

# OAK HILLS MISSION

Part 5 - To Learn to Know and Enjoy God

TEXT: PSALM 73:24-28 (ESV)



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Overland Park, Kansas

## Oak Hills' Mission

Oak Hills' mission is to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole person in our community and throughout the whole world, equipping individuals and families to:

- **learn to know and enjoy God;**
- respond to Him through authentic worship and godly living; and
- lead others to do the same —all by the grace of God and all for His glory.

## The Chief End of Man

Oak Hills' mission to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole person is so we might equip the people of this church to carry out essentially three objectives. Today we come today to the first—to **learn to know and enjoy God**. This is first because it is crucial for everything else in the Christian life. We take this point straight from the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever." If we're to call ourselves children of God and followers of Christ, we must be engaged in the pursuit of knowing Him. Our text, which we'll read now and discuss later, describes a heart hungry for the knowledge of God.

## Psalms 73:24-28

<sup>24</sup>You guide me with your counsel,  
and afterward you will receive me to glory.  
<sup>25</sup>Whom have I in heaven but you?  
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.  
<sup>26</sup>My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.  
<sup>27</sup>For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;  
you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.  
<sup>28</sup>But for me it is good to be near God;  
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,  
that I may tell of all your works.

## The Scandal of the Christian Mind

To learn to know and enjoy God is to learn to see this world through the lens of His truth. Our chief end, as John Piper modified the great catechism question, is to glorify God **by**

**enjoying** Him forever, adding, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." To enjoy God, we must know Him as He has presented Himself to us in His word. Think about marriage as an analogy. Can the statements, "I don't feel like my spouse has ever really tried to get to know me" and "I believe my spouse deeply delights in me" come from the same person in the same moment? Would you consider a marriage where one or both spouses habitually avoid knowing the other healthy? Or would you, instead, consider such a marriage *scandalous*?

Marriage is not merely an analogy here. God, in His Word, calls the Church the Bride of Christ. We are the object of His affection He is coming to bring home to His glorious Kingdom forever as verse 24 says. We were created to delight in Him with every fiber of our being through worship, prayer and fellowship with other believers, building one another up in Him.

But if we are not coming to know the truth of Who He is in the process, opting instead for a purely emotional response to a felt religion, we will develop a romanticized notion of a God who does not exist in any real sense except in our imaginations. This imagined God will disappoint us. He won't perform as we imagined. He won't bless as we expected. And the reason He won't is because this God we've imagined is a false god.

For this reason, Oak Hills is and will remain by God's grace, deeply committed to doctrinal accuracy and a high view of the Bible. We will be a church that cares about and strives to convey what Scripture teaches. By that same grace, we will seek to dispel and reject trendy or politically correct false notions of God, "for the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." (2 Tim 4:3) Doctrine matters.

If we're to care about doctrine, we must be a church that cares about the development of our minds as thinking Christians. But here the evangelical church has a problem. Mark Noll opened his book **The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind** stating the problem: "The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind. An extraordinary range of virtues is found among the evangelical Protestants in North America, including great sacrifice in spreading the message of salvation in Jesus Christ, open-hearted generosity to the needy, heroic personal exertion on behalf of troubled individuals... Notwithstanding all their other virtues, however, American evangelicals are not exemplary for their thinking, and they have not been for several generations."

As a church, we must recognize that while virtues like generosity and self-sacrifice are good, if we lack not only the foundation of solid doctrine but also the capacity for sound doctrinal thinking, we should expect our footing to erode from beneath us as it has for countless once-faithful but now-apostate churches who have traded in the truth of God for a lie, and often because they lacked the tools the Bereans employed in Acts to test what was being taught against the reliable truth of Scripture. (Acts 17:11)

Is our aim as a church that we'd all become a bunch of uber-brainiacs who only read puritans and intellectual heavyweights? No. Our call is to consider ourselves forever students of God's Word, and then to tend to our studies. (By the way, if you read only three pages per day of the great Puritan John Owen's classic "The Mortification of Sin," you'd be finished before Christmas.)

## Emotional, Cerebral Worshippers

One thing I love about Oak Hills is the range of expression in worship I see here. Some of you openly lose yourselves in singing praise to God. You stand when no one else is standing. You raise your hands. Some might even call it *dancing*. Hear me: Please don't ever stop. This church needs people continually pulling us toward the pole of "affections." You're helping us learn to delight in God in worship. We need you and I love you.

On the other end of that spectrum are those of you who might be perceived as perhaps more "cerebral." By the looks of you, the music might as well not even be happening. Your faces are expressionless, your hands are occasionally in your pockets, your mouths are sometimes closed. For many of you, I suspect you are thinking about the words, unfolding a thought, turning over in your minds complex and beautiful truths. You are the ones who wait until the service is over before talking about the sermon or something the Lord showed you that day. We need you too. You challenge us to engage with our minds—to think.

