

# Delighting in the Knowledge of God, Part One

By Jay Wegter

INTRODUCTION: This mini-series on *delighting in the knowledge of God* is a call to consider how central the affections are to true religion. Are we exalting the excellence of our God and His glorious perfections in the truths we declare? Are we setting forth the desirability and beauty of Christ? This author finds a growing compulsion to more effectively display Christ first to my own heart affections and then to the affections of my hearers and readers. As those who are called to handle the Word of God with precision, our task is not complete if we stop at crisp, factual exegesis alone—we must strive to ‘give them God’ and in so doing, move our hearers from *accuracy to awe, from appreciation to apt obedience, and from duty to delight*. For, the Scriptures are there to *give us God Himself*.<sup>i</sup>

In part one of this series we will explore **five areas** essential to delighting in God.

**In order to delight in the knowledge of God, we must:**

## **I. Identify the obstacles which block delight in Him.**

God’s missionary heart may be expressed in the following phrase, “God wills to be known through Jesus Christ.” Jesus shares the identity of Yahweh, and Jesus performs the functions of Yahweh—He is Creator, Ruler, Judge, and Savior. The most quoted Christological text in the New Testament captures the wonder that Jesus of Nazareth is sovereign Lord of all: “The Lord said to my Lord ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’” (Ps 110:1).<sup>ii</sup>

*The Apostle Paul’s all-consuming goal was to grow in his knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He saw knowing Christ as his whole life direction and response to ‘God’s upward call’ (Phil 3:7-16).* The Apostle’s daily habit was to ‘weigh’ the infinite privilege of knowing Christ against every temporal thing this world could offer—whether earthly security or personal honor and prestige. The apostle thunders: *compared to knowing Christ, all earthly gain is but rubbish*. Paul is a wonderful example of focused passion to know the Lord. He was discontent to know Christ at a distance, he refused to know Christ theoretically. He never would have settled for ‘secondhand convictions’—Paul could be described as ‘panting after God’ (Ps 42:1). It is all too common for professing believers to content themselves with a concept of God that is vague and void of passion. Scriptures such as Psalm 37:4 command us to cultivate our passion to know the Lord and in so doing, pursue a biblical strategy for delighting in Him. “Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart” (Ps 37:4).

*Part of our problem in living out our biblical faith is that we have often allowed the culture to define what is ‘normal’ in terms of life pursuits.* We dwell in a society which lives for the present without being controlled by eternal hope. This societal myopia conceals the fact that knowing God is a lifetime endeavor which is worthy of the best of our time, focus, sacrifice, and affection. The spiritual disciplines needed in order to grow in our knowledge of God are the very opposite of living for the present. They take time—they require that we come to a full stop. Spiritual disciplines cannot be ‘done on the fly’ while engaged in some diversion. Waiting upon the Lord means that we are subject to His timetable and not ours (Ps 25:3).

*Meditating upon Scripture means we will have to be silent, with patient concentration, until our thought processes and affections are captive to the Word of God.* “On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate” (Ps 145:5). Modern culture has us swimming in options (*social, recreational, self-improvement, travel*). In our over-scheduled, over-stimulated lives, we tend to be distracted from ‘kingdom consciousness’ to a life which revolves around the plaudits of men

and the achievement of our earthly goals. The false message portrayed by popular culture's media is, 'this is life as it truly is'. If we are to delight in God, we must make seeking Him our controlling passion.

## **II. Recover the spiritual discipline of Scripture meditation.**

The path of growth in our knowledge of God centers especially upon the activity of contemplating God's saving work toward us in Christ. This is the Apostle Paul's great emphasis in Ephesians chapters 1-3. "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (**Eph 1:18-19**). Paul wants each believer to live out his shared life in Christ. But, how are we to live upon Christ unless we know *who we are in Him* and *who God is toward us in Christ*? Living our shared life in Christ depends upon studying and meditating upon our new identity in Christ and our union with Him.

