

The background of the book cover is a detailed illustration of a forest stream. The stream flows through a lush green forest, with lily pads floating on its surface. The trees are tall and dense, with some foliage showing hints of autumn colors. The overall color palette is dominated by various shades of green, with some yellow and orange accents from the trees and lily pads. The text is overlaid on this illustration, framed by a thin orange border.

Stephanie
Rousselle

AWAKEN DELIGHT

Satisfying Your
Soul's Longing
for God

FOREWORD BY JENNIFER ROTHSCHILD



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CONTENTS

Foreword by Jennifer Rothschild ix

Part 1: Divine Delight

- 1 Delicious Delight 3
- 2 Tasting Divine Delight 14
- 3 Created for Delight 25
- 4 Behold Worshipfully 38
- 5 Look Forward to Fullness 52
- 6 Delight Through Pain 65

Part 2: Christlike Delight

- 7 Smell Like Jesus 81
- 8 Nurture a Jubilee Mindset 92
- 9 Persevere in Hope 104

Part 3: Rooted Delight

- 10 Root Delight in Habits 119
- 11 Abide Wholeheartedly 131
- 12 Live Generously 145
- 13 Build Intentionally 157

Conclusion: Loving Delight 169

A Recipe to Awaken Delight 175

Acknowledgments 177

Resources to Deepen Your Delight Journey 179

Notes 181



DELICIOUS DELIGHT

REMEMBER ATTENDING A SERVICE at my Parisian home church as a brand-new Christian. The love emanating from believers around me was intriguing, but foreign. It enthralled my spiritual senses but felt just outside my reach. They delighted deeply in the Lord through worship, Scripture intake, and interactions with one another. Knowing how beloved they were, they loved God and one another well in return. Could I, too, awaken such divine delight? How could I taste and see God like that?

“Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” How can we taste and see these inviting, rich flavors from Psalm 37:4 as our daily reality? What would happen if we dared to embrace the truth that we’re created to be enthralled by the beauty of God’s presence, both today and in heaven?

Scripture invites us to experience God’s goodness as deeply satisfying, even delectable: “Taste and see that the LORD is good!”¹ Can we attest to this? When we come away from our experience of church, prayer, worship, Bible study, serving in his name, or our own time alone with God, do we feel satiated with his goodness? Do we feel nourished, spiritually speaking?

Or are we left wondering if we’ve been feeding on scraps?

The abandon of my fellow Parisian congregants seemed a little scary, maybe even suspicious—at least for yours truly, a then-twenty-year-old

control freak. I suspected God might require more surrender than I was comfortable embracing. It's often not enough to be *told* that something's good for us; sometimes we need to *taste* it. Experience engages our minds in a way that transforms us and makes us hunger for more of what God has for us.

So, one day I finally dared to ask God to make me delight in him so much it would redefine my identity. I wanted to taste the full buffet of spiritual flavors these Parisian believers obviously enjoyed. Thirty years later, while I'm still slowly learning, he's answering that prayer. What a gift! I bow in humble worship, overwhelmed with gratitude and awestruck by his goodness and faithfulness. Delight in him is increasingly becoming my reality, and I'm hungry for more. When we delight in him, he does give us the desire of our heart—himself.

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the desire of our heart—himself.**

Delight. It's one of those rare words that exudes more depth and deliciousness in French than in English. As a native French speaker, I love the French word for delight: *délice*. It'll remind you of another English word: *delicious*. In French, we have only one word for the two English words "delight" and "deliciousness": *délice*. It applies to any feast for the body, mind, or spirit, where beauty reigns supreme. In French, Psalm 37:4 speaks of delicious delight when it calls us to delight in the Lord: "*Fais de l'Éternel tes délices.*"² *Délice* is delight and deliciousness both. The poetic beauty is inescapable: In French, God is both delightful and delicious.

So, when Psalm 34:8 beckons us to "taste and see that the LORD is good," we're invited to discover that the goodness of the Lord is, indeed, delicious. So, what does delight in God taste like? I wonder if, when we aim to make God our delight, we also aim to taste his deliciousness, spiritually speaking. The presence of God is flavorful. The love of God is intoxicating. The glory of God is enthralling. Can it be our experience?



Scripture doesn't call us to a disembodied experience of God. Feasting on the Lord is for our five senses as well as for our soul. We expose our faith to much loss when we dissociate what God has woven together in our bodies through our senses. In a culture that has lost its spiritual tastebuds, God invites us to recover Christ-centered spiritual delight in him.

