

Learning How To Enjoy God

Psalm 16

Intro:

The New Testament says that verse 10 is a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus. And following that resurrection, verse 11 says, “**In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**” But verse 9 indicates that Jesus had that joy even before His resurrection. He had learned how to enjoy God’s presence even when life was trying to rob him of that joy. And David as a type of Jesus had learned how to enjoy God above everything else in life. So that is the theme today – Learning How to Enjoy God. Piper worded the subtitle of one book on this theme, *How to Fight for Joy*. And it is so easy for us to lose that joy, isn’t it?

The first catechism says, “Man’s chief end [and that word “end” is just old English word for goal, so the catechism means that man’s chief goal; His chief purpose in life] is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” We frequently emphasize man’s chief end with reference to God - glorifying Him. But we do not as frequently emphasize man’s chief end with reference to ourselves- enjoying God. And yet John Piper’s books have demonstrated clearly that we cannot fully glorify God without enjoying God. And so I want you to evaluate your hearts this morning. Do you enjoy God? Do you enjoy being with Him? talking to Him? serving Him? How much? What are the evidences of that enjoyment? What are the ways in which you enjoy God?

Some of you may be wondering what in the world I plan to do with all of these bolts and nails this morning. I have put them here because one of the points I will make this morning is hard to understand. And I thought that this illustration will put it indelibly into your minds.

Let's say that the nails represent all of the people and other things of creation. This bolt will represent you. I've also got a magnet here. And let's say that this magnet represents God. [Put bolt on magnet.] It is God's grace, and God's grace alone that enables any of us to be attracted to God. Until we are regenerate, we are like this plastic bolt. [Put plastic bolt on and drop a couple of times.] No matter how close God may come to us, we will abandon Him and will not love Him. Nor will we cling to Him. [Put magnet into can full of nails] But there are a whole host of people whom God has regenerated. He has changed their hearts so that they are naturally attracted to God. Some are attracted so much to God that it takes a great deal to pull their affections away from God, and even after being pulled away, they

repent and they immediately rush back to God. Others are attracted to God second hand. Notice that some of these nails are attracted to the magnet even though they don't touch the magnet. They experience God's grace, but their love to God and enjoyment of God is almost always channeled through other people. Some are attracted to God, but the attraction is so weak that it doesn't take much to cause their enjoyment of the Lord to fail. [Knock off some of the bottom nails] They are constantly vacillating, and even the attraction of God's people and fellowship does not always hold their enjoyment. This psalm exhorts us to be people like this main bolt and these top nails; people who are strongly attracted to God and who enjoy His presence. Let me pray again.

[Father, before I go any further, I want to ask you to give these men, women and children their heart's desire. Father, you have made them to love you, and when they recognize the weakness of their love, they long for more. Please give them more of yourself O God. Fill us all with a magnetic attraction to your attributes, your laws and your purposes. We recognize that we love only because you first loved us. We love each other because of your love. We love you because of your love. And as we look at this Psalm, I pray that our hearts may well up with a holy admiration for all that you are and all that you do. Thank you Lord. In Jesus name I pray this. Amen.]

I. Learning To Enjoy God Exclusively (vs. 1-4)

A. Consistent With Presenting Requests (v. 1)

This psalm is full of references to enjoying God. Verse 11 says, “**In Your presence is fullness of joy**” If your cup of enjoyment is full, that means you can't fit any more enjoyment in. You can't imagine enjoying Him more. Now I can certainly imagine enjoying God more than I presently experience. I'm sure I will enjoy Him a lot more when I get to heaven. After all, this verse says, “**In Your presence is fullness of joy.**” But even now God enables us to experience His presence in some measure, and David over and over longed for more and more of God's presence. When you have God's presence, you will have all the enjoyment that you need. Verse 2 in the NASB says, “**I have no good besides You.**” His life is wrapped up in God. And yet the question comes, “How is *that* statement consistent with some of the things that he is saying in verses 1-3? If God is *enough*, why is He asking for more in verse 1? Why is he even making a prayer request? If God is our exclusive enjoyment in life, is it wrong to enjoy new clothing or to enjoy eating chocolate cake? Well, let me show first of all, how an exclusive enjoyment of God can be totally consistent with prayer requests and with enjoying God's good gifts (point B - we'll take points A and B

together), and then I will show how it is not only consistent, but *necessarily so*.

