

Your Life: Don't Waste It

by John Piper

John Piper emphasizes that life should be lived for God's glory, joy in Him, and love for others to avoid wasting it.

Duration: 44:13

Scripture: Psalm 16:11, Isaiah 43:7, John 15:11, Acts 20:35, Romans 5:3-4, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 2 Corinthians 8:2, Philippians 1:19, Hebrews 10:34

Topics: "Gods Glory", "Sacrificial Love"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of aligning one's life with God's purposes, focusing on three key aspects: being made for God's glory, finding joy in God, and loving others. It highlights that true love and glorifying God stem from being satisfied in all that God promises to be for us in Jesus, leading to a life of sacrificial love and joy in serving others.

Transcript

You're born, you live, you die, and that life defines your eternity. Heaven and hell follow in a straight line from what you've made of this life and that's it. You waste your life if you don't bring it into sync with God's purposes for you, for your life.

And I'm focusing on three of those. Number one, God made you for His glory. That is, He made you to put Him on display by the way you live, the way you think, the way you feel.

Hear a few verses. Isaiah 43, 7, Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone whom I created for my glory. Or, 1 Corinthians 10, 31, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all of it for the glory of God.

Or, 1 Corinthians 6, 19, You were bought with a price. You are not your own. Therefore, glorify God in your body.

Or, last night, Philippians 1, 19, My eager expectation and hope that now, as always, I might not be ashamed, but that in everything, Christ would be magnified in my body whether I live or whether I die. It's all over the Bible. You're on the planet by God's design in order to make Him look magnificent.

You're not your own. You were made and you were redeemed, bought for His glory to make Him look great. That's why we're here.

That's number one. If you don't bring your life into sync with that, you waste it. You throw it away, and in the end, you lose it.

The second is He made you for joy. Jesus said, I have spoken these things to you that my joy might be in you and that your joy might be full. It's just amazing to hear the Son of God tell you that.

Stunning! I have come, I speak, I live, I die, that my joy, which is a joy in my Father that is infinitely powerful, never ending, might be in you, and therefore, your joy might be explosively full. That's why you're on the planet, to be happy in God. In His presence is fullness of joy.

At His right hand are pleasures forevermore. You're called into His presence by creation. You're called into His presence by redemption.

And in His presence, it is full and it is forever. You can't increase full. You can't increase forever.

Joy is why you're made. It's amazing. And the point last night was that these two aren't alternatives.

These two aren't even in competition. These two are one. That you live for God's glory and that you be happy in God are one.

Because the rose story, the wife, God, is made to look good, glorious, valuable, treasured, praiseworthy, satisfying, when you are more satisfied in her, Him, than anything else. That's what makes Him look great. And so if you're not satisfied in God, you're making Him look bad.

Which means you're not doing what He created you to do. So that's the point so far. The third reason that you exist and that you need to bring your life into conformity to is that He made you to love other people, to do them good.

And what's good? To include them in what you've experienced. They need to glorify God and they need to be happy in God ultimately. Love.

I spoke at Lausanne over a year ago in South Africa, this big global conference where Christians from every country of the world were present. And I pleaded with them that they would all agree with this sentence, and I'm going to plead with you now. And I'm addressing the issue of social, physical caring for people and spiritual caring for people.

It's a big conflict. You know, some people want to give their lives away for human trafficking and clean water and good education and let's have food on the table. Let's put food in people's bellies.

Let's help them. They can't even survive without help. And then there's others who say they're going to go to hell.

They need the gospel. And I'm just pleading with you, don't separate those. They're both absolutely true.

You're not called to choose between those. When I say, God made you to love people, I'm not asking you to choose. So here's the sentence.

I said, Christians, Bible-believing people, care about all suffering, especially eternal suffering. That's it. And that's what I'd like you to feel.

I would like you to look on any pain in your friend's life with compassion. A sore throat or the loss of their mom or the announcement of a doctor that they've got cancer. Whatever it is, I want you to be the kind of person from Jesus' parable to the Good Samaritan who can't walk by on the other side.

You can't. You're just wired. I can't walk by and leave this person alone.

They have a need. I have some resources. So yes, but I want your heart to be whole and real and inclusive of all that God is and all that He teaches.

