



JOHN PIPER

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120 DAILY MEDITATIONS

THE
SATISFIED
SOUL

Showing the Supremacy of God in All of Life

THE
SATISFIED
SOUL

BOOKS BY JOHN PIPER

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J O H N P I P E R

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T H E
S A T I S F I E D
S O U L

Showing the Supremacy of God in All of Life



MULTNOMAH

THE SATISFIED SOUL

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To those who long for a satisfied soul.

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love.

PSALM 90:14



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A WORD TO THE READER

One of the reasons I put together collections of short meditations is that my life has been changed as much by paragraphs as by books. Books on one topic are valuable. They let the author explore all the angles of an insight. But where do the insights themselves come from? Usually they come from paragraphs. Even sentences. For reasons not entirely explainable, God can make a single paragraph life changing.

Perhaps some evening your soul is hungry. Not for anything in particular, just a soul-hunger. A longing. Something is needed beyond what television is going to give. Something about God, or about the meaning of your life, or about eternity. You're tired and you know that you probably can't stay awake to read twenty pages. So you pick up a book that you know focuses on eternal things, a Godward book. And three minutes later you have seen something, and you will never be the same again.

It may take a lifetime to sound the depths of what you just saw. But the seeing happens in an instant. It's as if God takes the paragraph in his fingers and uses it to adjust the lens on the eye of your soul, and something wonderful comes into focus that you had never seen before.

Isn't it amazing to think about the relationship between God's focusing fingers and the human activity of writing and reading? You may have read that same paragraph before—perhaps just the other evening. But this time, God put his fingers on it and turned the lens just one more focusing notch. What this means is that I should pray as a writer, and you should pray as a reader. We should ask God to do this focusing.

I think of your reading and my writing as a kind of partnership in the pursuit of a Godward miracle. I write, you read, but God gives the

sight. What we both want is this miracle of seeing—seeing life-changing things about God and life and eternity.

In one of his letters, the apostle Paul said, “By reading you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ” (Ephesians 3:4, author’s translation). But was reading enough? A few sentences later he prayed, “That you may have strength to . . . know the love of Christ” (Ephesians 3:18–19). Something more was needed than reading. Something from God—he called it “strength to know.” Earlier he had prayed that the eyes of his readers’ hearts would be “enlightened that you may know” (Ephesians 1:18). Something from God is needed—in answer to prayer. This is what I meant when I said that God takes a human paragraph and puts his fingers on the lens of the eye of your soul. The slightest turn, and we are made strong with sight. We are never the same again.

So I have written. And you are reading. And God is ready to act. My words are not Scripture. They are not infallible like God’s words. But my earnest aim in all I write is to be faithful to God’s written Word in the Bible. To point to God and his Son and his works and his ways. My aim is a Godward book in the hope that God would put his fingers on its paragraphs and turn the lens of the eye of your soul, ever so delicately, and bring glories into focus.

This is how God forms us into his image. “Beholding the glory of the Lord, [we] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18). This is our aim: from a Godward paragraph, to a sight of glory, to *A Satisfied Soul*.



I have enjoyed a long and happy relationship with Multnomah Books—especially in bringing my shorter writings to publication. *A Satisfied Soul* is a continuation of what we began in *A Godward Life, Book One* (2001, 2015), and continued in *A Godward Life, Book Two* (2003, which became *Taste and See*, 2005, 2016), *Pierced by the Word* (2003), *Life as a Vapor* (2004), and *A Godward Heart* (2014).

A Satisfied Soul is now the third volume of 120 (or more) readings, alongside *A Godward Life* and *Taste and See*. The three together combine for 365 daily readings, one for every day of the year, if you like. This new volume is a compilation of the three previously published smaller books (*Pierced by the Word*, *Life as a Vapor*, and *A Godward Heart*). Multnomah and the team at Desiring God thought it would serve readers to bring those three smaller devotionals together in this one volume to complement *A Godward Life* and *Taste and See*. I am thankful for this publishing partnership for the sake of spreading what I pray will prove to be life-changing, Christ-exalting paragraphs.

THE MORNING I HEARD THE VOICE OF GOD

When God's Word Gets Personal

Let me tell you about a most wonderful experience I had early Monday morning, March 19, 2007, a little after six o'clock. God actually spoke to me. There is no doubt that it was God. I heard the words in my head just as clearly as when a memory of a conversation passes across your consciousness. The words were in English, but they had about them an absolutely self-authenticating ring of truth. I know beyond the shadow of a doubt that God still speaks today.

