

Study Guide for *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy* by John Piper

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God created mankind for a purpose: To bring glory to His Name (Isaiah 43:7). How do we glorify Him? For over twenty years, John Piper has argued that the Bible teaches that “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.” That is, we glorify God when we can say with the psalmist, “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:25-26). We show that God is great and precious and trustworthy and beautiful when we live and act and feel in ways that magnify His value compared to the value of the world around us. This is our calling. This is our reason for existence.

Yet we don't wake up spontaneously each day feeling that God is great and marvelous. Quite the contrary. Most mornings we wake up feeling groggy and cranky, acting self-centered and self-absorbed. If we depend on our spontaneous feelings, most of us will spontaneously act like this world is all that is important, that our time and our comfort and our success are the overarching values in life.

So how do naturally self-centered persons live a life of joy in God?

The answer is twofold. First, by a miracle of the Holy Spirit, changing our hearts from within, so that we confess our sinfulness, our lack of delight in God, and trust that Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty we deserve for that sin. This is the gift of faith, of new birth.

But genuine believers in Christ Jesus still generally wake up groggy, cranky, self-centered, and self-absorbed. The Bible does not teach that we are born again and then live happily ever after with continual joy in God. Instead, *believers* are commanded to “Rejoice in the Lord always!” (Philippians 4:4); believers are commanded to “Be transformed through the renewing of your minds” (Romans 12:2); believers are commanded to “Know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Ephesians 3:19). We are dependent upon God for any spiritual good (John 15:5); yet our dependence is not passive. We are actively dependent. We must fight to fulfill the command to rejoice in the Lord. We must fight for joy.

That is the theme of John Piper's 2004 book, *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy*.

As explanation for the purpose of the book, Piper quotes Augustine:

I was astonished that although I now loved you . . . I did not persist in enjoyment of my God. Your beauty drew me to you, but soon I was dragged away from you by my own weight and in dismay I plunged again into the things of this world . . . as though I had sensed the fragrance of the fare but was not yet able to eat it.

This is the air we breathe. This is where most Christians live most of the time. We do not rejoice in the Lord always. Yet we must.

When we find ourselves *not* rejoicing in Him, how should we respond? Should we question our faith?

This book is extraordinarily helpful in this regard. Piper begins by giving us the best introduction in all of his writings to our obligation to delight in God. He shows that the Bible tells us not to

expect this delight to come automatically, just as constant joy in marriage does not come automatically. Instead, we are to fight for joy.

The rest of the book carefully shows what this fight for joy looks like, pointing time again to Scripture as our guide. The bottom line is simple to summarize: Immerse yourself in the Word! Pray! See God in the world around you! But Piper carefully nuances those instructions, discussing both why they are difficult to follow, and the biblical help to using them effectively. For the last several months, our small group has been going through this book. In the process, I have developed a study guide that supplements the book.

Desiring God has a study guide [online](#) that contains questions on each book chapter, along with some questions from the video available on DVD.

This study guide is quite different. Rather than help you understand the book, this study guide aims to help you initially to interact with key biblical texts on the topic, prior to reading Piper. Then, when you read the chapter, you are already familiar with some of the texts, and, like a good Berean, are in position to assess “if these things are so” (Acts 17:10-11).

I encourage you to read this book, and to consider using the study guide as you do so. Ideally, go through the study guide together with a friend.

We are all in a fight for joy. God offers us the greatest joy imaginable in Him – and then He commands us to pursue that joy. Will you fight well – for your joy?

