

## Chapter 4: Rewiring Multiple Circuits to Delighting in God

Desiring God, delighting in God, joy in God, and love for God are inter-related heart affections. Delight in God should be derived not only from God and his saving work, but also the created world and his judging work. Delight is wired both to God's blessed face (what has turned to me for salvation) and cursed face (what has turned to Christ on the cross in my place (1 John 4:10), turned to his and my enemies). I want to propose that these affections can be experienced in ways not typically considered by believers who know of the command to have these affections, and see examples of believers who experience these affections.

Delight is commanded, but the natural man cannot keep this command to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matt 22:37). Thus, delight in God must be regenerated, imputed, imparted, expanded from heavenly things to all of life, guarded by self-discipline and part of the believer's eschatological hope. Since unregenerate man cannot come naturally to delight in God or his character, God must regenerate his elect to new delight in his total character.<sup>1</sup> This may start with awakening delights in mere shadows and types of himself, arousing desire for finding the source of delight.<sup>2</sup> The delight in God is imputed, since the perfect delight of the human Christ in the Triune God is counted to us who believe he was raised from the dead by decree of the Father through the agency of the divine Son in the power of the Spirit (Rom 1:3-4; 4:25; 8:11-13; 10:9-10). Imparted delight in God as righteous law-giver comes as a gift of the new covenant, when the law is written on the heart (Heb. 10:16). By the Spirit, a heart of flesh is transplanted for a heart of stone (Ezek. 36:26). Citizenship is granted into a new kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17; Phil. 3:20-21) from where we await a Savior who will renew our mortal bodies to become like his immortal body (1 Cor 15:42-49). This delight must be guarded, for the seed and soils parable in Scripture uses a metaphor of *choking thorns* to represent the deceitful cares and delight from worldly wealth (Matt. 13:22).

Finding, increasing and guarding joy in God by the sacraments, means of grace and physical things that bring delights as from God's hand, should lead us to delight in the Giver, more than the gift. It could be sparked by mediating and praying on a Bible text, seeing sights along the northern California coastline, photos of kids and grandkids on the refrigerator, listening to Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major symphony, the smell of a silver spruce Christmas tree next to a warm fireplace on Christmas eve with family, savoring a slice of warm buttered black raspberry jam on wheat toast with a cup of favorite coffee or tea or enjoying the pleasures of sexual intimacy in marriage. God created them all to be enjoyed by mankind, made in his image, as they see and enjoy his eternal power and divine nature reflected in those things, and glorify and give him thanks for those things (1 Tim. 4:3-5; Rom. 1:20-21).

The old delight-circuitry of the sinful nature must be rewired by disconnecting delights in sinful things, and reconnecting them to affections of disgust and distaste. Delights in good things for sinful

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<sup>1</sup> See Jonathan Edwards' *Religious Affections*, part three, principle two, that the elect are regenerated by a spiritual sight of the glory and beauty of God's holiness. However, I propose in this book, that regeneration brings a whole new series of delights, for example, delight in God's eight omni-attributes, not only his omni-holiness, but also his omnipresence, omni-sufficiency, omniscience, omni-harmoniousness, omnipotence, omni-faithfulness, and omni-historical nature.

<sup>2</sup> This pattern is expressed well in two works by C.S. Lewis, his narrative of his conversion in *Surprised by Joy*, where he longs for recurring experiences of joy, but realizes that the joy is a fleeting by-product of the thing desired. He also writes a post conversion essay, titled *The Weight of Glory*, proposing that the temporal pleasures of this life should be seen as diluted flavors of God's river of pleasures, the *torrens voluptatis*, flowing from his throne, and these heavenly pleasures of the new earth alone give substantial and enduring joy. We are fools who would be satisfied with the diluted flavors in this old earthly realm, when God has promised joys of drinking at the fountainhead in the new earth.