***The central focus in our contemplation of redemption ought to be upon our relatedness to the Godhead as it is settled in Christ.*** As opposed to philosophy, Christianity is about *relationship* with God who came to us in Christ Jesus. Thus, we are to more principally consider Him who suffered so greatly that the church might become His reward (**Heb 12:2**). We are to frequently dwell upon our relatedness to the Godhead as it is *settled* in Christ. This is the most crucial point in our relationship with God. The Divine Being we are called upon to delight in is not remote. Our Christian God was among us. He took on our nature. He entered our experience on our behalf. Therefore, for those in covenant with Him, delight in Him is as natural as saying 'hello.' But, what is it about God's nature that generates delight? If we compare the intimate acquaintance of a fellow human to intimacy with God, God's communications are more intimate, constant, powerful, efficacious, delightful, and satisfying than any earthly friendship.<sup>iii</sup>

***Corresponding to this central need of meditating upon Scripture is the grace-driven 'logic' of the New Testament authors.*** For, they repeatedly focus upon the following 'grace cord' of four strands: ***Who*** Christ is, ***What*** He has done for believing sinners, ***Who*** we are in Him, and ***How*** we are to live upon Him. Thus, it is Christ's **supremacy**; Christ's **atonement**; our **union** with Christ; and our **abiding** in Christ. Our grasp of this four-strand cord has everything to do with our delight in God and in our progress in the knowledge of the Lord. For, this foursome of gospel truths outlines how the believer's life is wrapped up in Christ's life. These animating truths continually remind us that God's grace is relational from top to bottom—we grow in our knowledge of Christ as we ***reckon, cherish, and care for*** the relationship with Him graciously given to us by the Father.

***We come to a working, experimental knowledge of Christ best by meditating upon Him from the perspective of union with Him.*** In other words, we do not study Christ as passive spectators walking through a 'theological museum', but as those who have abundant life in Him by virtue of living organic union with Him (**Col 3:3-4**). As one pastor quipped about the epistle to the Ephesians, "It is Christ and the believer—compacted 'chock-o-block' together in nearly every verse in the letter."

***Ephesians is the great epistle of the believer growing in his knowledge of the Lord by means of meditating upon the 'mystery of union with Christ,' the 'mystery of Christ Himself,' and the 'mystery of the gospel' (Eph 3:8-12; Rom 16:25-27).*** Christ, as the last Adam, came to restore what the first Adam had lost. God, in His infinite wisdom and goodness in Christ is restoring members of the ruined race of Adam to the perfect image of God. Through the Last Adam, God is forming a new humanity of men and women who are 'complete in Him' (in Christ) (**Col 2:10**). Through Christ the redeemed have perfect sonship, status, favor, acceptance, righteousness, and right-standing. In Christ they have right-relatedness to the Holy Trinity. In Christ they bear the perfectly restored image of God. In Christ they have the Spirit of God making His permanent abode in them. Those who belong to Christ are His spiritual 'seed'—they make up His progeny—they have life in Him (**Col 3:3-4**). Their lives are bound up

in His life. They live upon Him (**Gal 2:20**). Apart from meditation upon Scripture, this all-encompassing spiritual reality of our existence and identity in Christ can easily appear remote, distant, and unreal. No wonder so many believers secretly ask, “What will bring these glorious truths of *life in Christ* into the present for me, what will transport them from lofty concepts into real Christian experience?” The answer involves meditating upon Scripture with a view to consciously, obediently living upon Christ now.

### **III. Fix our eyes upon Jesus (Heb 12:2).**

*The world’s promises of security and significance are addressed to sense, sight, and feeling. Christ’s promises are addressed to our enduring faith.* John Calvin offers a very practical reason for continually ‘looking unto Jesus’,

We can be fully and firmly joined with God only when Christ joins us with Him. If then we would be assured that God is pleased with and kindly disposed toward us, we must fix our eyes and minds on Christ alone, for actually, through Him alone we escape the imputation of our sins to us—an imputation bringing with it the wrath of God.<sup>iv</sup>

“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith” (**Heb 12:2**). “Looking,” or fixing our eyes on Jesus means looking away from one thing to concentrate on another. The word is a *present active participle*, thus *looking* is to be a habitual action. We look to Christ in *faith, hope, expectation* and *trust*. It is not merely an intellectual exercise—it is an act of the whole soul in faith, trust, and reliance. “*Look unto Him and be saved all the ends of the earth*” (**Is 45:22**).

