

David's God: Exhilarated in Love, Part 1

INTRODUCTION

Psalm 16:11. Put your seatbelt on; it's one of the most staggering passages in the whole Bible if you actually take it at face value. It will rock your boat completely if you take seriously each one of the three lines of verse 11.

This was David's view of the personality of God. There are hours and hours of teaching for every one of the three lines of verse 11. These are titles of books in David's library. When he got these lines, when he put it all together, I can imagine David's best friends, the people with whom he fellowshiped, saying, "Boy, David, you sure laid that out one, two, three. You said a mouthful in those three lines."

The book of Psalms, and the New Testament, and the whole Bible really develop these three lines. They're stunning in their implications. I'll give you just a little hint at each line. I take these three lines and I study them hard. Again, on our website I have a bunch of teachings and notes, and you can have them. We're reconstructing it, so if you look today or tomorrow you won't find it, but you'll find it really soon.

I've gone from Genesis to Revelation, and I encourage you to do it; I mean, you can use my research, but it's better if you do it on your own. You may say, "I'll take yours and I'll do it." There you go. I started in Genesis, and I read it carefully, slowly, like this, really slowly, every single line. Every single verse that described God's emotions, I wrote down. Whatever God said about God's heart, I wrote down. I've been doing this for the past four years—not entirely; I've done it entirely just in the last few years. I said, "Lord, I want to be like David. I want to study every emotion of Your heart. I want to be a man after Your own heart."

Though the website is temporarily down right now, it will be up really soon. Better than taking mine, go do it yourself. Actually, I've done it a few times. It's exciting to read, line after line. It takes you a little while, but, you know, you get rid of a lot of things for a few weeks, and you just go for it. The last time I did this, I did it on my computer, so I had it all there on my computer so that I could put it on the website for anyone who wants it.

We'll start at these stunning three insights into God's personality. David writes, "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11). We'll begin with the last one. We'll start at the very end and work our way back. Here's what David says. He was the first man in the Bible to make some of these statements. Moses said a few. Moses was the first great teacher in the Bible, and David was the second great teacher, 500 years later. Moses lived in 1,500 BC and David lived in 1,000 BC. That's approximate, so there's a 500-year gap. David took what Moses had taught and went up ten levels on Moses about God's heart. Moses gave us some really important things, but to David, the Lord says, "I want to give you more than I gave Moses." Then, of course, Jesus comes and takes it to a whole new level.

GOD'S PERSONALITY AND HEART ARE FILLED WITH PLEASURE

David says, "Let me tell you something about God." Look at that. God's personality is filled with pleasure. That's a very, very critical piece of information for the end-time worship movement. God, at the very center of His personality, is divine pleasure. God is happy being God. God's heart is filled with pleasure.

Let's go in our minds to Revelation 4. Some of you can picture Revelation 4. That's the picture of the throne of God. Remember that, in the book of Revelation? There's the throne of God, jasper, sardius, and emerald. There are lightnings and thunderings coming from His throne, and there are the seraphim, and there are the four living creatures, and the elders. You can picture that in Revelation 4. Revelation 4 is the great throne chapter in the Bible.

Here's what David is saying. He says, "At Your right hand," and what he means is that the atmosphere around the throne of God is filled with divine, spiritual pleasure. Everyone in the atmosphere of the throne of God is living with a fascinated heart, because God's heart is fully alive with who He is. It wouldn't be right to say God's heart is fascinated, because to be fascinated means that you're looking out at something that fascinates you. God's heart is fully exhilarated within Himself—fully. The closer we get to the throne, the humans and angels and all the different beings that come near Him, the more fascination we experience.

No one is bored, and here's the key phrase: they experience "spiritual pleasure." Their inner man is saying, "Wow! Wow, wow, wow." In the Bible, they use the word *hallelujah*, but it means, "Wow, this is really, really good!" They do that forever and forever. The right hand of God is the center of the throne, the center of the whole universe, the center of His kingdom, of His empire. The closer you get to the center, at His right hand, the more intense is the pleasure within the beings of those who draw near. The reason is because God, Himself, is a God of pleasure.