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purposes must be rewired to God-glorifying motives. This happens in many ways within two main categories of life. First, we make sets of active choices which form habits. We count ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God and yield ourselves and instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:11-14). Second, we submit to God's discipline. For some believers God permits them to experience the natural consequences for sinful choices that reveal sin's bitterness, and those believers need to submit to that bitterness as a teacher and invest in new life choices that bear new sweet fruits. For other believers, God permits them to experience sickness, suffering and frustration in a fallen world. We know God disciplines those he loves, and his discipline painfully rewires our loves and hates (Heb. 12:6-14; Rom. 8:17-39; Phil. 4:4-13).

The greater the awareness of how God's omni-attributes are reflected and experienced in and through the created world, the greater the appreciation and delight that comes from enjoying anything. Our task then, is to seek God's gift of regenerative rewiring that begins to replicate itself into all areas of life, or to use a medical metaphor, something like a God-delight stem cell transfusion. Though Edwards' thesis that love for God's holiness should be our chief delight and the singular proof of true religious affections (see note #1 above), awareness of and delight in seven additional omni-attributes enlarges our capacity for joy and are also chief signs of true religious affections.

Consider how to rewire the savor of a warm, crunchy, buttered slice of black raspberry wheat toast leading to delight in God. Toast is physically *present* to put in the toaster and hold in the hand acquired by *holy* means of faithful labor and exchange of goods (God's reflected omnipresence and omni-holiness) as a *provision* from God's hand on the produce of the earth (God's reflected omni-sufficiency) that requires God's gifts of *knowledge* and *wisdom* (God's reflected omniscience) giving *power to produce* creation's goods and distribute them by *unified* market services and family *cooperation* (God's reflected omnipotence and omni-harmoniousness) that are *faithfully* available to be purchased or made by God's people on six *theo-synchronic* days of the week (God's reflected omni-faithfulness and omni-historicity). The rewired preacher can enjoy a piece of breakfast toast while it brings him to delight in God! Of course, you can fill in the blank with your own favorite foods if you are on South Beach diet phase one or on a gluten-free, vegan diet, but hopefully without calling another's freedom's evil (Rom. 14:1-15:7).

These wires leading out of nearly anything you enjoy experiencing, tasting, smelling, seeing, hearing, touching (within the bounds of the Ten Commandments and Christian freedom) can be connected to delight in God (who gives and sustains it). Therefore, fundamentalist legalism prohibiting many kinds of Christian freedoms that originate from church or institutional leadership codifying them in statements of faith or covenants of behavior are misguided (prohibiting participation in popular culture such as alcohol, card or mahjong playing, movies, computer games and apps, TV, social media, dancing, certain books, defining acceptable clothing, jewelry or hair styles). In addition to submitting to the Ten Commandments as the control standards for our duties and prohibitions (Westminster Larger Catechism 99-150 gives an excellent summary of the biblical theology of each command), the morality of something we enjoy is more conditioned by whether we can see God's eternal power and divine nature reflected in it or through it, giving him glory and thanks, than by prohibitions that seem to protect the holiness of God's people. Don't handle, taste or touch, as traditional rules developed to restrain the appearance of evil, are of no value in stopping the heart indulgence of the sinful flesh (Col. 2:20-23).

The rewired preacher needs to enlarge his capacity for joy in the joys of his spouse, family and congregants and connect these multiple circuits of joy to joy in God himself. In his preaching, he will be able to help his hearers rewire connections between the attributes of God and their reflections in Christ, the people of God and in earthly things his people experience. His preaching of delight in God will supply an unlimited capacity of recharging power to energize the daily Christian life.

