

### Where can I find lasting pleasure?

Okay, well, let me draw you together again. And it's time for our big question of the night, so I hope you're ready for this. The big question we've chosen tonight is: where can I find lasting pleasure?

Now, I don't think it would take a genius to work out, if you walked along the local high street with a video camera and asked people at random, 'Do you want to be happy?', it would not take a genius to work out what people would say to you. The answer would be, 'Yes, you strange person.'

No-one's ever going to say to you, 'No, no. I really want to be miserable all my life.' But, of course, there's a difference, there is a difference between wanting to find pleasure and happiness and knowing where to find it.

Now, we've already seen tonight that Jesus is making an outstanding claim to be the bread of life. And he has promised that whoever comes to him will not hunger or thirst again. But the implication of that is that until we come to know Jesus personally, until we come and put him in charge, come as we are, with our past, but come as we are and put him in charge and follow him personally, then we will still hunger at a very deep level. Now, let me think that through with you. What does that mean, and what doesn't it mean?

Does that mean that you cannot have fun without following Jesus? Well, of course you can have fun without following Jesus. But we're not talking here about short-term fun. We're talking about long-term deep joy, and there's a difference. And Jesus is saying that if we want to experience what we were designed to need and designed to experience, that is, deep joy that lasts forever, that only he can provide it. 'Cause he is the bread of life, and he promises that whoever comes to him will never hunger again. So until we come to Jesus personally, we will always hunger.

Now, I don't know if you're the kind of person that can relate to this. I don't know if you're the kind of person that has been trying to find joy, or meaning or significance or that lavish, lasting, extravagant love elsewhere, but you've still got deep down, you know, when you stop running on the treadmill of life, deep down you know there are hunger pains because you haven't yet found what you're looking for. Well, if that is you, can I encourage you to avoid two really popular, but two very different ways that you can live your life from this point? What are they? Well, here you go.

One way you can live your life from this point is to keep on telling yourself that around the next corner you will find what you want. So it might be the next job, or the next relationship, or the next sofa, or the next shopping trip, or the next... I don't know you, but you keep on telling yourself, 'It's just around the corner. I can find something that will really meet my needs at a deep, deep level.' But if you do that, Jesus says you will simply become restless. 'You will flit from one thing to the next, and you will never really find what you are looking for because I am,' Jesus says, 'the bread of life.' Now, that is one dangerous path you can take.

Another dangerous path you can take is the one where you just say, 'Well, I don't think it is out there.' It's not so much the seeker after all this stuff, you just settle down. And do you know people like that? They've tried various stuff, but they've become disillusioned, and they just think, 'Well, that's just life. It's not going to get any better than this.' And you ask them a question, and you say to them, 'How are you?' And they say, 'I'm fine. Yeah. I'm okay.'

Well, my question to you is this: what if life could be better than just 'fine'? You know, what if life could be better than simply, 'I'm okay'? What I would encourage you to do is to believe the promise of Jesus, where he says, "I am the bread of life, and he who comes to me will never hunger again."

Now, there is a great dimension in the future to look forward to. Becoming a Christian is not pain-free. It is a tough way to live. But even now, Jesus says, at a deep, deep level we can have pleasure that can last for ever. Now, what does that not mean? Let me tell you what it does not mean. Becoming a Christian does not mean withdrawing into a cave, you know, switching off all the lights, sitting on your own with your legs crossed and going, 'Mmmm!'

You know, that's not what it is. That's not what it means to find pleasure in Jesus. It doesn't mean that we stop enjoying the good gifts that he has given us, but what it does mean is this: it means that we can enjoy him, and then enjoy the good gifts as they were intended to be enjoyed. So if we want to find lasting pleasure, what I encourage us to do is to believe the promise of Jesus. Come as we are and follow him every day of our life.

Well, see what you make of that on your tables. Spend a few minutes talking on that, and then we'll see how we get on.

Identity – Who is God? Who are we?

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