JOHN PIPER

125 DAILY MEDITATIONS

TASTE AND SEE

Savoring the Supremacy of God in All of Life

MULTNOMAH
TASTE AND SEE


Italics in Scripture quotations reflect the author's added emphasis.

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To
my daughter,
Talitha Ruth Piper

Come, lay your head down, little lamb,
And rest upon my shoulder;
It won’t be long till you’re too big,
And both of us are older.

Come, lay your head here, little lamb,
Your wool against my face;
And feel your father’s silent love,
Secure in my embrace.

Come, lay your head close, little lamb,
And listen to my heart;
And memorize the message there,
For when we are apart.

Come, lay your head now, little lamb,
While there is still a place;
I cannot promise life or strength,
Nor shape tomorrow’s grace.

Come, lay your head, my little lamb,
And listen on my shoulder;
The voice of Jesus deep within:
“That’s just the way I hold her.”
BOOKS BY JOHN PIPER

Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian Brothers, We Are Not Professionals
A Camaraderie of Confidence (Swans 7)
Contending for Our All (Swans 4)
The Dangerous Duty of Delight
Desiring God
Does God Desire All to Be Saved?
Don't Waste Your Life
Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die
Filling Up the Afflictions of Christ (Swans 5)
Finally Alive
Five Points
Future Grace
God Is the Gospel
God's Passion for His Glory
A Godward Heart
A Godward Life
The Hidden Smile of God (Swans 2)
A Hunger for God
The Legacy of Sovereign Joy (Swans 1)
Let the Nations Be Glad!
A Peculiar Glory
The Pleasures of God
Preparing for Marriage
The Roots of Endurance (Swans 3)
Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ
Seeing Beauty and Saying Beautifully (Swans 6)
Spectacular Sins
The Supremacy of God in Preaching
Think
This Momentary Marriage
What Jesus Demands from the World
What's the Difference?
When I Don't Desire God
### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. THE EXUBERANT OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasserting God’s Rightful Place in All of Life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. LESSON FROM A LOST MASTER CARD</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Cast All Your Anxieties on Him Because He Cares for You”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. GOD IS LOVE, GOD IS GOD</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing Complexity and Simplicity in the Bible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. THE GREAT WORK OF GOD: RAIN</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Thanksgiving Meditation on Job 5:8–10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. “THERE IS A LION OUTSIDE! I SHALL BE SLAIN IN THE STREETS!”</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pondering the Illusions Created by a Lazy Heart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. EARLY MORNING AT THE MANSE</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How a Father Fights for His Faith and His Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. TEN LESSONS I LEARNED FROM MY FATHER</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honoring My Father in His Eightieth Year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. LESSONS ON RETIREMENT FROM CHARLES SIMEON AND RAYMOND LULL</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“He Who Loves Not, Lives Not; He Who Lives by the Life Cannot Die”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. CAN CHRISTIANS BE HELD HOSTAGE BY THE SINS OF THE BELOVED?</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When Is Mercy Merry and When Does It Mourn?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. WHEN “WANT TO” AND “OUGHT TO” DON’T MATCH</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Between Hypocrisy and License</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. THE ONLY ULTIMATE LOVE</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do People Go to the Grand Canyon to Enhance Their Self-Esteem?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. “NO EVIL WILL BEFALL YOU,” REALLY?</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beware of Satan’s Use of Psalms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. WILL YOUR FAMILY DIG ITS OWN GRAVE?</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation on Martyrdom and Families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. RIGHTEOUS JOB AND THE ROCK STAR</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pondering Power and Popular Influences on Youth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. HER BODY, HER SELF, AND HER GOD</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pondering Diaries from Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. A LETTER TO MY WIFE SAYING YES TO ADOPTION</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, November 6, 1995, 11:12 p.m.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. SKY RIDER, ETERNAL HOME, AND EVERLASTING ARMS</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation on the Uniqueness of God in Majestic Helpfulness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. HOW TO PRAY FOR THE SOUL (YOURS OR ANOTHER’S)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praying in Sync with the Way God Works</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. BEWARE OF COMMON SENSE!