extended time each day

Professing Christians are letting themselves be duped by Satan's emotional lie that newspaper funnies, television, odd jobs, profession, play, etc. will bring greater payoff than an hour over the word in prayer.

There are no more important acts.

5.14. What helpful insights for prayer and Bible reading did you find in the testimony of George Mueller?

Two things were most helpful for me. One was the conscious effort to get my heart happy in God. Reading with a definite view to that spiritual victory. The other was the idea of not praying without the word as a guide. That has made a great difference. The reading of the word and the praying are now both much more pregnant with the presence and power of God.

6

Prayer

The Power of Christian Hedonism

6.1 What is the author's answer to the criticism that pursuing pleasure in all of life puts pleasure above God or puts the interests of man above the interests of God?

The author says, "The most precious truth in the Bible is that God's greatest interest is to glorify the wealth of his grace by making sinners happy...IN HIM". Our pursuit of happiness and God's pursuit of glory are not at odds, they are the same pursuit. Therefore Christian Hedonists pursue happiness IN GOD with all of their might.

6.2 It is very close to the heart of this book to say, "Our interest and his glory are one". Be sure you can give an account of why this is so.

God created pleasure as the measure of our treasure. Jesus said, "...where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). We enjoy most what we treasure most. Therefore the object we treasure most receives the most glory as we find our supreme enjoyment in it. This is why God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. So "God's greatest interest is to glorify the wealth of his grace by making sinners happy...IN HIM". Our pursuit of happiness and God's pursuit of glory are the same pursuit.

6.3 Explain from John 14:13 and John 16:24 how Jesus' view of prayer helps support the sentence in question 6.2 that "our interest and God's glory are one."

In John 14:13, Jesus teaches us that prayer glorifies the Father as the all-sufficient, infinitely wealthy benefactor and humbles us as needy beneficiaries of his mercy. In John 16:24 Jesus teaches us that through prayer we ask and receive from God all that we need for our joy to be full. Therefore through prayer God receives glory and we find happiness.

6.4 Why is it that when we pray the way Jesus taught us to we shift glory from ourselves to God.

Prayer demonstrates who is strong and who is weak. Christ is the vine apart from whom we branches can do nothing. We abide in him in order to bear fruit and a crucial aspect of that abiding (or remaining) in him is prayer. He is the source of living water which quenches our deepest thirst if we *ask* (John 4:9-10). "Prayer humbles us as needy, and exalts God as wealthy".

- 6.5 In answering the question, “Is prayer self-centered?” the author admits that in all prayer we are seeking our joy, but he says that this is implied in the prayer, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” How does that prayer support his claim?**

The will of God is not done by angels in heaven in a begrudging or indifferent way. It is done with joy! If we seek God’s will to be done on earth in the same way, we are seeking the same type of joy the angels experience.

- 6.6 How can prayer be used to make a cuckold out of God and adulteresses out of those who pray? (A “cuckold” is a man whose wife is unfaithful.)**

Using prayer to ask God to give us worldly pleasures which we desire more than God is like a wife asking her generous husband to give her money so she can pay male prostitutes to give her pleasure.

- 6.7 Express in your own words the explanation why delighting in and praying for things that are not God, does not dishonor God as the all-satisfying source of joy. Let St. Augustine and C. S. Lewis help you. (pp. 166-7)**

If you recognize the things you are praying for as reflectors of God’s glory and not objects of worship themselves -- having no value apart from God -- then you will love those things for God’s sake. In fact, you will not be able to disassociate those things from God, the same way you cannot disassociate the sound a bird makes when it sings from the bird itself in your mind.

- 6.8. In view of his endorsement of desiring things other than God, how does the author interpret the words “There is nothing upon earth that I desire besides thee” from Psalm 73:25?**

He agrees with the Psalmist that there is nothing he wants *besides* or apart from God. All the things he wants, which are not God, show him more of God; he desires them for God’s sake.

- 6.9 Prayer calls attention to the surprising fact that it may not honor God to “serve” him. Describe the kind of serving that would dishonor God and cite two or three texts that warn us not to serve God in this way. (p. 168-9)**

Serving God with a view that he has a need we must fill actually dishonors God. It is role-reversal since it makes him out to be the needy beneficiary and me the wealthy benefactor.

Acts 17:24-25; Psalm 50:12,15; Luke 12:35-37

- 6.10 How is God very unlike the gods Bel and Nebo? (p. 169-70)**

Bel and Nebo require man to work for them and beasts to cart them around; they are helpless apart from man’s efforts. God on the other hand demands that he serve and provide for man so it is clearly demonstrated that he is strong and man is needy. He apart from all other gods “works for those who wait for him” (Isa. 64:4).

6.11 Show from 2 Chronicles 16:9 that God’s call into radical discipleship is not a “Help Wanted” sign.

The Lord searches the earth for a person who completely trusts him so that he might demonstrate his strength on their behalf. God is not looking for someone to help him. God is looking for someone who believes that he is able to help them and meet all their needs.

6.12 What would be one example of something you can give to God that won’t belittle him as needy?

Our anxieties -- “Cast all your anxieties on him” (1 Peter 5:7). It demonstrates our dependence upon God.

6.13 How then shall we serve God if it so belittling to him to treat him as needing us? Use Matthew 6:24 and 1 Peter 4:11 to justify your answer.

Jesus demonstrates what “serving” is by comparing God and money in Matthew 6:24. Both promise that they are able to make us happy and Jesus says we must choose between them. We serve the one whose promises we believe since we will seek to put ourselves in position to benefit most from their power. Which is why it is impossible to serve both -- it’s not possible to divide our loyalties.

The way we serve God is *believing* (continually) in his power to meet all our needs and make us eternally happy. Serving God is putting ourselves in position to benefit from his power. And since we receive by asking, that position is prayer. In this serving we receive happiness from God and he gets the glory. This is “serve[ing] in the strength which God supplies in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11).

6.14 Now get your bearings in the flow of the chapter by reading the section: *Prayer As The Pursuit Of Our Joy* it the middle of page 174. Restate what two goals prayer holds together.

Goal # 1: God’s pursuit of glory.
Goal # 2: Our pursuit of joy.

6.15 What is the first reason given why prayer leads to fullness of joy? Show how this is based on John 16: 20-22.

In John 16:20-22 Jesus explains to his disciples that when fellowship with him is removed when he dies they will be sorrowful, but when that fellowship is restored after his resurrection they will be full of joy. Joy comes from fellowship with Jesus. For us prayer is the place of our personal fellowship with Jesus. Therefore fellowship with Jesus in prayer leads to fullness of joy and prayerlessness leads to joylessness.