A powerful curriculum for the committed Christ-follower, the Westminster Catechism teaches that the chief end of humanity is “to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”³ It might be news to some of us; others might already be actively pursuing this divine delight, so much so that he's truly become the desire of our heart. Still others may have no idea what “enjoying God” even means. That's why simple things, like how we experience food, can become wise and useful analogies.⁴

THE TABLE IS SET

Speaking of food as a pathway to awaken delight in God might feel irrelevant, shallow, or maybe even undignified. Not so in my French culture, where I was brought up to enjoy the sights, scents, textures, and tastes of food as approximations to spiritual experiences. I may have grown up radically atheist, but my culture gives food a spiritual dimension. Tasting and seeing *do* lead to knowing goodness.

This isn't true of only my hedonistic French culture. Scripture overflows with mystical and metaphorical associations regarding food. The deep mysteries of our Christian faith are rooted in embodied things that speak to our five senses, like salt and light, bread and wine, fish and loaves, lamb and bitter herbs, olive oil and frankincense. The Lord's table beckons us to eat his flesh and drink his blood.⁵ We look forward to an upcoming wedding feast,⁶ a banquet of rich meat and aged wine.⁷

So, as a French Christian, I invite us, together, to make God our delight—our delicious delight. Let's explore how our faith can be transformed when we approach and experience God as delicious and delightful both. He invites us to taste and see him so that he'll give us



the desire of our heart—himself. We'll discover he adds the blessing of delighting in one another too.

The invitation has been sent. Together, let's take a seat around Scripture, the best table that's ever been assembled for our enjoyment and delight and for the glory of God.

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DELIGHT TASTES LIKE LUSCIOUS VANILLA

A delicious meal, the beauty of creation, and delightful relationships are some of God's best gifts to us this side of heaven. Unfortunately, we sometimes take these good gifts from God for granted, as if they were "plain vanilla"—nothing special. "Vanilla" has become common slang used to describe plain, boring, typical, or flavorless things. But if you've tasted real vanilla, you know it's the opposite; real vanilla is a flavor explosion waiting to happen. God invites us to delight in the good vanilla of his multifaceted gifts to us: our favorite flower in bloom, a baby's belly laugh, a night sky blanket of stars, a transporting melody, a cherished fragrance, or the touch of soft grass underfoot.

There's good vanilla, and then there's extravagantly high-grade vanilla. Similarly, even God's best earthly gifts pale in comparison to a glimpse at heaven's delights, which are ours in Christ. The highest-grade vanilla provides a truly extraordinary experience for the senses, a mix of luscious taste and mesmerizing scent. God beckons us to discover the highest-grade vanilla of divine delight, a rich mix of his delight in us and our delight in him.

In Christ, we're invited to enjoy the best vanilla, straight from heaven. It's delightful and delicious both—it's what I think of as *spiritual* vanilla. Divine delight is like experiencing spiritual vanilla. Its scent is heaven-forward, and its flavor, heaven-heavy. We'll taste the fullness of its God-centered flavors in heaven, but we don't need to



wait until we get there. Because God is both omnipresent and timeless, delight in him is available here, today. When we respond to God's invitation to delight in him and experience his delight in us, it's like a taste of spiritual vanilla. Delightful glimpses and tastes of heavenly spiritual vanilla are available for us today in Christ.

We need them because much in life schemes and plots against delight. Scripture succinctly sums up these enemies of our soul as the world, the flesh, and the devil: external enemies, inner enemies, and spiritual enemies. They can masquerade as busyness, anxiety, guilt, shame, fear, stress, overwhelm, addictions, among others. These thieves of delight usually lurk just underneath the surface of our thoughts and emotions. They might initially smell and taste a bit like vanilla, but they're empty counterfeits. Like imitation vanilla full of additives and toxic chemicals, their flavor is flat and fake. They distract and disappoint. We need to learn to spot and refuse them. Otherwise they'll trick us over time into thinking that the real vanilla of divine delight will equally overwhelm and underdeliver. They might even convince us to stop looking for the real vanilla of delight in God.

DELIGHT-CENTERED LIVING

It's commonly said that authors write the books they need to read. This one is no exception. Delight has been my compass for decades, partly because it's central to my French culture, but mostly because I'm discovering that God invites us to find him in both the presence and absence of delight.

