

## Introducing the “H” Word

Shortly after moving to Colorado, I was teaching an adult Sunday School class and mentioned the teaching of John Piper which focuses upon finding our pleasure and satisfaction in God. I also noted that the well-known author has labeled this doctrine “Christian Hedonism”. Immediately, a man in the class was irate. “How dare you take such a vile word and use it positively!”

This reaction shows just how strange Christian Hedonism can sound—particularly when joy, pleasure, and affections continue to be downplayed—especially among serious Christians. Yet, after an additional decade of studying the Scriptures, I’m even more convinced now that we should aspire to be Christian Hedonists. Before you throw your tomatoes, read on.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines Hedonism (from the Greek for “pleasure”) as: “the doctrine that pleasure...is the sole or chief good in life” as well as “a way of life based on or suggesting the principles of hedonism.” In fairness to the angry man in the Sunday School class, historically this term has been used to describe people whose sole or ultimate purpose in life is to find pleasure apart from God and in very selfish, sinful ways. Christian Hedonism has only one point of agreement with its counterpart—it deals with pleasure. Otherwise, it is diametrically opposed since it calls us to find our pleasure in God. It reminds us that we are people of affections who will seek pleasure in something and/or someone(s) and God should be our ultimate object. Rather than simply believing Him or merely doing the right things, we are to understand that God is even more glorified when we see Him as the greatest and ultimate source of all good, holiness, love, grace, and beauty. All other pleasures are merely gifts designed to reflect the ultimate good and glory of the Giver and to turn our attention, worship, and love toward Him.

Consider this small sampling of biblical statements which “ooze” with Christian Hedonism: “Be glad in the LORD” (Ps. 32:11); “Taste and see that the LORD is good” (Ps. 34:8); “Delight yourself in the LORD” (Ps. 37:4); “singing and making melody to the LORD with all your heart” (Eph. 5:19); “rejoice in the Lord” (Phil. 3:1). Additionally, we are exhorted to seek treasure in God’s eternal reward (Mt. 6:20)—in whose presence there are eternal pleasures (Ps. 16:11) and taught that our prayers are answered to glorify the Father and that our joy might be full (John 14:13; 16:24).

In the same way that an affectionate, appreciative husband bearing flowers to his wife brings her greater honor than merely a dutiful one, so we intensify the realization of God's worth by finding pleasure and contentment in Him.

One of the reasons that you have seen the by-line floating around, "joyfully following and loving to His glory," is that it is designed to capture this rich, biblical concept of Christian Hedonism which Piper often words: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." May this be our aspiration, our prayer, and our life goal.