Fighting with you to delight in Jesus above all the world has to offer,
Coty

When I Don't Desire God – Study 1

1. Read Hebrews 10:32-39. The author tells his readers to remember a time of suffering.
 - a) From the text, summarize what had happened with the readers. What had they tried to do? Why had they suffered?
 - b) Could they have avoided those sufferings if they had wanted to?
 - c) What was their attitude towards the sufferings?
 - d) Summarize the principle the readers exemplify, and the author – in verse 35 – applies more generally.
 - e) What are the implications of this principle for the readers – and for us today (verse 36)? Look up the word “endurance” in a dictionary and elaborate on its meaning.
 - f) Verses 37 and 38 are a quotation from Habakkuk 2. Investigate the political climate in which the book of Habakkuk was written. Why did the people of this time need faith? What were they about to go through? What is the implied threat in verse 38? How are these quotes, then, related to Hebrews 10:32-36?
 - g) How does the author summarize the section in verse 39? Considering the last three words, how important is joy in suffering in the Christian life?

2. Read Chapter 1 of *When I Don't Desire God* (If you don't have a copy, the entire volume is available online as a [pdf file](#).) How does our sinfulness keep us from delighting in God above all things?

3. Define "Christian Hedonism."

4. Consider the quotation from Jonathan Edwards on p. 17. Elaborate on what Edwards means when he says, "endeavor to promote spiritual appetites by laying yourself in the way of allurements." What allurements might promote our spiritual appetites?

5. Piper says that Christian Hedonism is not "a lowering of the bar." Why might we think it is? In what sense is it not?

6. Piper says that, in one sense, Christian Hedonism was liberating to him, yet, in another sense, it was devastating. Explain why each is true.

7. Piper defines conversion in an unusual way (p. 15-16). Why is this definition important to his aim in writing this book? Do you agree with his definition? Consider your study of Hebrews 10 above in your answer.

8. Based on this introductory chapter, what do you most want to learn, discover, and apply in our time together? How is this relevant to your life today?

When I Don't Desire God, Study 2

1. Read Psalm 63.

- a) Remember a time when you were exceptionally thirsty. Imagine that time going on for days. Then consider verse 1 again: How much does the psalmist long for God?

- b) Has the psalmist ever experienced God's presence? How do you know?

- c) In which phrases is the psalmist expressing a longing desire for God? In which phrases is he expressing his joy and delight in God? How would you summarize the difference between these?

- d) What does the psalmist do that increases both his delight in God and his desire for God?

- e) What do verses 9 and 10 have to do with the theme of longing for God? How does verse 11 help explain these verses?

- f) Is verse 1 true for you? What can you take away from studying this psalm that will increase your longing for God?

2. Read chapter 2 of *When I Don't Desire God*.

- a) List the verses Piper cites that express a desire for God (p 24-25). Can you say any of these are true for you? Which ones?

b) List the verses Piper cites that express joy in God (p. 25). Can you say any of these are true for you? Which ones?

3. Piper is trying to tease out the difference between desire and delight. His first attempt (p. 26) was the following. Explain why this attempt does not work: “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.”

4. Why does Piper say it is important for us to distinguish between desire for God and delight in God? How do we see the distinction and the inseparability of desire and delight in the way the psalmists speak of the Word of God (p 27)?

5. Evaluate the statement, “I want joy above all things.” In what sense is this biblical? In what sense is it misleading? Why is this important?

6. Why does Piper emphasize pursuing **joy** in God, rather than simply saying, “Pursue **God!**” (There are three reasons on pages 30-31)

7. Answer question 1f again, taking into account what you have read from Piper.

When I Don't Desire God, Study 3

1. Consider Jeremiah 2:11-13.

- a) Given the first half of verse 11, what does "their glory" refer to in the second half?

- b) As He speaks through Jeremiah in these verses, God seems to imply that what His people have done is not only evil and wrong, but also stupid. Why is it stupid?

- c) What do the people think they are gaining by making their own cisterns? What do they actually gain? What do they actually lose?

- d) Why is this evil?

- e) How are we tempted to do the same today?

2. In Philippians 1:21-24, Paul says that he considers dying gain, since he would then be with Christ. The question thus arises: Why not die now? Because, he says, there is fruitful labor for him here.

- a) Before you read verse 25, write down what you would consider fruitful labor for Paul. How would you describe such labor?

- b) Now read verse 25. How does Paul describe his labor? Why doesn't he die?

- c) Reflect on the importance of having joy in our faith.

3. On pages 35 to 38, Piper summarizes the central theme of the book: Why we must fight for joy. Outline his answer to the question. Do you agree with him? Explain.

4. In John 14:15, Jesus says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” Does this imply that loving God and obeying God are identical? (p. 34)

5. Now to love and obedience, add faith. What is the necessary relationship between love and faith? What is the difference between them? (p. 35-36)

6. On pages 38-39, Piper lists five reasons for calling the fight for joy good. List and critique them.

7. On p. 40, Piper asks the question: “How does the fact that joy is a free gift relate to our responsibility to have it?” Summarize Piper’s three-part answer in your own words. (p. 40-44)

8. If we fight for joy and then have it, will we boast in that joy? Why or why not? (p. 44)

9. Given what you’ve learned, summarize in a couple of sentences what the fight for joy consists of. Then evaluate how you’re doing in this fight. With what aspects of the fight do you need help?

When I Don't Desire God, Study 4

1. Consider Jeremiah 31:31-34, the promise of the New Covenant.

- a) What is a covenant?

- b) This new covenant supercedes what previous covenant (v32)?

- c) What reason does God give to explain the need for a new covenant? What was wrong with the old one (v32)? Who was responsible for this wrong?

- d) Summarize the four key provisions of the New Covenant (v33-34).

- e) What sort of behavior is implied for those who are under the New Covenant? How will this behavior compare to that of those under the earlier covenant?

- f) How, then, does the New Covenant solve what was wrong with the previous one?

- g) In light of this, consider: What is the relationship between Christian obedience and divine enablement?

2. Consider this statement before you read the chapter: "The only virtues God can require of me are the ones I am good enough to perform."

- a) Why is the statement appealing? Can you think of counterexamples, of commands that God gives us that we are *not* good enough to perform?

b) Now read Chapter 4 of *When I Don't Desire God*. How does Piper answer the question? Consider in particular his discussion of the command to repent (p. 51-52)

3. a) What is the biblical justification for saying that we must rejoice in God?

b) What prohibits us from obeying that command (p. 48-50)?

c) If we naturally cannot obey the command, is our guilt lessened (p. 50)? Refer back to your answer to question 2. Do you agree with Piper's answer? Explain.

d) How, then, will we ever rejoice in God? In your answer, refer to what Piper calls the two halves of "the central mystery of the Christian life" (p. 52-53), and to Augustine's prayer (p. 53).

4. Summarize in no more than 3 sentences the central message of this chapter.

5. What five reasons does Piper give for saying these truths are vital for us (p. 54-55)? Has a misunderstanding of these truths hindered your Christian walk? Explain.

When I Don't Desire God, Study 5

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-6. In particular, compare verse 4 to verse 6

- a) What type of person is Paul describing in verse 4? In verse 6? How do you know?

- b) How does Paul describe the difference in perception of these two classes of people? What does one group see that the other group does not?

- c) Why does one group see what the other group does not? What leads to the difference?

- d) What is the role of verse 5 in this passage? How does the main point of verse 5 lead in to verse 6?

- e) Using the images of this passage, describe the process of salvation, being careful to identify the actor at each phase.

- f) Consider 1 Peter 1:8 and compare it to this passage from 2 Corinthians. In what sense does *every* believer see Jesus for who He is? In what sense has the believer not yet seen Jesus? What implications does this have for our growth in the Christian life, and for our fight for joy?

2. Now read chapter 5. What is the biblical difference between seeing with our natural eyes and seeing with the eyes of our hearts? How is the blindness of our heart related to idolatry? (p 57-58).