In verse 2 David is saying that He is so strongly attached to God that God is the only good that He clings to. He is like this metal bolt here. [Put one large bolt on magnet with other nails attached to it. He doesn't need the other nails to be attracted to God and to enjoy God. But he is attracted to the good gifts that God gives because *God has given him a heightened capacity to enjoy life*. Now that is a key insight that ascetics miss. An ascetic is a person who believes it is spiritual to deny himself pleasure by dieting, wearing poor clothing, suffering, avoiding treats, etc. He thinks those things will necessarily pull him away from God. *But God's regeneration of our hearts (the magnetic alignment, so-to-speak) actually does the opposite – it gives us a new and fuller capacity to enjoy life*. Just as the magnetic force from this magnet flows through this bolt and attracts all of these nails, so too, the love and grace of God flows through a believer and enables him to appreciate and find pleasure in the good things of God. *The magnetic force is undiminished by these other good gifts*.

[Pull off some of the nails] Nor does he need these good gifts in order to enjoy God fully any more than this bolt needs the other nails in order to remain attached to the magnet. Can you see that? [Put nails back on.] But God delights in giving us a stewardship trust of many things in creation. He just doesn't want us to forget where all these good things come from. Now let's imagine that we let go of God and begin to get bored with Him; He is no longer our chief delight. What happens? [Pull nail that has other nails attached to it off of the magnet.] When we no longer enjoy God, the magnetic attraction to these things in life falls off as well. God makes sure of that. *He makes sure that when we do not find our rest and enjoyment in Him, that life becomes empty and meaningless*. And if you want a good picture of how that happens, read Ecclesiastes. Solomon backslid from the Lord, and what ended up happening was that he grew tired of everything that he pursued. Let's say that this bolt is Solomon. Now, let's add a bunch of things to Solomon's life. [Add nails to the big nail on the table.] He tried wine, women and song and found himself with a headache and an empty heart. [Put more nails on.] He tried wealth and wisdom. He tried entertainment. He tried accomplishments. He tried all kinds of things to find enjoyment. And the more he tried to find attraction in the things of earth, the more empty He became. There was no longer the same attraction that He had to God's creation. Notice that even though there are lots of nails around this big bolt, they are not attracted to the bolt. Solomon had everything most people could hope for, but because his hope was in people and in things they

let him down. He could not connect. In Ecclesiastes 2:17 Solomon said, **“Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was grievous to me, for all was vanity and grasping for the wind. Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun.”** That’s what happens when your first attraction is not to God.

And Solomon emphasizes this point over and over again in the book of Ecclesiastes. He says that the only way to enjoy the simple and the great things of life is to see them as coming from the hand of God; a God in whom is your only delight. [Attach bolt to magnet, and then put other nails on.] Just as this bolt finds connection with other nails when it is solidly attached to the magnet, we find ourselves connected to and enjoying life when we are solidly connected to God. Solomon ends the book by saying, **“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”** And when we do that, we find enjoyment. When God is our exclusive joy and delight (and we can say with Jesus, “I delight to do your will, O My God”), *then* we find an extra capacity to enjoy the things of His creation. *We don’t need them, but we can enjoy them.* And Ecclesiastes is full of references to enjoying one’s wife; enjoying food; enjoyment of the simple things of life. Do you wake up in the morning thoroughly enjoying the sunshine, the snow, the birds and the fact that you have another day to serve your blessed Lord? For the most part I do, but I want to be there more consistently. And I want you to forever cast off the experience where you wake up and say, “Oh, please. Not another day that I’ve got to go through.” That need not be your experience. If that was *not* the experience of Jesus in Passion week, it should never be the experience of the Christian. With Jesus we should be able to say, “For the joy that is set before me, I will endure the cross that You have put into my life.” Even on difficult days we should be able to say, “Lord, I am so happy that you have trusted me with another day to serve you. I know that today holds challenges and angry people and painful experiences, but I look forward to your strength, your presence and the fact that Your grace is sufficient for this day.” Now, some people think that is ridiculous; that it is absolutely impossible. But Jesus said in Luke 6: **“Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.”** James 1 says, **“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the trying of your faith produces patience.”** Acts 5:31 says that after the apostles were beaten, **“they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing**

that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” [Take nails off bolt.] Everything had been removed from their lives, but they were still rejoicing. Later in the book of Acts, Paul and Silas were able to enjoy the Lord and sing praises to Him even when they had been thrown into jail and had been severely beaten.

