

FIND YOUR PURPOSE

PSALM 147:10-11

# OUR PURPOSE: GOD'S PLEASURE



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**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

God is a pleasure seeker. He loves pleasure and looks for pleasure. Where does God look for pleasure? He looks at you, Christian, for his pleasure. He looks for pleasure in you. He made you to give him pleasure and he enjoys any pleasure you give to him.

This may sound heretical to you. That's because we often associate pleasure-seeking with sin and condemn such pleasures as sinful pleasures. We're therefore reluctant to view pleasure in any kind of positive way for ourselves and we're especially resistant to the idea of God seeking and savoring pleasure for himself.

But the Bible teaches differently. Just because we tend to pursue pleasure in sinful ways, in sinful things, and to sinful degrees, that doesn't mean God does. Rather, God pursues pleasure in holy ways, in holy things, and to holy degrees. He loves pleasure and looks for pleasure in you, through you, and from you.

That's an amazing thought, isn't it? That you and I can give God pleasure. We can please God. How though? **How can we give God pleasure?** Psalm 147:10-11 tells us how not to do it and also how to do it.

## BACKGROUND

In the first sermon of this series we started with God's purpose which is to glorify himself in grace-and-truth filled relationships. In the second sermon we turned to look at our own purpose and saw that our first purpose is to glorify God in grace-and-truth filled relationships. In this sermon we'll look at our second purpose, which is to give God pleasure.

Verse 10 warns us about what God does not take pleasure in. "**His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man**" (10). The Psalmist is describing the greatest military machine and military muscle of his day, the kind of impressive man-made sights that people often enjoy viewing.

We enjoy seeing military power. We're impressed with SEAL Team 6, with Marines, with Stealth Bombers, with the Abrams battle tank, with Cruise missiles, with laser-guided bombing, and so on. The nations of the world put on military parades and air shows to bolster national pride and confidence. But such military might is not God's favorite sight. He is not moved to marvel at muscles or metal.

There's a place for national defense, of course. God puts "the sword" in the hands of civil governments to punish evil doers and protect good-doers. God therefore approves of the just use of force by just authorities. However, no matter how much God approves of such, it's nothing compared to the pleasure God takes "**in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love**" (11). This is the opposite of human confidence, it's God confidence.

NB: This does not mean that God is unhappy and we make him happy. We have to hold two truths together: (1) God is infinitely happy; (2) God finds pleasure in his people.



So what does God get pleasure from?



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# 1. OUR AWE GIVES GOD PLEASURE

"The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him" (11).

Although many find pleasure in the fearless, God finds pleasure in fearers, God-fearers. Although people are impressed with military might and muscle, God is impressed with spiritual fear and awe. When God sees us respond to him with appropriate awe, fear, and respect, he is delighted.

Most fear is a horrible experience for the one who is afraid and for those around the person. We hate to fear and hate to see fear in those we love. But this kind of fear is something we want more of, both for ourselves and others. We love to see it in ourselves and others, and God loves to see it even more.

Fear usually makes us avoid what we are afraid of. The fear of God is different to all other fears. It's pleasant rather than painful. It makes us run towards the One we fear rather than away from him. It produces wordless worship sometimes and word-filled worship at other times. It makes us praise the One who awes us rather than criticize him for terrorizing us.

This fear is not just an Old Testament response to God, but a New Testament response to God (Matt. 10:28; Acts 9:31; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 14:7). As Sinclair Ferguson put it: "The fear of the Lord is that undefinable mixture of reverence, fear, pleasure and joy which fills our hearts when we realize who God is and what He has done for us." Although Old Testament events and words prompted holy fear of God, New Testament events and words prompt even holier and greater fear.

## CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Give God pleasure to enjoy God's pleasure.** There are some people we love to please. It might be a boss, a colleague, a spouse, a family member, a friend, a team-mate, etc. We love putting a smile on their faces and are careful to avoid anything that would make them frown. Who better to please than God? What greater smile can there be than God's smile. Imagine how you would feel if God smiled at you with joy. You don't have to imagine it. You simply have to believe it based upon this verse. Giving our great God great pleasure is our greatest pleasure too. This is why we are here, this is our purpose - to give God pleasure.