3. What does seeing with the eyes of our heart have to do with joy? How are both related to glorifying God? (p. 58-60)

4. How would Piper answer question 1f above? Do you agree? (p. 60-61)

5. What is the primary way that we see the glory of God in the present age? Why is it important to recognize this? (p. 63-65)

6. What, then, is seeing with the eyes of the heart? Why must we “taste and see that the Lord is good”? (p. 66-68)

7. How are you doing in the fight to see Jesus for who He is? Where does the enemy make inroads? What can you take away from this chapter that will help you in the fight to see?

When I Don't Desire God, Study 6

1. Read Micah 7:1-9.

- a) When the prophet looks at people around him, what does he see? What about when he looks at himself? (verses 1-6)

- b) Given verse 7, where does Micah place his hope? What name does Micah give to God?

- c) Why does Micah address his enemy at the beginning of verse 8? What might his enemy have been saying about him? Do you hear similar voices accusing you?

- d) Is Micah guilty? Does Micah think that God will simply overlook his sins? Or does he think his life will always go smoothly?

- e) What is the nature of the prophet's hope? Indeed, why does he have any hope at all if he is sinful?

- f) What is the parallel for us today? What is the nature of *your* hope? How can you use these ideas in your fight for joy?

2. Now read chapter 6. Summarize Piper's illustration of two possible types of joy among passengers on a ship that is bound to sink. What are the parallels in our lives today? (p.71-72)

3. Pipers says that Jesus "died for his own everlasting life and joy", and that "his joy was blood-bought at the price of his own obedient death." In what sense did Jesus purchase his own joy at the cross?

4. Why is sitting under the public preaching of the Word – and, particularly, of the Gospel – important not only for unbelievers but also for believers? (p.77-80)

5. Why is celebrating the Lord's Supper important in the fight for joy? (p. 79)

6. Define justification. Why is this doctrine of justification key in the fight for joy? How can you apply it to the ways you lose your joy? (p. 73-74, 82-83)

7. How does the confusion of justification with sanctification rob us of joy? How is this related to our "becoming what we already are"? (p.84-85)

8. How would Piper answer questions 1d, 1e, and 1f? (p.87-90)

9. What is cheap grace, and how is the fight for joy different from it? (p.90-91)

10. How will your fight for joy change and be more effective because of this study?

When I Don't Desire God, Study 7

1. Read John 15:4-11.

- a) Describe the image Jesus uses of our relationship to Him.
- b) What is the goal of the vine for its branches? What is the Jesus' parallel goal for His followers? (Note: The goal is stated in several different ways. Consider verses 5, 7, 8, and 11).
- c) Can the branches achieve this goal on their own?
- d) Under what conditions will they achieve it? What do these conditions mean for us? Consider especially verses 7 and 10 in your answer.
- e) From this passage, summarize the role of the Word in the fight for joy.

2. Read pages 95-97 *only*. If our goal is to know God and delight in Him, why is the Word crucial in our fight for joy? (p. 96).

3. In the remainder of the chapter, Piper lists 10 benefits of the Word in our fight for joy. *Before you read the rest of the chapter*, flip through it and write down the 10 benefits. Think a bit about each. Is their meaning obvious to you? Note any questions you may have.

4. Now list the 10 benefits again below, leaving a space after each. As you read the remainder of the chapter, note a verse or idea from each that is new and you need to ponder, or is helpful and you need to use in your fight for joy. Come to the study prepared to share some of these.

5. What is the relationship of the Word to the Spirit, and how does Piper argue for this relationship? (p. 98-99)

6. Why does Piper say on p. 102 that we need to have a “mean, violent streak in the true Christian life”? What is the object of our violence? In what sense is this part of the fight for joy?

