

Getting THE Most FROM God

(but not how you might think!)

Discussion Guide

Introduction

Revell starts off by asking: *“It seems like everyone wants to hit the heavenly lottery.”*

- ◊ Have you ever met someone who seems to have that mindset—always looking for financial and material “blessings” from God?
- ◊ How do you react to their ambitions?
- ◊ Do you think their expectations are justified or realistic?
- ◊ Why do you suppose they hang on to such hopes?

On the back cover he says: *“Millions of people around the world are sucked in by the claims of greedy televangelists who promise them perfect health and incredible wealth if they will just ‘have enough faith.’ But those claims are lies.”*

- ◊ What is your reaction to that?
- ◊ Do you think his observation is accurate?
- ◊ Why or why not?

On page 6, Revell says that the passages in the book suggest that the Bible promises God’s people a number of things, including

- * the desires of our hearts;
 - * joys and pleasures;
 - * absolute and ultimate victory over Satan;
 - * extended family, houses, and land.
- ◊ When you first read that list, what was your initial reaction?
 - ◊ Did this list strike you as unrealistic and far fetched?
 - ◊ Did it seem like these were bizarre promises?

On page 7, Revell says that those promises don’t come as a result of merely asking for them, but that they are conditional and that God doesn’t give the greatest rewards to those who specifically ask for them. What was your reaction when you first read that?

Revell talks about his personal experience with a “prosperity gospel” televangelist.

- ◊ Have you personally seen any evangelists on TV who fit this profile?
- ◊ Have you heard similar televangelists promise financial prosperity if you sent them money and had enough faith?
- ◊ What is the most extreme example you have personally witnessed?
- ◊ What was your reaction?
- ◊ Do you think they are sincere in their beliefs?
- ◊ What do you think is their motive for making such claims?

Do you know of anyone who has sent money to a televangelist because of such claims? If so, have they experienced miraculous healing or received a financial windfall as a result?

Did the Introduction raise your curiosity enough to read the rest of the book? Did it leave you with a sense that Revell might have “something up his sleeve?”

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Chapter 1—The Desires of Your Heart

Revell starts off by referring to Psalm 37:4: “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

- ◊ When you first read that what did you think?
- ◊ Does this sound like an unusual or unrealistic promise?

On page 12, he lists “dark” desires of the heart: sensual lusts, greed, and the pursuit of recognition and praise.

- ◊ Do you agree that these desires are indeed dark? Why or why not?
- ◊ Is it possible to have any of these desires in a good sense?

Revell follows up with a list of appropriate desires—the desire for: inner peace, harmony, financial stability, joy, and true love.

- ◊ Do you agree that these are appropriate?
- ◊ Have you ever found yourself deeply desiring—or even sensing a deep need for—any of these?

From your observation, what are some ways some people try to secure these?

On page 18 Revell lists some common delights. What are some things that might be added to the list?

Do you agree with his conclusion that cultivating a genuine delight of any kind takes an investment of time? What about his comparison to delighting in a relationship, and investing time in that relationship accordingly—do you think that is a fair comparison?

Revell makes the connection that to cultivate “delight” in the Lord requires an investment of time in that relationship—how did that strike you? Does it seem odd or strange to you to think about cultivating a relationship with God?

On pages 21 and 24, Revell suggests that in order to truly delight in the Lord requires a significant time set aside regularly for studying the Bible and praying.

- ◊ Do you think that prospect is appealing to most people?
- ◊ Why or why not?

On page 27, he lists what the Bible calls the “fruit of the Spirit:” love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

- ◊ In your opinion, are most people around you genuinely experiencing most of these on a regular basis?
- ◊ If not, why not?
- ◊ If they found out that they could truly incorporate these into their lives on a daily basis, do you think they would be interested?

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Chapter 2—Full Joy and Pleasures Forever

The passage for this chapter is *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* (Psalms 16:11 ESV). What is your initial reaction to that passage? Does it seem odd to associate joy and pleasure with God.

What kinds of activities do you most associate with joy? What kinds of things in life threaten to steal our joy?

On page 32, Revell lists several things often associated with pleasure—would you add anything to the list?

Revell indicates that the picture of joy from the passage is one of taking in so much joy that you are filled up to capacity. He then describes the “pleasure” from this passage as experiencing something sweet forever. Have you ever imagined having so much joy and pleasure?

People around us are trying desperately to find joy and pleasure. How do they usually try to reach this level of joy and pleasure?

- ◊ What are some of the ways television commercials say these can be achieved?
- ◊ How do your friends try to find joy and pleasure?

