

# Liking Life for the Love of God

Ecclesiastes Part 3

Ecclesiastes 2:24-26

11-31-2013

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Summary: Instead of seeking pleasure first, seek first to please God, and enjoy whatever comes. One way to please God is to enjoy His gifts, but we must do so in ways that lead to holiness rather than sin. This is done by trusting God (enjoying whatever He gives rather than striving to put your own plan into place), and relational enjoyment, which increases love for God.

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**Ecclesiastes 2:24 There is nothing better for man than to eat, drink, and enjoy his work. I have seen that even this is from God’s hand, 25 because who can eat and who can enjoy life apart from Him? 26 For to the man who is pleasing in His sight, He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner He gives the task of gathering and accumulating in order to give to the one who is pleasing in God’s sight. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.**

## Introduction

### Recreation?

Is there any Biblical reason why we should ever watch a movie or a ball game? Or go on vacation or play a game or have some dessert? Or take \$2000 that could feed a third world family for a year and spend it on a kitchen remodel? Is it ever OK to do any of that, and if so, when?

## Only if it glorifies God

I hope no one in this room has the attitude that says, “Christians should find a healthy balance between glorifying God on the one hand, and enjoying earthly pleasures on the other.” There is no healthy balance between glorifying God and anything else because we are commanded to seek God’s glory in everything we ever do.

“Even in drinking a glass of water?”

Yes!

### **1 Corinthians 10:31 whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.**

There is never any moment in your life in which it is acceptable to spend any time or money on anything that does not glorify God. If your employer pays you for 40 hours of your time, then those 40 hours belong to your employer. Anything unrelated to work has to be done on your own time, not during those 40 hours. But God has purchased your whole life - every second of your time every day.

### **1 Corinthians 6:19 You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.**

There is no free time. Every second belongs to God, and so if there is ever a moment when you are not serving God, you are robbing God of what He purchased. So what are the implications for enjoying the pleasures of life?

## Pleasure: Yes or No?

### **No!**

People who are into asceticism would say, “We should never seek pleasure. Seeking pleasure is always selfish, and so it’s wrong.” And they would point to passages like 2 Timothy 3:4 which says there will be terrible times in the last days because people will be **lovers of pleasure**. And in James 4:3 he says that the reason they don’t get their prayers answered is that they pray with the wrong motives – that they may spend what they get on their pleasures. Pray for things to enhance your pleasure and God will not answer. That is just two of a number of passages in the Bible that speak negatively about seeking pleasure. So does that mean it is wrong for me to spend hundreds of dollars on a vacation? Or for that matter, if I am by myself in a room with a comfortable chair, should I sit on the floor? If I sit in the chair just because it is more comfortable, isn’t that seeking pleasure - self-indulgence and luxury? If I go to a restaurant, should I order whatever item on the menu sounds the least enjoyable? If I pick out the things I like, am I not seeking pleasure?

### **Yes!**

#### *Ecclesiastes: Enjoy Life*

If that were the case it would collide head on with the message of Ecclesiastes. The message of Ecclesiastes is not hard to spot.

**2:24 There is nothing better for man than to eat, drink, and enjoy his work.**

**3:12 there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. 13 That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil--this is the gift of God.**

**3:22 So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work**

**5:18 Here is what I have seen to be good: it is appropriate to eat, drink, and experience good in all the labor one does under the sun**

**8:15 So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.**

**9:7 Go, eat your bread with pleasure, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart, for God has already accepted your works. ... 9 Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days of your fleeting life, which has been given to you under the sun**

**11:8 if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all ... 9 Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth.**

It does not take a PhD in Bible interpretation to figure out that God is telling us in this book to enjoy life. Enjoy your work, your spouse, your food - enjoy whatever God gives you in this life. We have a whole book of the Bible commanding us to seek enjoyment. Some people have tried to solve this tension by coming up with some way of interpreting Ecclesiastes so that it does not say what it seems to say. They say, "The passages against living for pleasure are clear, and therefore Ecclesiastes is obscure, and so we'll interpret the obscure in the light of the clear" and so they come up with interpretations that say it is not really telling us to enjoy life (even though it says that over and over).

