

When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy

Leader's Guide

Basic Class Structure

During the class:

1. Watch the session from the DVD
2. Discuss the DVD session and the chapter(s) read using the discussion guide or questions of your own.

Before class:

- Encourage each student to read the chapter(s) and answer some of the questions in the discussion guide in preparation for class discussion.
- In addition, you may wish to incorporate the Scripture memory into the class since this is such a vital part of fighting for joy in God.

8-Week Class Schedule

DATE	SESSION TO WATCH ON DVD	BOOK READING FOR NEXT CLASS	SCRIPTURE MEMORY FOR NEXT CLASS
	Session 1: The Fight for Joy is Essential, Part 1	Foreword, Chapter 1-2	Hebrews 10:34
	Session 2: The Fight for Joy is Essential, Part 2	Chapter 3-4	Psalms 37:4
	Session 3: How to Fight and What to Fight for, Part 1	Chapter 5-6	Micah 7:8-9
	Session 4: How to Fight and What to Fight for, Part 2	Chapter 7-8	Psalms 19:10
	Session 5: Strategies for the Fight, the Word	Chapter 9-10	Psalms 119:36; 119:18; 86:11; 90:14
	Session 5: Strategies for the Fight, Prayer	Chapter 11	1 Timothy 4:4-5
	Session 6: Strategies for the Fight, Various Others	Chapter 12	Psalms 40:1
	Q & A with John Piper plus Extra Q & A in the Bonus Material	N/A	N/A

Session 1: The Fight for Joy Is Essential, Part 1

From Session 1 of the DVD

1. Why does John Piper believe that he is on a mission when it comes to the topic of fighting for your joy in God?
2. What four aims does John Piper say that he is not on a mission to do?
3. Why does God do everything he does?
4. Explain the difference between how a microscope and a telescope magnifies an object. Which way were we created to magnify God?
5. How is it loving for God to do all things for his own glory?
6. According to John Piper what does it mean for God to love you?

Session 2: The Fight for Joy Is Essential, Part 2

From Session 2 of the DVD

1. What does John Piper mean when he says, “You glorify what you enjoy?”
2. Why is the fight for joy not peripheral, but essential?
3. According to John Piper what is the true opposite of joy?

Chapter One: Why I Wrote This Book

1. In what ways does indwelling sin oppose and pervert your pursuit of God?
2. What does John Piper mean when he says that Christian Hedonism is not “a lowering of the bar” (not an easy doctrine)?
3. What makes the exciting discovery of Christian Hedonism both liberating and devastating?
4. How does John define conversion? Explain the importance of this definition.
5. What does John Piper say is the aim of this book?

Chapter Two: What Is the Difference Between Desire and Delight?

- 1. Explain why this is an oversimplification: “delight is what we experience when the thing we enjoy is present, and desire is what we experience when the thing we enjoy is not present but, we hope, coming to us in the future”?**
- 2. Why does John Piper say it is important for us to distinguish between desire for God and delight in God?**
- 3. What do desire and delight have in common? Why is this important?**

Session 3:

How to Fight and What to Fight For, Part 1

Chapter Three: The Call to Fight for Joy in God

1. Explain the essence of the fight for joy.
2. Why is the fight for joy so important?
3. Aren't loving God and obeying God almost the same thing? Discuss.
4. Explain the connection and the difference between love for Christ and faith in Christ.
5. What are the five reasons Paul calls the fight for joy a "good fight"?
6. If the nature of joy is spontaneous and the nature of fighting requires planning, then how do we fight for spontaneous joy?
7. Why doesn't successfully fighting for joy give us a place for prideful boasting?

Chapter Four: Joy in God Is a Gift from God

1. "The only virtues God can require of me are the ones I am good enough to perform." Why is this false?
2. "Joy in God is a duty." How do we know that's true? Can a duty be a gift?
3. What is the deepest reason that we cannot rejoice in God.