On page 36, Revell makes the point that David chose to worship only one God, contrary to the culture of the day. He then describes idolatry as placing our primary faith (our trust), focus (on authority), and affection on someone or something other than God. Most of us don’t have little statues in our homes that represent various gods, but do you agree that we can be inclined to place our faith, focus, and affections on things other than the God of the Bible?

- ◊ What are common objects of people’s trust?
- ◊ Who (or what) do people look to as the ultimate authority in their lives?
- ◊ What are the things in life that often become the object of people’s affection?

In the passage from Psalms, David indicates that he found a “safe refuge” in God.

- ◊ What are some things that threaten people today—things from which they might seek refuge?
- ◊ What do you think of that notion of finding refuge in God?

On page 43 Revell points out that David took great delight in the saints. Then he suggests that it might seem odd to associate delight with saints today.

- ◊ Do you agree?
- ◊ Why or why not?

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Chapter 2—Full Joy and Pleasures Forever (cont.)

He says: “There are plenty of churches that are filled with a majority of people who are pursuing their own agendas and have no interest in directing their faith, focus, and affection to the Lord. Church, for them, is a place where religious people gather to enjoy religious music, hear religious messages from a religious preacher, and if absolutely necessary, participate in a few token religious activities.”

- ◇ Have you ever experienced a church like that?
- ◇ Do you think his observation is exaggerated or pretty accurate?

He goes on to say: “Please trust me when I tell you that there is no describing the pure delight that comes from being with others who sincerely love God and love each other, and who are committed to striving to grow together in Him.”

- ◇ Have you ever encountered a church like that?
- ◇ Has it been your experience that this type of church is common or uncommon?

Revell points out on page 45 that David sought counsel from God, and that today many look more to Oprah and Dr. Phil than to God for direction. Do you agree?

His last point of the chapter emphasizes that “full joy” and “eternal pleasures” are truly found by living in God’s presence, suggesting an ongoing relationship with Him. He contrasts that with people’s tendency to think of God as the One who they run to in emergencies or when they have a deep need. Do you know of people who seem to view God this way?

On page 48, he suggests that some view God as a heavenly fireman or EMT who rescues them in times of trouble, or a divine Santa Claus who grants wishes.

- ◇ Do you think his description is harsh?
- ◇ How do most people you know view God—as One in whose presence they want to live, or as One who is there primarily to help them?

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Chapter 3—Absolute Victory Over Satan

Revell starts this chapter by suggesting that there is clear evidence of Satan’s activity all around us—in our culture, our entertainment, the deterioration of our families, and in the increase of terrorist activities.

- ◊ Do you think he is exaggerating?
- ◊ If not, what examples of the enemy’s activity do you see?

On page 55 he suggests some Christians seem to approach Satan in an attack mode—then on 57 he suggest that some act as if they are, “Christian versions of Rambo, faces painted with some sort of spiritual camouflage, storming the gates of hell and single handedly wreaking havoc on the forces of evil.”

- ◊ Have you met people like this?
- ◊ What kind of impression did they make on you?
- ◊ Did they strike you as being emotionally stable?
- ◊ Did they seem successful in overcoming obstacles and having victory over their challenges?

On page 57, Revell says, “Satan eats such self-styled ‘warriors’ every day for lunch.” From the paragraph before that statement, on what biblical principle does he base his claim?

On pages 56 and 57, he says that the Bible teaches ultimate victory is not tied to individual efforts, but to the corporate body, the church.

- ◊ How did you react when you read that?
- ◊ Is it consistent with the claim of Christ in the passage quoted at the beginning of the chapter?

Starting on page 58, Revell says that Jesus ties the founding and growth of the church directly to the understanding that He is the ultimate King of the universe. How did that strike you when you read it?

He points out that the people in the first century saw kings as a combination of majesty and deity, as exercising absolute authority, and as possessing ultimate ownership.

- ◊ Do you think people in today’s society would be willing to revert back to such a monarchy in our own government?
- ◊ How would you like to live under that kind of ruler?
- ◊ What are some of the potential abuses that could result from that view of leadership?

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Chapter 3—Absolute Victory Over Satan (cont.)

He then suggests that the proper view of Jesus is that He is indeed the true King of the universe and that He truly deserves our recognition and submission to Him as such.

- ◇ How would most of the people you know react to that expectation?
- ◇ Do you think it is realistic to expect people to bow before Him, to submit to His authority in every aspect of life, and to recognize that He is owner of all of their possessions?
- ◇ How do you react to that expectation?