I couldn't sleep for some reason. I was at Shalom House in northern Minnesota on a staff couples' retreat. It was about 5:30 in the morning. I lay there, wondering if I should get up or wait till I got sleepy again. In his mercy, God moved me out of bed. It was mostly dark, but I managed to find my clothing, get dressed, grab my briefcase, and slip out of the room without waking up Noël. In the main room below, it was totally quiet. No one else seemed to be up. So I sat down on a couch in the corner to pray.

As I prayed and mused, suddenly it happened. God said, "*Come and see what I have done.*" There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that these were the very words of God, in this very moment. At this very place in the twenty-first century, God was speaking to me with absolute authority and self-evidencing reality. I paused to let this sink in. There

was a sweetness about it. Time seemed to matter little. God was near. He had me in his sights. He had something to say to me. When God draws near, hurry ceases. Time slows down.

I wondered what he meant by “come and see.” Would he take me somewhere, as he did Paul into heaven to see what can’t be spoken? Did “see” mean that I would have a vision of some great deed of God that no one has seen? I am not sure how much time elapsed between God’s initial word, “*Come and see what I have done,*” and his next words. It doesn’t matter. I was being enveloped in the love of his personal communication. The God of the universe was speaking to me.

Then he said, as clearly as any words have ever come into my mind, “*I am awesome in my deeds toward the children of man.*” My heart leaped up, “Yes, Lord! You are awesome in your deeds. Yes, to all men whether they see it or not. Yes! Now what will you show me?”

The words came again. Just as clear as before, but increasingly specific: “*I turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There they rejoiced in me, who rules by my might forever.*” Suddenly I realized God was taking me back several thousand years to the time when he dried up the Red Sea and the Jordan River. I was being transported by his word back into history to those great deeds. This is what he meant by “come and see.” He was transporting me back by his words to those two glorious deeds before the children of men. These were the “awesome deeds” he referred to. God himself was narrating the mighty works of God. He was doing it for me. He was doing it with words that were resounding in my own mind.

There settled over me a wonderful reverence. A palpable peace came down. This was a holy moment and a holy corner of the world in northern Minnesota. God Almighty had come down and was giving me the stillness and the openness and the willingness to hear his very voice. As I marveled at his power to dry the sea and the river, he spoke again. “*I keep watch over the nations—let not the rebellious exalt themselves.*”

This was breathtaking. It was very serious. It was almost a rebuke, at

least a warning. He may as well have taken me by the collar of my shirt, lifted me off the ground with one hand, and said with an incomparable mixture of fierceness and love, “Never, never, never exalt yourself. Never rebel against me.”

I sat staring at nothing. My mind was full of the global glory of God. “*I keep watch over the nations.*” He had said this to me. It was not just that he had said it. Yes, that is glorious. But he had said this to me. The very words of God were in my head. They were there in my head just as much as the words I am writing at this moment are in my head. They were heard as clearly as if at this moment I recalled that my wife said, “Come down for supper whenever you are ready.” I know those are the words of my wife. And I know these are the words of God.

Think of it. Marvel at this. Stand in awe of this. The God who keeps watch over the nations, like some people keep watch over cattle or stock markets or construction sites—this God still speaks in the twenty-first century. I heard his very words. He spoke personally to me.

What effect did this have on me? It filled me with a fresh sense of God’s reality. It assured me more deeply that he acts in history and in our time. It strengthened my faith that he is for me and cares about me and will use his global power to watch over me. Why else would he come and tell me these things?

It has increased my love for the Bible as God’s very Word, because it was through the Bible that I heard these divine words, and through the Bible I have experiences like this almost every day. The very God of the universe speaks on every page into my mind—and your mind. We hear his very words. God himself has multiplied his wondrous deeds and thoughts toward us; none can compare with him! “I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told” (Psalm 40:5).

And best of all, they are available to all. If you would like to hear the very same words I heard on the couch in northern Minnesota, read Psalm 66:5–7. That is where I heard them. Oh how precious is the Bible. It is the very Word of God. In it God speaks in the twenty-first century.

This is the very voice of God. By this voice, he speaks with absolute truth and personal force. By this voice, he reveals his all-surpassing beauty. By this voice, he reveals the deepest secrets of our hearts. No voice anywhere anytime can reach as deep or lift as high or carry as far as the voice of God that we hear in the Bible.

It is a great wonder that God still speaks today through the Bible with greater force and greater glory and greater assurance and greater sweetness and greater hope and greater guidance and greater transforming power and greater Christ-exalting truth than can be heard through any voice in any human soul on the planet from outside the Bible.

