

Lesson 2

A PASSION FOR GOD'S GLORY AND YOUR JOY



A Companion Study to *Battling Unbelief*, Session 1

LESSON OBJECTIVES

It is our prayer that after you have finished this lesson...

- A passion for the glory of God will be awakened in your soul.
- You will begin to think about how your joy relates to the glory of God.
- You will understand how to approach God in such a way that he always gets the glory.

Before You Watch the DVD, Study and Prepare

DAY 1—SPREADING A PASSION

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Question 1*: When you hear the phrase “the glory of God,” what do you think of? How does the glory of God relate to you?⁴

The following is John Piper’s mission statement:

I exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.

Question 2: Each word in this mission statement is carefully chosen. In your own words, describe the significance of the following words. Why do you think each word was chosen instead of other alternatives?

- a. Passion
- b. Supremacy
- c. Joy
- d. All peoples

DAY 2—WHAT GOD IS PASSIONATE ABOUT

Question 3: One of the most important questions in the world is, “What is God passionate about?” How would you answer this question? What do you think God is *most* passionate about? Cite any Bible verses that come to mind.

Study Isaiah 48:8–11.

⁸ You have never heard, you have never known, from of old your ear has not been opened. For I knew that you would surely deal treacherously, and that from before birth you were called a rebel. ⁹ For my name’s sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. ¹⁰ Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. ¹¹ For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

Question 4: According to these verses, what is God passionate about? Underline phrases in this passage that support your answer.

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My conclusion is that God's own glory is uppermost in His own affections. In everything He does, His purpose is to preserve and display that glory. To say that His own glory is uppermost in His own affections means that He puts a greater value on it than on anything else. He delights in His glory above all things.⁵

DAY 3—PURSUING JOY

Blaise Pascal was a French mathematician who died in 1662. One of his most famous works was entitled "Pensees." The following paragraph from that work has had a profound influence on John Piper.

All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.⁶

Question 5: Interact with the above paragraph. Is it true that "all men seek happiness...without exception"? How is someone who hangs himself seeking happiness?

Question 6: How do you think the Bible views the pursuit of happiness? Does the Bible endorse or condemn the pursuit of happiness? Cite Scripture in your answer.

DAY 4—FALLING SHORT

Study Romans 1:18–25.

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

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Question 7: Underline all the words and phrases in the passage above that have to do with sin. From these words and phrases, come up with a brief working definition of sin.

Examine Jeremiah 2:12–13.

¹² Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, ¹³ for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Question 8*: To what is God compared in this passage? What two evils had God's people committed? If this is a description of evil, how should we understand what "good" is?

DAY 5—TO SERVE OR NOT TO SERVE?

Question 9: Is it biblical to attempt to serve God? Cite Scripture to show that God desires us to serve him.

Consider Luke 4:8.

⁸ And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’”

Now consider Romans 12:11.

¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

Look at Mark 10:45.

⁴⁵ “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Look at Acts 17:24–25.

²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

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Question 10*: In the first set of verses, we are commanded to serve God. In the second set, we are told that “God is not served by human hands.” How do we reconcile these two sets of verses? Should we or should we not serve God? Attempt to resolve this tension.

FURTHER UP AND FURTHER IN

Note: The “Further Up and Further In” section is for those who want to study more. It is a section for further reference and going deeper. The phrase “further up and further in” is borrowed from C. S. Lewis.

Read John Piper’s sermon “Is God For Us or For Himself?” at www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/gods_passion/god_us_himself.html.

Question 11: List all the texts in this sermon which demonstrate that God does all things for the sake of his glory.

Read the Following Quote from Jonathan Edwards:

So God glorifies Himself toward the creatures also in two ways: 1. By appearing to... their understanding. 2. In communicating Himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying, the manifestations which He makes of Himself.... God is glorified not only by His glory's being seen, but by its being rejoiced in. When those that see it delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it. His glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart. God made the world that He might communicate, and the creature receive, His glory; and that it might [be] received both by the mind and heart. He that testifies his idea of God's glory [doesn't] glorify God so much as he that testifies also his approbation of it and his delight in it.⁷

Question 12: According to Jonathan Edwards, what is the relationship between the glory of God and the happiness of human beings? Restate Edwards's conclusion in your own words.

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Read the following quote from C.S. Lewis:

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But the most obvious fact about praise—whether of God or anything—strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honor. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise unless (sometimes even if) shyness or the fear of boring others is deliberately brought in to check it. The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game—praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians and scholars...My whole, more general difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what indeed we can't help doing, about everything else we value.

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses, but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are, the delight is incomplete till it is expressed.⁸

Question 13: What was the “obvious fact about praise” that C.S. Lewis missed? Do you agree with his assessment of why we praise things? Provide examples that support your answer.

Read an article that summarizes what Christian hedonism is at http://www.desiringgod.org/library/what_we_believe/christian_hedonism.html.

Question 14: Reflect on the statement, “God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him.” Is this a true and biblical statement? Why or why not? What are the implications of this truth for your life? Record your reflections below.

Read Philippians 1:19–23.

¹⁹ ...for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life

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or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Question 15: According to this verse, how do you honor Christ by life? How do you honor Christ by death? (Hint: notice the word “for” in v. 21.) Does this verse support Christian Hedonism? If so, how?

While You Watch the DVD, Take Notes

John Piper’s mission statement:

To spread a _____ for the _____ of God in all things for the _____ of all peoples through Jesus Christ.

What is John Piper’s answer to the question, “Should we serve God?”

What text has John Piper quoted most often before he preaches?

According to John Piper, “The _____ gets the glory.”

What is John Piper’s goal in life?

After You Watch the DVD, Discuss What You've Learned

1. Is there a conflict between a passion for the glory of God and a passion for our own joy? As Christians, is it right to say that we should make it our life's goal to be happy?
2. In light of the discussion on the DVD, should we seek to serve God? If so, how do we do this in such a way that we don't belittle him?
3. Do you agree that "the giver gets the glory?" Should we ever try to give anything to God?

After You Discuss, Make Application

1. What was the most meaningful part of this lesson for you? Was there a sentence, concept, or idea that really struck you? Why? Record your thoughts in the space below.
2. Devote at least ten minutes this week to meditating on the reality that God desires to glorify himself by fully satisfying you. Compose a prayer that reflects this truth and pray it to God.

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