Revell then states that a true church, as Jesus designed it, is made up only of people who sincerely recognize and submit to Him as the true King, not only of the universe, but of their lives.

- ◇ Does that seem extreme to you?
- ◇ How many churches do you know where most of the people who attend are actively trying to submit all that they are and have over to Jesus as King?

He says a true church, one that is made up of those who recognize and submit to the Kingship of Jesus, is the kind of church that experiences ultimate victory over Satan.

- ◇ Can you point to churches filled with families that are being destroyed by divorce, sexual immorality, drug and alcohol abuse, and other weapons of Satan?
- ◇ Would you say those churches are made up primarily of people who are recognizing and submitting to Jesus as the True King of their lives?
- ◇ According to Revell, would those be examples of true churches as Jesus designed and defined it?

On page 67, he says some people seem to view Jesus merely as one who rescues them when they are in need—do you think that is an accurate observation? If so, why do you suppose those people think of Him that way?

He goes on to say that if we truly view Jesus as our King, we will not view Him in a casual way, as if He were our “buddy.” Have you seen this mindset among Christians?

He also says that viewing Jesus as King means yielding to His authority in all things, that the proper response to Him in any situation would be, “Yes, Your Majesty.”

- ◇ How hard is that to actually do?
- ◇ Why or why not?

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Chapter 3—Absolute Victory Over Satan (cont.)

Finally, Revell says that recognizing and submitting to Jesus as King means seeing everything as belonging to Him—our checkbooks, our families, our homes, our very lives. How hard is it to actually do this?

He concludes by reminding readers that Jesus is not a cruel or harsh King, but that He is good, tender, loving, compassionate, gracious, and forgiving. How would that affect the way people view Him as King?

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Chapter 4—Expanded Family, Houses, and Land

When you first read this chapter title, and realized Revell was suggesting that God promises such things, what was your initial reaction?

What was your reaction when you read the passage where Jesus gave the context?

Revell suggests on page 76 that preachers may not be focusing on this passage because of the sacrifice mentioned at the beginning and end of the passage—leaving loved ones to follow Jesus and experiencing persecution.

- ◇ Have you heard much emphasis on this from popular televangelists?
- ◇ Have you attended a church where the pastor makes this emphasis?

On pages 76 and 77, Revell describes the “rich young ruler” as the poster boy for righteousness and blessing because he seemed to have it all. Have you ever known someone like that—someone who seemed to have everything from a financial, spiritual, and social standpoint?

He goes on to suggest that this man was practicing an “empty religious ritual,” that he was devoting his life to maintaining an external set of religious standards “without embracing the heart—the very Person—behind those standards.”

- ◇ Have you known people who seemed more devoted to religious activities and rituals than to a relationship with God?
- ◇ Have you personally ever been caught up in that mindset?

On page 78, Revell says the young religious ruler seemed to sense that something was missing, and that this was what likely led to his conversation with Jesus.

- ◇ Have you ever known anyone who could relate to this man’s frustration?
- ◇ Have you personally ever experienced any frustration from merely going through the religious motions?

On page 79, he suggested that sometimes, the ones who “attend the most church services, put the most in the offering plate, and are serving on the most church committees,” are the ones viewed as most spiritual.

- ◇ Do you know people who seem to define their spiritual maturity by their level of religious activity?
- ◇ Have you ever been tempted to embrace that mindset?

Revell points out that the rich, religious man in this account placed more of his faith, focus, and affections on his personal wealth and possessions—that he was clinging to his riches and it was too difficult to let go. Do we see that very much in today’s society?

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Chapter 4—Expanded Family, Houses, and Land (cont.)

He then points out that it is easy to cling to earthly treasure and difficult to view Jesus and His Kingdom as true wealth.

- ◊ Do you agree?
- ◊ If so, why do you think it is so difficult to view Jesus and His Kingdom as true wealth to be desired above all else?

Revell makes some pretty strong statements on 82 and 83. Quoting Matthew 16: 24-26, he suggests that truly following Jesus requires a full surrender of everything we are and have over to Him.

- ◊ How does that strike you?
- ◊ Does that seem extreme?
- ◊ What if he is right—what would that mean for us?

He goes on to point out that the passage says anyone who wants to follow Jesus must be willing to die for Him.

- ◊ Are we hearing that message from pastors very often today?
- ◊ If not, why do you think that is?

On pages 88 and 89, he quotes passages that indicate personal surrender and sacrifice of everything over to Jesus are prerequisites for eternal life.