*In looking unto Jesus, we are to look away from all the things that divert our minds and discourage us: oppositions, discouragements, persecutions, afflictions, personal injustice, setbacks, failures.* It is so easy to become fixated upon negative circumstances; but the believer is to be characterized by “looking unto Jesus” (**Heb 12:2**). In order to make progress in our knowledge of God, we must fix our eyes of faith on Jesus. This consists of not only contemplating His Person, but also His saving work toward us, His sufficiency, and His will for His people. Christ Jesus makes God known to us—Christ is communicating the Father to us, “He is the radiance of His glory and exact representation of His nature” (**Heb 1:3**).

*The ongoing act of looking unto Jesus reveals the secret of perseverance in this long distance ‘contest’.* Our gaze must be continually fixed upon the great object of our faith—the Lord Jesus Christ; for from Him alone we derive our renewed energy, refreshment, and encouragement.<sup>v</sup> The ground of our stability in the Christian life is a constant looking unto Christ. He is the **Author**, or **Beginner** of our faith. Jesus is the *pioneer* and *forerunner* of our salvation (**Heb 2:10**). He is the High Priest of our confession (**Heb 3:1**). He effectively worked by His Spirit to plant faith in us at our conversion. He is also the Perfecter and Finisher of our faith. He grants saving faith by His sovereign grace and mercy; He upholds our faith and He perfects and finishes our faith—it is His work in us.

God makes this promise to believers: “*For I am confident of this very thing that He that began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus*” (**Phil 1:6**). The Christian is “*protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (**1 Pet 1:5**). The One we love and in whom we trust *birthed* faith in us. Christ is our ‘Sanctifier’ (**Heb 2:11**)—He is our Mediatorial King who rules us and who subdues us to Himself. As our Lord and Master, He chooses the trials through which our pride and self-will are broken. He disciplines us to bless us—to do good to us in the end. Our response must be, “Lord, I trust you and put you first above my own carnal reasoning.”

*We must not neglect the blessed duty of fixing our eyes on Jesus. Our comfort and holiness depend upon this gracious duty.* Christ is our life and covenant, but He is also our example of endurance.

For the sake of His people, He exercised faith, looking at the unseen. He endured for our sake amidst incredible opposition. He finished the work His Father gave Him to do. His whole earthly life was the embodiment of trust in God. “He learned obedience from the things which He suffered” (**Heb 5:8**).

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously (**1 Pet 2:21-25**).

Now He calls us to exercise faith in Him as a habit of life. In terms of our redemption, present and future, we live between the cross and the resurrection.<sup>vi</sup> You are to live upon what Christ *has done* for us at the cross and what He *will do* for us at the resurrection to come. The finished work of the cross disconnects us from the world and the hope of the resurrection fixes our sights on the glory to come. We will come to know God better only as we strengthen our focus on Christ and deepen our habit of reliance upon Him.

*Looking to Christ’s excellence is the feast for the believer’s mind and the heart—we will come to know the Father’s love who brought Him into the world for us.* His redeeming love is held out to us amidst our great difficulties and discouragements. We must note the comfort here and the inducement to perseverance in believing—Jesus is not merely our example. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith—He begins faith in us and He carries it on to perfection. Jesus is our example unto encouragement; what He suffered was “for the joy set before Him.” “Joy” pertains to the things in which He rejoiced—the joy set before Him was the salvation of the Church and the glory of God. He had joy at the prospect of accomplishing all of the counsels of divine wisdom and grace unto the eternal glory of God. His love for the elect and His desire for their eternal salvation was inexpressible.<sup>vii</sup> These things were all a matter of joy. “As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One My Servant will justify the many as He will bear their iniquities” (**Is 53:11**).