And what's our reaction? “Yeah, right! I've tried that! It doesn't work with me.” Well, let me ask you something. Can this bolt have power in itself to attract? No. It can try all it wants to, but it won't work. Sometimes there is residual power when it has been attached to the magnet for quite a long time, but in ourselves there really is nothing. The key to enjoyment is not what happens to us or what we have with regard to creation, but whether we are stuck to the Lord. If we can learn to enjoy God in all circumstances, we can learn to enjoy the rest of life as well.

Just make a mental note of the fact that there are two key phrases to understanding Ecclesiastes. Life “under the sun” and life “under heaven.” They are not synonyms; they are opposites. Life under the sun is always associated with vanity and meaninglessness because it is merely looking at life and seeking to enjoy life in a closed system. The highest thing in this closed system is physical - the sun. And consistently, when that phrase is used, he speaks of vanity. If that is the highest thing in your life, life is going to be miserable. The other phrase is life “under heaven” where the throne room of God is. And there is a purpose and a time for everything under *heaven*. Those who live under heaven's rule can enjoy even the simple things of life. And I will give you just one example from Ecclesiastes chapter 2:24-26.

Ecc. 2:24 ¶ Nothing *is* better for a man *than* that he should eat and drink, and *that* his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.

Ecc. 2:25 For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I?

Ecc. 2:26 For *God* gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who *is* good in His sight; but [now comes a major contrast] to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to *him who is* good before God. This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

Vanity to the sinner, but enjoyment for the believer who receives His gifts from God's hand and is contented with them. And immediately after that comes chapter 3 where everything under heaven has meaning and purpose. God has not called us to be ascetics. Part of our enjoyment of Him is the enjoyment of the gifts that He gives to us.

B. Consistent With Enjoying God's Good Gifts (v. 2)

C. Consistent With Enjoying God's People (v. 3)

So we have seen under points A and B that learning to enjoy God exclusively is consistent with asking for more things as David does in this Psalm, and it is consistent with enjoying God's good gifts (verse 2). But point C says that it is also consistent with enjoying God's people. And by now that should be obvious. David in verse 3 says that he delights in being with God's people. But look at how he words it. **“And to the saints who are on the earth, “they are the excellent ones, in whom is all [Not 20%, but "all"] my delight.”** Is that a contradiction? How can you have all your delight in the saints and all your delight in God? Down through history there have been those who have thought you couldn't. They have thought that the only way they could draw near to God is by abandoning things and people. Monasteries flourished and some people even went further and became hermits in the desert. I had a friend who sincerely told me that you could not love God fully if you were married and so he was choosing the single life because he believed it was more honoring to God than the married life. Well, in part I think it was sour grapes because he wasn't able to get his gal. But he used 1 Corinthians 7 to try to prove that singleness was the best choice in the kingdom. Now in some situations that may be true if God has called you to that. But he was taking Paul's advice concerning the specific situation of persecution and was making it a general principle, and that contradicts even verse 2 1 Corinthians 7. God made very clear what His norm was in Genesis 2:18. He said, **“it is not good that man should be alone.”** And 1 Corinthians 7:2 repeats that norm. But the point is that God can give grace to those whom He has called to be single and He can give grace to those who are married. How can you be devoted to God and devoted at the same time to your wife or to your husband? And we realize from experience that we fail on precisely that issue many times. Many times our wives and our husbands *do* draw our hearts away from God. Many times our children become idols and they draw our hearts away from God's will. 1 Corinthians 7:33 **“he who is married is concerned about the things of the world - how he may please his wife.”** People can make idols out of things and they can make idols out of their husbands, wives and children and find those to be a distraction to Christ. And that is because their focus and their desire for possession is not placed on the magnet, but it is placed on these things down here.

Why don't you turn with me to Mark 10:28-31. I've read this so many times to you that you may be sick and tired of it, and I'm going to keep reading it, because it is something that we forget all too quickly. But beginning at verse 28:

28 **“Then Peter began to say to him, See, we have left all, and followed You. 29 So Jesus answered and said, Assuredly I say to you, There is no one who has left house, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s,”** [He is saying that leaving is necessary before we can follow Christ. He must be our only possession. When I put this magnet down, what is the direction that some nails go? It is leaving the other nails and going to the magnet. But notice what He says happens when we give up our idols and give our sole devotion to the Lord. Verse 30: **“who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time”** [and notice that he lists the things that were given up] – **“houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands...”** In other words, when we relinquish control of all these things and we tell the Lord, “Whatever you entrust to my care I will use to your glory and in your way,” God entrusts those things to us and makes our enjoyment of them 100 times better. He is not saying that he is going to give us a hundred children, wives, or houses. He is going to make it a hundred times better with our wife or child or house. And notice that he adds the little word **with persecutions** because He wants to test His children from time to time to see if they truly have a steward’s heart. There may be times when these things are removed from our lives. [Remove some nails clinging to the bolt.] And then he says - **and in the age to come, eternal life.** He gives us the paradox that when you give up all for Jesus, you have more than when you tried to cling to your idols, and so Christ says in verse 31 **“But many that are first will be last; and the last first.”**

Think of this magnet. [Put several layers of nails on the magnet.] There are two ways in which you can be attracted to God’s people. Those down in this weakest link are attracted to God through His people, and that is good, but they do not have as strong a grip on God’s love as the person on this first link. This person loves God exclusively. The only thing that is holding him on to this magnet is God Himself. It’s not the other people who are holding him on to the magnet. Even if all the other nails drop off, this nail will stay on the magnet. But is this bolt also attracted to the other nails? Of course. It is attracted because the magnetic force is flowing through it into the other nails. In the same way, the closer we draw to God, the closer we will draw to God’s people and delight in them.

In your outlines I have given another illustration. In a marriage, two people have covenanted together. But notice that the further away from God they get, the further away from each other they become, and the closer they draw to God, the closer they are drawn to each other. And so it is fully consistent for David to say in verse 2 “I have no good thing apart from you,”

and yet to say in verse 3 that all of his delight is in God's saints. We could paraphrase it, "I have no magnetic power apart from you, but your magnetic power attracts me to Your saints." 1 John says that you don't even love God if you don't love fellow believers. 1 John 4:20 says, "**If anyone says, 'I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ... everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.'**" Don't deceive yourselves into thinking that you love God if you don't love God's people.

If you are attached to the magnet, you are going to be attached to God's people. This morning, you may need to confess idolatry because your focus has been exclusively on pleasing your children and keeping your children. Or, you may need to confess your sin of lack of love if you do not enjoy God's people. Ask God to shed abroad His love in your heart so that you can both enjoy Him and the people whom He delights in.

D. But Impossible With Any Form of Idolatry (v. 4)

Verse 4 may be one of the reasons why the magnetic power is so weak in your life, because it indicates that an exclusive enjoyment of God is impossible when there is any form of idolatry. [Turn magnet off, and show how bolt does not stick to magnet.] Let's read verse 4: "**Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god; their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, nor take up their names on my lips.**" There are many forms of idolatry. We already saw how houses, spouses, children and parents can become idols in Mark 10. And Christ said that it is impossible to enjoy God and continue to hold onto an idol. Can you imagine that? - that your house can become a stumbling block between you and Christ? If you are not living with your husband, or wife, or parents in the way God commands you to live, then you are not living as a steward. You are living as a rebel. You are acting as if you have a right to determine the relationship - as if you have ownership say-so, and as if you are the magnet. You are not the magnet. The moment you relate to others independently, you lose magnetic power. When that happens, you are going to lose everything and be miserable. Yes, your own relatives can become idols if you do not maintain a right relationship with the Lord. It says, "**Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god.**" What about you? Have you set up things in your life that have sapped your enjoyment for God? You need to give them all up to Jesus. You need to be willing to die to your past relationships as an owner, take up your cross and follow Christ. And it is then, and only then, that God can trust you with a steward's enjoyment -

giving you 100-fold in this life and in the life to come, pleasures forevermore. Learning to enjoy God exclusively always involves idol smashing parties.

II. Learning To Enjoy God Contentedly (vs. 5-6)

Now in verses 5-6 we see that once we do that; once we give up ownership and become stewards, we learn to be content and happy in whatever circumstance that we find ourselves in. We know that David had some needs because verse 1 says, **“Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.”** But like Paul, David had learned both to abound and to suffer lack and yet in either position to be content. Despite his need he says in verses 5-6, **“You, O LORD, are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance.”** When he talks about lines, he is talking about a surveyor’s line. He is saying, “Lord, the landscape that you have portioned out for me; the circumstances that you have tailor made for me are circumstances that I accept. I cheerfully accept.” Paul said, **“Godliness with contentment is great gain.”** When you have come to the place where you are contented no matter what your circumstances, you have come to have a steward’s heart. The Christian can *never* be satisfied with the sense that David felt in *Psalm 13*. David wasn’t satisfied in *Psalm 13*. In that Psalm he felt distant from God and as if God’s face was turned from Him, but when he sensed the presence of God, he was content with whatever circumstances he had. Or to use another analogy, when like this bolt, David did not sense the enjoyment of God, he did not enjoy life at all. But when the sense of God’s presence was restored, it didn’t matter how many of these nails of circumstances were added or taken away, he rejoiced in knowing the Lord.

