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The Things Of Earth: Treasuring God By Enjoying His Gifts



Synopsis

The world is full of good things. Ice-cold lemonade. The laughter of children. College football. Scrambled eggs and crispy bacon. But what happens to these earthly pleasures when Jesus shows up? Do the things of earth grow strangely dim? Or does he shine in all thatâ€™s fair? In this book, Joe Rigney offers a breath of fresh air to Christians who are burdened by false standards, impossible expectations, and misguided notions of holiness. Steering a middle course between idolatry on the one hand and ingratitude on the other, this much-needed book reminds us that every good gift comes from the Fatherâ€™s hand, that Godâ€™s blessings should drive us to worship and generosity, and that a passion for Godâ€™s glory is as wide as the world.

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Customer Reviews

The vision of the Christian life expounded in Joe Rigney's The Things of Earth* is the long awaited climax of a train of thinking that I was first exposed to in a Seminary class with Joe on the Theology of Jonathan Edwards. The second round of interaction I had with Joe's thesis can be found in a

class he gave on the topic at Bethlehem Baptist Church as well as a chapel message and sermon (both of which can be found by searching for "Joe Rigney" on Bethlehem's website). Many believers (myself included) have had their world's rocked by John Piper's claim that: "God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him." This claim can be found in all of Piper's dozens of books and is expounded most comprehensively in "Desiring God" where the term "Christian Hedonism" is unpacked and defended at length. Like me, Joe Rigney considers himself a Christian Hedonist. He has devoted his entire life to being as happy as he can possibly be, in God. Like Piper, Joe believes with all his heart that the two "ends" of pursuing God's Glory and our own joy need not be pitted against each-other. They are one. Yet Piper's thesis has left many (myself included) unsure of what to do with creation. The call to be happy in God strikes a deep cord in our souls, but leaves us unsure of how to relate to the stuff of earth. Should we feel guilty when we enjoy a delicious meal and are not constantly feeling like we are "enjoying God" as we eat? Do we have to consciously think about "enjoying God" while we make love to our spouses? For Piper, (who actually writes the forward to Joe's book), the gifts have often been treated as a medium on the way to God while prayer, singing and Bible reading are more "direct" approaches to enjoying God.

There are different books and different authors that have a certain type of effect on me. Some primarily increase my knowledge and understanding with clarity and conviction. Some primarily stir my affections. But there are some who not only do both of these things, but they make me want to live. And by that I mean that they make me want to live a certain type of life, to be a certain kind of man, to live life to its fullest in a God-oriented, Christ-exalting way. These books and authors (e.g. C.S. Lewis, Jonathan Edwards, N.D. Wilson, Andrew Peterson, and others) have a certain texture that I have a hard time even putting into words. I just recognize them when I see them. Joe Rigney is in that category. Perhaps partially because he gleans all the right things from many of these authors I listed above! Rigney has wrestled with and then articulated the very thing that many "Christian hedonists" have been struggling with for many years now, but to no avail. And he has done so in an articulate, sometimes humorous, always clear, and thoroughly biblical way. The bottom line: this book has literally been one of those "turning-point" books in my life. That happened in college first with Mere Christianity, then Desiring God, then The End For Which God Created the World, and many others. I can look back and pinpoint these turning-point books and I believe this will be one of them. If you want to think about how to live life in a way that both glorifies God and enjoys His gifts, buy this book. You won't regret it. I'll leave you with a quote: "When we love God supremely and fully, we are able to integrate our joy in God and our joy in his gifts, receiving the

gifts as shafts of his glory.

I am grateful to have received a free copy of this book from Crossway Publishers and Net Galley in exchange for a review. Have you ever heard of the term "Christian Hedonism?" Well, that is the concept for this book. John Piper formed this concept and has developed it into a strong Biblical theme for the Christian's Life. Joe Rigney has taken the concept and written an entire book on it to bring us to a point of discussion within the Christian religious world. The thought process is this, God created and saw that it was good, so why do we not embrace the things God created and enjoy them 100%? Maybe you are like me and the term "Christian Hedonism" turns you off. You have strong feelings that this is something evil or to be avoided. It just sounds wrong. But John Piper assures us that, "the very heart of Christian Hedonism, textually, is found in Philippians 1:19-23, where Christ is most magnified in our dying, because we treasure Christ so supremely that we call dying gain--because we get more of Christ." He then goes on to say, "The weakness of this emphasis is that little space is devoted to magnifying Christ in the right enjoyment of creation and culture." So, Joe Rigney takes Piper's teaching and gives us work that reminds us that Creation is Good. God is the Creator and what He Created He intended for good and for our enjoyment. So, why is it that we don't enjoy? Why is it that we instead tend to make idols of material things instead of enjoy them how God intended for us to enjoy them? I don't agree with everything that Rigney has written, but he sure has given me pause to stop and look at the Things of Earth in a different way and in a way that will make me enjoy God's creation even more.

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