And that means there's a heaven and there's a hell and everybody's bound one way or the other. And if you try to fill a person's belly and don't care about where they're going, you don't love them. I don't care what you feel in your heart or how many needs on this planet you have laid down in your life to meet.

If you're not aiming, I'm not saying you succeed. And I'm not saying filling their bellies is contingent upon them getting saved. No.

I'm saying if you don't care, if your heart's not moving toward their salvation and their eternal joy in God where they glorify Him forever, you don't love them. So on this third point that God made you to love people, love each other as believers and love the world that's not believing yet, love everybody on your campuses. Here's what has to be established in view of last night's talk.

You told us last night, Piper, that we should devote our lives 24-7 until we're dead to maximize our joy in God. Yes, I did. And now you're telling us we should devote ourselves to loving people and caring about people and relieving suffering of people and drawing people into the fullest possible experience of their own joy.

Yes, I am. That's right. And all of it to the glory of God.

So what has to be established now from the Bible, not from my mouth who cares about what Piper thinks, what matters is what God thinks. So I'm going to take you to the Bible. What I need to show you is that if last night isn't true, you can't love people.

I'm going to argue that if you're not pursuing satisfaction in God, if you're not experiencing a significant measure of deep joy in God, you can't love people. That's today's message. That's what I have to establish yet.

So the place we're going is this. The unwasted life, the life that really counts, is a life lived to make Christ look magnificent by being satisfied in Him more than anything else, which overflows to meet the needs of others. That's the summary of my two talks.

So let's go there. And here's the way we're going to do it. My point is going to be that the power and the freedom to love other people is being satisfied with all that God is for you and all that God promises to be for you in Jesus.

That's my thesis of this message. You can't love people unless you are satisfied with all that God is and promises to be for you in Jesus. That's the power.

That's the freeing, liberating power to love. And the way we'll do it is by looking first at 2 Corinthians 8 for a few minutes, then Acts 20, 35 for a few minutes, and then close by a whirlwind overview of four passages in Hebrews if there's time. If you have a Bible, you can go with me to 2 Corinthians, and if you don't, I hope

you'll just listen carefully.

So 2 Corinthians chapter 8. I am going here because I'm looking for a definition of love. I want to be biblical. I don't want to just assume that what I just said is all right.

And I'm looking for a source of love. I want to know what it is and where it comes from, because I want to get it. Because I know if there's anything clear in the Bible, it's 1 Timothy 1, 5, the aim of our charge is love from a good conscience and a pure heart and sincere faith.

Everything I'm teaching, Paul says, is aiming at your being a loving person. Or the whole of 1 Corinthians 13, which ends faith, hope, and love. Remain these three.

And the greatest of these is love. I don't want to go there. I'm going to waste my life if I'm not a loving person, if I'm not a loving husband, if I'm not a loving father, if I'm not a loving neighbor, if I'm not a loving pastor, if I'm not a loving embracer of the world.

I have wasted it. So here we are looking for what it is and where it comes from at the first three verses of 2 Corinthians 8, which go like this. We want you to know, brothers.

Now, maybe I better set the stage. The brothers are the Christians in Corinth. Corinth, southern Greece.

And he's going to allude to those who are in Macedonia, which is northern. So he's been there and something amazing has happened among the believers in Macedonia as he was collecting money for the poor saints in Jerusalem. They really responded with amazing generosity.

And he's going to tell that story to motivate the Corinthians. That's what's going on here. We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia.

For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. That's just the first two verses. And drop down to verse 8, if you're looking with me, where Paul gives a name to that.

Experience that they had in Macedonia. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others, namely those Christians in Macedonia, that your love also is genuine. Now I've got a name.

It's called love. All right. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of the others, that your love also, and the word also means what I just described about them is love.

Now I want you to love like that. You love like they love. Now let's go back and see how they loved in verses 1 and 2 again.

We read it, but let's just walk through it. We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia. So God showed up in power.

What happened when grace came down in power? Sovereign grace came. It's like we heard it came and is coming in China. Came into your life.

So what did it do in Macedonia? Verse 2. For in a severe test of affliction, this happens over and over again, that when Christ comes into a person's life, affliction increases. They get persecuted. People reject them.

They make fun of them. They don't want to associate with them anymore. They become weird, believe in that crazy mythological stuff and change in some of their lifestyle that makes people upset, feel guilty.