The great need of our time is for people to experience the living reality of God by hearing his word personally and “transformingly” in Scripture. Something is incredibly wrong when words that claim to be from God from outside Scripture are more powerful and more affecting to us than the inspired Word of God.

Let us cry with the psalmist, “Incline my heart to your testimonies” (Psalm 119:36). “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law” (Psalm 119:18). Grant that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened to know our hope and our inheritance and the love of Christ that passes knowledge and be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 1:18; 3:19). *O God, don't let us be so deaf to your Word and so unaffected with its ineffable, evidential excellency that we celebrate lesser things.*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SEEK THE LORD?

A Meditation on Psalm 105:4

*Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually!*

— PSALM 105:4

Seeking the Lord means seeking his presence. *Presence* is a common translation of the Hebrew word for “face.” Literally, we are to seek his face. But this is the Hebraic way of having access to God. To be before his face is to be in his presence.

But aren't his children always in his presence? Yes and no. Yes in two senses: First, it's yes in the sense that God is omnipresent and therefore always near everything and everyone. “He upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:3). His power is ever present in sustaining and governing all things.

And second, yes, he is always present with his children in the sense of his covenant commitment to always stand by us and work for us and turn everything for our good. “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

But there is a sense in which God's presence is not with us always. For this reason, the Bible repeatedly calls us to “seek the Lord...seek his

presence continually.” God’s *manifest, conscious, trusted* presence is not our constant experience. There are seasons when we become neglectful of the Lord and give him no thought and do not put trust in him, and we find him “unmanifested”—that is, unperceived as great and beautiful and valuable by the eyes of our hearts.

His face—the brightness of his personal character—is hidden behind the curtain of our carnal desires. This condition is always ready to overtake us. That is why we are told to “seek his presence *continually*.” God calls us to enjoy continual consciousness of his supreme greatness and beauty and worth.

This happens through seeking. Continual seeking. But what does that mean practically? Both the Old and New Testaments say it means to set the mind and heart on God. It is the conscious fixing or focusing of our mind’s attention and our heart’s affection on God.

Now set *your mind and heart* to seek the Lord your God.
(1 Chronicles 22:19)

If then you have been raised with Christ, *seek* the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. *Set your minds* on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.
(Colossians 3:1–2)

This setting of the mind is the opposite of mental coasting. It is a conscious choice to direct the heart toward God. That is what Paul prayed for the church: “May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ” (2 Thessalonians 3:5). It is a conscious effort on our part. But that effort to seek God is a gift from God.

We do not make this mental and emotional effort to seek God because he is lost. That’s why we would seek a coin or a sheep. But God is not lost. Nevertheless, there is always something through which or around which we must go to meet him consciously. This going through or around is

what seeking is. He is often hidden. Veiled. We must go through mediators and around obstacles.

The heavens are telling the glory of God. So we can seek him through that. He reveals himself in his Word. So we can seek him through that. He shows himself to us in the evidences of grace in other people. So we can seek him through that. The seeking is the conscious effort to get through the natural means to God himself—to constantly set our minds toward God in all our experiences, to direct our minds and hearts toward him through the means of his revelation. This is what seeking God means.

And there are endless obstacles we must get around in order to see him clearly, and so that we can be in the light of his presence. We must flee every spiritually dulling activity. We must run from it and get around it. It is blocking our way.

We know what makes us vitally sensitive to God's appearances in the world and in the Word. And we know what dulls us and blinds us and makes us not even want to seek him. These things we must move away from and go around if we would see God. That is what seeking God involves.

And as we direct our minds and hearts Godward in all our experiences, we cry out to him. This too is what seeking him means.

Seek the LORD while he may be found; *call* upon him while he is near. (Isaiah 55:6)

Seek God and *plead* with the Almighty for mercy. (Job 8:5)

Seeking involves calling and pleading. *O Lord, open my eyes. O Lord, pull back the curtain of my own blindness. Lord, have mercy and reveal yourself. I long to see your face.*

The great obstacle to seeking the Lord is pride. "In the *pride* of his face the wicked does *not seek* him" (Psalm 10:4). Therefore, humility is essential to seeking the Lord.

The great promise to those who seek the Lord is that he will be found. “If you seek him, he will be found by you” (1 Chronicles 28:9). And when he is found, there is great reward. “Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that *he rewards those who seek him*” (Hebrews 11:6). God himself is our greatest reward. And when we have him, we have everything. Therefore, “Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!”

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