</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Command What You Wish, and Give What You Command”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. CLYDE KILBY’S RESOLUTIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awakening Amazement at the Strange Glory of Ordinary Things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. THE MISSING NOTE OF SOVEREIGN JOY</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Lesson on Love from Augustine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 22. | HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT  
How Do You Drink the Wine of God? | 75 |
| 23. | WHAT IS COMMUNION WITH GOD? WISDOM FROM JOHN OWEN  
Thoughts on Hebrews 10:22 | 78 |
| 24. | WHAT IF OUR DYING IS DISCIPLINE?  
Meditation on 1 Corinthians 11:29–32 | 81 |
| 25. | “THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD IS TO BE SAVED”  
Thinking About the Greatness of What We Are Saved For | 84 |
| 26. | THE AGONIZING PROBLEM OF THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION  
Where to Look When Looking In Is Fearful | 86 |
| 27. | ARE YOU A DESCENDANT OF KING DAVID?  
Meditation on Psalm 18:50 and Isaiah 55:3 | 89 |
| 28. | THERE IS NO SALVATION OUTSIDE ISRAEL  
Did the Old Testament Teach That Gentiles Could Be True Jews? | 92 |
| 29. | JUSTIFIED, BUT NOT FORGIVEN?  
Pondering the Difference Between Judicial Wrath and Fatherly Displeasure | 95 |
| 30. | IMPERFECTION: THE MARK OF ALL THE PERFECTED  
Meditation on Hebrews 10:14 | 98 |
| 31. | TEN REASONS TO LOVE THE TRUTH  
The Perils of Vulgar Relativism | 101 |
| 32. | SHOULD CHRISTIAN COLLEGES INDOCTRINATE?  
The Other Alternative to the Adolescent Academia | 105 |
| 33. | LUTHER, BUNYAN, BIBLE, AND PAIN  
Meditation on Psalm 119:71 | 107 |
| 34. | DOES GOD REALLY WANT YOU TO BE ENCOURAGED?  
On Seizing the Gift of Hope | 110 |
| 35. | THEY GAVE IT THEIR BEST SHOT IN VAIN  
If They Don’t Knock You Down, They Can’t Let You Up | 112 |
| 36. | DISCERNMENT BY DESIRE  
Finding God’s Will by the Fragrance of the Holy | 114 |
| 37. | YOU ARE ABOUT TO CHANGE YOUR JOB  
Thinking About How God Shakes Us Loose and Leads in a New Way | 116 |
| 38. | WHAT IS A “ROOT OF BITTERNESS”?  
The Price of Presumption | 118 |
| 39. | WHEN GOD’S WILL IS THAT HIS WILL NOT BE DONE  
Meditation on 1 Samuel 2:22–25 | 121 |
| 40. | THE ROOT OF MENTAL HEALTH: BEING HEALED BY KNOWING GOD  
On Not Helping People Be Happy on Their Way to Hell | 124 |
| 41. | THE SIMULTANEOUS SOUND OF LAUGHTER AND WEEPING  
Living in the Real World of Constant Pain and Pleasure (Somewhere) | 127 |
| 42. | THANK GOD FOR DIARIES, JOURNALS, AND BIOGRAPHIES!  
Meditation on the Life of David Brainerd | 129 |
| 43. | WE ARE NOT CONTENT JUST TO SOW  
Pondering Ordinary and Extraordinary Seasons of Ministry | 132 |
| 44. | NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!  
Getting the Gospel and Theology in Right Order | 135 |
45. THE DANGERS OF COMPUTER UNREALITY
   Fire Resolutions 138
46. DARWINISM ON MY FRONT PORCH
   Are You a Tick-Tock in the Timeline of Evolution? 141
47. DOES GOD HAVE CIVIL RIGHTS?
   Urban Injustice, the Fourteenth Amendment, and God 144
48. CAN JOY INCREASE FOREVER?
   Meditation on Ephesians 2:7 147
49. PRISON PROFANITY: WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?
   Meditation on Ephesians 4:29 and 5:4 149
50. HOW CAN ELSIE RUN?
   How to Run and Box When You Are Over Eighty 152
51. THE UNASHAMED GOD
   Meditation on Hebrews 11:16 155
52. GOD DOES NOT REPENT LIKE A MAN
   Meditation on 1 Samuel 15:11, 29 158
53. DEVIL PRAYERS AND DIVINE PLEASURES
   Meditation on Being Real 161
54. A WORD ON POETRY
   Pondering the Implication of Rock-Solid Reality for Creative Art 163
55. PRAYERFULLY RANSACK THE BIBLE
   Pondering the Both-And of Prayer and Study 166
56. HOW CAN ETERNAL LIFE BE A FREE GIFT AND YET “ACCORDING TO WORKS”?
   Meditation on Romans 2:6–8 169
57. JESUS AND THE CHILDREN
   Pondering Children as Pride Detectors 172
58. BODIES, BREAKFAST, AND THE MARRIAGE BED
   Meditation on Daily Worship 175
59. THE PISTOL STAR AND THE POWER OF GOD
   Meditation on Science, Sight, and Divine Splendor 178
60. IF YOU BELIEVE, YOU WILL SEE THE GLORY OF GOD
   Thoughts on Whether Seeing Grounds Faith or Faith Grounds Seeing 181
61. HOW DOES THE SPIRIT PRODUCE LOVE?
   And Why He Does It This Way 184
62. CAN THE REGENERATE BE ERASED FROM THE BOOK OF LIFE?
   Meditation on Revelation 3:5 187
63. HOW DANGEROUS IS OUR FAITH?
   Less and More Dangerous than You Think 191
64. FACTS, SEEN AND UNSEEN
   What Does It Mean to Walk by Faith and Not by Sight? 193
65. PLEASE, FEED ME MORE!
   The Cry of Dying Faith 197
66. CHERISHING TRUTH FOR THE SAKE OF LOVE
   Obscuring Truth to Obtain Triumph 200
67. AUGUSTINE ON WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE GOD
   Thoughts on Love as Delighting, Not Just Acting and Willing 203