- ◊ Have you heard that emphasis before?
- ◊ What is your reaction to that?

He also points to the blessings of being part of a vibrant community of those who are also following Jesus.

- ◊ Do you know people who seem to be enjoying that level of relationship?
- ◊ Have you ever personally been a part of such a community?

Revell closes with the account of a TV show he watched as a child in which a monkey was trapped because it refused to let go of its new-found “treasure.”

- ◊ What did you think of the illustration?
- ◊ Do you know people who seemed trapped by their treasures?
- ◊ Have you ever been ensnared by your own treasures (or the pursuit of them)?
- ◊ How did you escape?

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Conclusion

In the opening paragraph, Revell suggests that God doesn't so much reward those who earnestly seek rewards, He rewards those who earnestly seek Him, and that in reality, He is the reward.

- ◇ Do you know many people who value God as a reward to be sought?
- ◇ Why do you suppose He is not so highly regarded as such?

After referring to the relationship we can have with God, on page 96 he makes the following statement:

This relationship was made possible by the sacrificial death of the King. Jesus willingly and lovingly paid the penalty for our sin, a price we could never pay, when He gave Himself over to be crucified. Our sin—our insistence on running our own lives, doing things the way we choose, rejecting His authority and disobeying His commands—has separated us from God. It made us His enemies, fully deserving of His wrath, and the price for that sin was blood. Jesus, the High King, had no sin, so He offered His own blood to pay for our sin when He died on the cross; and the great news is that He rose again! And according to God's Word, He graciously and willingly forgives the debt for all who will repent of their sin and trust Him enough to surrender their lives over to the King to follow and serve Him.

With this in mind, consider the following questions:

- ◇ When you think that the Almighty King of the universe, because of His love, was willing to pay a penalty on your behalf—a penalty you could never pay—how does that make you feel?
- ◇ Have you ever thought of “sin” as rejecting God's authority or rebelling against Him?
- ◇ How do you react to the idea that we all are enemies of God and deserve His wrath?
- ◇ How do you react to the idea that the Almighty King of the universe died a very cruel death so that we could be delivered from that wrath and enter into a loving relationship with God?

Revell suggests four commands that are necessary to enter into that relationship—on page 97 he says the first is to *repent* of our rejection and rebellion. According to his statement at the top of page 98, what does repenting mean?

On page 98, he says the second command is to *believe*.

- ◇ How does he describe believing in the second paragraph under that heading?
- ◇ Is it enough to have belief about Jesus?

Revell says the third command is to “*call* on the name of the Lord.”

- ◇ What does he indicate that means?
- ◇ From what he says on page 100, who may call on the Lord?
- ◇ How does it strike you that even the most sinful person on earth can call on the Lord and be saved?

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Conclusion (cont.)

On page 100, Revell goes on to say that the fourth command is to *confess* to others that Jesus is Lord (which means King) of our lives.

- ◊ Is that easy?
- ◊ Are any of these easy?
- ◊ But if what Revell reports that the Bible says is really true, how important are these commands?

Where are you right now in your understanding of God and His expectations?

- ◊ Have you already recognized the reality that He is the true King of the universe, fully deserving of our surrender and obedience?
- ◊ Have you already recognized that we, by nature, reject His authority and instead assert our own?
- ◊ Have you already repented of and turned from the sin of rebelling against and rejecting His authority?
- ◊ Have you already called out to Him, indicating that you are repenting of the sin of rejecting Him, and trusting in Him to be your Lord (King) and Savior?
- ◊ Have you already started looking to Him as your true King, willingly and lovingly surrendering your whole life over to Him?
- ◊ Have you already acknowledged His absolute authority and ownership over everything in your life?
- ◊ Have you already told others about your surrender and submission to Him as King?
- ◊ If not, have you reached the point where you are ready to do these things? If so, on pages 102 and 103, what does Revell say you should do?

If that is what you would like to do right now, stop and talk to the Lord about it, following the steps in the book. You might feel a little uncomfortable at first, but understand that God loves you and will warmly receive you, regardless of what you have done, said, or even thought in your mind.

Revell points out on page 105 that some people think because they walked down the aisle of a church at the end of a worship service, prayed a special prayer with the pastor, and got baptized, that they have done all they need to do in order to be saved from hell.

- ◊ Do you know of people who seem to base their relationship with God on such an experience?
- ◊ What does he say about that perspective?

Based on what you have read, how would you say a person puts himself/herself in the best positions to experience God's richest blessings?

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