When I Don't Desire God, Study 8

1. For our Bible study this week, we'll look at selected verses from Psalm 119. I encourage you to read the psalm in its entirety, though I will draw your attention to only a few verses. After answering these questions, you might want to read or listen to my two sermons on this psalm, preached early in 2005: www.expository.org/scriptureindex.htm

a) Read verses 97 and 103. What is the psalmist's attitude toward God's Word? Why might he have that attitude? How does he act as a result?

b) Read verse 147. What can you discern about the psalmist's mental condition as he rises (note also in this regard verses 82 and 84)? How does he respond to this mental condition? How do you respond to similar conditions? Why does he turn to the word?

c) Read verse 148. When combined with 147, what do these verses tell us about the frequency with which the psalmist goes to the word? See also Psalm 1.

d) Read verses 98 and 99, and note that they are part of the same section as verses 97 and 103, considered above. Those other verses tell us God's words are sweet to the psalmist, but in these verses note that it is not the commandment per se that makes him wise. What leads to wisdom? What is the lesson for us?

e) Read verse 11. The first verb is "stored up" in the ESV, "treasured" in the NAS, and "hidden" in the NIV. Assuming that all three of these translations bring out genuine connotations of the Hebrew word, what is the psalmist doing in this action? How does this relate to keeping him from sinning against God?

f) Read verses 67 and 71. How do we naturally respond to affliction? As the psalmist looks back on his affliction what is his attitude? Why? What is the role of the word in this?

2. Read chapter 8 of the book. Why is spontaneity important in any relationship, including our relationship with God? Paradoxically, what is necessary for such spontaneity to occur?

3. What suggestions does Piper give for helping us to meditate effectively on the Word?

4. Why does Piper talk about human authors in a chapter on fighting for joy with the Word of God? What types of books are important to read, and why? (p. 126-128, 132-134)

5. What reasons does Piper give for church membership? How does he support this biblically?

6. Explain why Luther says, “For I myself . . . owe my [Roman Catholic adversaries] many thanks for so beating, pressing, and frightening me through the devil’s raging.” How does this relate to question 1f above? How does this relate to the use of the Word?

7. How will you put what you’ve learned from this study into practice this week?

When I Don't Desire God, Study 9

1. Read Matthew 6:7-13.

a) Define prayer as best you can, not looking at any reference work.

b) In verses 7 and 8 of the text, our Lord instructs us not to pray like the Gentiles. What characteristic of Gentile prayers does He want us to avoid? What two reasons does He give for this?

c) Verses 9 to 13 are Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer. Note that there is a preface to the prayer, and then, in this account, six petitions. List each of these components. What is the reason for the preface? For each petition, elaborate on what we pray for and why such a prayer is important.

d) How do your prayers compare to the Gentile prayers of verses 7-8? How do they compare to Jesus' example of prayer?

e) Do you want to revise your definition of prayer (from part a) after this study?

2. Read chapter 9 of the book. How does the Westminster Shorter Catechism define prayer? How does this definition compare to the one(s) you wrote above? What phrase does Piper emphasize, and why? (p. 138-9)

3. Imagine you are discussing this study with someone unfamiliar with Piper. You mention praying for joy, and your friend responds, “That’s Christianity lite! You’re just coddling yourself! Look at Jesus: ‘A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.’ To truly be a Christian is to suffer in this life. If you say we should always go around joyfully, what you’re preaching is no different than the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel!” How would you respond? (p. 141-148)

4. How does Piper understand four of the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer in the context of fighting for joy? How does His understanding compare to the answers you gave in question 1 above? (p. 143, 144, 147, 148)

5. In the previous two chapters, Piper has emphasized the importance of the Word in our fight for joy. In this chapter and the next, he emphasizes prayer. In what sense do the Word and prayer work together for our joy? Explain Piper’s illustration of the joy of the shepherds in Luke 2 in your answer. (p. 148-150)

6. What acronym does Piper use as he prays to understand the Word? List the words that each letter stands for, give a Bible verse behind each, and explain why each is important.