*Before time, in eternity past, these things regarding our salvation were assured in a covenant within the Triune Godhead.* This was the covenant that planned the birth of Messiah in Bethlehem. Thus, as Jesus contemplated the fulfillment of this covenant, He had joy that supported Him amidst the trials of His soul. He knew that His sufferings would *make peace between God and man, seal the covenant of grace and make Him the Mediator of it, open up the way of salvation to sinners through Christ, effectually save all those given to Him by the Father, and that He Himself would become the Firstborn among many brethren.* He paid the price of the cross to gain the joy set before Him. His faith looked past the cross to the eternal joy (**Heb 10:1-14**).<sup>viii</sup> “He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” He patiently endured the most horrific suffering and ignominy and insults. By faith He saw past hideous agonizing circumstances to the joy His suffering was accomplishing. He *despised the shame*—that is He did not succumb under it or faint because of it. He counted it as nothing in comparison to the blessed and glorious effects His sufferings would bring.

*He was assured of the outcome which is eternal glory and joy.* Likewise we are called to suffer. “If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him” (**Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:12**). Our duty is to fix our eyes on Jesus in all of our difficulties and hardships—and know that our suffering is an essential part of our race to the glory and joy set before us. If we trust in God’s purposes in our suffering, we will be safe. His cross which ratified the new covenant was the gateway to His joy and ours!

#### **IV. Seek the Lord as He is revealed ‘in the new covenant’.**

In the new covenant it is God’s own glory and excellence that have granted to us His magnificent promises (**2 Pet 1:4**). These new covenant ‘promises’ are gospel promises. God has literally ‘harnessed’

His own infinite power and perfections and put them to work in our redemption and adoption. We are to live upon gospel promises that are ‘backed up’ by the exertion of God’s glory and excellence. God’s attributes, perfection, and character have been put on display in our reception of His grace.

***We must seek to grasp the truth that God has willed to make Himself known to us by way of the covenant of redemption (Mt 26:28; Heb 9:13-15; 1 Cor 11:25; Heb 10:5-25).*** How paramount this is in our apprehension of life and completeness in Christ. God’s own glory and excellence have formed and fashioned every gospel promise in Christ. This means that God’s glory, excellence, and perfections have been moved out of the realm of abstraction and into the category of covenant. Consider the wisdom of God’s plan—in order to bring us all the way to God and glory, the Lord exercises His perfections on our behalf—placing these perfections on display in the process of redeeming us. Thus, beholding God’s perfections is inseparably joined to the saints’ true happiness. Edwards reminds us that beholding God’s perfections is a savor to the saint, and so appealing to the saved man that he places his highest delight in those things. Then, he will desire them as he desires his own happiness because they are inseparably joined. The saints’ love to God is the fruit of God’s love to them. The ability to love God is God’s grace gift to believing sinners. God’s love to particular elect persons is discovered by conversion.<sup>ix</sup>

God’s precious and magnificent promises are not bare propositions (such as, ‘if you do this, such and such will happen’), no, these magnificent promises are God’s covenant faithfulness in action—for the promises are God’s commitment to keep exerting His own attributes on our behalf. ‘By His own glory and excellence, He caused us to escape the corruption in the world by lust. He made us partakers of the divine nature’ (2 Pet 1:4). By His own power and excellence He transferred us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col 1:12-14ff.).

**By the exercise of His infinite attributes He removed us from being children of wrath in order to make us heirs with Christ.** In Christ, the Father is taking us from defiled dust to grace and glory. Thus, ‘how’ He is taking us to glory is the source of endless wonder and meditation for the holy angels. He is taking us to glory in such a way that His own excellence and perfections are being put on display—being exhibited to the watching angelic hosts who marvel at God’s wisdom in perfecting the church through Christ (Eph 3:8-12).