Contents 7
68. “LORD OF THE DEAD”
Facing Death When God Is Your God and Jesus Is Your Lord 206

69. HOW DOES ONE SIN MAKE YOU GUILTY OF THE WHOLE LAW?
Degrees of Guilt before God 208

70. ONE DANGER OF DENYING GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN CHOICES
Undermining the New Covenant 211

71. THE GRACE OF BEING BORN TO YOU
A Tribute to the Supremacy of Grace in the Life of Ruth Piper 214

72. HOW DISPENSABLE IS GENDER?
Preserving God’s Precious and Satisfying Patterns of Life 217

73. MAKING A DIFFERENCE BY FIRE
“What Are You Doing Here?” “I Have Been Very Zealous for the Lord of Hosts” 220

74. WHEN TO SEPARATE AND WHEN NOT TO
A Letter to an Earnest Inquirer 222

75. SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CONSIDERING A JOB
Pondering Vocation as Service to Christ 225

76. SWEET SOVEREIGNTY AND THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION
What Can Be Sweeter Than to Be “Kept by the Power of God”? 228

77. MORE, MORE, MORE
Seventeen Aspects of Holy Dissatisfaction 231

78. ON LENDING TO GOD
Meditation on Proverbs 19:17 234

79. “THE TERROR THAT IS NAMED THE FLIGHT OF TIME”
“In the Lord Your Labor Is Not in Vain” 237

80. FOUNDATIONS FOR THINKING ABOUT RACE AND interracial MARRIAGE
Pondering the Primacy of Being Created in the Image of God 239

81. CONTROVERSY: ESSENTIAL AND DEADLY
Communing with God in the Doctrines for Which We Contend 243

82. “FINALLY, BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US”
A Plea for Pastors 245

83. BEING LOVED AND BEING HATED
Thinking About the Dark Side of Missions 248

84. EMBRACING A GOD-CENTERED GOD WITH GOD-CENTERED LOVE
A Letter to One Longing to Love the God of Romans 9 250

85. BETWEEN RESIGNATION AND TRIUMPHALISM
Finding the Way Between Presumption and Paralysis 253

86. HOW TO BE STRONG IN THE LORD
Pondering the Power of Joy in the Lord 255

87. “FOR YOUR SAKE HE BECAME POOR”
Taking the Poverty of Jesus to Heart 258

88. FROM SHADOW TO SUBSTANCE FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST
Pondering the Shift from Old Testament to New 262

89. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD: A PRECIOUS AND PRACTICAL DOCTRINE
Savoring the Sovereignty of God in the Life of George Mueller 266

90. HOW IS THE WRATH OF GOD BEING REVEALED NOW?
Meditation on Romans 1:18 269
91. THE WRATH OF GOD ON BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS NOW
   What Wrath Becomes in the Life of Believers 272

92. WHAT DOES THE SLAUGHTER OF THE AMORITES MEAN?
   When to Leave Judgment to God 275

93. A LIFE WELL-LIVED IS LIKE WRITING A GOOD POEM
   Meditation on 1 Corinthians 15:10 and the Process of Writing and Living 277

94. MARTIN LUTHER’S RULES FOR HOW TO BECOME A THEOLOGIAN
   Prayer, Meditation, and Suffering—the Path to Understanding 280

95. IS THE HOLY SPIRIT PHASE THREE OF GOD’S WORD?
   Preserving the Finality of Phase Two 284

96. WHO GOVERNS THOUGHT AND TONGUE?
   Meditation on Proverbs 16:1 287

97. ANSWER TO PRAYER IN THE MIDST OF NONANSWERS
   Meditation on the Detours of God 290

98. WHO WAS JESUS’ GRANDFATHER?
   How to Think About Apparent Contradictions in the Bible 293

99. “THEY LOVE ALL MEN”
   Thoughts on How to Make a Name for Christ 296

100. PLURALISM: WE HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE
   Meditation on Why We Are Here 299

101. “GOD HAS ALLOTTED TO EACH A MEASURE OF FAITH”
   Meditation on Romans 12:3 302