And so that happened. Affliction came. In a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy, we'll come back to that, and their extreme poverty, here comes the gospel of grace into their lives.

They fall in love with Jesus. And what happens? They're still poor and they get afflicted on top of it. This is not a good text for the prosperity gospel.

Their poverty didn't disappear, at least not right away. And its disappearance was not the foundation of their joy. Neither was the absence of affliction.

So check yourself here. Where's your joy? Is it poverty going away makes me happy and affliction going away makes me happy? If so, you're not like these people. So let's read that again, verse 2. And in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty.

Now, if your joy is not in affliction going away, and your joy is not in poverty going away, what's it in? Grace. God. Verse 1, the grace of God showed up in Macedonia and its effect was joy came in, and that joy wasn't rooted in the absence of poverty, that joy wasn't rooted in the absence of affliction, and the increase of affliction didn't make it go away.

Just like Paul said in Romans 5, we rejoice in our tribulations. I want to be like this, and I'll bet hundreds of you do. I want my joy to be undaunted and undestroyable by material wealth and by persecution or any kind of affliction or hardship.

I want it to be in God. Now, next phrase. For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

So Paul was collecting money for the poor in Jerusalem. We know that from numerous other texts in his epistles. And he said to these poor people who were being persecuted, would you give? Would you be generous? Would you get outside your own little selfish world and minister to the poor in Jerusalem? And they said with joy.

In fact, if you read on, verse 3, For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means of their own free will, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking a relief to the saints. They said, oh, yes, you don't have to twist our arms to give. We want you to take a second offering, Paul, because it is making our day to give out of our affliction and out of our poverty, because our joy is overflowing.

So here's my definition of love from that text. Get other definitions from other texts. But here's my definition of love from that text.

Love is the overflow of joy in God that meets the needs of others. You think that's faithful to the text? Love is the overflow of joy, because that's what it says. In a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy overflowed with a wealth of generosity.

I'm just trying to say what it says. Their joy overflowed in a wealth of generosity. So where does generosity come from? That is, where does love and blessing other people and helping other people and lifting other people and ministering to other people, where does it come from? Joy overflowing in God.

So I've got my answer to my two questions. Now I know what love is, and I know where it comes from. My agenda is set for my life.

There it is. I mean, the Bible is a wonderful book. You don't have to read all of it in order to know what it tells you to do.

This is clear. Grace comes down. It's coming down right now in this room.

The Holy Spirit is here. He's speaking. If I'm in accord with His Word, this is His Word.

Grace is coming down. And if He's at work in your heart, joy is starting to awaken. It's just liberating.

Joy is rising, and it rises to the point where you look around at the people, people you've been mad at, people you envy, and things are changing. I don't want to feel envy. I've got joy in God.

I don't want to be mad or driven by bitterness and anger. All that stuff starts to bleed away. It can even love your enemy.

So I could start my sermon right now. I really could. I think I have made my case that you, the power and the freedom to love other people is being satisfied with all that God is for you and promised is to be for you in Jesus.

I think that's all in verses 1 and 2 of 2 Corinthians 8. But God's Word is big for a reason. And so let's go to Acts chapter 20. Acts chapter 20 is the place where Paul is talking to the elders of Ephesus on the beach in Miletus, giving them final words because he may never see them again.

And he's loved them and spent a couple of years with them. And he has some final words of what they should be like and what they should do and how they should shepherd the church. And here's the way he closes his talk.

And they weep and they kiss him. And he was a much-loved apostle. So I'm at verse 35 of Acts chapter 20 where Paul says, In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way you must help the weak.

This is love. Help the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus.

Now he's trying to motivate them and give them some freedom and some power to do this, love. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Blessed.

You've probably been taught, some of you anyway, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek, blessed are the peacemakers. That word makarios in Greek means joyful, happy, a deep sense of well-being God imparts to you. And then it's used in a lot of places.

And here it's used to describe those who give. It is more happy. It is more satisfying.

It is more, you get a sense of well-being from giving rather than receiving. Now it sure sounds like he's trying to motivate these elders to give. To work with your hands to help the weak because Jesus said, It's more blessed, you'll be happier.