But may the Lord protect us from becoming a body of some who are emotional worshippers and others who are cerebral. Your emotions must be informed by Biblical truth—truth you must think through. Otherwise, you'll sway with any wind of teaching that has a soft piano playing beneath it. And your mind must be accompanied by affections such as wonder and joy, and even grief and remorse. We need to worship with our hearts and minds. And we need to seek to be ever maturing in both.

## Opportunities to Cultivate the Mind

So Oak Hills is committed to feeding your mind so that your learning would lead you to a deeper knowledge and enjoyment of God. Of course, we have the corporate worship service, which involves singing, prayer, giving, the reading and proclamation of God's word and participation in the sacraments. But beyond the corporate worship service and the ministry of this pulpit, Oak Hills is developing and currently offers many opportunities for study, prayer and cultivating the Christian mind—opportunities we should avail ourselves of.

- **SUNDAY SCHOOL**—We offer Sunday School for all ages, and I must tell you how impressed I am with our teachers. They work hard, sometimes putting in 8 hours of preparation each week. I haven't done near enough to encourage this church to take advantage of the Sunday School hour. This ministry is a great example of the people of the church doing the work of studying and teaching God's word. If you make Sunday School a regular part of your Sunday Morning worship, you will benefit from prayerfully prepared, thoughtful explorations and discussions from God's word. It will be time well spent.
- **COMMUNITY GROUPS**—We have several community groups and new ones forming. These groups focus on developing relationships within the church on a smaller, more personal scale in the intimacy of each other's homes. These groups are discussion oriented and provide opportunities for you to learn more about each other while learning to know and enjoy God. If you've never been part of a community group, or if you've stepped back for a season, I want to encourage you to consider joining up with one, or perhaps talking to an elder about possibly leading a new one. We need others to speak truth into our lives. We were created for community.

- **YOUTH GROUP**—To you students (and your parents), I want you to know you have a treasure in Pastor Jon. He cares for you, prays for you and wants you to grow into young men and women of character and faith in Christ. He is committed to cultivating in you humility, selflessness and a love for Christ's church. Pastor Jon has devoted years to rigorous study that he might teach you God's word. Pastor Jon will never treat you like you are incapable of substantive thinking. He holds a dignifying belief in your capacity to learn what God's word teaches, so he won't waste your time with fluff.
- **MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDIES**—Currently we have two studies for men and two for women. These studies are also great for growing in your understanding of God's word, as well as in your friendships. Some profound accountability relationships have come out of these studies. Also, these studies, along with community groups, provide powerful opportunities not only to learn from God's word, but also to apply it to your lives as you come along side one another in times of crisis or tragedy. The application of God's Word is the evidence of understanding and the demonstration of love.
- **BOOK TABLE AND WEBSITE**—Mark Twain said, "*The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them.*" Bill Burns and some of his friends want to give Oak Hills the advantage of reading by developing our book table into a place where we as a church can plunge deeper into our delight of God by peering over the shoulders of saints and scholars who have either gone before us or live far from us. This, and our website, are meant to be well-springs you can visit and reliably find nourishment for your minds and faith. Peruse. By just grazing at the book table for ten minutes each Sunday, I guarantee you'll learn true things.

These ministries and others exist to encourage and equip you to know and enjoy God forever doing all that He commands. To know God is to enjoy Him. To enjoy Him is to obey what He commands—to give ourselves, by the power of His Spirit, to things pleasing in His sight. <sup>(Heb 13:20-21)</sup> There is a link between knowing God and obeying Him. When we don't know His word, obedience can seem arbitrary, as if we're trying to live by some employee handbook, not sure why we're doing what we're doing, but afraid to upset the Boss. That's a horrible motivator.

What does our text teach us about the benefits of knowing Scripture? The guidance we find comes from One who will receive us into glory. <sup>(v 24)</sup> His guidance leads us to where He is! When we know God, our proclamation of the Gospel isn't drudgery, but rather the best news we have to offer—by a mile. We proclaim that we know the One we must know if we are to ever be truly happy and fulfilled. It is as St. Augustine said, "*God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.*" To know God is to rest in Him as He is. What are the habits of your mind? How are you cultivating your intellect to see all of life through the lens of God's Word?

Who do you have in heaven besides God? Is there anyone on earth more worthy of your desire? When you have relied on yourself, have you found your heart and flesh to be reliable? Or do they fail you? If God is the strength of your heart and your portion forever, are you seeking to know Him as He has presented Himself in His Word? Are you learning to love God in the ways you use your mind? To know God is to enjoy Him. To enjoy Him is to delight in His commands because we know that they are given for the glory of His name, and this is our chief end as people. The reason we exist is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever. Think about that. Keep thinking about it.