

‘Disobedience or law-breaking is not the ultimate essence of evil.’ And: ‘Disobedience to the command of God is not more basic, not more fundamental, not more ultimate than what they [Adam and Eve] desired above God.’ But the apostle Paul says otherwise: ‘For as by one man’s disobedience [Adam] many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [Christ] shall many be made righteous’ (Romans 5.19). Paul does not identify a deeper ‘desiring’ behind disobedience, but Piper’s Christian Hedonism needs this. Piper summed up his Passion address in these words: ‘The ultimate essence of evil is a preference for other things, other people, anything created more than God, that’s the ultimate essence of evil, biblically.’

Our Lord Jesus obeyed God’s law perfectly, and we, who are justified by faith in Christ alone, should strive to do the same (Matthew 5.18-19). ‘O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day’ (Psalm 119.97). But Piper’s interpretation of the first sin is unbiblical and encourages a hedonistic approach to life. According to the Bible, sin is transgression of the law of God (1 John 3.4). So it is disobedience to God’s commandments, not a lack of ‘desiring God’ that is our problem. Piper’s Christian Hedonism is and must be predicated on antinomianism—they stand or fall together.

Conclusion

A fuller evaluation of Christian Hedonism is provided in my book, *Christian Hedonism? A biblical examination of John Piper’s teaching* (2017). It reveals a man-made concept based on an antinomian view of Scripture, a false view of God’s love, an ungodly view of worship, a worldly view of happiness, a twisted view of Scripture, and a wrong view of salvation. Over several decades Piper has preached his false doctrine of Christian Hedonism throughout the world, utilising the Internet to do so. Most alarming is the way he has subtly distorted and misrepresented Scripture. Plausible as his mix of truth and error may seem, we must conclude that John Piper’s Christian Hedonism is a heretical doctrine that has no place in the Christian Church.

For more information

Books

Christian Hedonism? A biblical examination of John Piper’s teaching (2017), ES Williams, Belmont House Publishing

Is John Piper an Antinomian? (2018), ES Williams, Belmont House Publishing

The Pied Piper: Is John Piper and New Calvinism destroying the Church? (Dec 2017), Enoch Burke, Burke Publishing

YouTube videos

John Piper in the Dark

Piper’s Journey into Hedonism

The Folly of Christian Hedonism

Is John Piper an Antinomian?

John Piper’s Hero: C.S. Lewis

Articles

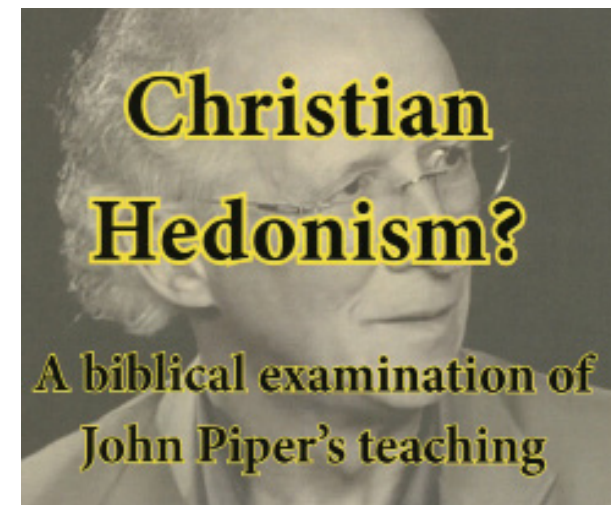
‘Cracking the Insidious Code’ series (2017-18), published in *English Churchman*, and available from therealjohnpiper.com

Websites

[New Calvinist.com](http://NewCalvinist.com)

[The Real John Piper.com](http://TheRealJohnPiper.com)

Written by ES Williams, Belmont House Publishing, May 2018.
www.belmounthouse.co.uk



John Piper’s charismatic personality and powerful preaching style have made him extremely influential among evangelical Christians and especially among young people. His bestselling book, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (1986), has been called a 20th-century classic that changes lives. Some reviewers even declare that, next to the Bible, *Desiring God* is the most life-changing book they have ever read. This is the book that introduced Piper’s novel philosophy of ‘Christian Hedonism’ to the Christian world, summed up in his phrase, ‘God is most glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in Him.’ At the 1997 Passion Conference, Piper explained his philosophy to thousands of young people. He enthusiastically declared: ‘If this is true, that God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in Him... then the vocation of your life is to pursue your pleasure. I call it Christian Hedonism.’ He insists he is a Christian Hedonist ‘not for any philosophical or theoretical reason, but because God commands it’ (DG, p25).

Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist

In a perceptive review of *Desiring God*, Pastor C.W. Booth of The Faithful Word.org, comments: ‘While studying philosophy books, both Christian and secular, Dr Piper states that he hit upon the idea of Christian Hedonism and then turned to the Bible to see if it could be supported... This book disappoints

the discerning Christian on many levels. The entire premise of the book is built primarily on an extra-biblical creed, derived from a single question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism.’

The review concluded: ‘*Desiring God* is not really a book about having joy in God, it is a call for all Christians to become hedonists. In so much as the book has only secular philosophy, edited creeds, and misinterpreted Scripture supporting it, the philosophy of “Christian Hedonism” is truly unworthy of further attention by the church... This reviewer strongly recommends that young Christians avoid this book, and its subject-philosophy altogether’ (Reviewing Titles from Dr John Piper, 2002, by C.W. Booth).