- 6.16 “Prayer is a fountain of joy because it is the source of the power to love” (and love is the capstone of joy). The author argues for this by unpacking the logic of John 16:16-17. Be sure you get this (pp. 176-7) and then put the logic in your own words.**

Jesus has given us a mission of love: to bear fruit that lasts (to love one another). Then notice how this mission logically relates to prayer. See it in the connecting words, “so that whatever [we] ask the Father [in Jesus’ name] he will give us.” The words, “so that,” show that God gives us a mission of love so that prayer has an appropriate place to work. So prayer is mainly for calling on God for the power to love.

- 6.17 What conception of prayer does the author think is missing from many prayer meetings that make it malfunction?**

Life is war. We are engaged as Christians in a life and death struggle against tremendous powers of evil (Eph. 6:12). Prayer is a war-time walkie-talkie with which we are able to communicate directly with the General regarding strategy, instructions and to call for reinforcements. However, if we do not regard life as war, our attempt to use prayer as a means to obtain more peace-time luxuries causes the walkie-talkie to malfunction.

- 6.18 Give several Bible verses to show that prayer is designed for advancing the mission of the gospel in the world.**

Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 4:3; Romans 15:30-31; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Matthew 9:38.

- 6.19 What will be the final joy of God’s people? And how does prayer relate to that?**

Our full joy will be realized when the mission Jesus assigned to us is finished: when God’s glory fills the earth, all of God’s people have been gathered from among all peoples, all evil is banished and Christ’s kingdom is fully established. Prayer is the means of obtaining the power to accomplish this mission of love. History demonstrates that prayer is the “prelude to spiritual awakening and missions advance”.

- 6.20 One last time, state how prayer holds these two great goals together: your quest for joy and God’s zeal for his glory.**

Prayer is the means through which we receive from God what brings us the greatest and longest lasting joy. And God receives glory in our asking him because it acknowledges that he has the power and the reserves and we do not.

7

Money

The Currency of Christian Hedonism

- 7.1. People often stumble over the statement in 1 Timothy 6:10, "The love of money is the root of all evils." The NIV even paraphrases it very loosely to try to avoid the problem, "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." There is another way of understanding this sentence that really does take the phrase "all evil" more literally. How does the author state this understanding? How does the love of money relate to "all evil"?**

Perhaps "the love of money" is a reference to the craving or the heart for what is not God. This craving, this penchant for idolatry, is indeed the root of all evil without exception. And perhaps it is fitting to focus on money as the object craved because money is nothing in itself but is the means by which we try to get all the other things that might fill the craving for what is not God.

Loving money is simply the opposite of love for God, and that is indeed the root of all evil. Do we look to God for our needs and satisfaction? Or do we look to what human resources can provide (which is what money stands for)?

- 7.2. Paul deplores the "depraved mind" that treats godliness as a means of gain" (1 Timothy 6:5). In opposing this depravity does he attack the motive of gain? What does he do?**

No, he does not attack the motive of desiring gain. On the contrary he agrees that there is great gain in godliness (v. 6) and he builds his argument for godliness on the reality and desirability of this gain. See especially verse 9 and 1 Timothy 4:8, "While physical training is a little profitable, godliness is profitable for all things, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

- 7.3. "There is great gain in godliness." That sentence is subject to great misuse. What is the misuse, and how does adding the words "with contentment" protect against that misuse?**

The misuse is to think that 1) it is all right to use spiritual means to make a lot of money, say by TV "ministries," music sales, etc.; and 2) it is all right to expect that being godly will make us rich in money, and that we should desire that this happen so that it can be plain that we are godly and that God approves of us.

The words "with contentment" show that godliness should not be pursued as a means to wealth but that with Godliness should come (as part of that godliness) a contentment with what we have (Hebrews 13:5 - "Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have;

for he has said I will never fail you nor forsake you."). The same word for contentment as in 1 Timothy 6:6 is used in Phil. 4:11, "I have learned in whatever state I am to be content." This is part of godliness and shows that the "gain" being spoken of does not come through the pursuit of wealth. The gain is the reward of being content without wealth -- being content with food and clothing (1 Tim. 6:8).

7.4. What Biblical sentence proves that it is "very profitable not to pursue riches"?

1 Timothy 6:9 -- "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction."

7.5. What similar activities should we NOT confuse with the wrong pursuit of riches? What precisely IS Paul warning against when he points out the danger of wanting to be rich?

We should not confuse the making of a lot of money with the desire to be rich. We should not confuse the gathering of capital for some worthy and helpful project to be the same as the desire to be rich. What Paul is warning against in the desire to be rich is the desire to HAVE a lot of money so that the security and comforts and ego boost will make us happy. To be a channel for millions of dollars is not bad

7.6. The first argument (from 1 Timothy 6:7) given on page 188 (to support the claim that there is great gain in godliness *with contentment*) is that "We brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world." But there is an assumption behind this argument without which it would not be compelling. What is the assumption? (Hint: why couldn't someone argue just the opposite: "since 'you can't take it with you,' get as much as you can now and live it up"?)

The assumption is that we WILL live for ever and that when we depart from this life what we have accumulated here is of no help. (See 1 Tim. 6:12) If we will not rise from the dead, then we are of all men most to be pitied. Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die (1 Cor. 15:32). But if we will enter into God's presence after death with nothing of what we accumulated here, then we must seriously ask what we will take with us to commend us to God; and how the use of our money here might in fact affect our eternal destiny.

7.7. A second argument (from 1 Timothy 6:8) to support the claim that there is great gain in godliness *with contentment* is that we can and ought to be happy with the simple necessity of life. In a sentence for each, state the three reasons why it is possible and good for a Christian to be content with the simple necessities of life without needing luxuries?

1. You don't need more than the simple necessities of life to be happy because according to Hebrews 13:5-6 you can have God with you to give you the joy of his fellowship and provision and protection. God is infinitely more valuable than things.

2. You don't need more than the simple necessities of life to be happy because the greatest joys in life under God are the joys that cannot be bought with money or things -- the joys of precious loving relationships and the joys of the beauties of nature.

3. You don't need more than the simple necessities of life to be happy because so much happiness comes by giving rather than by accumulating things. To use you money to meet needs in others rather than increasing comforts will pay great dividends of joy now and for ever.

7.8. Explain from 1 Timothy 6:9-10 why no Christian Hedonist wants to be rich.

The desire to be rich results in
temptations
snares
senseless and hurtful desires
ruin and destruction
evils of every sort
a wandering from the faith
hearts pierced with many pangs

So surely no one would want to be rich.

7.9. It may sound like the author does not believe in the free market system of economics. But he says he does. In your own words what is the reason he gives?

He believes in free enterprise not because of a naive sense of man's native goodness to do for each other what they ought to do, but because his belief in the depravity of man makes him even more skeptical of power centered in a party or a committee. He sees the free market and the democratic system as providing the best checks and balances against endorsing any small groups misuse of power through coercion. Great evil can flourish in a free enterprise, but so can great good, but it is very hard for great good to flourish when a small group of party rulers control things with the power of the gun.

7.10. From Matthew 6 and Luke 12 explain what Jesus' investment strategy is.

Money is to be invested for eternal yields in heaven. It is to be used so that the dividends that come from its use will last for ever not just for a few hundred years here.

Matt. 6:19-21, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust consume and thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal."

Luke 12:32-34, "Sell your possessions and give alms; provide for yourselves purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys."

7.11. How practically and specifically do you lay up treasures in heaven by using your money on earth? Give at least two specific Biblical supports.

1. Spend your earthly treasures for merciful purposes in Christ's name here on earth. Give alms. This is the point of Luke 12: 32-34.

2. "Whenever you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot pay you back, for it will be paid back to you in the resurrection of the just." Luke 14:13-14.

3. "Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into eternal habitations." Luke 16:9. Notice: Not "IF it fails" but "WHEN it fails." Money will fail! Then all that will be left the effects in eternity of what we have done for others with it.

7.12. One scholar objects on page 194 that "You do not live this way for the sake of reward." What are two texts that seem to state exactly the opposite? If you wanted to make this objection be valid, what meaning would you have to give to the word "reward"?

Luke 16:9 (Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon.) and 12:33 (Provide yourselves with purses.)

For this objection to be valid "reward" would have to refer to money or some other material or merely worldly gain. Both Luke 14:14 (don't want repayment now) and Luke 6:35 (expect nothing in return, and your reward will be great) show that the reward to seek is in heaven not on the earth.

7.13. Why is almsgiving or an act of mercy which is motivated by a desire for the promised reward not unloving or uncaring?

Because in my almsgiving my deep desire is that my joy in God's reward be increased by your sharing in it. My goal is that as I show my zeal for the reward of God by making sacrifices for you, you would come to see the value of that reward too. If I were not driven primarily by my zeal for joy in God, then you would not recognize that the greatest joy in the universe is god and might make the terrible mistake of finding your happiness in the thought that I was making you ultimate value of my heart. That joy would feel good for a while. This is the way most secular psychological healing is done today. But it is a cheap and temporary healing that will lead to destruction in the end. The most loving and caring way to help people is out of a motive that communicates that God is our chief joy and that our joy in him will be expanded if they share it.

7.14. Explain how the way we use our money can lay hold on eternal life without this being a salvation by works. If we can forfeit our life by the way we use our money then how is the use of money NOT a way of earning eternal life?

1 Tim. 6:19 says that rich people should "lay up for themselves a good foundation for the future and take hold on eternal life which is life indeed."

The way we use our money confirms where our heart is as Jesus said. It shows that our hope is in God. It proves what we are trusting in. It is what the heart hopes in and rests on that appropriates the gift of eternal life. That it is a gift see 2 Tim. 1:9 and Tit. 3:5.

7.15. Explain why there is such a close connection between riches and pride that Paul has to warn the rich "not to be haughty"?

Money's chief attraction is the power it gives and the sense of savvy and intelligence it seems to confirm. If we make money in the market it isn't just the things we can buy that give us a thrill, it is the sense that we were smart enough to build the system. So it is with many money making schemes -- they all can easily call attention to our ability or cleverness or hard work, any of which can feed pride.

7.16. What emotion (according to 1 Timothy 6:17) do riches tend to direct away from God to themselves? Why, according to Psalm 147:11, would this be a great mistake?

Riches tend to direct our HOPE from God to themselves.

This is a great mistake because God takes pleasure in those who hope in his steadfast love. It would be utterly foolhardy to turn your heart to something that would mean that the Lord ceased to take pleasure in you. That would be the worst state in the universe to be in.

7.17. If God promises to "richly furnish us with everything to enjoy," and if he promises to "prosper all that we do" (Psalm 1:3), then why does this not lead to a prosperity teaching which attempts to glorify God by displaying the tokens of the wealth that he has so graciously and powerfully given?

God increases our yield so that by giving we can prove that our yield is not our god.

This text does not say that the only way we enjoy what God gives is by using it for our immediate comforts. In fact 2 Cor. 9:8, "God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work." And again in 2 Cor. 9:11, "You will be enriched in every way for great generosity . . ." We are made rich to prove by our generosity that riches are not our god. The delights of wealth are in giving not in greater and greater life-style enhancements!

Moreover the life of Jesus and Paul would be hard to justify if they meant for us to enjoy every possibility of purchase and ease. Paul accepted a life style of extraordinary self-denial (2 Cor 4:8-12; 11:23-29; 1 Cor. 15:30-33). And Jesus and John the Baptist would have taught and lived very differently if a prosperity pattern of indulgence were Biblical (Luke 12:33; 12:29; 3:11; 9:58; 19:8).

7.18. Why is "wartime lifestyle" a better term than "simple lifestyle"?

Because simple lacks the strategic implication of trying to accomplish something. It seems too easily to be an end in itself. It does not seem to allow for the use of non "simple" technologies in Spartan and loving ways for the kingdom. It creates the impression that if you are simple you are good, when you may not have any zeal for the accomplishing the great commission or of bringing blessing to others.

7.19. How does the author counsel a person who owns or is thinking of owning an extra "lake home" which sits empty part of the year?

1. He points out the horrible plight of billions of people in the world without the gospel and without food and medicine and education and shelter.
2. He quotes Amos 3:15 as a kind of warning: "I will smite the winter house and the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish; and the great houses shall come to an end." And Luke 3:11, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none." Should we invest in two for ourselves while millions have none?
3. He may tell an example of a family that sold their second home and used the money to help others.
4. If they seem truly troubled and eager to be obedient to the Lord, rather than just annoyed that they should be questioned, He will empathize with the difficulty of knowing how to apply some of Jesus sayings. He will admit that he struggles with many such things in his own life.
5. He will probably not say that the house must be sold in order to be obedient. Rather he will hold that out as a possibility. It is perhaps conceivable that the use made of it could justify it in kingdom values. But by all means measure the usefulness of it according to the King's priorities not the world's.

7.20. Why has God given his people in America so much? (Use Ephesians 4:28 and 2 Corinthians 9:8)

See answer to 7.17. He has given us so much so that we can testify to his great worth to us and love to others by our willingness give generously to others and live a wartime life-style. For "great generosity" -- that is the clear reason given in 2 Cor. 9:11.

8

Marriage The Matrix of Christian Hedonism

Ephesians 5:25-30

(25) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, (26) that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, (27) that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish. (28) Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. (29) For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, (30) because we are members of his body.

8.1. What does the word "matrix" mean?

"A place within which something originates, takes form or develops." So the point is that marriage can be a place where a man and a woman experience the birth and developing of a Biblical way of relating called Christian Hedonism.

8.2. Using the text above (Ephesians 5:25-30) express what the aim of Christ's loving self-sacrifice for the Church was. It is stated in two stages. Verse 26 gives one stage and verse 27 gives the next stage. In your own words state why this is an example of Christian Hedonism.

Stage one aim is to sanctify his church, that is make her holy. Stage two is to present the church to himself in splendor, or glory -- the glory of holiness.

This is Christian Hedonism because the aim of Christ's sacrifice is a gift for himself, and not just any gift, but a beautiful gift. A gift of glory.

8.3. In verses 29-30 what reason is given why Christ nourishes and cherishes the church? Explain why this is an example of Christian Hedonism.

The reason given is that we are members of his body. He nourishes us because no man every hates his own flesh, and we are the flesh of Jesus. We become as it were one flesh. So what he does to us he does to himself. And he is eager to nourish and cherish himself. So he nourishes and cherishes us, because we are members of his body.

8.4. How do we know we should call this kind of nourishing and cherishing "love"?

Because Ephesians 5:25 calls it love: As Christ loved the church . . . i.e. giving himself and sanctifying and presenting to himself in splendor and nourishing and cherishing.

8.5. What is the meaning of love between a husband and a wife in view of these verses and the observations you have just made? How can something that is so driven by the desire for joy be loving toward others?

Christ's love was the pursuit of his joy in the holy joy of the church. Christ was seeking his own delights for sure. But he was seeking them in doing for us that which would make us the most happy: namely, our holiness, our being nourished and cherished, and our being presented to him, our best prize. So love of a husband for a wife is the pursuit of the husband's joy in the joy of the wife; and the love of a wife for her husband, on that analogy would be the pursuit of her joy in his.

Love is not the commitment to go without joy in a relationship. It's the commitment to be the kind of person who seeks and finds joy in the holy joy of the other.

8.6. How does this definition of love relate to the one given on page 119? Is there any disagreement or tension?

The definition was "Love is the overflow of joy in God that gladly meets the needs of others." I don't think there is any contradiction. But there is some tension. The one on pages 119-20 stresses overflow which sounds passive. The one here on page 206 stress "pursuit" which sounds active.

But the word "gladly" in the first definition implies that the meeting of other's needs is not at all a matter of indifference but something we are very eager for because of the gladness it brings. So "pursuit" is implied. The overflow idea is not meant to communicate passivity. Rather it is meant to communicate that our pursuit of others' joy is owing to the fact that God has given us so much. And the "pursuit" idea is not meant to imply that we are without joy during the pursuit. Rather it is meant to communicate that the joy God gives is so good that we are driven to enlarge the experience of it by sharing it with others.

8.7. Why is there no contradiction between Ephesians 5:29 ("No man ever hates his own flesh") and John 12:25 ("He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life")? Is Revelation 12:11 ("They loved not their lives even unto death") a contradiction of Ephesians 5:29?

There is no contradiction because when Jesus says we should hate our lives he adds "in this world." He does not mean that we should hate them ultimately. In fact he tells us how to gain them in eternal life. So the hate here is a willingness to suffer pain and death in order to gain the greatest and longest joy. So it is with Revelation 12:11. When Paul says no one ever hates his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it he means that we always try to do what we think will make us most happy. Under normal circumstances we take very good care of ourselves. But there

are some circumstances in which we will allow ourselves to be endangered and even killed for the greater joy of some good end.

- 8.8. When Paul says in verse 28, "Husbands should love their wives as they love themselves," he is applying what command of Jesus?**

"Love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:39

- 8.9. What is the common modern understanding of this text about self-love which the author thinks is a misunderstanding? What is the proper meaning of self-love according to the author, and its relation to love for others?**

The common misunderstanding is that self-love is a command and that it refers to self-esteem and that one must learn to first love himself in this sense before he can love others. But that is not what Jesus says. He assumes we already love ourselves and that this is a natural will for our own happiness. This will for our happiness should therefore serve as a measure of our zeal for the happiness of others.

- 8.10. From page 210, what would be a way to state the rule that this understanding of self-love implies for the way a husband should love his wife. What is this rule?**

Husbands should devote the same energy and time and creativity to making their wives happy that they devote naturally to making themselves happy. The result will be that in doing this they will make themselves happy.

- 8.11. Is there an argument in Ephesians 4:25 that would make you think we are on the right track here in thinking about the motivation of love between husbands and wives who are "one flesh"?**

Eph. 4:25 says, "Therefore putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members with one another." The words, "for we are members one of another," show that a proper motive for speaking truth to a Christian brother is that he is part of your own body. The argument is the same as in 5:29-30. So there is a close parallel in the one body relationship of all Christians and the one flesh relationship of husband and wife.

- 8.12. When God said in Genesis 2:18 that it is not good for man to be alone, did he imply that God's own fellowship was insufficient to satisfy Adam? What was it that was not good?**

It was not good for man to be unable to channel God's grace to others. We come to the fullest experience of God himself when we share what we love about him with others and find that very love increased. So Eve was not in competition with God as a source of Adam's joy. She was a means of increasing Adam's delight in God by what he saw of God in her and by what he could share of God with her.

8.13. In Ephesians 5:31 Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh." Then in verse 32 he says, "This is a great mystery, and I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church." In what sense is marriage a mystery?

The mystery is that God created human marriage on the pattern of Christ's relationship to the church. The reason this is a mystery is that Christ's relationship to the church was only dimly foreshadowed in the OT (for example, in the relationship between God and Israel as his wife). So marriage is not used as a way of explaining Christ and the Church. Rather Christ and the church are used as a way of explaining what God meant when he designed marriage.

This gives incredible meaning to marriage: it is a mysterious (but now revealed) symbol of parable of the relationship between Christ and the church. This has profound implications for roles in marriage.

8.14. What specific distinct roles for husband and wife does Paul choose to focus on which are implied in the mystery of marriage?

He focuses on the role of headship for the husband (5:23) and the role of submission for the wife (5:22,24).

8.15. What do each of these roles correspond to in the relationship between Christ and the church?

The role of submission corresponds to the role of the church (v. 24) and the role of headship corresponds to the role of Christ in relationship to the church (v. 23).

8.16. Give two or three reasons why "leadership" is implied in the idea of headship.

1. The logic of verses 22-23, "Be subject because he is head," implies that headship is something to which submission is given and that is naturally leadership.
2. Head can mean leader in the OT (Judges 10:18; 11:8-9; 2 Samuel 22:44; Psalm 18:43; Isaiah 7:8).
3. Paul's use of head in Ephesians 1:22 (head over all things) implies authority and leadership.
4. The idea of source that is there in Eph. 4:15-16 may also imply leadership because what Christ is the source of in that context is at least "truth" (v. 15) which means that we would need to "hold fast" to him (Col. 2:18-19) and follow him. (See note 10 in What's The Difference?)

8.17. Why does the author define Biblical submission as "disposition to yield and an inclination to follow"?

Because there may be times when she should not yield or follow, for example, if he leads into sin? Yet she can be submissive in the Biblical sense even in that moment of declining his wish.

8.18. Why does the overarching principle of "mutual submission" not rule out the role distinction of the husband as head and the wife as the supporter of that headship?

Because mutual submission does not imply identical submission. Christ and the church may submit to each other, but hardly in the same ways. Christ as the self-giving leader. The church as the yielding follower and admirer.

8.19. The author thinks that in Ephesians 5:22-33 the effect of Christ's redemption is applied to the effects of the fall on the marriage relationship. These effects are reversed. State the results of the fall that emerge between men and women in Genesis 3, and how Christ reverses these sinful effects of the fall.

The fall caused man to become callous and uncaring in his leadership. He expresses this "rule" either by a withdrawn passivity or a harsh dominance. In either case he forsakes the caring leadership and protection and provision that God intended.

The woman fell from her role to become a competitor for control. She lost her meek and tranquil spirit. This expresses itself either in forcefulness and pushiness or in a kind of manipulative show of helplessness. In both cases and all the mixtures she has fallen from her glory.

But in Ephesians what we find is not the blotting of distinctions but the restoration of love. Man's headship is redeemed and woman's submission is redeemed. Man in his unique role is conformed to Christ in his relation to the church, and the woman in her unique role is conformed to the purpose of the church in its relation to Christ.

9

Missions

The Battle Cry of Christian Hedonism

- 9.1. Many today believe that all people will be saved regardless of what they believe or what they do. Many others believe that any sincere religious faith, whether Christianity or any other, is a sure road to eternal life. But the author argues that people are cut off from eternal life unless the gospel reaches them and they believe. Write a sentence or two in your own words to explain how the following passages of Scripture show that what is at stake in the Christian missionary enterprise is eternal life. Acts 26:16-18; / 1 Corinthians 9:22; / Acts 13:46; / Acts 4:12**

Acts 26:16-18 Jesus says the goal of Paul's being sent is to turn people to the light by his witness to Christ so that they will receive forgiveness of sins. This implies that without someone being sent to testify about Christ people will not have their sins forgiven and escape their guilt.

1 Corinthians 9:22 Paul says his missionary strategy is "to save some". The implication is that salvation comes through the work of missionaries and not apart from it. Paul is not informing people of their acceptance with God. He is showing them the way to be saved.

Acts 13:46 Paul says plainly that when people reject his message they reject eternal life.

Acts 4:12 The point of this verse is that only through the name of Jesus can someone be saved.

- 9.2. If people cannot be saved without hearing and believing the gospel of Jesus Christ, how can God be just to condemn people who have no access to the gospel because they live among peoples who have never been reached with the gospel?**

Romans 1:20ff and 2:12 make clear that judgment will be according to the truth that we had access to. If we have never had access to the gospel we will not be judged by the gospel. But all have had access to the power and deity of God manifest in nature. But instead of glorifying God by faith and humility and worship, all have suppressed this truth and loved the creation rather than the Creator.

- 9.3. Why, in general, do liberal churches and denominations put *little emphasis on frontier missions*?**

Because liberal churches in general do not take seriously the particular teachings of Scripture about human lostness and the seriousness of hell and the utter uniqueness and indispensability of

Jesus Christ and faith in him. When the authority of Scripture is minimized, missions is minimized.

9.4. Would the author approve of the statement, "We are all missionaries?" Why or why not?

No. Because it obscures the unique good of the missionary calling. The goal of world missions is not simply to win individuals. If that were the goal pure and simple, then all believers would be called missionaries. The goal of world missions is to speak the Gospel among people where Christ is unknown and to plant disciple-making churches there. So a missionary is a person actively engaged in that spread of the gospel to unreached people. More on this below.

9.5. In Romans 15:23 Paul said, "I no longer have any room for work in these regions." He was referring to the part of the world from Jerusalem northward and westward to the northern part of Greece called Illyricum (Romans 5:19). He even said that in this region he had "fulfilled the gospel of Christ." How can Paul say that there is no more room for work and that he has fulfilled the gospel in an area where there are still thousands of unbelievers who could be converted to Christ and saved from judgment?

The reason Paul could say that the gospel was fulfilled is because he had the special missionary task of the gospel in mind, not the ongoing task of evangelism that belongs to the church. This passage shows that the completion ("fulfillment") of the missionary task can be accomplished long before every individual in an area and in the world is evangelized. Paul had preached, won individuals and planted churches throughout these regions which could effectively evangelize the people in their area or group. That is the goal of a missionary and it can be fulfilled as Paul fulfilled it.

Recall that Paul later told Timothy to "stay at Ephesus" and "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5). So a lot of evangelism was yet to be done in that area. So there is a difference between fulfilling the evangelism mandate and fulfilling the missions mandate.