HE GIVES US DRINK FROM THE RIVER OF HIS PLEASURES

I'll give you too many verses to look up every one; you can jot them down if you've got a pen, and you can look them up later. One of my other favorite David verses is Psalm 36:8. I told you Psalm 27:4 is one of the favorites. One of the companion verses of that verse is Psalm 36:8. Oh, I love this. David says, "I drink from the river of Your pleasure, O God" (Ps. 36:8, paraphrased), which means the Holy Spirit's revelation. David says, "I'm tapping into the exhilaration of Your own being." He says, "Oh, I love to be near You."

Beloved, as we work our way through this psalm backwards, this paradigm of God makes it only reasonable to be radical. This paradigm of God will equip your heart to sustain a journey to enter into the vision that God gives us to be radical. The vision to be radical isn't enough. We have to have an equipped heart to sustain the journey into becoming, and being, and sustaining, a radical heart for Him.

There's just too much to go into all of this, but I wrote a book called *The Pleasures of Loving God* based on this verse, and the pleasure we feel by being abandoned. I don't mean the price we pay to be abandoned, but the pleasure we feel by being abandoned. It's a very different paradigm of being abandoned to God. One man is gritting his teeth, far away from the presence of God, paying a price, and then if he pays the price for years and years, he wants a return for that. This is a totally different paradigm; it's not about paying the price, but about feeling the pleasure and glory of touching a God who has this kind of personality.

That's what Paul said in Philippians 3:8. I said it earlier. He says, "I count it rubbish—it's trash, it's rubbish to me what I gave up. It means nothing. Don't talk to me about what I gave up" (Phil. 3:8, paraphrased). People went to Paul and said, "Paul, you were beaten. You fast. You pray. You gave up your money. You gave up your career."

He says, "Tell me something interesting. Who cares? Do you know what I received? Do you know who I'm touching?" He says, "Because of the excellency of knowing Christ." He says, "It's because of the excellency."

Let me say it differently. "It's because I'm fascinated with the beauty of Jesus."

He says, "I take the beauty of the God-Man and His love for me, this indescribably stunning, ravishing Man, who is fully God and fully Man, who is pursuing me, who likes me, who is so fascinating, and His eyes are filled with delight, and He keeps pursuing me."

You say, "You know what, to have that, you had to give up your job."

Paul said, "That's really dumb to me, that you're putting those in the same sentence."

You say, "Well, wait a second. There's a place to pay the price. Jesus said it in Luke 14. He said count the cost."

He did. He said, "Count the cost before you build the tower" (Lk. 14:28, paraphrased). Do you know who He was addressing? Brand-new believers before they're initiated into the reality of the heart of God. They do pay a price, and then as their minds are renewed, when they know the excellencies of the Person, they account what they paid to be rubbish. They refigure what really happened when they said yes.

On the front end, we gave up something. A few years into it, when we began to contact this stunning Man, we said, "I don't think I really gave up anything. It's embarrassing, that old testimony I gave years ago about how much I gave up."

I can hear the angels. Here's the new man who just met the Lord: he counted the cost, he paid the price, he gave it all up, and he says, "I gave it all up," and the angels say, "He's going to get the shock of his life when he finds out what the real deal is." It will take a few years, but he will get the shock of his life when he figures out who gave up what, and who received what for free. There's a place to pay the price, but in Luke 14, Jesus is preaching to the multitudes about discipleship. In the beginning, before the mind is renewed to the Philippians 3:8 excellencies, to the King David beauty of Jesus, we're in that paradigm, but that paradigm changes in not a lot of time. God is a source of pleasure.