### *Other Pro-Enjoyment Passages*

That is a misuse of God's Word. But even if it weren't - even if you could somehow just throw out the whole book of Ecclesiastes - that would not solve the problems with the no-enjoyment view because there are other passages in the Bible outside of Ecclesiastes that are very much pro-enjoyment. For example:

**1 Timothy 6:17 God ... richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.**

That is the Apostle Paul, in the New Testament, telling us that God gives us things specifically *for our enjoyment*. He gives them to us and He expects us to enjoy them. That means if we fail to enjoy them we are going against His purposes. In Romans 15:24 Scripture speaks approvingly of enjoying your friends.<sup>1</sup> God wants us to enjoy His gifts. Are there times when sorrow and grieving are appropriate? Absolutely. But there are also times when they are inappropriate. It is not a good thing to be sad during times when God wants you to be happy.

**Nehemiah 8:5 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.<sup>10</sup> Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."<sup>11</sup> The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve."<sup>12</sup> Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.**

## **Moderation?**

So how do we reconcile the anti-pleasure passages with the pro-pleasure ones? Some people say the key is moderation.

"Moderation in all things. Go ahead and enjoy the pleasures of life - just make sure you do it in moderation."

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<sup>1</sup> The word translated "enjoyed" means to be satisfied. Paul had some desires with regard to companionship and friendship and exchanges of love with those people, and he stayed there until those desires were satisfied. That is not a confession of sin - he is describing a good thing.

Is that the answer? God gave you things for your enjoyment, He wants you to enjoy them, but whatever you do don't enjoy them a lot? Only enjoy them moderately? If you look up at the stars and see them displaying the glory of God it is OK to enjoy that a little bit. Just do not be astounded or enthralled by it. Is that what Scripture teaches? Not that I know of. I don't know of any place in the Bible that warns us to only moderately enjoy God's gifts. When I give someone a gift, the more they enjoy it the happier I am. If I buy my kids a Christmas present, and it only makes them moderately happy, I am disappointed. If moderation were so important, why wouldn't it be mentioned in those passages that tell us to enjoy God's gifts?

## Only God-Pleasing Pleasure

So if the answer is not moderation, how do we harmonize the passages that condemn seeking pleasure with the passages that command us to seek pleasure? The clearest answer to that question comes in ...

**Ecclesiastes 2:26 For to the man who is pleasing in His sight, He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy**

Seek all the pleasure you want - indulge yourself. The only restriction is, it must be the pleasure that is along the path of pleasing God. You walk the path of pleasing God, and any pleasure that can be had without stepping off that path is fair game. And not only fair game, but good and holy and righteous and pleasing to God. It is what God wants, because it brings Him glory and honor. But any pleasure that requires you to step off the path dishonors Him and is therefore wickedness.

Today is week three in our new study through the book of Ecclesiastes, but this principle that I just described is so crucial to the book, and it has raised so many questions, instead of moving to the next section of the book today I think it would be good for us to take a week to make sure we understand exactly what a God-pleasing pursuit of pleasure looks like.

## The Two Directions of Enjoyment

There are two different ways a person can pursue enjoyment in life. There is a kind of enjoyment of pleasure that points your life in the direction of sin, and there is a kind that points you in the direction of righteousness. All those anti-pleasure passages - those passages are only talking about the kind of pursuit of pleasure that points you toward sin. Let me give you five quick examples. Here are five ways to know that your enjoyment of some pleasure is the wrong kind of enjoyment:

## The Wrong Kind of Enjoyment

### *1) When your hope is in that thing rather than God*

The widows in 1 Timothy 5 who are accused of sinful self-indulgence were in sin because pursuit of pleasure diverted them from hoping in God.

**1 Timothy 5:5 The widow who is really in need, left all alone, has put her hope in God ... 6 however, she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.**

It was a kind of self-indulgence that was the opposite of hope in God. It is hope in stuff - or hope in circumstances. When you start thinking, "Ok, what do I have to look forward to? What do I have coming up tomorrow or in the coming days or weeks that I can just enjoy thinking about and anticipating?" - whatever it is that comes to mind, that is your hope. And your hope should be in God and His expressions of love. If it is in earthly things rather than God, that is the wrong kind of pursuit of pleasure and it will lead into sin.