III. Learning To Enjoy God Personally (vs. 7-8)

And if this enjoyment is to reach its fullest potential, it must be personally experienced and not just be theoretical. Look at the personal references in verses 7-8. **“I will bless the Lord, who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons.”** He's talking about the Lord opening His understanding; giving Him guidance and speaking to His heart. Though we no longer have prophecy (in other words, though we no longer have counsel that is infallible or inspired outside of the prophetic Scriptures), God continues to personally manifest Himself to us through those prophetic Scriptures. In fact, Jesus promised in John 14:23, **“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him,**

and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” Wow! That’s pretty personal; that’s pretty close. The Triune God making their home with us. He’s talking about a personal relationship. But He says that God is not willing to do that if we are not willing to keep His Word. Let me read that again. That’s John 14:23. **“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”** Earlier in verse 21 He said, **“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”** The word “manifest” indicates that it’s not just a theory; it is the *experience* of His presence. He says, that’s the heritage of all who love Him – no exceptions.

There is not an audible voice we hear (at least not usually), but God converses with us nonetheless. There are times when I read the Bible, and all I read is theology. There are other times when I read those same words and God is speaking to my heart as really as if He was audible. The Word overcomes us because it is brought to our minds and hearts by the very presence of the Triune God in our room. That’s why David cried in Psalm 13, **“How long will you hide your face from me.”** That’s why he cried in Psalm 22, **“Why are you so far ... from the words of my groaning? My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear.”** David was not content with merely speaking *to* God. He wanted God to speak to His heart through the Scriptures. Does God counsel you; converse with you when you read the Scriptures, or is it merely an academic exercise? Psalm 16 goes on to say, **“My heart instructs me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.”** Notice that it is not just in heaven that David will experience God’s presence. He is talking about the present: **“I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.”** Is God before you? Do you sense Him at your right hand? Does the fire of His love burn in your chest? Do you sense overwhelming conviction at times; and overwhelming comfort at times? All of those are different ways of saying that there is a magnetic presence that we can experience. If you are to enjoy God fully, you must learn how to *be* in His presence rather than just going through an exercise with yourself.

IV. Learning To Anticipate the Incredible Joys of the Future (vs. 9-11)

And then finally, learn to anticipate (this is the role of hope – learn to anticipate) the incredible joys of the future just like Jesus did. Hebrews says that for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. Some of the