THE INFERIOR PLEASURES OF SIN, THE SUPERIOR PLEASURES OF THE GOSPEL

That's a subject that's scary in the Church, because we think of the devil as the source of pleasure. No, the devil counterfeits pleasure. Do you know why the devil counterfeits pleasure? Because he sees that God is so successful by leading His kingdom with pleasure. He looks at it and says, "Look at Him. He's so successfully leading His people and His angels by pleasure. I will counterfeit pleasure."

That's what I call the "inferior pleasures" of sin. If there are inferior pleasures of sin; they're the counterfeit of what I call the "superior pleasures" of the gospel.

GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF THE PLEASURES THAT THE DEVIL COUNTERFEITS

God is the author of many types of pleasures. He's the author of mental pleasures. There's exhilaration we feel when we discover wholesome truth; not just biblical truth—I'm talking about the scientist, the Beethoven, the

Mozart, the brilliant. I'm talking about when God reveals truth in all the realms of life, and it touches our minds, and you're built so that you say, "Wow! I love this."

The Lord says, "There you go. I'm the One who created the ability for you to love that, and because I love it, that's why you love it."

There are mental pleasures. There are emotional pleasures. There are physical pleasures, and they're not just sexual. There are physical pleasures in food, in rest, in other arenas. God created all of them. God thought of those pleasures, and the devil counterfeited them. You'll feel pleasure in eating real food in eternity, and it will be pleasurable, because the God of pleasure simply wants to run His kingdom by pleasure.

THE GREATEST OF ALL PLEASURES IS GOD REVEALING GOD TO THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Of all the different types of pleasures, the most exhilarating, the one that touches the human make-up the deepest, is spiritual pleasure. It's when God reveals God to the human spirit. It eclipses mental, emotional, and physical pleasures when God reveals God to the human spirit. When a little drop of revelation, if you will, touches our fragile, small-capacity spirit, we say, "Oh, I love that!" and it exhilarates us. We live fascinated.

If we want to use an electrical analogy, it's like our spirit is 110 volts, and God is a billion. He says, "I can only give you a little, because it will blow all your bulbs, so I had better just give you a little."

We're reading the Word, we're doing this and that, and a little piece of insight hits us, we say, "Oh," and we have to call someone. We have to tell someone. We can't wait.

The Lord says, "You like that? You haven't even touched a drop of the ocean of My being. I will absolutely overwhelm you with pleasure."

THE MEASURE OF HIS PLEASURE IS INFINITE; ITS DURATION, ETERNAL

That's what the seraphim are doing in Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8 when they're before the throne, saying, "Holy, holy, holy." Those are the two moments in the Bible where these living creatures are around the throne, and it says they cover their eyes because they're so overwhelmed at the new discoveries of God, so filled with pleasure and fascination. They cover their eyes, and it's like the power of it races through their being. They come up for air sometime later, and they look again, and yet another discovery of beauty exhilarates their beings.

That will go on forever and ever, because at the center of the throne, at His right hand, the center of the whole empire called "the kingdom of God," God leads by pleasure. The pleasure is forevermore. That means two things. It's infinite in its measure, and it's eternal in its duration. The pleasure is forevermore.

How much pleasure, on a scale of one to ten? God says, "It's infinite; it's more than ten." It's infinite; that's its intensity, but how long will it last? God says, "It's eternal. Billions of years from now, the intensity will be there." This is the God of the Lord Jesus, and this is the Lord Jesus. He's like His Father. His Father has this personality, and so does He, and so does the Holy Spirit, three in one.

David begins with this climactic, pinnacle declaration: "At the very center of the eternal empire is a God who rules and motivates everything by pleasure." What a statement.

IT'S NOT THAT YOUR BODY IS TIRED; YOUR SPIRIT IS WEARY

I told you that we have these 400 staff members in Kansas City, these young people. They mostly come, on the front end, because they want to do worship and intercession, because it will be fun, and they want to say, "Devil, come out, or I'm coming in after you!"

They'll be warriors for God, and I love it. I sit them down, and I say, "OK, I love all that, but until your heart gets equipped in a new understanding of what God looks like at the heart level, you're never going to know what you look like to God."