2) *When it becomes the defining love of your life*

2 Timothy 3 says there will be terrible times in the last days because people will be...

**2 Timothy 3:4 ...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God**

When you start loving pleasure in the same ultimate, life-defining way that you are supposed to love God, then you have gone too far.

3) *When it impels selfishness rather than love*

**James 4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your pleasures that battle within you? 2 You want something but don't get it. .... You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.**

If you find yourself getting angry at people a lot, it is because you are pursuing pleasure the wrong way.

4) *When it enslaves you*

**Titus 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.**

Any pleasure that enslaves you is sin – period. If you have a habit you cannot stop, you are enslaved.

5) *When it chokes the work of the Word in your heart*

**Luke 8:14 they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.**

If it interferes with what Scripture is doing in your heart it is wrong.

## **How Enjoyment Can Glorify God**

Those are just fine examples of pleasures that would pull a person off the path of pleasing God. And that is wrong. However, all other enjoyment of pleasure is good, because it glorifies God.

“How is that? How does it bring God glory and honor when I indulge in pleasure?”

Think about it - what are the two things that we can do that honor God the most? Loving God and trusting God, right? The greatest command in the Bible is to love God, and the primary way to please God is through faith - trusting Him. So the two best things you can ever do is to love God and trust God. Trusting Him brings Him glory because it shows Him to be trustworthy, and loving God brings Him glory because it shows Him to be good and delightful.

## **Trust**

So how does enjoying life accomplish those two things? Let's start with trust. This is a major emphasis in the book of Ecclesiastes. One of the most powerful ways to express and increase your trust in God is by saying, “The only enjoyment I want in life is the enjoyment of the things God gives me - nothing else.” It takes trust to say that, because you don't know what God is going to give you. And even when you do know, very often you can't see how it is a good thing. God does not show you the big picture, so you have no way of seeing how this part of His plan is good. All you can do is take His word for it.

Most people trust themselves, not God. They trust their own judgment about what would make them happy. So they decide what they want, and they go after it, and if it happens to be on the path of righteousness, great. But if not, they will tend to go after it anyway. Or, if they are afraid of the consequences, maybe they don't go after it, but they still long for it. They still believe that thing would

make them the happiest. They trust their own judgment on things like that. Their attitude is, "I'll decide what would be best for me."

That is one of the things that is so bad about the prosperity "gospel." You decide what would be best for you to have, then you use Jesus to get it. Jump through whatever religious hoops you have to jump through - come to church, pray, give lots of money to the prosperity preachers - whatever it takes to manipulate the big Vending Machine in the sky to give you the thing that you have decided would make you happy. That is trusting yourself.

And the Preacher in Ecclesiastes is saying, "That will lead to a life of utter futility, despair, and you will end up hating life." But if you want real meaning and joy in life, then just stay on the path of pleasing God. Don't take any other path. And enjoy whatever is on that path.

"But what if it's not the thing I think would make me happy?"

It may not be. The stuff you think would make you really happy may never appear on that path. The only things that will be on that path are the things God says are best for you. So who are you going to trust - your own ideas of what would be best for you to have, or God's? Living a life that says, "I'll stay on the path of pleasing God, and just enjoy whatever God places on that path and nothing else" - living that way glorifies God because it shows Him to be so trustworthy that you trust Him more than you trust your own judgment about what would make you happiest

When you trust your own judgment about what would make you happy, you will inevitably be drawn into sin. But if you just trust God, and seek to enjoy whatever He brings into your life, that will not only keep you on the path of righteousness, but it will increase your righteousness.

"How does that work? How can enjoyment of a pleasure make me more holy and righteous?"

Two ways. The first is the fact that it is an act of faith, and every time you exercise trust in God you increase your godliness. Faith is like a muscle - the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets. And every time God gives you a gift that does not seem like a gift - it seems more like a curse - it is an exercise of faith to trust Him that it is really a good thing.

### ***Make God's Plan the Object of Your Enjoyment Rather than Your Plan***

When we have a "bad" day, what does that mean? Usually it means things did not conform to your plan. You planned a good night's sleep, what you got was insomnia. I get up in the morning and I decide the best thing would be for me to have a productive day, what I get instead is constant interruptions mixed with my own laziness and stupidity and now I am farther behind than I was yesterday. I plan one thing, God's plan is something different, and so I label it "a bad day." What kind of arrogant audacity do we have, saying a day is bad because God's plan happened instead of ours?