4. Paul says that we are dead. What does this deadness pertain to and not pertain to?

5. What is the relationship between ignorance and hardness?

6. Does the impossibility of having joy in God lessen or heighten our guilt? Explain.

7. Is repentance a gift, or is repentance something we do?

8. What is the “central mystery of living the Christian life”? What are the “two halves” of the mystery?

9. What distinguishes the new covenant promises from the old covenant?

10. Give five reasons for why believing this matters.

Session 4: How to Fight and What to Fight For, Part 2

Chapter Five: The Fight for Joy Is a Fight to See

1. **What is the connection between inner blindness and idolatry? What are some contemporary examples?**

2. **Why is spiritual seeing so essential to joy in God?**

3. **According to Jonathan Edwards, what are the two ways God glorifies himself toward his creatures?**

4. **"Explain this statement: "All strategies in the fight for joy are directly or indirectly strategies to see Christ more fully."**

5. **Explain what John Piper means when he says that there are "two kinds of seeing" the glory of God. How do they work to sustain our joy?**

6. **If Romans 1:20 is true—"For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made"—how is it that we don't "see"?**

7. **How is this blindness remedied?**

8. **What does John Piper mean that "the glory of God is more ultimate than the word of God"? What is the role of the Word of God?**

9. In the last hours before his death, why was it loving for Jesus to pray that his followers would “see [his] glory”?

10. What does John Piper mean that “seeing and enjoying” are inseparable?

Chapter Six: Fighting for Joy Like a Justified Sinner

1. Since we are sinful people, what is the main obstacle to our joy?

2. Therefore, apart from the cross of Christ, what is the only form of hope that is possible?

3. But we are not without a Savior! What has Christ saved us from?

4. What does John Piper mean when he says, “in a sense Christ died for his own everlasting life and joy”?

5. And what specifically is that joy?

6. Why is it important for Christians to have the gospel preached to them?

7. Explain the doctrine of justification by faith alone and why it is so important in the fight for joy.

8. Explain why it’s crucial that we do not confuse justification and sanctification.

9. Explain what John Piper means by “gutsy guilt.”

Session 5: Strategies for the Fight, the Word

Chapter Seven: The Worth of God's Word in the Fight for Joy

- 1. Why does John Piper say, "If there were no Bible, there would be no lasting joy"?**
- 2. Name some things that lure you away from the Word of God.**
- 3. Why do you think God ordained this form of revelation and even our fight to see and savor him in it?**
- 4. Explain what this means: "The Holy Spirit does not awaken and strengthen faith apart from the word of God."**
- 5. Where does John Piper get the idea that "Through hearing the word, God supplies the Holy Spirit"?**
- 6. Explain how "The word of God creates and sustains life."**
- 7. Explain how "The word of God gives hope."**
- 8. Explain how the word of God gives us "freedom from the enslaving, destructive effect of sin."**
- 9. What does it mean that we should have a "mean, violent streak in the true Christian life"?**
- 10. What strategies have you found effective in waging violent war against sin?**

11. How does the Word set us free from deceitful desires?

12. How does the Cross kill joy-killing sin?

13. How is the devil defeated?

Chapter Eight: How to Wield the Word in the Fight for Joy

1. How do planning and spontaneity relate to each other in the fight for joy?

2. What is your current plan for Bible reading and meditation? In what ways could there be improvement?

3. What is the key to being happy in God?

4. What is the most crucial means of fighting for joy in God?

5. How shall we use the word of God to fight for joy?

6. What does memorization offer us?

Session 6: Strategies for the Fight, Prayer

Re-watch the prayer portion of Session 5.

Chapter Nine: The Focus of Prayer in the Fight for Joy

- 1. When do you find yourself particularly vulnerable to desiring other things besides God?**
- 2. “If we do not pray for spiritual things. . . then probably it is because we do not desire these things.”. How have you seen this to be true in your own life?**
- 3. If “prayer is the measure of the man,” how do you measure up? Are there any changes that you have planned to make? What should we do differently?**
- 4. What’s the connection that John Piper makes between prayer and the relief of the poor?**
- 5. How did the early church pray for joy?**
- 6. According to John Piper, what is the purpose of prayer? Is that how you view prayer?**
- 7. What does I.O.U.S. stand for? What texts are they taken from?**