Or in view of the fact that today many missionaries are like Timothy -- living in foreign lands doing evangelism where the church has been long planted -- it may be helpful to talk about Paul-type missions and Timothy-type missions. Paul-type missions as frontier missions to unreached peoples. Timothy-type missions is cross-cultural evangelism among unreached peoples.

9.6. How then would you define "frontier missions"?

"Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and planting his church among groups of people who have not yet been reached."

- 9.7. a) What new insight and emphasis in missions thinking would explain this statement: "The remaining task of Frontier Missions is no longer conceived mainly in geographic terms"? b) Another way to ask the question would be to ask, When Jesus said, "This gospel will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations," why might the English word "nations" be misleading?**

a) The new insight and emphasis in missions thinking is people-groups: the idea that according to Genesis 12:2, Matthew 24:14;28:19, Revelation 5:9;7:9, Romans 15:11, etc. The goal of the missionary mandate is to reach all peoples not all lands or areas. The word "nations" in missionary texts does not mean "political states" but peoples.

b) Because to us "nations" sounds like political states. But nations are peoples not geographical areas.

- 9.8. The gospel has made progress and there is a growing consensus today about what a people-group is. Read through pages 229ff. and jot down what may be encouraging and what may be disappointing about these figures.**

The answer to this question is largely subjective. What we are looking for is a thoughtful answer with the chapter as a backdrop to the answer given.

- 9.9. A new way of describing the progress of world evangelization has been developed since the publication of *Desiring God*. Read through the tables and the chapter and then explain in your own words why this is very good news for Great Commission Christians.**

The encouraging thing about the table is that we are making progress in having more congregations per unreached peoples. Numbers of Christians are increasing and numbers of unreached peoples are decreasing.

- 9.10. The story of the Rich Young Ruler from Mark 10:17-31 teaches two powerful incentives for engaging in frontier mission work. They are described on pages 194-8. a) What's the verse in Mark 10 that contains this incentive? b) But if you read carefully you will see that this incentive really has two distinct parts. Can you put each of these parts in a sentence?**

a) The first incentive is expressed in Mark 10:27 "All things are possible with God."

b) The first part is the incentive that no obstacle in missions is too hard for God to overcome. So be encouraged to pray and hope in his help.

The second part is that Christian Hedonists love to experience the sovereign grace of God overcoming the obstacles in their own lives and getting the glory for God in all they do.

In other words, God's doing the impossible removes external obstacles enabling success, and constitutes an experience in the heart of the Christian Hedonist missionary which brings great joy.

1 Corinthians 15:10 not I but Christ!

1 Corinthians 3:7 Apollos and I are rotten: God is all
Romans 11:36 from Him are all things
John 15:5 apart from Christ . . . nothing
2 Corinthians 3:5 our sufficiency is from God
2 Corinthians 4:7 we are clay pots . . . all of God
Romans 15:18 what Christ has wrought through me.

9.11. In what sense does Jesus mean that it is impossible for the Rich Young Ruler to be saved (Mark 10:25-27)?

Not physically impossible as though he wanted to be saved and was constrained against his will. Rather he loved money so much he was enslaved to it and kept from believing. You can't do the opposite of what your strongest love commands.

9.12. The first part of this first incentive is contained also in John 10:16, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice." There are three clauses in that verse. Take each one and paraphrase it in your own words to make clear how it is a great incentive for hopeful frontier missions.

Clause #1: "I have other sheep that are not of this fold." This means that beyond the present bounds of the church Christ has people chosen. The church (Christians in Israel in that context) is never to be content as though we are all God wants to gather in. He has elect people beyond us.

Clause #2: "I must bring them also." This means there is a divine necessity laid on Jesus to gather in all his sheep. They are not just chosen and there. Jesus intends, with divine incentive and power to go find them.

Clause #3: "They will heed my voice." This means that not only are they chosen and there, and not only are they being pursued with divine necessity, but it is certain they will respond.

9.13. How did God use this text to create the Africa Inland Mission?

Peter Cameron Scott lost his brother in Africa and then had to return home with malaria. He was discouraged beyond words. But in Westminster Abbey he saw these words on David Livingstone's tomb: "Other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring." This gave him hope. He went back and the AIM was founded.

9.14. The second part of the first incentive found in the story of the Rich Young Ruler is expressed in texts mentioned at the bottom of page 235. How do passages like these keep a faithful missionary from boasting in his own heroic courage?

See answer to 9.10 These passages show that all our best efforts are carried along by God and He should get the glory. Our joy in success and fruit is joy in the display and evidence of God's grace.

- 9.15. The second incentive found in the story of the Rich Young Ruler is unfolded on pp. 198ff. What *displeased* Jesus about Peter's readiness to sacrifice for Christ when Peter said, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you"?**

Jesus was displeased by the attitude that any sacrifice made for his cause was more loss than gain (Philippians 3:708; Romans 8:17).

- 9.16. What clue is there *in the text* (Mark 10:28-30) that we should NOT take the promise for 100 houses to mean that Christ will make all his obedient disciples wealthy real estate magnates?**

The clue in the context is that the promise to return 100 mothers, sisters, etc. as not strictly literal. It probably means 100 persons in the church ready to be a mother for you. And so an analogy, the promise of 100 homes would mean many homes are open to you (v. 30).

- 9.17. In Mark 10:28-30 is Jesus contradicting the teaching on self-denial in Mark 8:34-35? Peter seemed ready to deny himself to follow Jesus, and Jesus seems to correct him with the promise of reward? What then does he mean by self-denial?**

The measure of your longing for the advance of Christ's Kingdom is the amount of comfort you are willing to give up to get it (p. 200.3). Obedience to Christ always means denying yourself lesser values for the sake of greater ones.

- 9.18. Read the quote from the missionary David Brainerd. He shows that there is a good kind of self-love and a bad kind. Put in your own words what the difference is. Then in the very last line of this quote he says "hope of self-interest" is bad. How can hope of self-interest be bad in view of the definition he has just given for the good (regular) self-love?**

Brainerd: good (regular) self-love unites God's glory and the soul's happiness so that they become one interest. Seeking God's glory is seeking happiness. Bad (irregular) self-love separates God's glory and the soul's happiness and seeks happiness apart from God's glory. So when Brainerd debunks the hope of "self-interest" we must take this to mean self-interest in the sense of irregular self-love not regular self-love.

- 9.19. What did David Livingston mean when he said, "I never made a sacrifice"?**

"Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blest reward?" So what he meant was that whatever he gave up in his obedience to Christ resulted in more benefit than if he had kept it!