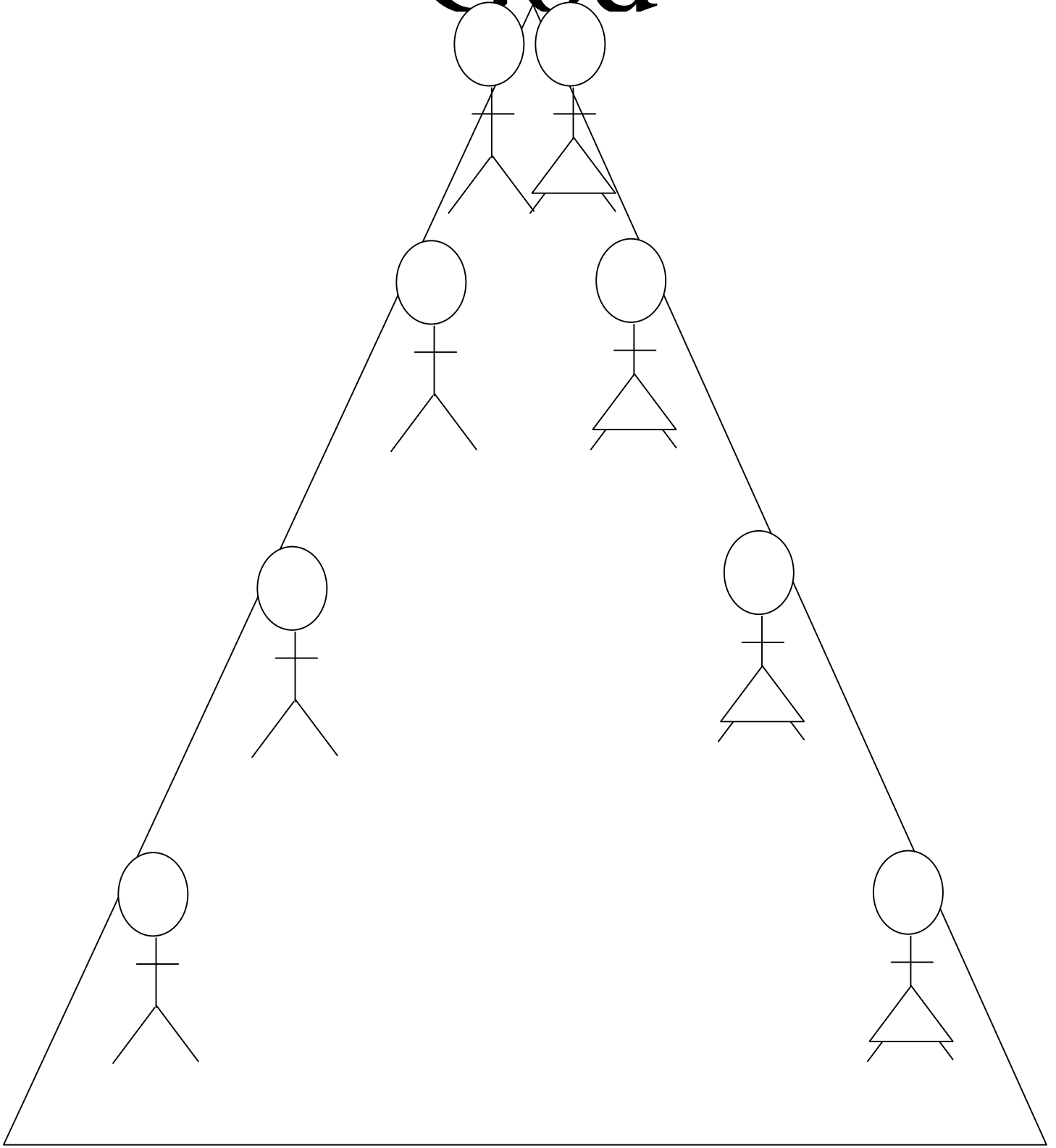
most important memories are things that we also looked forward to for a long time. They were anticipated, just like Joel anticipates going to Minnesota, and the kids anticipate opening up the presents at a birthday party. A family needs to have many things it can look forward to if it is to enjoy its time together. But the same is true in our relationship with God. God is excited about the gift of heaven that He has promised to you. He can hardly wait till you take the wrapping paper off of that fabulous gift. That's why Scripture says, "**Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of His saints.**" He so looks forward to our death when He can watch the glee and pleasure in our eyes as the wrapping paper is taken off and we see how fabulous heaven really is. Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of His saints. That is the time par excellence when the wrapping paper hiding God's good gifts is taken off and we are ushered into the greatest enjoyment possible. And He wants us to have an excitement and an anticipation of that joy. The thought of heaven brings joy to me. It brought joy to Jesus. As we meditate upon the incredible joys we will have in heaven, it enlivens our walk with the Lord right now.

Verses 9-11 are applied to Christ in the New Testament, but David enters into the resurrection joys through Christ. "**Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**" I cannot do justice to those amazing verses. They could occupy an entire sermon all by themselves. But let me quote from the Puritan writer, Thomas Brooks. And I have included that quote at the bottom of your outlines. He said about this verse, "Mark, for quality, there are PLEASURES; for quantity, FULLNESS; for dignity, AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND; for eternity, FOR EVERMORE. And millions of years multiplied by millions, make not up one minute to this eternity of joy that the saints shall have in heaven." Isn't that good? When you start meditating on *that*, it is bound to help you to enjoy God more right *now*. Spurgeon said, "The glorified soul shall be forever bathing in the rivers of pleasure."

Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, and God wants us to begin that enjoyment right now. And if you think you need one more dollar to enjoy life, you will never fully enjoy it. If you think you need changes in your job, your family, or to have different nails attached to you, then you've missed the whole point of *how* to enjoy life. Enjoy *God* as your sole possession. Then you will leave all idols behind and God will restore certain things of creation and enable you to find magnetic joy in those things

because they are connected magnetically to God. Enjoy Him so much that you are content in whatever circumstance God places you in, except the circumstance of losing His comfort and the sense of His presence. Learn to enjoy God personally; and learn to enjoy the anticipation of what He has prepared for you in the future. Enjoy God, and He will be glorified. Amen? Let's pray.

God



Husband

Wife