My French brain can't quite separate delight from deliciousness. Good food was central to life as a French kid. My home country is known for our enjoyment of rich and beautiful tastes, smells, sights, and experiences. After all, Americans call the best vanilla "French vanilla." My family and surroundings also greatly valued classical culture, as much as our intellectual postmodern atheism.

I came to the United States as a foreign exchange student for my senior year of high school to learn English. I was a staunch atheist.



There, the unexpected happened: I was introduced to the claims and the person of Jesus. Through the nurturing love and heartfelt prayers of my host family, my “American parents,” I surrendered my life to him as my Savior and Lord. I returned to Paris still wet from baptism, thinking I might be the very first French Christian ever. I’d never met one.

In Paris, I met and married Jonah, now almost thirty years ago. Paris still feels like home to me, even though we moved to Jonah’s home country in Francophone Africa around the time our kids were born. After almost a decade there, and then a couple of years in North Carolina, we moved to London, following my husband’s job, and finally settled in Pennsylvania. In other words, our French family is still living crossculturally. Living overseas, cultivating a crosscultural marriage, and raising kids in that context proves to be a daily honor and challenge.

Woven throughout these circumstances, I’ve experienced both the presence and the absence of delight in God. Our lives are a journey with high peaks, low valleys, and everything in between. To be plucked out of one’s own culture is the best way to take a step back and view it with a new perspective. It’s taught me to view God, the world, others, my faith, and myself through the ultimate perspective: the perspective of heaven. When we embrace God’s way of seeing and experiencing the world, we develop a palate for delight in God, which in turn equips us to further own the perspective of heaven.

When we embrace God’s way of seeing and experiencing the world, we develop a palate for delight in God, which in turn equips us to further own the perspective of heaven.

I suspect delight in God is often the missing piece in our Christian faith, at least here in the West. I’m convinced that if we awakened our awareness to the unmeasurable delight we’ll experience in heaven, we’d live today more fully, more awake, more present.



You might be tickled to know that our young adult daughter's favorite French perfume is called "Spiritueuse Vanille"—French for "spiritual vanilla." Guerlain, its creator, describes it as "amplified by an excess of vanilla." It's exactly what we're after—a life amplified by an excess of the spiritual vanilla of delight in God. I wonder if that's the fragrance my fellow Parisian worshipers were wearing that day.

HOW DO WE AWAKEN DELIGHT?

To awaken delight, we begin by simply asking God to change the shape of our heart so that it conforms to his desire for us to delight in him. God is the one who gives us the desire to delight in him—and I know that he's given you this desire, else you wouldn't be reading this book. I humbly suggest a three-pronged approach of planting, growing, and cultivating this Godward delight. Like seasons, together they inform, feed, and benefit one another as a virtuous cycle.

First, ask God to plant divine delight. It all starts with God. According to Psalm 37:4, God alone gives us the desire of our heart. He awakens in our heart the desire to delight in him, and then he gives us the desire of our heart: himself. Therefore, he plants delight in our hearts. When we intentionally live in increased awareness of this truth, surrendering to his timing, we cultivate dependence, as well as a sense of responsible stewardship. It's balanced. It's worshipful. It's delightful.

So, let's humbly start by embracing a posture of holy expectancy. We ask and expect him to move us toward him. God reveals himself to us as he sees fit, Creator to created. He's the ultimately delightful one. As our Creator, he's also best positioned to tell us who we are: We're those in whom he delights. We'll find that we cannot grow divine delight without first knowing who God is and then who we are. These are the seeds of delight.

Together we'll learn to live in greater awareness of God's love for us and our love for him. This Godward perspective revolutionizes how we see God, ourselves, and the world around us, especially in our seasons of hardship and trial. We'll say with freeing certainty, "There



is nothing I can do for God to love me more; and there is nothing I can do for God to love me less.” I can’t wait to unpack this with you.

Second, grow Christlike delight. Our delight in God must be radically anchored in Christ, because he’s “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”⁸ We grow our own Christlike delight in God by fixing our gaze on Jesus, our king and model. That’s Christocentric delight.

As we spend time with Jesus, we’ll get to know him increasingly well, to discern and even emulate his delight in his Father through his Holy Spirit. We’ll start doing what he does, anchored in who he is and who we are. Christlike delight is particularly relevant and needed when we go through seasons of pain and suffering.

Before long, as we spend much time in his presence, we’ll start smelling like Jesus—a life marked by an excess of spiritual vanilla.