7. How will you put what you’ve learned from this study into practice this week?

When I Don't Desire God, Study 10

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14-18.

a) Consider verses 14 and 15. List at least four of the different types of people with problems that Paul mentions. Reflect on times in your life when you have ministered to such people. How do you respond naturally, in the flesh, to such people? How does the prospect of ministering to numerous such people make you feel? If you are going to obey Paul's commands in these verses, what will you need?

b) How is verse 16 linked to the previous two verses? That is: Why does Paul give this command at this point?

c) How are verses 17 and 18 linked to verse 16? What is the flow of Paul's thought?

d) Given your answers above, what does Paul mean by "pray without ceasing"?

e) Now try to paraphrase all five verses, capturing the flow of Paul's thought and the meaning of the different phrases.

2. Read chapter 10 of the book. How would Piper answer questions 1b and 1c above? (p. 155-56)

3. How would Piper answer question 1d, the meaning of praying without ceasing? (p. 156-57)

4. What reasons does Piper give for disciplining yourself to have early morning prayer? How does the quote from William Law elaborate on those reasons? What does this importance imply about discipline in the evenings? (p. 158-62)

5. What places to pray does Piper discuss? What places and times have worked well for you in the past? Does your present place and time work well or not? (p. 162-63)

6. What is the link between discipline in prayer and discipline in the Word? What are the benefits of turning what you read into prayer? (p. 163-67)

7. What are the benefits of using someone else's written prayers as a starting point? Have you done this in the past? If so, what prayers have been helpful? Be sure to read footnote 21. (p. 168-70)

8. Why does Piper believe fasting is helpful? Have you fasted in order to pray and seek God's face? Would you fast differently because of what you read in this chapter? (p. 170-72)

9. Why should we pray for and with others? (p. 172-73)

When I Don't Desire God, Study 11

1. Read 1 Timothy 4:1-5

a) In verse 1, Paul warns Timothy to expect some to depart from the faith through following false teachers, just as Jesus warned (Matthew 24:5) and Paul himself warned elsewhere (Acts 20:29-30). These teachings are ultimately from demons, from Satan himself. What examples does Paul give in verse 3 of the content of these teachings?

b) Doesn't this seem rather minor? Why does Paul make this such a big deal? In your answer, give modern-day examples that are equivalent to this type of teaching. What is at its heart?

c) From the end of verse 3 through verse 5, Paul explains why this teaching is wrong. He makes a statement at the end of verse 3, and then argues for its truth in the next two verses. Lay out the steps in the argument, paraphrasing it in your own words.

d) Optional question: How is this argument consistent with the dietary laws we find, for example, in Leviticus 11? See also Mark 7:1-23 and Acts 10:9-16. My 1998 sermon on Leviticus 11-15 might be helpful: <http://www.expository.org/levitclean1.htm>

e) Now think more broadly of the role of creation in the Christian life. Given Paul's argument in verses 3-5, when and under what circumstances can our delight in creation honor God and lead us closer to Him. When and under what circumstances will delighting in creation dishonor God and lead us away from Him?

2. Read chapter 11 of the book. How does Piper describe both the danger and the positive benefits of delighting creation? (p. 178)

3. Describe C.S. Lewis' analogy of the orchestra and the piano. How is this analogy helpful in thinking about the relationship between our spiritual affections and the physical effects that accompany those affections? (p. 179-82)

4. Describe C.S. Lewis' analogy of the sunbeam in the toolshed. How does this give us insight into the way we can use creation to increase our joy in God? How does this relate to 1 Timothy 4:1-5? (p.183-186)

5. What does Piper mean when he says, "Gratitude is occasioned by a gift, but is directed to the giver" (p. 186)? Why is the distinction important? With this in mind, assume you've been praying for some material thing for a long time, which you now receive. Describe both an improper and a proper way to respond to this answered prayer. (p. 186-87)

6. How does the Word work to sanctify sex and food? (p. 187-88; note especially the six ways that Piper answers this question on p. 188).

7. How does prayer work to sanctify sex and food and other physical pleasures? (p. 189)

8. Give examples of art, music, and literature that have helped you see and feel the glory of God, increasing your spiritual affections for Him and your gratitude to Him.