Solomon is trying to teach us to give up our frantic, futile effort to get what God is not giving, and just enjoy what He is giving - even if what He is giving involves suffering. The fact that something is hard does not make it bad, nor does it make it impossible to enjoy. If enjoyment really does come from God rather than circumstances, then anything can be enjoyed if God grants the enjoyment.

### ***Take This Job and Love it***

**Ecclesiastes 3:22 So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot.**

Notice it does not say "find a job you enjoy." It says "Enjoy your work." In those days most people just did whatever their father did. Your profession was pretty much predetermined. And Solomon says, "Instead of running here and there in a frantic search for enjoyment, just enjoy your job." If there is a better job available, fine. But until that happens, this is the job God has given you, and if you see it as coming from His hand, and you trust Him, you can enjoy this job. He will give you the gift of enjoyment if you are willing to receive it.

"But my job feels meaningless. I don't see the value in it."

That is the beauty of trusting God - you do not have to see something before you can know it's there. If this is the only job God has provided for you, trust Him that He knows what He is doing, pay attention to what is good about it, and just enjoy it.

### ***Life with Your Wife***

And enjoy your spouse.

### **Ecclesiastes 9:9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love**

That is another thing that is ultimately outside of your control. You may choose who you marry, but you do not have control over what that person becomes after you get married. Tracy chose to marry me based totally on what I was 25 years ago. I am *nothing* like that now. And back when we got married she had no possible way of knowing what I would be like at age 45. God is the one who sovereignly chose what sort of person you would end up being married to at this point in your life. And Solomon does not say, "Well, I hope the spouse you ended up with is someone you can enjoy." He says, "Enjoy your spouse." And he is not talking about enjoying your spouse just a little bit either - read his other book, the Song of Songs.

### ***Enjoy Your Veggies***

When we think our plan is better than God's plan we are like little children who cannot enjoy anything but candy. You can give them a five-course meal, a perfectly cooked cut of prime rib, garlic mashed potatoes - everything cooked just right, and for them, it is a hardship. You have to keep telling them, "Take another bite of your meat." If they had a choice between that wonderful meal and a piece of gum they would take the gum. They do not know how to enjoy the best things, which is why their happiness is so shallow that it only lasts for about two seconds after they finish their candy.

An adult who knows how to enjoy the full spectrum of foods gains far greater satisfaction from a good meal than a child who can only appreciate dessert. Some of God's gifts are dessert - easy to enjoy, but not the deepest level of satisfaction. Entertainment and recreation fall into that category. Should we engage in those things? Yes - God gave them to us for our enjoyment. But we do not want to make our enjoyment of life so narrow that we can only enjoy God's dessert gifts. We should also learn to enjoy the meat and potatoes of our spouse and family and work. And even the vegetables of hardship. Veggies are the hardest of all to learn how to enjoy, but it can be done. At Morton's Steak House a serving of green beans is \$12. Every day people walk into that place and pay \$12 for a side of green beans. Some people have even learned to enjoy vegetables. If you can learn to enjoy life even when it is really hard, that honors the God who gave you that hardship as being good and trustworthy.

I don't think a Christian should ever say, "Man, I hate the snow." Or, "I can't stand summer time - it's so hot." Both the snow and the summer are gifts from God designed to be received with thanksgiving in a way that increases your love for God. And so they are not to be rejected just because they involve some hardship. If you trust the God who gave you those things for your enjoyment, that faith will please Him and He will enable you to enjoy them.

## **Love**

So, one way enjoyment of pleasure can increase your godliness is by exercising your faith. Another way is by increasing your love for God. Enjoying God's gifts can make you love Him more. Does that happen automatically? No. You can enjoy God's gifts in a way that has no effect on your heart at all. You can enjoy His gifts with your back to Him, and exalt the gift to the level of being your joy source. That is idolatry and it does nothing to increase your love for God. In fact, just the opposite. It feeds your love for this world and *diminishes* your love for God. It is possible to use earthly pleasure to enjoy God, and it is possible to use God to enjoy the earthly pleasure. And the difference has everything to do with love.

### ***Relational Enjoyment vs. Selfish Enjoyment***

The key to enjoying God's gifts in a way that increases your love for God is found in what I will call *relational* enjoyment as opposed to *selfish* enjoyment. In last week's Q&A I used the illustration of a woman who wants to express her love for her husband so she cooks him his favorite meal. He comes home, sees what she did, understands what it means, and his heart swells with love for her. He embraces her, and thanks her, and they are both filled with joy and love as they enjoy the meal. Fast forward a few years, the marriage has grown cold, and now he does not care about her at all. All he cares about is getting a good meal when he comes home. So now he is just using her as a personal chef. To the outside observer both look the same - you have a man enjoying a meal that his wife cooked. But they are vastly different. The first one is relational and the second one is selfish. The first one is all about a love relationship, and the food itself is incidental. The second one is all about food and the relationship is incidental. In the first case the object of the man's love is the wife, and the food assists in his enjoyment of her. In the second case the object of the man's love is the food, and the wife assists him in his enjoyment of that. The first one honors the wife, the second one dishonors the wife.

### ***See the Meaning***

So how do you enjoy God's gifts in a relational way? By making meaning behind the gift the thing that you are actually enjoying. The first guy is not mainly getting his enjoyment from the food - he is mainly getting it from what the food means. There is a huge difference between just enjoying a gift and enjoying what the gift means. If a woman finds a diamond ring on the street, she's happy. She has a ring to add to her jewelry box. That is a certain kind of happiness. But it is nothing like the kind of happiness that comes when the man of her dreams presents her with a diamond ring. Why? Because of the meaning of the gift, and who it is from. That is a much different level of joy, because it is a relational enjoyment.

If you enjoy God's gifts like a woman finding a diamond in the street, that won't increase your love for God and your enjoyment becomes an evil thing. But if you enjoy it in a way that does increase your love for God - you receive it like an engagement ring, then it is increasing your righteousness, it is pleasing to God, and there is no limit to how much you can go ahead and enjoy that thing - the more the better because according to 1 Timothy 4:5 you are actually making that earthly pleasure a holy thing.

### ***Sanctifying Pleasure***

This is what the ascetics don't understand. Ascetics are people who teach that God is pleased whenever we abstain from pleasure so they come up with these religious rules about abstaining just for the sake of abstaining.

**1 Timothy 4:3 They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. 4 For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, 5 because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.**

You see, when you enjoy some earthly, temporal pleasure, like tasty food; if you receive it as a gift from God's hand in such a way that it generates gratitude in your heart toward God (which increases your love for Him), that consecrates that gift. (To consecrate or sanctify something means to make it holy.) The food (or game or cup of coffee or beach) is actually made holy by your gratitude. Gratitude is the biblical term for what I am calling relational enjoyment. Gratitude focuses on the giver and on the meaning of the gift, not just the object itself. So gratitude for the gift and for the ability to enjoy the gift can make anything holy (as long as you don't have to step off the path of pleasing God to get that thing. Gratitude will not make adultery holy. It will not make drunkenness or lust or greed or indecency or foolishness or gluttony holy, because those things cannot be found on the path of pleasing God. But anything that is not forbidden by God's Word, if you enjoy it in a way that increases your love for God and generates gratitude is actually made holy by the gratitude.) Why? Because any earthly thing that becomes a tool to carry exchanges of love between you and God becomes holy in the exchange.



### *Expressions of Love*

Sometimes people say, “We need to enjoy God, not His gifts. And when you think about heaven, don’t think about the streets of gold, or the incredible food, or rewards, or any of that. Just think about God. You should only be looking forward to being with God - nothing else.”

I have a problem with that. If I am not supposed to be looking forward to the rewards, why did God tell us about those things? Are they just to tempt us? No, it is obvious that God does want us to look forward to those things. It is true that God is the only good thing about heaven, and 100% of our hope should be in Him. But part of the way we enjoy God is by enjoying His many different expressions of love. And some of those expressions will be food and drink and gold and reward and ruling and all the rest. When people say, “You shouldn’t be looking forward to reward. You should be looking forward only to being with God,” that’s like a man who is about to get married and his wife says, “Are you looking forward to our honeymoon?”