GIVE GOD PLEASURE  
TO GET GOD'S PLEASURE



I love giving God pleasure.  
What else can I do to give him pleasure?



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## 2. OUR HOPE GIVES GOD PLEASURE

"The Lord takes pleasure...in those who hope in his steadfast love" (11).

Hope is a rare experience today. We live in a pessimistic and nihilistic time and place. Few expect better days ahead. Most expect things to get worse for them and their children in the future. There's a deep dark sense of foreboding around, that we are on the wrong track and no one knows how to get back on it.

But as God looks down on these billions of despairing hearts, he sees some here and there that look and sound different. They are bright, cheery, happy, and hopeful. Why? They are hoping in God's steadfast love. They look ahead with an expectation that God's steadfast love is in them, with them, for them, and ahead of them. Their future view is filled with the hope of increasing encounters with and experiences of God's steadfast love.

They've already looked back in faith to God's steadfast love that was demonstrated at the cross. But they also look forward in hope to God's steadfast love being demonstrated in their life, in their death, and especially in eternity. They have a good hope (2 Thess. 2:16), a lively hope (1 Peter 1:3), a sure hope (Heb. 6:19), and a happy hope (Prov. 10:28; Rom. 5:2).

It's strange to hope in the one we fear and to fear the one we hope in. That seems an impossible pairing. But not with a Gospel understanding of hope and fear. As John Piper put it: "It means that we should let the experience of hope penetrate and transform the experience of fear, and let the experience of fear penetrate and transform the experience of hope." It's to feel completely safe in the refuge of God's love even when the greatest storm is raging all around you. Or again as Piper says, "The fireside fellowship is all the sweeter when the storm is howling outside the cottage."

God detects every moment of hope in our hearts. Every time we look ahead with optimism that we will experience God's steadfast love, he sees it, recognizes it, and responds to it with joy.

### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

#### Hope in God's steadfast love when you:

- *Believe the Gospel.* Believing the Gospel always involves hope in God's steadfast love. Faith comes with hope.
- *Read your Bible.* Instead of opening it with limited expectation, expect to be embraced by God's love.
- *Witness to unbelievers.* Instead of expecting failure, expect God to embrace the person with his love.
- *Go to church.* Instead of going expecting little or nothing, expect to enter God's loving embrace.
- *Raising kids.* Hoping in God's steadfast love for his covenant kids pleases God more than "perfect" parenting.
- *Suffer.* Instead of seeing suffering as a denial of God's love, view it as a door to God's love.
- *Lonely.* You may not have much hope of human love, but you can still have God's steadfast love.
- *Are dying.* Instead of seeing your hope diminishing as you age, expect to see it grow stronger and clearer.

Every time you hope in God's steadfast love in this way, you give God pleasure and therefore fulfill your purpose. Aren't you so glad that giving God pleasure is so easy? It doesn't require tons of words or works, just hope in God's steadfast love.

HOPE IN OUR HEARTS PUTS  
HAPPINESS IN GOD'S HEART



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others' stories



## SUMMARY



## A NEW CHAPTER

**God is a pleasure seeker.** He loves pleasure and put us in the world to give him pleasure. He's also designed us so that we get the greatest pleasure when we give him the greatest pleasure. Every ounce of awe and hope in our hearts fills his heart with pleasure. God doesn't just tolerate us, but actually appreciates us and gets pleasure from us (Zeph. 3:17).

**You are a pleasure giver.** Your primary purpose is not to get pleasure but to give pleasure. Your aim is not your own pleasure, but God's pleasure. As you fulfill that purpose you will be fulfilled. As you give God pleasure, you will get great pleasure from his pleasure.

**Prayer:** Pleasure-seeking God, give me awe and hope so that I can give you pleasure and so fulfill my purpose on this earth.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. "God is a pleasure-seeker." What's different between this and sinful pleasure-seeking?
2. How often do you think about how to give God pleasure? How can you increase that?
3. What kind of fear displeases God and what kind of fear pleases him.
4. Which life circumstances help you to hope in God's steadfast love?
5. How much awe and hope in our hearts is needed to give God pleasure?
6. Are we to be pleasure-seekers or pleasure-givers?

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