9. How can music be used the wrong way, not to God's glory? Give an example. (p. 194)

10. What does Piper mean by "joy in the commonplace" and why is this important? (p. 195-97; consider especially the Chesterton quote on p. 197)

11. Consider Clyde Kilby's 11 resolutions on pages 197-99. Pick three that you especially want to put into effect, and explain why.

12. What does Piper mean by the *indirect* use of the world to increase our joy in God? How do the Jonathan Edwards quotes help explain this idea? (p. 199-200)

13. What three indirect ways does Piper say we should use to maximize our joy in God? Which of these are you using effectively now? Where do you need to change? What steps will you take to make that change? How does this change your attitude toward self-discipline? What, ultimately, is at stake?

When I Don't Desire God, Study 12

1. Read Psalm 40:1-3 and Psalm 32:1-7; both are psalms of David.

a) According to 40:2, what was David's situation prior to being drawn up? What do the word pictures he paints symbolize? Have you suffered through similar situations? If so, list some of the factors that led to those situations.

b) In what sense is the situation David describes in 32:3-4 similar? In what sense is it different? Might they both describe the same incident? Have you suffered through a similar situation?

c) What was the solution to the situation in Psalm 32? What conclusion does David draw in verse 6? How can verses 4 and 6 be consistent with each other?

d) What was the solution to the situation in Psalm 40?

e) In Psalm 40, how long did the situation last before it was resolved?

f) What lessons can we draw from these psalms concerning the way we fight for joy in the midst of our own depression. What lessons and warnings can we draw concerning the way we help others fight for joy in the midst of depression?

2. Read chapter 12 of the book. Given the discussion in the previous chapter about the physical causes of our lack of joy, what does Piper think about the use of medication to deal with depression? (209-213)

3. Piper makes a distinction between making “peace with darkness” and being “patient in the hour of darkness.” Explain the difference, in view of your study of Psalm 40. (215-16)

4. Those who are depressed can think they are not saved, even if in the past they have expressed great confidence in their salvation. Piper distinguishes between full assurance of salvation and having faith. Explain the distinction, and how this is helpful when dealing with those who doubt their standing before God. (216)

5. Piper gives four suggestions for how to speak to a depressed person who doubts his salvation. He subsequently draws an implication that suggests a fifth way to speak. List these. Have you found any of these helpful in ministering to others? Or have any of these been helpful as others have ministered to you? What overarching principles do we need to keep in mind when ministering in such circumstances? (217-18)

6. On p. 219, Piper states that “*doing* is often God’s appointed remedy for despair.” Have you found this to be true or false in your experience? He then warns that we must not say, “Just do your duty,” instead making four suggestions about how to speak about activity to the depressed. Why is saying “just do your duty” dangerous, and what are the four suggestions? Would you add to his list? (219-222)

7. Piper discusses the role of unconfessed sin in depression on p. 222-24. Given your study of Psalm 32, do you agree with him? How does Piper use Psalm 19:12-13 in fighting this type of depression?

8. Should we be concerned about Satan's role in bringing about depressing circumstances? What do we need to remind ourselves about in this regard? (224-25).

9. Piper argues that self-absorption is often key in keeping us in a depressed state. How do the promises of Isaiah 58 help us understand this issue? How would answer the depressed person who says, "I can't help others – look, I'm a mess. And don't talk to me about sharing my faith! I hardly feel I have any faith to share. You're just putting a greater burden on me!" (226-29)

10. Piper concludes by underlining the importance of our loving those who are depressed. Consider the Baxter quote on p. 229, and the example of John Newton and William Cowper, as well as your own experience. Look again at question 1e above. How long should we love and encourage the depressed? Why? (229-234)

11. Glance over the entire book again, and your answers to questions in this study guides. What are two or three key ideas you want to take away from this study that will help you fight for joy?