**At conversion the believing sinner comes to know the wonder of God’s perfections exercised towards him.** In his book, *The Religious Affections* Edwards captures the transforming truth that the gospel gives us God (the glorious saving knowledge of God). States Edwards, in conversion, the redeemed man experiences a great manifestation of God’s moral perfection and glory exercised toward him. The fruit of this discovery is the excitation of love to God born of holy gratitude. Thus the spiritual occasion of gracious love in the saints arises primarily from the excellence of divine things as they are in themselves, and not from any conceived relation they bear to the sinner’s immediate self-interest.<sup>x</sup>

**God’s love is the foundation for all of our gracious affections. God’s love lays the foundation for these grateful affections.** Edwards notes that gracious gratitude arises when saved men are affected with the attribute of God’s goodness and free grace, not only as they are concerned with it as it affects their own interests, but as a part of the glory and beauty of God’s nature. In the gospel of grace, God’s goodness as part of the beauty of His nature is set before our eyes—His exercises of it for us is the special occasion of our mind’s attention to that beauty. It fixes our attention and heightens our affections.<sup>xi</sup> Joy, spiritual delight, and pleasure in God are not primarily born of immediate self-interest as its foundation. Instead, it primarily consists in the ‘sweet entertainment’ the believer’s mind has in the view and contemplation of the holiness, glory, and beauty of divine things in themselves. By contrast, the hypocrite rejoices in himself—self is the *foundation* of his joy.<sup>xii</sup>

***In opening up the storehouses of divine wealth to bestow it upon sinners, God is making His majesty known. God’s great self-revelation is through His plan to glorify His grace (Eph 1:3-6ff.).***

From the standpoint of finite humans and angels, it would not appear possible for God to bridge the ontological barrier (uncreated Being versus created being), and the moral barrier (holiness versus defilement) that separates Him from His rebellious creatures. For, the meeting of God's burning holiness and man's sinfulness results in an eternal conflagration of divine wrath. How is it possible for our holy self-existent God to export His wealth of *blessedness, life, light, community, and love* into the lives of rebellious creatures? How can God shower the guilty with eternal kindness without violating His own immutable character?" For Scripture states that, "[He] alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see" (**1 Tim 6:16a**).

***We marvel, how can God bestow His infinite divine wealth on those with infinite demerit?*** No one wants to know this more than angels 'who long to look into the mystery of redemption (**1 Pet 1:12**)! And angels are glorying in the answer (**Eph 3:8-11**). This is the most marvelous thing about God's grace—it has a goal even higher than bringing us to heaven. That goal is to magnify God. This is the great and lofty goal of grace—that God might be glorified and made known through the means by which He bestows His infinite wealth upon guilty, polluted, undeserving rebels. God is putting His excellence and perfection on display in the plan of redemption. God's wisdom and power have been exerted in His 'bridging' the apparently hopelessly formidable barrier between Himself and sinners (**1 Cor 1:23-25**).

***The message of grace in Christ cannot coexist with the 'fig leaves' we use in an attempt to cover our moral nakedness.*** The gospel comes at us like a 10.0 earthquake—it sends seismic waves throughout our natural intuitions about religion. It shreds our religious instincts. It comes claiming that God has taken our salvation out of our hands and placed it into His own hands. It humbles us, devastates us, then it thrills us with the prospect that God wishes to love us, cleanse us, and pour out His kindness upon us for Christ's sake. The gospel is God making Himself knowable and accessible by way of the promises of blood-bought grace. The gospel is the great revealer of God. Through the Spirit of God the gospel floods our heart with the light of His glory (**2 Cor 4:6**). By faith in the gospel we come to know God for the very first time—for the gospel reveals three invaluable truths at once that are a requisite to knowing God: **1.) The gospel reveals God's attributes, His unbending holiness, and just character. 2.) The gospel reveals the heart of God to be that of love, compassion, and mercy in His plan to send Christ to be Savior. 3.) The gospel reveals man's darkened, lost, guilty, condemned, helpless condition.** All three of these elements are indispensable to the biblical gospel. If any one of the three is removed—the biblical gospel is compromised and is made void. But, what must be 'displayed' to the sinner is the fact that God's plan of redemption is based upon substitution. The gospel is about exchange—Christ's life for the life of His people—Christ's righteousness for the sins of His people. Christ's blood for the guilt of His people. All fellowship and communion with God, from the moment of salvation to timeless eternity is based upon this glorious exchange of Christ in our nature and stead assuming our liabilities (**Eph 2:16-18; 2 Cor 5:21**).