- 9.20. If our trusted doctor says that we need to spend a week in the hospital for special treatments, we may have to deny ourselves some previously made appointments. We may have to be away from our family. We may have to tolerate some unpleasant smells. But one thing is for sure, we are in the hospital to get well -- and to let the doctor show his wisdom and skill. We are NOT there to pay back a debt to the doctor. Daniel Fuller (pp. 247-8) applies this**

analogy to the missionary (patient) going to the mission field (hospital). What's the point of this analogy? Why do "people who regard themselves as invalids make excellent missionaries"?

The point of the analogy is that more of God's grace and power and glory will be evident in the lives of those who are invalids rather than heroes. Heroes look like self-reliant resources for others with glory coming to them. Invalids draw all attention to the worth of their Physician who is mercifully making them fit for heaven and willing to make others well too.

9.21. Does William Carey's motto, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God," contradict Daniel Fuller's statement above about invalids? Why or why not?

No. Because the first clause grounds the second. An invalid is willing to do his painful therapy assignments if the therapist assures him of all the help he needs.

9.22. Why did Elisabeth Elliot not regard the murder of her husband Jim as "a nightmare of tragedy"?

Because he only gave up what he could not keep to gain an eternal life he could not lose - and to gain much more in the faith and life of those he inspired.

10

Suffering

The Sacrifice of Christian Hedonism

- 10.1 What is the difference between Paul’s answer and the abbot’s answer to the question: “Is the Christian life a good life even if it proves to be based on a falsehood in the end?”**

The abbot in essence said that the noble qualities of the Christian life are in and of themselves worth having even if Christianity proves to be false. Paul on the other hand states in 1 Corinthians 15:19, “If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.” The answers are opposite.

- 10.2 Why does Paul think his life of joy would be pitiable if there were no resurrection from the dead?**

The reason is that Paul’s life is one of freely chosen suffering rather than one of ease and prosperity. He is choosing to suffer extraordinary affliction because of his joy in the hope of eternal life for all who trust in Jesus. If there is no resurrection hope for Paul his life of freely chosen suffering is a foolish, deluded life.

- 10.3 How are persecution and sickness different kinds of suffering? But give an example of how one’s obedience to a Christian ministry can result in suffering without persecution.**

Persecution is an intentional hostility a Christian endures from someone as a result of being openly Christian. Sickness is not suffering intentional hostility. It is a result of living in a fallen world and sometimes may be a result of making deliberate choices to minister in areas of high risk to health.

If a person is living in obedience to the direction of Christ in how and where they are living out their life, and in the process endure illness, it is in a sense a “chosen” suffering since they accept it under the Lord’s sovereign providence.

- 10.4 What is the common threat in all suffering?**

Suffering threatens our faith in the goodness of God and tempts us to leave the path of obedience.

- 10.5 When we speak of suffering “with Christ” and “for Christ” we usually think of the persecution that was similar to Christ’s. But the author says that all suffering in the path of our Christian calling is “with Christ” and “for Christ.” Describe two ways that our**

sufferings can be “with Christ” and two ways our sufferings can be “for Christ” even if it is not from persecution.

We suffer “with Christ” in the sense that a] we experience it as a result of our walking by faith in him, and b] that we endure it in the strength that he supplies. We suffer “for Christ” in the sense that a] suffering proves our allegiance to his goodness and power, and b] it demonstrates that we believe in his sufficiency to meet every need and that we consider him more precious than health or even life.

10.6 What is Satan’s design in all our suffering?

The destruction of our faith.

10.7 Give one or two illustrations that show how the suffering of sickness and the suffering of persecution are not always distinguishable.

The Apostle Paul includes being shipwrecked and suffering from cold and exposure in the same list as he includes being beaten with rods and being whipped for the sake of the gospel (2 Cor. 11:25,27). In other words, Paul understood that “any suffering [persecution, sickness, discomfort] that befell him while serving Christ was part of the ‘cost’ of discipleship”. He did not make distinctions between suffering intentional hostility from unbelievers and suffering sickness while obeying the Lord.

Another illustration of this is when a missionary suffers sickness as a result of obeying the call of God to be in a place where there are health risks. We generally understand this as suffering for Christ’s sake. This principal holds true not just for missionaries, but for all who are living in obedience to God’s calling.

10.8 When Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:32, “Let us eat and drink,” what does he mean? In view of this, what are we called to in the Christian life?

According to the author, Paul does not mean we should give ourselves to drunkenness and gluttony if there is no resurrection. Rather Paul is saying that if there is no resurrection from the dead, we ought to pursue the ordinary pleasures of life (food, drink, etc.) which bring comfort and a sense of happiness since subjecting ourselves to extraordinary suffering would be a foolish waste of life.

According to Paul’s testimony, we as Christians are called to live such a life which would be a foolish waste if there is no resurrection. A life that values the resurrection from the dead more than life and freely chooses suffering or the possibility of suffering if that is what is required for Christ’s sake.

10.9 When Paul calls suffering a gift (Philippians 1:29) what does he have in mind? How can something so painful be a “gift”?

Paul says that as faith is given to believers as a gift (“not only to believe in Him”), suffering is also given as a gift (“but also to suffer for His sake”). But in order to call it a gift, Paul obviously sees something of eternal value and benefit in the experience of suffering in obedience to Christ. One way that it is a gift is that it proves that Paul is a Christian since he is living out what Jesus said would characterize the Christian life (losing his life for the gospel’s sake that he might gain it - Luke 9:23-24). Alexander Solzhenitsyn illustrates another way suffering is a gift as blesses the communist prison for the wonderful sanctifying effect it produced in him. If suffering proves the reality of our conversion and makes us holy it is surely a precious gift.

10.10 What evidence is there that the promises of Jesus that his disciples would suffer also apply to later Christians and not just the original twelve?

Paul makes it clear in his numerous instructions and admonitions to believers in general that he understood suffering to be a common experience in the Christian church (Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Cor. 4:16). Paul most likely would have gained this understanding of suffering from the teachings of Jesus.

10.11 What is God’s universal purpose in all the suffering of his children?

God’s universal purpose in all the suffering Christians experience is to cause them to become more content in Him and less satisfied with themselves and the world.

10.12 Explain from 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 how suffering can serve to magnify the grace of Christ.