Third, cultivate rooted delight. When that happens, we get to spread “the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.”⁹ We become the aroma of Christ to a world very much in need of his fragrance of life. Delight functions as a powerful apologetic to our own hearts in dry times and to others as we become agents of delight to a world in desperate need of joy. Divine Christlike delight must be properly rooted to transform the world by helping others see and know Jesus. We know Christ and, consequently, make him known.

Delight is a key characteristic of heaven, a concept foreign to many Christians who’ve been trained to approach faith as a joyless race. As such, delight in God becomes practice for heaven. How do we practice, then? We cultivate spiritual habits and patterns that foster our delight in God. It’s the practical *how* of delight. I promise we’ll get there. But before we practice delight in God, we must remember exactly how delightful he is and how he delights in us. If we don’t first taste and see God through theology and experience, we risk turning our spiritual disciplines into empty rituals when they’re meant to be stepping-stones to relationship. Our actions and behaviors show who we know God to be, who we are, and what he’s done for us.



Scripture is woven throughout this book. While a majority of Bible verses are included as endnotes, a few key passages receive special emphasis:

- Psalm 1:1-3
- Psalm 37:4
- Psalm 34:8
- 2 Corinthians 2:14
- 2 Corinthians 4:6
- Philippians 3:10

As you journey through *Awaken Delight*, consider studying, memorizing, and meditating on these key Scriptures. Chapter reflection prompts will invite you to do so.

LIFELONG TRANSFORMATION

Delight doesn't magically appear by somehow working out a formula or checking off a to-do list. It's less to do with doing than with being. Awakening delight in God isn't a personal sanctification project. It's deeply relational, with God and one another. It's about slowing down to become the person God created us to be. It's a lifelong endeavor, through all life's seasons.

Delight in God calls for transformation at our deepest roots, because it confronts the many idols that compete to be our source of identity and meaning. We're often unaware of the cultural forces that influence our days. After all, fish don't know what water is. Thomas Chalmers, the nineteenth century Scottish theologian and preacher, famously spoke of "the expulsive power of a new affection."¹⁰ Awakening delight in God will push lesser loves to the periphery of our hearts until they inevitably fall off the cliff of our awareness.

Delight in God will become the defining flavor of our life over the course of many experiences, and it'll progressively crowd out unhealthy loves. Why fill up on cotton candy before Thanksgiving dinner? So, yes, delight in God might require the occasional fasting from lesser



glories and delights. But as we French like to say, hunger is the best spice. Come with an appetite. Delight awaits.

Cultivating delight in God will reshape the landscape of our lives to reveal Christ at the very center, to our utmost reverence and joyful worship. That's divine, Christlike delight, rooted in spiritual habits.

So, let's sit down to a vanilla-forward banquet of delight in him. The feast won't end once we reach the end of our time together, however. These spiritual flavors will kindle a heavenly taste for unending delight in God, individually and together. So, come, taste, and see that the Lord is good.¹¹ Let's delight ourselves in the Lord, for he promises to give us the desires of our heart.¹²

Together, let's cultivate a hunger that only he can satisfy.

.....Reflection Questions

The concluding sections of each chapter invite you to digest God's goodness for yourself. Here, delight in God will embed itself in your heart and bones.

Use the prompts during your personal time with God. Consider recording your responses in a prayer journal. The questions are optional and independent from one another, so choose your favorites! Ponder these questions alone first, then possibly with a friend or in a group.

If you wish to taste deeper flavors, I'll invite you with each chapter to these activities:

- Study and/or memorize key Scripture in the translation of your choice.
- Identify a concept from this chapter that particularly resonated with you personally. Write it down, then prayerfully ponder it.
- Flipping to the endnotes, choose a few verses (or all of them!) from the chapter, and look them up in your Bible. Then,
 - ✓ Read them prayerfully a few times.
 - ✓ Write them down.



- ✓ Journal about this: How do these verses echo each other, and speak to you?

Chapter 1 Questions

1. God is both delightful and delicious. How does this invite you to experience Psalm 34:8 afresh?
2. What examples of “real vanilla” can you name in your own life? How have you experienced imitation vanilla?
3. What would a life of delight in God “amplified by an excess of spiritual vanilla” look like?
4. What is your role in this endeavor to awaken delight? How about God’s role?
5. Delighting in God is practicing for heaven. How do you understand this? Has this been your experience? How so?
6. Consider writing a prayer as you start this journey.

Deeper Flavors

- Memorize Psalm 37:4.
 - Choose your own key takeaway to ponder from this chapter:

 - Study the verses in the endnotes: read, copy, ponder.
-

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