***This is absolutely foreign to natural reason that God should satisfy His own offended justice by inflicting agony of body and soul upon His only begotten Son.*** It is the gospel of penal substitution alone that reconciles sinners and preserves the Name of God in so doing. Whoever truly has faith in Jesus—has faith in Jesus as suffering Substitute (**1 Pet 2:24; 3:18**). No one can come to God but by the provision of forgiveness in Christ as Substitute—thus, to bow before God is to bow before Him as He is revealed in the gospel—as the One who has not withheld His only Son (**Rom 8:32**). As the One who can only be known through His provision of the slain *Lamb* (**Jn 1:29**). The stumbling sinner's failed quest to be accepted by his Creator through works ends at *Christ crucified for sinners*—for "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (**Rom 10:4**).

**V. Recognize that the exchange of Christ's life for the life of His people is not only our entrance into life, it is the definer and direction of our Christian life.**

Gospel promises ‘map out’ our Christianity, we ‘navigate’ by these promises—gospel promises constitute a mold which is designed to ‘shape’ our Christian life. These promises are joined to our new identity and purpose, for they reveal: *the source of divine enablement for obedience, the Father’s will for us, who we were before Christ, who we are in Christ, who we are to others, and who we will be in glory.*

***The gospel promises in Christ are efficacious, they give us access to God—they bring us ‘near’ to God (Eph 2:13-18).*** In our walk with the Lord, we are to grow in our knowledge of Him by testifying or ‘preaching’ to our own hearts the truth, content, and preciousness of the gospel promises. As we ‘feed’ upon the gospel promises, the net effect is that Christ is *displayed* to our understanding and affections. We begin to see Him as ‘Source Person’—in other words, we begin to really understand that everything we need for life and godliness is found in Him (**2 Peter 1:2-4**). To recline upon Christ as ‘Source Person’, so as to live upon Him is the exchanged life in action. This is what Paul meant in **Galatians 2:20** when he said, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me [through me].” This concept of the exchanged life is not merely the ‘secret’ to effective Christian living—it is the very means of growing in our knowledge of the Lord and delighting in Him—for we are commanded in Scripture to *reckon, consider, count, calculate* who we are in Christ (**Rom 6:11; Col 3:3-5; Gal 2:20**).

***We are to reflect upon our Savior from the perspective of our radical identification with Him.*** In His condescension, His incarnation, His humiliation, and His passion—He became radically identified with us (in our helplessness, hopelessness, guilt, shame, separation, condemnation, pain, and dereliction). How we need to understand that He became radically identified with us, and our dilemma that we might become radically identified with Him as our life (**Rom 6:3-9**). How vital it is to understand that this brings the value of Christ’s cross into the believer’s present experience and victory.

***God requires that we believe something outside of anything in our earthly experience—namely that the sin natures of believers were legally judged in the body and soul of our Lord Jesus Christ in His death—all that we might be legally set free from the dominion of sin (Rom 6:5-11).*** Thus, to live by faith in Christ is to live out the ramifications of radical identification with Him every day. Ongoing communion with the Lord is fueled by ongoing reckoning of the great exchange Christ accomplished. “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (**2 Cor 5:21**). As Puritan John Owen exhorts, we are communing with God when we keep taking Christ for all the reasons God gave Him to us. What a glorious thought! The gospel is not designed to ‘jump-start’ and then abandon us to the impotence of flesh power. No, the promises in the gospel are designed to equip us to ‘live upon Christ’ as He is offered in the gospel. Oh how perfectly this answers the quiet desperation of the average Christian who is often mired in self-recrimination—bemoaning his lukewarm-ness, carnality, and unfruitfulness.