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Delight in God is *always* discerned through some created thing. Yes, that's right! There is no direct pathway to delighting in God. We always get redirected through means of created things to discern God in the created thing. God spoke to the fathers through angels, dreams, visions and pre-incarnate appearances, which were then recorded in the Old Testament by the prophets. God's grace and truth was revealed through the incarnate Christ. Without going through his created humanity, no one can come to God (John 14:6; 1:14; Heb. 1:1-3; 7:25; Rom 5:17-20; 1 Cor. 15:42-49). Since we are pilgrims living after the New Testament era, we must go through the foundation of the prophetic and apostolic God-breathed, inerrant, created pages of Scripture to discern God, and Christ the cornerstone (Eph. 2:20; 2 Pet. 1:3-4, 21; 3:16-18; Rom. 15:4). By reading Scripture, we learn who God is and his providential works in the world in ruling over the created universe, the works he continues to do through his people, and the evil he permits in giving up his enemies to their lusts and conquering them. When looking at the text of Scripture or at people, or observing the interactions of time and space with created beings and objects, we can discern God's person and work, leading to delight in God who is discerned.<sup>3</sup> Then through Scripture in our hearts as the glasses with which to see the world, we can look at created things and discern God's eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:20; Ps. 19:1-2). When looking at his work, but failing to see God or his work, we go back to Scripture to try to understand more about what we have been missing in our spiritual perceptions of the world. Creation study by itself, without the glasses of Scripture, will reveal some "rebel facts" (it never *directly* reveals *truth*) and when interpreted by unregenerate man, will lead to distorted and erroneous ideas.<sup>4</sup> Those facts must submit to the authority and interpretive lens of Scripture to become a source of delight in God himself (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

This is something like Neo, in the movie the *Matrix*, when he is enlightened, and starts to discern the matrix into which all things connect, depicted in the movie by his ability to see the zeros and ones (lines of matrix code) as the structure behind all things visible. In the movie, the matrix is an imaginary or surreal world that can only be superseded by those who know the matrix is a digital image, a kind of imaginary lie created to keep people in submission. I'd like to use the matrix of digital-zeros-and-ones-overlaid-on-everything-we-see metaphor for another purpose, not as an imaginary digital lie that needs to be discovered and resisted, but as a way of seeing everything in this world as reflections of God's attributes, as our minds are renewed by Scripture to know who God is. Suppose we label each of the eight derivative attributes in the buttered toast paragraph above as 1a-8a in a digital matrix. After we are regenerated, we see lines of 1a-8a code reflected in all created things. It could be a piece of buttered wheat toast with jam, sharing intimacy with one's spouse, enjoying a scenic view, enjoying the social harmony of a system that works from production of goods to roadway distribution to market to functional credit cards and Google or Apple Pay apps that work for purchasing at a local convenience store, driving a well-made car, riding a well-performing bicycle, or seeing the city's well-built and designed buildings, stores, roads, transportation systems, parks, bike paths and sidewalks. Every created thing has discernable aspects of the derivative glory of God to those regenerated to see those attributes. This is the usual way to delight in God by created things. Another movie metaphor might also combine with the matrix metaphor, the *Avatar* movie. Selected humans enter a dreamlike trance while they are mentally united with avatar bodies. This enabled the avatar to experience Pandora as a living planet connected to Eywa,

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<sup>3</sup> See John Piper *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy* for a wonderful study about how Scripture, prayer and created things are all means to stir up and guard our delight in God.

<sup>4</sup> See *Redeeming Sociology: A God-Centered Approach* (Crossway 2011) for examples of how unregenerate sociologists leave God out of their sociological analysis, and falsify the data that they "see". Also available free in PDF form at <https://frame-poythress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/PoythressVernRedeemingSociology.pdf>

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the tree of life. Though Christianity would teach us to reject all of the movie themes involving worship of the tree representing Eywa, the idea of biological interconnectivity, a neural network linking all life on the planet, is a useful metaphor. In an analogous way, regenerated believers have new eyes to see how “in [Christ] all things [in the universe] hold together,” (Col. 1:17), how he reflects his eternal power and divine nature to, on, in and by all created things (Rom. 1:20; 11:36; Eph. 1:10), including his Triune (omni-harmonious) all-wise (omniscient), sovereign control (omnipotent) over all the sequencing of all events in time (omni-historical) and space (omnipresence) also sustaining the biodiversity of our planet earth (omni-sufficiency) by the word of his promise (omni-faithfulness) to a holy purpose (omni-holiness), that he alone would be glorified, praised and worshiped (Rom. 1:21; 11:36; Rev. 15:4; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 4:8; 83:18; 86:10; Isa. 37:16; 44:24). The created world is infused with reflections of his glory!

Delight derived from created things that leads to delight in God as the source, this is the proper use of the temporal delight turned to the eternal source of delight! The sinful side, ignorance and blindness to the derivative attribute “matrix” instead will see in the things themselves some amazing substitutes that seem qualified for worship (Rom. 1:20-25). Much of our super hero movie attraction in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Batman, Superman, Fantastic Four, Captain America, X-Men, Flash, Arrow) seems to be a quest for divine substitutes that seem worthy of worship. Similarly, this blindness is expressed in pantheism, a worldview that supposes everything created is some sort of god. The devil will ever seek to lead men to rejoice in God’s gifts, the created things themselves, or the actions we do, rather than using those things to lead us to delight in God himself.<sup>5</sup> Job worshiped God because God is glorious and worthy of worship, regardless of perceived benefits, unlike Job’s wife, who seemed to expect more benefits from God for all the toil of religion (Job 1:1-2:10). Without delight in God himself, the temporal “believer” will fall away both in times of trouble and times of pleasure (seed on rocky soil and among thorns Matt 13:20-22).

Seeing greater likenesses to God’s omni-attributes and the derivative reflections of those attributes in the created world ought to stir God’s regenerated-delighters to greater delight and attraction, while lesser reflections stir less delight or attraction. Thus, the greatest delight regenerate believers can experience is in knowing, believing in, and communing with Christ himself, the perfect reflection of the derivative attributes of God, and the fulfilment of the moral law as the definition of the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 1:1-3; Matt 5:17; 1 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 8:3-4). All other delights in created things must be derivative subsets of our ultimate delight in Christ himself!

Here is one theme that can put an end to the attraction of sin, particularly “pleasurable” sins and addictions that appear initially pleasurable. All regenerate delights are renewed to enjoy God in Christ, and everything that flows from his blessed face, while sharing in his grief, disgust and hatred of all that doesn’t share his likeness. Consider one example that the world exalts as delightful, but often without delight that returns to God’s himself as the giver of these marital intimacy delights. Regenerate marital sexual intimacy (one man, one woman for life as defined in the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment) reflects greater likenesses to Christ’s eight *derivative attributes* than all lesser sexual substitutes: total life intimacy combined with naked *presence* to bless, *holiness* of mind and bodily rights given only to each another,

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<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, section two lists false signs of conversion and spiritual life as rejoicing in the gifts of God and that they are loved by God and have received justification, rather than rejoicing in God himself. [cite source](#)). *David Brainerd’s Journals* show a resistance to this temptation in evaluating signs of true assurance of salvation, not satisfied to rejoice in his justification, but through that justification to rejoice in the God who justifies ([cite source](#)). C.S. Lewis *Screwtape Letters* develops a similar theme in the instructions to the junior devil to cause the man to rejoice with pride in his spiritual devotion and the fact that he did his Bible reading and praying, rather than whether these devotions actually caused him to have communion with God. [cite source](#)).

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created *complementary provision* for mutual, simultaneous sexual climax, using *knowledge* of sexual preferences to serve and give greater pleasure to spouse, *unity* in established roles of a husband's authority that sacrifices and a wife's submission that honors, created complementary creation *rule* by procreation, being fruitful and multiplying, and use of all resources, powers and gifts to bless and prosper one another in the family and the world, *faithfulness* to each other's marital vows, and *theosynchrony* of a lifetime shared and invested in each other in synchrony with God's view and use of time for work, rest and leisure-fun together, together with setting apart the time needed for mutually enjoyable sexual intimacy.<sup>6</sup>

All lesser substitutes offered by the world, the devil or the left-over sinful delights of the unregenerate heart fail to reach the full delights of God-reflective intimacy. C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* has a wonderfully creative illustration of this principle. The last scenario is about an angel spirit persuading a gray wisp of a human spirit to let it kill the lust lizard on its shoulder. The wisp human spirit cringes before the angelic spirit in anticipation of pain, while the lust lizard promises more satisfaction and more ability to be contained and quiet, so as not to cause future disturbances. Then with final permission, the angelic spirit crushes the lust lizard and throws it to the ground. Quite unexpectedly, the lizard turns into a beautiful horse upon whom the wisp human spirit rides into heavenly glory. Lewis has captured in imaginary story form what is true in life: sexual lust is a puny and slimy imaginary pleasure compared to the power and beauty of marital sexual pleasure, the latter of which is an aid to reaching heavenly glory, since in healthy marriages, sex reveals so much of God's reflective glory.