If in our suffering we find that the grace of Christ is indeed sufficient for us and causes us to rejoice in hope, then His grace is magnified. Or another way to say it is the glory of Christ’s grace is put on display, made more visible, because we are demonstrating that it is more satisfying to us than worldly comfort.

10.13 Show how the illustration of Ephaphroditus in Philippians 2:27-30 explains the meaning of Paul’s words in Colossians 1:24, “complete what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.”

When Paul explained to the Philippians that Ephaphroditus “complete[d] was lacking in [their] service to [him],” he didn’t mean that the gift they sent to him through Ephaphroditus was lacking. He meant that what was lacking was the fact that the whole Philippian church was not able to deliver the gift to him in person and that Ephaphroditus completed that lack by eagerly representing them in their absence. The phrase Paul used here is almost identical to Col. 1:24, where he stated that in his suffering he was “completing what [was] lacking in Christ’s afflictions.” Like the Ephaphroditus illustration, Paul was not claiming that Christ’s afflictions were lacking in atoning worth. He simply was saying that the lack was the fact that many peoples do not know of Christ’s atoning, justifying death and triumphant resurrection and he was filling up that lack by suffering in order that more and more peoples will know and believe.

10.14 Be sure you see *how* Paul intended to “complete what was lacking in the afflictions of Christ.”

Paul understood that his completing Christ’s afflictions was more than just proclaiming the message of salvation in Christ’s absence. He completed Christ’s afflictions in his own suffering for gospel. In suffering for Christ’s sake he became an extension of Christ’s suffering and made the love that caused Jesus to endure the cross real to the people to whom Paul was ministering. In other words, Paul’s suffering testified “to the kind of love Christ has for the world”.

10.15 Show from Revelation 6:11 that God’s intention is to complete the Great Commission through the suffering of his people.

In Revelation 6:11 those who had been martyred are told to rest until the number of believers destined to give their lives for the sake of the gospel is complete. In other words, it is God’s intention that a certain number of Christians suffer and even die for the sake of Christ in the process of the completion of the Great Commission.

10.16 How does Joseph Tson sum up one key difference between our suffering and Christ’s suffering?

Christ’s suffering is for *propitiation*, our suffering is for *propagation*.

10.17 Why does the author think that calling suffering a “sacrifice” in this chapter is *not* a contradiction of the quote from David Livingstone on page 243 where he says, “I never made a sacrifice”? (p. 280)

The author asserts that what David Livingstone meant was that the blessings he gained from his life of frontier missions in Africa far outweighed any losses he suffered. However, the losses and pain in Christian suffering are too great to say there is no sacrifice at all. But the massive eternal benefits Christians gain still make it a hedonistic choice to willingly choose suffering for Christ’s sake.

10.18 From Philippians 3:8 and 1:21,23 explain why Paul’s choosing to suffer was still Christian Hedonism.

Paul makes it clear from these texts that suffering was not an altruistic exercise for him. He endured suffering because of the reward it would bring. He considered Christ to be such gain that everything else was “rubbish” in comparison (Phil. 3:8). Dying and being with Jesus was much greater gain than life itself (Phil. 1:21, 23). This is hedonistic language. Paul rejoiced so much in what he would gain that it made suffering very much worth the pain.

10.19 Why does cherishing the glory of Christ above all things not allow a person to be indifferent to whether perishing sinners are converted?

No one who treasures Christ will be content to treasure him alone since the apex of Christ's glory is the fact that he will be treasured by persons of every tribe, tongue, people and nation. The pleasure of gaining Christ is a communal pleasure because the enjoyment reaches consummation when the joy is shared.

10.20 Explain how Christ can be Paul's joy and yet he can also call his converts his joy.

Those who became Christians through Paul's testimony were his joy because the more people believed in Christ, the more Christ's mercy was magnified. This in turn made his joy in Christ increase. The joy of experiencing Christ's mercy together with his converts increased Paul's own joy in Christ.

10.21 Why does the author think that it is all but blasphemy to say that the obedience of suffering for Christ may be pursued but not the joy of suffering?

Paul said in Colossians 1:24 that he *rejoiced* in his sufferings for the Colossian believers since he was presenting to them Christ's afflictions through his own. And in Philippians 3:8 he states that his goal in life was to *gain* Christ. Therefore, Paul was openly pursuing his joy in embracing a life that included much suffering. The appeal to live a life of obedience in suffering is that it yields unspeakable joy. To remove the reward (the joy of gaining Christ) from the pursuit (obeying Christ in suffering) is dangerously close to blasphemy.

10.22 What is the basis of the joy that Christ commands in suffering according to Matthew 5:11-12?

The basis for joy in the midst of persecution is that our "reward in heaven is great." Jesus points to future grace and tells us that the joy ahead is worth all the present suffering.

10.23 What is the reason Paul rejoices in suffering according to Romans 5:3-4? Don't just quote the text. Explain the connections between the parts.

Enduring suffering produces endurance. And when we have endured suffering for Christ's sake, we prove that our faith is in fact genuine, and that in turn strengthens our hope that we will ultimately gain Christ. That hope causes us to rejoice; our faith is real and we will obtain our Reward!

10.24 Show how the logical connection between the two halves of 1 Peter 4:13 teaches that joy in suffering now is the way of attaining joy in the presence of Christ when he comes.

Rejoicing in hope now as we endure suffering will find its indescribably joyful consummation when Christ returns and our hope has finally been realized. It is as if Peter is telling us to increase our capacity for joy at the coming of Christ by rejoicing now in the midst of suffering.

10.25 Explain from Hebrews 11:25-26 why choosing to suffer *the way Moses did* does not glorify our courage, but God's worth.

Moses chose to bear ill-treatment with the people of God not out of a heroic, altruistic resolve, but because he "looked to the reward." He considered God and all of His promises to be worth far more than any temporal comforts he might receive through pursuing the fleeting pleasures of sin. This hedonistic motive glorified God's worth, not Moses' courage because Moses wanted God, not heroism.

10.26 If the essence of Christian Hedonism is the truth that "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him," explain why Christian Hedonism is most vividly expressed when God's people rejoice in suffering for the sake of the Name.

Suffering more than anything else demonstrates what our treasure is. If we are willing to suffer the loss of all things for the sake someone or something, we glorify that person or thing as having supreme value in our hearts. Therefore, suffering in joyful hope for the sake of Christ puts on display for all to see that gaining Christ is worth more than gaining anything or anyone else in the universe. In showing that we are most satisfied in Christ, he is most glorified.