“No! Just you. I don’t want a honeymoon, I don’t want any of your hugs or kisses or handholding, I don’t want you to do anything for me, I don’t want anything from you - I just want you.” That would be nonsense. You cannot fully enjoy her without enjoying her various expressions of love. And it is the same way with God. The reason there are so many different delights in heaven is because He wants us to enjoy Him through enjoying His expressions of love. The food and reward and all the rest are expressions of His love and they are to be received with joy and thanksgiving in a way that increases our love for Him.

That is why couples go on honeymoons. They go to a place that is full of delights because that enhances their enjoyment of each other. If a couple gets so they cannot enjoy each other’s company at all unless they are in Hawaii, that is a bad sign. But on the other side there is something about going to Hawaii together that can really enhance their enjoyment of each other. There is a special kind of closeness that comes from enjoying some wonderful thing with a person you love. That is why people don’t usually go to movies alone. Think about that - why go to a movie with another person? You are sitting there in a chair watching a screen – just like you would if you were there alone. And yet, people always want to go with their friends or loved ones, because there is something about enjoying something with someone you love that both increases the enjoyment and adds closeness to your relationship. So God wants you to enjoy life, and to enjoy it with Him with a relational kind of thankful enjoyment. And that will keep you from sin.

### *Keeps You from Sin*

It keeps you from sin, because if you get into the habit of constantly trying to enjoy God through His gifts, then the moment you are confronted with something that is sin, right away you think, “Oh, this won’t work. The enjoyment I’m seeking is a relational kind of enjoyment, so if this thing is going to put me at odds with God, it won’t work.” So sins are filtered out right at the gate because they will not bring you the kind of pleasure you are seeking. But if you just seek sensations of pleasure without seeking to enjoy God through them, then you just kind of forget about God, and you can drift into sin without even being conscious of it.

### *Priorities*

And that will also keep your priorities from becoming skewed, because the more important things in life also happen to be the things that provide the most closeness with God. If I am enjoying God by enjoying some dessert-type gifts - a comfy couch, a good movie, some popcorn, a warm, comfortable house, and the phone rings and someone is in the ER with life threatening injuries, or a friend is really distraught and needs someone to talk to, what will I do? What is going to keep me from saying, “Well, Ecclesiastes says I’m to enjoy life, so I’ll just stay here on the couch”? What is going to keep me from wrong priorities? Is it just commitment? Do I say, “I just need to forsake pleasure, and do what’s right”? No. The thing that is going to save me from wrong priorities is my pursuit of happiness. If my main objective is to seek the highest, deepest, most profound kind of happiness, and I am seeking that only through fellowship with God, and I understand that the closest fellowship with God comes through loving

people because He loves them, then what will I do? I will opt for the greater joy. Even though I don't feel like it, and it seems like a hardship at first, I will still want to do it because I am after enjoyment in life, but only the kind of enjoyment that is an enjoyment of God Himself, and as soon as I realize God wants me to do something other than what I am doing, I won't be able to enjoy Him while disobeying Him. So this way of living keeps our priorities intact.

## Conclusion

In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul said **these three remain: faith, hope, and love**. Those are the big three in the Christian life. And enjoying God's gifts plays a key role in all three. Trust God in what He gives you, and just enjoy whatever it is. Place your hope in whatever He has in store, rather than your own ideas of what would make you happy. And enjoy His gifts as expressions of His love, so that all your enjoyment increases your love for Him.

**2 Benediction: Psalm 37:3 Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. 4 Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. 5 Roll your way onto the Lord; trust in him and he will act.**

## James 1:25 Questions

- 1) Which of the gifts of God tends to pull you off the path of pleasing God most often (diverts your hope from God to that thing, or becomes the object of your love, or impels selfishness, or enslaves you, or chokes the Word in your life)? Discuss with the group what it would look like for you to enjoy those gifts the right way.
- 2) What is a gift that God is giving you right now that requires trust in order for you to enjoy it?
- 3) Pick one of God's gifts that you would like to work on enjoying in a more relational way (that increases your enjoyment of God).