Consider how a lust pleasures outside of God's design fail to reach full delight. Intimate naked presence with a *prostitute exchanges* the life-enriching theosynchronic holiness and faithfulness to lifelong promises *for* life-destroying commodity transactions, offering a pimp money for physical sex with an enslaved woman's body, with high probability of sexually transmitted diseases, *exchanges* mutually shared unity of sacrifice and honor that properly uses sexual knowledge to give mutual pleasure *for* dominance of the client over the pretending prostitute, *exchanges* the creation order of one man-one woman sexual ethic and of possible offspring from the union *for* enslaved, manipulated, abused and wasted resources used in destruction of relational unity and any resulting offspring (abortion). Ironically, *committed homosexual relationships* (in some countries, now called marriage) must *exchange* created complementary sexual climax and procreation *for* substitutes of God's design for genitalia and artificial conception. These relationships also *exchange* God's design for different gender, male-female unity *for* mimicry of authority-submission roles in same gender relationships. *Pornography* used for masturbation may avoid dangers of sexually transmitted diseases by intimate naked presence, but *exchanges* mutually enjoyable rights to a spouse's real body *for* digital imagery mimicking physical presence, *exchanges* knowledgeable intimacy between sacrificing and honoring partners with the purpose of procreation to extend the creation mandate *for* self-stimulation with imaginary possession of a sex object or slave, and *exchanges* times shared and invested in real relationships *for* interruptive, lonely diversion.

Of course, like God, God's people will learn to love those who are still sinners (Rom. 5:8; Matt. 5:44-

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<sup>6</sup> For other related themes about how sex is a way to know God better, see John Piper and Justin Taylor, *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*, chapters 1-2 written by Piper. There is even a kind of intimacy preserved when the married couple must separate or cease mutual sexual intimacy by mutual agreement for a time (injury, medical problems, sexual performance problems, sickness, work, travel, and similar types of hindrances to intimacy) to give themselves to prayer, with delight in their remembered sexual intimacies shared, longing after and preparing for future sexual intimacies (1 Cor. 7:3-5).

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45), but will not experience attractive delight when observing moral failure. Every Christian parent regenerated to God-delight will know this! When children reflect more of the likeness of Christ, the parent experiences more delight in that child, but when the child rebels against Christ and reflects the world, the flesh and the devil's likenesses, the parent experiences more grief and sadness (Prov. 17:25). Every minister, in the same way, will share delight when his disciples reflect more of Christ, and experiences grief and sorrow when disciples sin (Phil. 2:20-23; 2 Cor. 11:28-29). If the Spirit "rejoices with the truth," so his people will share this delight (1 Cor. 13:6). If the Spirit is grieved by sin and wrongdoing, so will his regenerate people share in his sin-grief (Eph. 4:30; 1 Cor. 13:6).

Another kind of delight that reflects God in the world is delight in discipline for sharing in greater likeness to God (Heb. 12:6-14). We engage the created world by *disciplining* people and creatures into the likeness of the derivative attributes, by *designing* all inanimate objects into the likeness of the derivative attributes, and *designating* them for uses that further show his derivative attributes, and *displaying or declaring* these objects so that God can be seen and glorified in those things. These themes hold true for all vocations, from the minister preparing a sermon to the carpenter building a tiny house.

Another kind of delight is in seeing and waiting for the justice and wrath of God to be poured out on his and our enemies (Rom. 1:18-32; Rev. 18:20; 1 Pet. 2:23; 4:19). If they will not be converted, we pray that God would "look upon their threats" and intervene with the extension of his kingdom rule as well as his evil-limiting, proud-humiliating, rich-impoverishing, throne-displacing judgments (Psalm 2 as used in the prayer of Acts 4:24-31; Luke 1:51-53; Acts 12:20-23; Dan. 4-5). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," (Heb. 10:31).