If you don't know what God looks like, you'll never know what you look like to God, and you'll have a wrong image of yourself, and all of your work will be motivated and springing out of that which ultimately wears you out. The work wears you out, but so does the competition, the correction, and the fear of inferiority. All those things will wear you out. It's not just the two-hour worship sets. All of our worship sets are two hours. We have eighty-four two-hour worship sets per week. Eighty-four times every week for the last three years, we have a two-hour worship team going. It's not that the work wears them out. The struggling with failure, the struggling with inferiority, the fear that someone will be better, the fear that someone will like them more, all that stuff wears them out completely. They think their body is tired when really their spirit is weary, because they're laboring without a foundation in their inner man.

It's not just the work; when I say "the work," I don't mean the hours only. Burnout doesn't come because of the amount of work. Burnout comes because of the way we do the amount of work on the inside. "Oh, I blew it, and I want to pay God back, so I will go serve and evangelize. Oh, I'm evangelizing, but what if the other church down the road is better? I want to evangelize, but what if everyone finds out I'm really un-anointed? I want to evangelize, but..."

There's competition, inferiority, fear of failure, and paying back God for sins previously committed. All those things are bopping around on the inside, crashing and colliding, and the man says, "I'm really tired today."

The angel might be there and say, "Well, of course you're tired. There's so much traffic on the inside of you right now, of course you're tired." They think it's because they're working hard outwardly, but it's because inwardly their inner man is in absolute agony and spiritual chaos.

When they come to join us, I say, "OK, we want you to do it rightly now." We don't make them wait really long before they jump on teams, but I say, "You know, we want to get you rewired on the inside. We want to equip your heart to do this in a different way."

One of the first doctrines we come to is the God of pleasure. Beloved, you close your eyes and you worship a God on the throne where everyone around the throne—and this is true—if you go near them, has delight in their hearts and smiles on their faces.

You say, "You're kidding! I thought everyone around the throne was gritting their teeth and saying, 'OK, we'll do this, bless God, if it kills us.'" That's not what they're doing. That's not how the kingdom works.

There's so much more to say about spiritual pleasure. I'll say one more thing about it. We need some of you; we need theologians on the pleasure of God to be raised up. We need men and women, young ones who are twenty years old right now, to begin to do the thing I suggested. You start in Genesis and go to Revelation, and find every single verse where God tells us about God's heart. I don't mean every indirect verse, because then it's the whole Bible. The whole Bible indirectly reveals that. I mean every verse that's a direct statement. He has mercy. He has joy. He has gladness. He has anger. Lay out every single emotion, and then begin to read it over. Meet in Bible studies and pray over it. We need theologians on the pleasure of God.

There's a profound book—it's a little theological, but go for it, you're smart enough. It's John Piper's *The Pleasures of God*. If you don't know where to get it, you can get it on our website. It's one of the books I promote on the top of the list. It's about 400 pages. It's a bit theological; you won't read it on the run. I love it, and many love it. Some think it's a little heavy, and some don't.

Then I wrote a book called *The Pleasures of Loving God*. It's the same ideas, but it has very different verses. And then another man who was a part of our staff, Sam Storms, wrote a book called *Pleasures Forevermore*, and he bases it on this verse, too. We all base it on this verse. We need 100 more books out there on the doctrine of the pleasure of God's personality. The worship movement needs to be motivated by this reality. It's a very, very different paradigm.

STARE AT THE SUPERIOR PLEASURES OF THE ONE YOU'RE PURSUING

Pleasure doesn't necessarily mean exuberant celebration, though it does have celebration. Pleasure means living exhilarated and fascinated on the inside with the beauty of God. It's a very common idea that when people repent of sin, it's their pursuit of holiness. The common thing today is to look at the list of "don't's." We stare at the twenty "don't's" and renounce them. We say, "No. No. No." We look at the inferior pleasures, and we say no with resilience. "We won't do those inferior pleasures!" What happens is that we try to back away from them as far as we can get, and we stumble into them, and then we cry and repent, and promise God, and make vows. Then we stare at the inferior pleasures, and say no.