Despite his huge popularity, there are those who believe that Piper is compromising the Christian Faith. While many Christians sense that there is something seriously wrong with combining the Christian Faith and the worldly philosophy of hedonism (pleasure-seeking), few understand why Christian Hedonism is a false doctrine.

Cracking the Insidious Code

In a series of articles, ‘Cracking the Insidious Code: John Piper’s *Desiring God*’, Pastor Michael Butler, of Fellowship Bible Church in Carson City, Nevada, explains the method of philosophical argumentation known as ‘recursive logic’, which makes it difficult to detect error within the book. Simply stated, Piper’s recursive logic works by enticing his reader to first give up a little grain of truth in chapter one, and then to give up two grains of truth in chapter two, and four grains in chapter three, and so on. By the time the reader arrives at the end, he has given up more truth to Piper than he has realised. In fact, the reader may leave the boundaries of Scripture and be no longer able to discern truth from error.

Manipulating Scripture

Christian Hedonism is a false doctrine that combines the philosophy of hedonism with the Christian Faith. To legitimise this syncretism, Piper misuses Scripture to create a new, conscience-binding commandment, ‘Delight yourself

in the Lord’, from Psalm 37.4, and tells Christians that the vocation of their life is to seek maximum pleasure in God or risk His grave displeasure (DG, p9). Another ‘proof text’ Piper often misuses is Deuteronomy 28.47-48, which he calls a terrible threat to all who will not be happy (DG, pp293-4). In a keynote address to the New Canaan Society in 2015, entitled, ‘It Is Right to Live for Maximum Pleasure: Eight Reasons from the Bible’, Piper dealt with Deuteronomy 28.47-48 and made the amazing statement: ‘You go to hell if you are not happy in God.’ A mere glance at verses 15 and 45 shows that Piper’s interpretation is false and misleading. Deuteronomy 28 is about obedience to God’s commandments, not about enjoying God, as Piper wants us to believe.

Piper manipulates Scripture to make the claim that the apostle Paul was a Christian Hedonist (DG, p122). He even claims, in his ‘Ask Pastor John’ interviews, that the Lord Jesus Himself was a Christian Hedonist: ‘So, my answer is yes. Jesus was a Christian Hedonist. He is today a Christian Hedonist... Jesus was the best Christian Hedonist who ever existed... (APJ, episode 998, 3 Feb. 2017).

The Happy God

Piper confidently declares, ‘the foundation of Christian Hedonism is the happiness of God’ (DG, p33). Though none of the serious English translations of Scripture refer to God as ‘happy’, Piper’s Christian Hedonism demands the ‘happy God’. With a clever, quote, ‘digging up’ of Scripture (others might call it a clever manipulation of Scripture) the ‘blessed God’ of Scripture is transformed into the ‘happy God’ of Christian Hedonism. He makes no attempt to explain the difference in meaning between ‘blessed’ and ‘happy’. In Scripture ‘happy’ always refers to human beings who are experiencing a pleasant emotion in favourable circumstances; it is never used of God (*The Pleasures of God*, 1991, p23).

Love

In pursuance of his philosophy of Christian Hedonism, Piper says that ‘ethicists have tended to distinguish these two forms of love as agape and eros... but conceptually both resolve into one kind of love at the root. God’s agape does not “transcend” His eros, but expresses it’ (DG, p124fn). This is

vital to his Christian Hedonism, as eros love is fundamentally self-seeking or hedonistic.

Piper insists that all love, as it is expressed in good deeds, is and should be motivated by the pursuit of pleasure. By this he means that the only love of God and the only love of man that will please God are both at root erotic, motivated by self-pleasure. While he acknowledges agape and eros as different Greek words, he denies that they distinguish between two very different concepts of love. Piper simply rejects the New Testament understanding of ‘agape love’ (sacrificial and self-giving), to promote his hedonistic view of love. So Piper coins a new definition of love, one that combines agape and eros (despite not one mention of eros in the New Testament) — ‘holy, divine eros’.

Antinomianism

Piper’s commitment to antinomianism (an age-old heresy) is examined in my book, *Is John Piper an Antinomian?* (2018). In the ‘Ask Pastor John’ interviews, he responded to the straightforward question, ‘Are Christians under the Ten Commandments?’ His answer was unequivocal: ‘No! The Bible says we’re not under the law’ (APJ, 7 Aug, 2010). Piper relied on what many see as the proof text for antinomianism, Romans 6.14: ‘For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.’ But he used only the second part of the verse, out of context, and ignored the first: ‘For sin shall not have dominion over you’.

Reformed biblical Christianity rejects antinomianism—universally defined as the belief that God’s moral law (the Ten Commandments) is not binding on Christians as a rule of life. Yet answering a question about antinomianism (APJ, episode 366, 18 June 2014), Piper claimed that the word is not defined enough for him to respond, and listed a series of absurd definitions to muddy the waters. He failed to affirm that obedience to God’s moral law as a rule of life is fundamental to living a sanctified Christian life.

Speaking at Passion 2017, Piper openly revealed his opposition to law-keeping. He said that obedience to God’s moral law is secondary to seeking pleasure in God. He declared: