

Prioritising our Pursuits

Deuteronomy 4:29, *“But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”* In life, our number one pursuit should be to find God. For when we find Him, we find His will, and as a result, we are able to do His will. Jesus said, *“For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother” (Mark 3:35).*

Notice, to actively pursue God, there can only be only one strategy, and that is, you must **“seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”** In other words, God must become your first priority. Many things we chase after end up being too stressful purely because our priorities are wrong. This concerns God-inspired priorities also. For instance, serving the Lord should never supersede your need to delight yourself in Him. **Psalm 37:4** says, *“Delight yourself also in the Lord, and [then] He will give you the desires and secret petitions of your heart”* (Amplified). If you get pleasure or delight purely by serving Him, then your priorities are wrong. What’s likely to then happen is that your life will eventually become stressful and disheartening. Why? Because you are expecting God to grant you the desires of your heart through good works instead of adoration, worship and intimacy.

God supplies all our needs because of relationship, not because we have performed well. I have no doubt that serving God with zeal is a good pursuit, and that it should be one of our major goals. But I also believe that it should not necessarily be at the top of our priority list. Delighting yourself IN HIM – by seeking Him alone, and being worshipful, intimate and loving toward Him, should be your highest priority and your most direct pursuit. The word **pursue** implies *“to run after, chase after, follow after or hunt down.”* All of us are probably running after, chasing or hunting down certain priorities in life. We all have genuine pursuits and identifiable priorities, some by choice and design, and others out of pure necessity or circumstance. Therefore, it would be correct to say that we are all (in some way or another) involved in the ‘pursuit of happiness’ through specific and identifiable priorities. But do these priorities help us find God? There are many acceptable priorities yet only three main areas of pursuit for Christians. I call them the 3 G’s: (1) The Pursuit of Goals (2) The Pursuit of Good, and (3) The Pursuit of God.

(1) **The Pursuit of Goals.** We live in a goal oriented society and the primary goals which dominate in both secular and religious areas of life can be expressed in six simple words; and these words are broken up into two groups: The 3 S’s - success, size and security; and the 3 P’s - position, power and possessions. Very early in life we will be subjected to these goals and become influenced by the desirable images which they portray. A goal which clearly focuses on “success, size and security” was probably programmed into every one of us at an early age. And a strong desire to have “position, power and possessions” was cultivated during our formative years. Now, there is nothing wrong with ambition provided it does not dominate your existence. Seeking first the Kingdom of God places your ambition where it can be kept at bay.

(2) **The Pursuit of Good.** Probably all conscientious Christians pursue good; for doesn’t the Bible say, *“Always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all” (1 Thessalonians 5:15).* It is this quest that will tug on your heart strings - a quest which you genuinely consider honourable. But be careful, your primary pursuit should still be the pursuit of God Himself, and not just becoming a good person for God. God, and not good, is the ultimate

thing you should be chasing after.

We can often miss God by seeking His by-products. By seeking His gifts or seeking His fruits independent of Him. If we genuinely pursue Him, and seek His presence, all His fruits and His mighty power will be available to us without any striving or great effort.

(3) **The Pursuit of God.** Please let me reiterate something before we continue. The other pursuits we've just examined are acceptable and honourable provided they are kept in their correct order of priority. Wanting to succeed is a positive and beneficial attitude. Desiring to be more godly and serving God with zeal and enthusiasm is a blessing. But seeking God Himself, in an attitude of reverence, worship and deep intimacy must remain the highest priority for each of us.

God is not as interested in our service as He is in our relationship with Him. God, and not good, is the ultimate entity we should pursue. As we sincerely set our affections upon Him, and are intimate with Him, He releases His great love and power toward us. Note, He can both out-give and out-love us at any point in the relationship. As we diligently seek God, He is faithful to seek our good! As we give ourselves totally to God and **delight ourselves in Him**, He in turn delights in giving Himself totally to us.

So how do we delight ourselves in God? By doing what is pleasing to Him. Here's how Matthew Henry put it: *"God has not promised to gratify the appetites of the body and the humours of the fancy, but to grant all the desires of the heart, all the cravings of the renewed sanctified soul. What is the desire of the heart of a good man? It is this; to know, and love, and live for God, to please Him and to be pleased in Him."* The "desires" of the heart must be desires that are satisfied in 'more of God' in more and more ways!