There's a completion of joy in loving. You're happy in God, it starts to overflow and as it overflows, I'm adding this text to 2 Corinthians now, put the two together, as it overflows and others are drawn into it, it

gets bigger. Your joy in God gets bigger as it presses out to draw others into it.

The more you can have your arms around others drawing them into your joy, your joy gets bigger in their joy. You've all tasted this. You know you have.

Even if you're not a believer, you've tasted some form of this. That when you've given yourself just a little bit to bless another person, to help another person, they're getting help makes that initial okayness about you feel bigger. Now, I went to graduate school in Germany for three years and read dozens and dozens of essays on ethics because I was writing a dissertation about love your enemies and its motivation.

Years ago, 1971 to 1974 and over and over and over again, I would read things like, well, reward is certainly promised to acts of love. But if you do them to pursue the reward, you're not loving. I just read that over and over in standard ethical stuff.

Like if you seek your blessing in loving another, it's not love. It's selfish. It's manipulative.

It's using people. I just read it. And being an old Southern Baptist Bible-thumping, Bible-saturated kid, I just kept saying to myself, that doesn't smell right to me.

I just, it doesn't smell right. It doesn't smell like the Bible. And I just think it's a wonderful thing.

You don't need to have a big education to have a good nose. Some of you are super discerning when some teacher in your class says something and you say, that doesn't smell right. And you're way more discerning than many scholars.

So it's not good just to be a smeller. You need to go to the Bible and say, why doesn't that smell right? So I went and I looked at this text. Now, if they're right, if all those ethical theorists are right, that my loving you for my benefit, for my reward, ruins the act of love and makes me a manipulator, then Paul should have written it like this.

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way, you must help the weak forgetting the words of the Lord Jesus. How he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. What he wrote was, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said is more blessed to give.

Because if you remember them, they're going to contaminate you and ruin your act of love, they would say. Because Jesus said, come on, come on, love because you'll get blessed. And either Jesus is a very bad teacher, namely ruining the acts of love he's commending, or the ethicists are wrong.

They are wrong. Paul is saying, if you're on your way to the hospital and you don't know what you're going to say, you just know they've been in an accident, and you don't know if they're going to live or going to die, and all you know is love is driving you there, and you want to help. And you're scared.

And you think, maybe I even shouldn't go, because I don't know what I'm going to say, I don't know if I'm going to be of any use. And Paul says, remember something, remember something, Jesus said, it's more blessed for you to just go in there and give yourself than it is to get the security and safety of just going home and praying. He said that.

Remember that. Which means your mind should work something like this. You walk into the hospital room, and tubes are everywhere, and their eyes are closed.

And you walk over and you put your hand on their arm, and they open their eyes and smile. It will not offend them. This is going to sound just like the rose story last night.

It will not offend them if you say, you know, I didn't know if I should come or not, but I just felt like I would get a great blessing if I could somehow minister to you. It would make me happy if I could strengthen your faith, if I could pray a word of healing into your life, it would make me happy. Just like the rose would make me happy, Noel, if I spend the evening with you.

It's the way love works. Would that person lying there, right there, say, you don't love me, you love yourself. Because it would make you happy to bless me.

They would never say that. In fact, I think, if you ask yourself this question, do you feel more loved when people care for you begrudgingly, or when they care for you joyfully? If they look you in the eye and say, if I could make you happy, if I could relieve your suffering, it would enlarge my joy. They would never say, enlarge your joy.

No, they wouldn't. They would say, you're an unusual kind of person that your joy is found in my joy. Yes, they would.

It is more blessed to give than to receive, because as you extend your joy in God into the life of another person, to try to draw them in, that joy in God gets bigger. So, I conclude, after the second text we've looked at, that the freedom and the power to love other people is being satisfied in God and all that He promises to be for us in Jesus. Because that joy has an expansive force to it.

It wants to get bigger and bigger and bigger, so that my joy in God gets larger when your joy in God increases because of mine spreading to you. That's Acts 20, 35. And now, let's go to Hebrews.

Hebrews, and we'll start at chapter 10. That text was read at the beginning for a reason. Amazing what that text said.

I don't know if you were listening carefully. What that text said was that by faith, God works miracles for you. And by faith, you are cut down, beheaded and sawn into with no miracle bailing you out.

Right in the middle of verse 35 of Hebrews 11, you shift from the miracles happening by faith to the suffering happening by faith. Because faith is being satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus and being assured that's the way it's going to be in the future as His promises come true for me. And by that faith, we sometimes experience miracles like healing, and we sometimes endure suffering for His sake.

That's what that text was about. Now, let's just glimpse in the last five minutes or so that we have chapter 10 and one or two others. Chapter 10, verse 32.

Recall the former days when after you were enlightened, saved, you endured a hard struggle with suffering. So there it is again. You get saved and things go worse.

Yes, they do. I have no promise to any of you that things will go materially or relationally better for you if you follow Jesus. They might go, probably will go worse in many regards.

So no invitation here to an easy life. Just a powerfully significant one. Sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

So some were arrested and put in jail and others associated with them at great risk. Verse 34. For you had compassion on those in prison.

It's very costly. Look what happens. You had compassion.

Now that's love in action. Where did it come from? You joyfully, this is utterly unheard of, you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property. So they said, now some of our comrades are in jail because of their faith.

We're believers. If we go visit them, they will know we're believers and something bad is going to happen to us and our families. Shall we go? Shall we just disappear? No, we won't.

We'll go. And what happens? Their house gets trashed. Or something.

It's called the plundering of your property. And what did they do as they were walking to the jail in love, looking over their shoulder at their trashed house? They sang. Or it says they joyfully accepted the plundering of their property.

I'll tell you, 2012, that's what I want to be. That is so utterly different from every other person on the planet who's not satisfied with God. So the question is, how did they become like that? How might you, in the next five minutes, have such a touch from God that you would be that kind of human being who says, I'm going to the jail to visit my fellow Christians.

I don't care if they trash my house. In fact, if I see them trashing my house, I'm going to sing with Martin Luther, let goods and kindred go. This mortal life also, the body they may kill.

God's truth abided still. His kingdom is forever. I'm going to the jail because I love my friends.

That's the kind of being you want to be. Where did that come from? It's real clear where it came from. We just haven't read it yet.

So let's read it. Verse 34, you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property. Since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one, you joyfully accepted persecution and the trashing of your stuff.

Because you knew my treasure, my inheritance, my God, my Christ is better and abiding. Does that remind you of something like Psalm 1611? In your presence is fullness of joy. It can't get better.

And pleasure is forever. It can't get longer. And here it says, because you knew you had a better possession and an abiding one, love comes from being satisfied in all that God promises to be for you in Jesus.

And I'll tell you, all the voices of advertising on the web and on television are telling you the opposite. Satisfaction is now and here in stuff you can have. And I promise you at age 66, having walked with the Lord a long time, having stuff is not the source of joy.

Knowing Him, being satisfied in Him is. And that joy, when it's full, overflows to meet the needs of others and makes you a loving person. So I'm going to stop here and maybe just put it in a summary statement again.

We could have looked at 11, 24 to 26. We could have looked at 12, 1 and 2. We could have looked at 13, 13 and 14. They all say the same thing, but this is the clearest.

You love people at great cost to yourself because you know, this is what faith is, being satisfied in all that God promises to be for you. So here's my thesis. If you try to abandon your pursuit of full and lasting joy in God, you can't glorify Him and you can't love people.

That's the summary negatively of my two talks. Let's put it positively. If you want to love people, the root of loving people and glorifying God is the same.

God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in Him. And therefore, make it your passion in 2012. I will seek satisfaction in God above all other satisfactions.

I will get on a quest. It costs me my arms and my legs and my eyes. I will get on that quest and find it at any cost.

I'll chop off my hands and gouge out my eyes. I will have this joy because therein is my God made to look really good. And that joy the Bible teaches, 2 Corinthians 8, Acts 20, 35, Hebrews 10, 34.

The Bible teaches that joy in that God is the freedom and the power to die loving people with joy. Oh, this country and this world and your campus needs you to be like that. So let's pray.

Why don't we be quiet for 30 seconds? And you deal with God because in all honesty, we all know we don't delight in Him to the degree that we should. And some of you need to just renounce once for all the idols in your lives and yield yourselves decisively at this moment to Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us that we might come to the treasure God. Perhaps now on the basis of these two messages, three words that I might have said at another time would have stunningly different meaning for you than they've ever had if I say, Happy New Year.

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