The Holy Spirit taps us on the shoulder, and says, "I want you to turn differently. Don't stare at the inferior pleasures; stare at the superior pleasures of the One you're pursuing." Begin to let God tell you who God is. Begin to study the emotions of God. Begin to feel the exhilaration and the fascination, the superior pleasures of God revealing God to your spirit.

That's just one type of pleasure in God, and of course, all the pleasures of God are fulfilled in fullness in the resurrection, but they're experienced a little in this age. The physical, emotional, and the mental are experienced in this age, for sure, and in total fullness in the age to come. They never go away.

We begin to go after it, and when I begin to go after it, and you begin to go after who He is, and I begin to live fascinated, I begin to think, "Oh, I love this! God, I love this! I love who You are. I love how You love me. I love to love You back. I love this whole thing called me being Yours and You being mine."

"THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS, AND THE DARKNESS HAS NOT OVERCOME IT"

We're going after it. Here's what we do. We turn around occasionally, and we have to rebuke and say no to the inferior pleasures, but if all we have is the inferior pleasures, and we don't have any of the others, we're in a vacuum. If all we have is one set of pleasures operating, these will dominate us.

I've seen this approach to holiness for years: "Tell them to say no to the bad stuff."

I say, "Feed their spirit on the good stuff. When they run this way, they'll sometimes have to turn around and say no, but they'll do it less and less as this abounds more and more."

The analogy I've used for years is this. If the lights weren't on, and this room was full of darkness, the approach that many people have to holiness is that they would open the window, get a bucket full of darkness, and try to dump it out the window. You don't overcome darkness by dumping it out the window. You turn the light on and the darkness goes right away. John the apostle tells us that light came into the world, and it overpowers darkness (Jn. 1:5). The superior pleasures overpower the inferior ones.

You take the man who says, "I'm trying to stay away from desserts. I'm trying to stay away from sugar." Eat a lot at dinnertime, and you won't even be tempted by dessert. Get so stuffed on the right stuff that you don't even care about it. You'll say, "Uh, you know, I love it, but I'm so full I can't take it."

God says we're so filled up with the wrong stuff that we've lost our appetite for the right. He wants to so fill us up with the right that we lose our appetite. Maybe it's unrealistic that we lose it entirely, but our appetite for the wrong stuff is diminished substantially. If all we do is stare at the list of inferior pleasures, the list of do's and don't's, and we say, "No, no, no," it's like trying to open that window and throw buckets full of darkness out the window. It's never going to work. The Lord says, "Turn around. Turn around."

Look at the second line of verse 11. I'm just going to introduce it, and then we'll start there tomorrow. He says, "In Your presence is fullness of joy" (Ps. 16:11b). Instead of the word *joy*, put *enjoyment*. The God of the happy heart, the glad God, the beautiful God with a glad heart; that's the God we serve.

You see, a lot of people think that God is mostly mad or mostly sad when they relate to Him. I want to tell you an absolute fact of the Bible. God is mostly glad when He relates to you, even in your weakness. God is mostly glad. We have the idea that He's mostly sad and mostly mad when He relates to His children. We have this idea that God only has the capacity to enjoy us when our maturity is perfected. We'll pick up with that tomorrow: the fact of God's ability to enjoy us while we grow, not just after we grow. That's the key to growing.

These are all important parts of the heart of David, becoming a lovesick worshiper, which makes us an effective warrior-king and anointed warrior.

Amen. Let's stand.

MINISTRY TIME

Father, I ask You to raise up a generation of lovesick worshipers, a generation of theologians of the pleasure of God, a generation of men and women who are people after God's own heart like David. They're lovers before they're workers. They're worshipers before they're warriors. But they're warriors, nonetheless. They're anointed warriors.