Chapter Ten: The Practice of Prayer in the Fight for Joy

- 1. What does “pray without ceasing” mean?**
- 2. John Piper says that “if we hope to fight for joy day and night by praying without ceasing, we will need to develop disciplined times of prayer.” What have you found that works well for you?**
- 3. Why does John Piper commend early-morning prayer?**
- 4. How in the world did William Law and other saints rise up early before the invention of the alarm clock?**
- 5. What are some of John Piper’s suggestions for planned meetings with God throughout the day?**
- 6. How are the prayers of believers and unbelievers supposed to be different?**
- 7. What does it mean to pray in the Holy Spirit?**
- 8. How have you found fasting spiritually helpful? Do you have a strategy for fasting?**
- 9. What is the place of corporate prayer?**

Session 7: Strategies for the Fight, Various Others

Chapter Eleven: How to Wield the World in the Fight for Joy

- 1. Explain C.S. Lewis' concept of "transposition." (Think of the orchestra and the piano.)**
- 2. What are the four ways "transposition" is helpful?**
- 3. What is the connection between C.S. Lewis' experience in the tool shed and Psalm 19:1-4 ("The heavens declare the glory of God")?**
- 4. What is the connection between C.S. Lewis' experience in the tool shed and gratitude?**
- 5. How are physical sensations (like sex and food) "sanctified" by the Word of God and prayer?**
- 6. What are ways you have found effective in directly using the world in your fight for joy?**
- 7. John Piper describes many helpful ways to directly wield the world in the fight for joy. What are some of your favorite quotes?**
- 8. How have you found eating right, exercise, and rest helpful in your fight for joy?**

Session 8: Q & A with John Piper

Q & A with John Piper:

1. How do you convince a happy unbeliever that they are not truly and lastingly happy?
2. Can, or how can, a person have a passion for golf and a passion for God?
3. Do we pursue the glory of God in everything we do or do we let everything we do glorify God?
4. What is the role of the world in the fight for joy for a believer?
5. Is affection for God a necessary part of true saving faith?
6. What is God doing in the moment of suffering? How do we help someone understand?
7. How do we pursue our joy in God during the seemingly mindless moments of life?
8. How do we keep the thought of lost rewards in heaven from quenching our joy in God?
9. Could you recommend any counselors or counseling philosophies that would help in the fight for joy in God?

Extra Q & A in the Bonus Material:

10. What makes the discovery of Christian Hedonism both liberating and devastating?
11. How do you define conversion?
12. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the fight for joy?
13. How do you fight for joy in the midst of a crisis or calamity?

Chapter Twelve: When the Darkness Does Not Lift

1. In your own words, explain John Piper's main goal or purpose in writing chapter 12.
2. Can extremely long, dark seasons of the soul in which a person finds himself or herself virtually unable to rejoice in God, His word, or His Son happen to genuine Christians? Why does Piper affirm this, if as he says earlier, "A person who has no taste for the enjoyment of Christ *will not go to heaven*" (p. 34)?

3. Read the quote from Lloyd-Jones on p.211. Think of a few examples of our physical condition impacting, whether positively or negatively, the condition of our souls.

4. Why does John Piper say that “by itself medicine is *never* a solution to *spiritual* darkness?” (212) How, if at all, would one use or recommend the use of medication in the battle for joy in wise, and God-honoring ways?

5. How long did David have to wait God to delivery him from his misery according to Psalm 40:1-3? (214-215) How might knowing this help prepare us for and encourage us in the midst of our own trials?

6. What is the difference between having our assurance rest on Christ’s faithfulness and placing it on our faithfulness? (216)

7. How clear are our minds in the midst of depression and despair? Why would the four pieces of advice that John Piper gives on pp.217-219 helpful in light of knowing how the mind and soul tend to function in times of distress?

8. Read “Fold Not the Arms of Action” on p.219. Taking into account John Piper’s exhortations in the rest of the chapter, explain the difference between patience and inactivity, perseverance and fatalistic indifference.

9. How is unconfessed sin a hindrance to deeper joy?