***Christ is waiting for, and asking for our acts of faith to ‘seek Him out’ in His sufficiency.*** He is a merciful High Priest who waits to hear our cry that He might bestow fresh provisions of grace and mercy (**Heb 2:18; 4:15-16**). Christ is a divine Person—He is sensitive and responsive to our faith. He waits for us to reach out to Him in our faith. Our faith toward Him is a measure of our adoration and our longing to know Him better. And, since our hearts as believers are already His home, our faith toward Him is a measure of our hospitality towards Him. Our heart-hunger for His love and presence will be manifested by our faith. In other words, our faith will seek Him out through the gospel promises in His Word. We will want to ‘meet’ Him at the gospel promises to learn more of His heart toward us. This is the believer feeding upon Christ—for Christ is the *bread of heaven*, the food of the regenerated soul.

***Christ’s responsiveness to our faith means that He waits for us to answer His gospel love out of a desire to ‘sup’ (dine) with Him in fellowship (Rev 3:19-21).*** Our faith demonstrates the level of our heart’s hospitality. Have we been aloof from Him—too busy to seek Him out? Have we given up panting after Him because the disclosures of His love have been few and far between? Christ is there

nonetheless—waiting for our faith to reach out to Him; to desire Him; to adore Him and take delight in Him. How passive we often are in this area. We easily forget that His Spirit is ready to assist us to ‘press on to know the Lord’ (**Hos 6:1-3**). This vital reality of Christ responding to the believer’s faith is highlighted in expanded translations which seek to capture the emphasis in the Greek, “*And that Christ in His love, through your faith, may make His permanent home in your hearts*” (**Eph 3:17**).<sup>xiii</sup> “*That the Christ might finally settle down and feel completely at home in your hearts through your faith.*”<sup>xiv</sup> Do you see the impact of this verse? Our trust and dependency and longing to live upon Christ as our ‘Source Person’ is our message of hospitality to the Christ, “I desire that my heart be your hospitable home.”

Our growing knowledge of the Lord is not merely an academic exercise, nor can it be reduced to an experience. It is actually intensely practical. To grow in the knowledge of the Lord is a rectifying, sanctifying process. It weans us from the world. It gives us a growing desire to mortify indwelling sin and smash all of our heart idols. It shakes us out of our stagnancy and spiritual apathy. It perfects our ability to live responsively to His love as spontaneous worshippers. It convinces us that we are carried by Christ our ‘Source Person’—thus, freeing us up to be burdened on behalf of others.

***Therefore, in light of the fact that the Christian life is ‘mapped out’ by the gospel promises, how can we content ourselves with a bare ‘God concept’? We cannot.*** We must break out of our lethargy which has made us too willing to live with a passionless, vague concept of God. We must rouse ourselves to meet the Lord in the gospel promises—to meet Him who first met us by His sovereign grace. If we humble ourselves, learning to meditate in such a way that we are always ‘matching’ our spiritual weakness and poverty with His infinite sufficiency and grace we will grow in our knowledge of Him. By continually presenting ourselves to Him as our Master who employs us in service as stewards of divine grace we will ‘care for’ this glorious relationship with Him (**1 Pet 4:10**). By such intentional seeking of His presence we will be growing in the knowledge of the Lord and taking delight in Him.

#### End Notes:

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<sup>i</sup> John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, p. 11

<sup>ii</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God*, pp. 104-118

<sup>iii</sup> *The Works of the Reverend John Howe*, “A Treatise on Delighting in God” (Soli Deo Gloria) 1:474-664. *The Devoted Life*, Kelly M. Kopic and Randall C. Gleason, eds. (IVP), “A Treatise on Delighting in God,” summary of Howe’s treatise by Martin Sutherland, pp. 225-237).

<sup>iv</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill, editor, vol. xx, book II, p. 506

<sup>v</sup> John Owen, *Communion with God*

<sup>vi</sup> David Peterson, *Possessed by God*, pp. 93-114

<sup>vii</sup> John Piper, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*, p. 51

<sup>viii</sup> Isaac Ambrose, *Looking unto Jesus*, p. 244.

<sup>ix</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*, p. 166

<sup>x</sup> *Ibid*, p. 175

<sup>xi</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 176-177

<sup>xii</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>xiii</sup> Williams Translation of the New Testament

<sup>xiv</sup> Kenneth Wuest, Expanded Translation of the New Testament