102. SHALL WE GOOF OFF THAT GRACE MAY ABOUND?
   Why Does the Gift of Faith Not Produce Passivity? 305

103. ANOTHER PARADOX OF PRAYER: “VAIN REPETITIONS”
   VERSUS “CONTINUAL COMING”

104. DOES UNCONDITIONALITY CONCEAL THE REAL REMEDY?
   Wisdom from Another Century 311

105. WHERE DOES CHRISTIAN LIVING COME FROM?
   Reflections on the Power of Right Knowing 314

106. CAN YOU BE WORTHY OF GOD?
   Finding What Fits with the Faithfulness of God 316

107. IF I HAVE FOUND FAVOR, LET ME, O GOD, FIND FAVOR
   Meditation on Knowing God in Exodus 33:13 319

108. ARE CHRISTIANS FULLY SATISFIED?
   Pondering (Again) the Path Between Paralysis and Triumphantism 322

109. GOING BEYOND THE LIMITS OF UNLIMITED ATONEMENT
   Christ Died for All, but Especially for His Bride 325

110. WHEN ADULTERESSES ARE MEN
   Spillover of a Sermon on Abortion 328

111. A JOYFUL MEETING WITH JOSEFTSON
   The Camaraderie of a Common Vision of Suffering 330

112. WHEN JESUS WILL NOT ANSWER A QUESTION
   How Not to Be a Pig or a Dog 333

113. IN QUEST OF REST
   Pondering the God-Centered Purpose of Sleep 335

Contents 9
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>114.</th>
<th>WILL WE LOVE CHRIST AT THE END OF THE YEAR?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meditation on 1 Corinthians 16:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115.</td>
<td>“TAKE HEED HOW YOU HEAR!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ten Practical Preparations for Hearing the Word of God on Sunday Morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116.</td>
<td>“WHY DO YOU CALL ME GOOD? GOD ALONE IS GOOD”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What the Rich Ruler Needed to Learn About the Goodness of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117.</td>
<td>YOU ALMOST CAN’T TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thoughts on the Possibilities of Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118.</td>
<td>SENeca, C. S. LEWIS, AND A SALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How Does Death Steal Our Days?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119.</td>
<td>JESUS DELIVERS US FROM THE WRATH TO COME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How Shall Happiness Not Be Thin?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120.</td>
<td>A SURPRISE ENdORseMENT FOR DOCtRINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teach Us What the Bible Says</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121.</td>
<td>A JEWISH RESPONSE TO THE PASSIOuN OF THE CHRISt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An Open Letter to Rabbi Marcia Zimmerman, Temple Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122.</td>
<td>USE MEANS, BUT DON’T TRUST IN MEANS; TRUST IN GOD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Lesson from George Mueller’s Life and Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123.</td>
<td>HOW TO SPEAK ABOUT GOD WHEN HE HURTS US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eleven Truths from the Book of Lamentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124.</td>
<td>WHAT DID CHRIST PURCHASE FOR YOUR CHILDREN WITH HIS BLOOD?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Blessings and Limits of Christian Ancestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125.</td>
<td>WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exploring What Makes the “Good News” Good News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A NOTE ON RESOURCES: DESIRING GOD MINISTRIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUBJECT INDEX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PERSON INDEX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SCRIPTURE INDEX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Boston pastor John Cotton, who died in 1652, had spiritual tastes that are unintelligible to the average modern person. In his declining years he was asked why he read late into the evening. “Because I love to sweeten my mouth with a piece of Calvin before I go to sleep,” he replied. I have felt that way about the prophet Isaiah and the psalmist David and the apostle Paul and Jonathan Edwards, who was born fifty-one years after John Cotton died.

There are bad reasons to turn to other writers besides the Bible. And there are good ones. One of the bad reasons we turn to other writers is that we find the Bible tame and tasteless. It is anything but tame and tasteless. One of the good reasons we turn to other writers besides the Bible is that we savor the taste of God not only in the Bible, but also in the way others savor him. The best writers intensify our taste for the Bible, and especially for God himself. Edwards has had that effect on me for more than thirty years.

“Taste and see that the LORD is good,” says the psalmist (Psalm 34:8). This is what I mean by “savoring the supremacy of God”—the subtitle of this book. We taste the sweetness of God as he meets us in his Word. “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103, ESV). It is not surprising, then, that those who are permeated with God’s Word will have a certain taste, as Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?” (Matthew 5:13, ESV). And if these savory, Bible-saturated Christians write as Jonathan Edwards wrote, there will be a kind of Godward flavor to what they say. This is what we love to sweeten our mouths with before we go to sleep.

I know that I am not Calvin or Edwards, but I do love the Bible and try to steep my mind and heart in it year after year. So what I have written here is partly meditations on biblical reality and partly applications to contemporary life. I hope that what pervades all the readings is a savoring of the supremacy of God. Jonathan Edwards said, “The creation of the universe is nothing but God’s
manifestation of his own perfection and excellency.” This is true. And so the aim of all life is to see and savor and show this perfection and this excellency.

This is my aim. And if this book is seen on the bedside table of some battle-weary saints, I hope the reason they give is, “Because I love to sweeten my mouth with the supremacy of God before I go to sleep.”

May my teaching drop as the rain,
my speech distill as the dew,
like gentle rain upon the tender grass,
and like showers upon the herb.

Deuteronomy 32:2, ESV
Acknowledgments

As I write these thanks [in 2005], I am nearing the end of twenty-five years of ministry as a pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church. These are the people whom I love to serve week by week in the ministry of the Word and prayer. Thank you, my much-loved partners, for spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ. You have favored me with your faithfulness and supported me in my writing through all these years without complaint.

To the Council of Elders, among the saints at Bethlehem, you have been a sweetness in my life and labor for twenty-five years. This is astonishing, and a great gift of grace to me, in a world of contention. The vision of God that unites us is precious and pervades this book. Thank you for the bounty of your blessing on my life.

To Aaron Young and Rick Gamache and Justin Taylor, thank you for your partnership in the making of this book. Your spirit and insight and vision and joy and encouragement and correction keep me on track and happy in the narrow way that leads to life.

To Carol Steinbach, if you ever weary of writing indexes and giving editorial counsel—after thirty years of friendship and partnership in the ministry—I don’t know where I will turn. May the Lord continue to give you joy in the use of your remarkable gifts. And thanks also to Robert Williams and Nancy Markie for volunteering your time to assist Carol in assembling the indexes.

