

# Pursuing Joy

Psalm 16

## Summary

Our longing for joy and the biblical command to glorify God are fulfilled on the same path – “the path of life,” (v11). God designed us to find ultimate happiness in Him, motivating us with eternal pleasures and commanding us to delight in Him. Pursuing deep, lasting joy in God magnifies His supreme worth. Living with this perspective transforms the Christian life from duty to delight.

## Truth 1: You were designed to enjoy God

You have a deep-seated longing for happiness and joy. God hardwired this desire into your soul by design.

### The historical case

Philosophers and theologians throughout history, such as Blaise Pascal, Thomas Aquinas, and J.C. Ryle, recognize this universal human condition. Every person is actively motivated by the pursuit of happiness.

### The Biblical Case

Scripture continually supports the pursuit of joy...in God. He directs your search for happiness toward Himself.

#### He motivates us with Joy

A good destination makes a difficult journey bearable. In **Psalm 16:1**, David seeks refuge in trials, and in **Psalm 16:11**, God makes the path of life known, motivating him by promising fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore in His presence. **Isaiah 52:7** prophesies good news of happiness, **Luke 2:10** announces “good news of great joy” and **Matthew 25:21** motivates faithful stewardship with the promise that one day the faithful will “enter into the joy of your master”.

#### He commands our joy

God gives direct commands to delight in Him (**Psalm 37:4**) and rejoice always (**Psalm 32:11**, **Philippians 4:4**). Your appetite for happiness is meant to lead you to God’s table to be satisfied forever.

## Why don't we seek joy in God? Three lies...

### 1. We believe a lie about His character.

We falsely view God as an angry cosmic killjoy. But **1 Timothy 1:11** reveals He is the "blessed" or happy God, and **Psalms 36:8** shows He invites you to drink from the river of His delights.

### 2. We believe a lie about His commands.

We wrongly view God's commands as fences meant to restrict us. Walking in His commands provides the roadmap to profound joy and soul satisfaction, as Jesus explains in **John 15:11**. In a relationship of trusting Him, His commands are given so that your joy may be full.

### 3. We believe a lie about His creation.

We turn to created things to fill a void only the Creator can satisfy. Worldly gifts are fleeting, and relying on them leaves you empty, illustrating the exchange of the Creator for the creature described in **Romans 1:25** and the chasing of the wind, like in **Ecclesiastes**.

## Truth 2: You were created to glorify God

The overarching narrative of the Bible makes it clear that the universe revolves around God. You were created for the purpose of glorifying Him and putting His infinite worth on display, as stated in **Isaiah 43:7**. Even mundane details are to be done for His glory (**1 Corinthians 10:31**).

## The Tension: A Split in the Road

These two truths create an apparent theological tension. It feels like you must choose between the path of glorifying God and the path of pursuing your own joy.

## Truth 3: These aren't separate paths.

Your deepest longing for joy and your greatest purpose for God's glory are fulfilled on the same path. Showing the immense value of God by joyfully surrendering everything for Him brings Him ultimate glory, mirroring the man who joyfully buys the field in **Matthew 13:44**. Valuing Christ above all things, in life and in death, magnifies His worth, as Paul demonstrates in **Philippians 1:20-26**.

## Truth 4: So, glorify God by pursuing joy in Him

Embracing this mindset changes your approach to the Christian life. Holiness becomes choosing a superior joy. Community becomes sharing joy. Communion with God becomes fueling your joy. Missions becomes spreading joy. And death becomes entering unending joy and pleasure forevermore.

## Conclusion: The Invitation and Three Prayers

God invites everyone who is thirsty and exhausted to come to Him and be truly satisfied in **Isaiah 55:1-2**. The joy you find in Him glorifies His name (**Isaiah 55:12-13**). To stir up joy in God, pray through **Psalms 36:8**, **Psalms 51:12**, and **Psalms 90:14**.