We should also note that if your delight is wholly in God then you won't want anything that has the potential of turning your heart away to trust in anyone but Him. If your "desires" are for the things of this world (that would easily detract from your complete satisfaction in God), then you aren't truly delighting yourself in Him.

That said, let's take note of two things in **Psalms 37:4**: *"Delight Yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart."* First, it is a command. This isn't something we are to "pray about" or "consider", as if it were an option or choice. This is a moral obligation binding on all of us. In God's eyes, there is no alternative! Second, delight (like joy) is also a feeling, an emotion, an affection, a subjective experience that is ultimately not under our control. It isn't something we can produce by an act of our will. God has to awaken and stir and evoke such affections in our souls. He uses a variety of means to this; the scriptures, creation, holiness, obedience, prayer, worship, meditation, etc. Our responsibility is "to lay ourselves in the way of allurements." God's responsibility is to allure - to draw us toward Himself!

How then, are we to fulfil this command? Or better still, how exactly do we delight ourselves in the Lord?

Let me suggest four ways:

(1) Intellectual fascination. We must make use of the mind to set ourselves to 'know' Him. Our understanding of God will be expanded and intensified as we become truly fascinated by Him. Know him. Learn of Him. Study him. Explore His ways. Investigate His will. Become a student of the personality and character of God and He will most

surely captivate your mind.

(2) Aesthetic adoration. We are fundamentally, and by God's own design, aesthetic creatures. Being fashioned in the image of God means, at least in part, that we are instinctively drawn to beauty and repelled by ugliness. We have an innate capacity to recognise and rejoice in beauty. God is ultimate Beauty. To delight in Him is to behold His beauty in all its vast array: the uniformity of His attributes, the intricacies of His handiwork, the splendour of His power, the majesty of His mercy, and the list could go on to infinitely. We must therefore make every effort to cultivate an aesthetic sensibility to His majesty and refine our taste for the sweetness of His glorious presence.

(3) Emotional exhilaration. Our affections are also designed to find their focus and fulfilment in God. He is worthy of our zeal, love, devotion, delight, fear, joy, passion, gratitude, and hope. Although we do not see Him now, we "love him," and "believe in him" and "rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory" (1 **Peter 1:8**). With the Spirit's help we must learn to re-direct all our affections so that they are rooted in Him and riveted on Him. In sum, trust God to be sufficiently enjoyable that all else pales in comparison!

(4) Wilful dedication. Delighting in the Lord also entails the engagement of our wills and the choices we make. We must do two things. First, we must choose to obey His commands, and second, we must choose to avoid all that He has prohibited. Obedience nourishes delight and joy. God's commands are His prescription for happiness and spiritual health. We must therefore trust God when He says that sin will corrupt and destroy. We must trust God when He says obedience will bless and enrich. Disobedience dulls and anaesthetises our spirits to God's presence and activity. Disobedience diminishes our capacity to delight in Him; it drains our spiritual energy; it lays waste to our ability to focus on God and trust Him confidently.

It unleashes in our spiritual system a toxin that will progressively cause our spiritual eyes to go blind and our spiritual ears to go deaf. Therefore, we must trust God's commandments to be 'sufficiently good' so that the ways of the world are exposed as poisonous and spiritually fatal. We must set our minds on Him so that we can dedicate our lives to Him. We must "will" to make the right choices. God said, "*I place before you life and death, blessing and curses, choose life!*"

God is life, and He can be the strength and joy of your life – provided you **delight yourself in Him alone**. He desires to be your wisdom, your power, your source of inspiration, and your abundant supply. But for this to take place you must pursue Him and hunt down His will for your life. David declared in **Psalm 27:8**, "*When You said, 'Seek My face', my heart said to You, 'Your face, O Lord, I will seek'.*" You must seek His face with such heartfelt tenacity as to find Him in every situation, and in finding Him, you will discover a whole new source of supply. New love, new peace, new joy, new strength, new inspiration, new hope, new faith and new horizons. Your life will be freshened up!

Can you meet this standard? Are you willing to seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul? Have you prioritised this pursuit? Will you genuinely delight yourself in Him, and Him alone? Are you an honest and sincere God-chaser?