To the team at the Billy Graham Training Center, The Cove, thanks for a quiet place where the finishing touches could be put in place without distraction. Your kindness was beyond all our expectations.

Noël, God looked with great favor on me when I fell in love with you in 1966. I had no idea I was marrying a skilled editor and proofreader and theological consultant and author in your own right. I did hope that I was marrying...
a woman of God who would stand by me in all the unknown paths of our pilgrimage. This has come true. Thank you. I love you. The book is dedicated to the daughter you never bore and never ceased to ask God for. With God all things are possible. As the thunder rolled across those Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina the afternoon I finished this book, there you sat with Talitha teaching her the Lord's Prayer.

Come, listen now, my little lamb,
This prayer is like no other;
Come, learn to live a Godward life
From such a praying mother.
Where is God in your daily newspaper or in your talk radio show or the network TV programming or *Time* and *Newsweek* or the theater or the public school classroom? God is the most important reality in the universe. But he is almost totally ignored. And if not, he is as likely belittled as reverenced. Yet he is the most crucial factor in every issue facing the nation. There would simply be no nation without God. But he is disregarded by our cultural leaders in almost all they do. Disregard for God is the greatest evil in the West today. It is as though an ant on his anthill should disbelieve in the earth.

If the church is going to reassert God’s rightful place in the soul of man and the center of all life, we will need a sharpened focus of who he is and what he is like. One of the reasons our witness to God’s reality is minimal is that our understanding of God’s reality is minimal. In the name of quick and relevant impact we minimize the very greatness that would be his renown. Without this, we will not boldly and graciously reassert his rightful place in all of life.

What we need is a big picture of a great God who is utterly committed to joyfully demonstrating his greatness in doing us good. That is, we need to see the majesty of God and know the splendor of God overflowing toward us with exuberant omnipotence. It is not enough to believe that God is big and strong and fearsome—which he is. We must experience this magnificence as the explosion of God’s uncontainable zeal to satisfy his creatures by showing them himself.
We need the vision of God that Jonathan Edwards had already at age twenty when he preached a sermon titled “Nothing upon Earth Can Represent the Glories of Heaven.” He reveled in the God of this sermon so much that he preached the same message in at least six towns outside his own parish of Bolton. The “doctrine” of the sermon he stated like this: “The godly are designed for unknown and inconceivable happiness.” This he discerns from the purpose of God to glorify himself in creating the world and from his conviction that “this glory of God, [consists] in the creature’s admiring and rejoicing [and] exulting in the manifestation of his beauty and excellency. For God has no glory actively from those that behold his glory and take no pleasure in it; but the essence of [the] glorifying of God consists, therefore, in the creature’s rejoicing in God’s manifestation of his beauty, which is the joy and happiness we speak of” (The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 14, ed. Kenneth Minkema [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997], 144). In other words, the certainty and greatness of the happiness of God’s people is as sure as God’s zeal for his own glory.

This is the vision we need. And we would do well to meditate on some of the texts that capture the wonder of God’s exuberant omnipotence in doing good to those who hope in him.

- The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. (Zephaniah 3:17–18, RSV)
- I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good…with all my heart and all my soul. (Jeremiah 32:40–41, RSV)
- The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show his might in behalf of those whose heart is blameless toward him. (2 Chronicles 16:9, RSV)
- The LORD will again take delight in prospering you. (Deuteronomy 30:9, author’s translation)
- For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory. (Psalm 149:4, RSV)
• His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man; but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. (Psalm 147:10–11, RSV)
• Great is the LORD, who delights in the welfare of his servant! (Psalm 35:27, RSV)
• My God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)
• In the coming ages he [will] show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:7, RSV)
• You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you.... As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isaiah 62:4–5, RSV)

God’s omnipotent exuberance to do us good is one of the most freeing discoveries a human can make. Oh, that we might believe it and savor it and bring it to mind again and again until it is our very nature to feel the truth that “the godly are designed for unknown and inconceivable happiness.” Unremitting confidence in this truth would surely transform our attitudes and keep us steady in the face of great adversity.
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