CAN I LOVE GOD AND THE THINGS OF THE WORLD?

WHEATON, Ill.—There are many wonderful and beautiful things in the world—bright sunny days, delicious food, and love and laughter from friends and family. While these are all gifts from God, a tension can arise between enjoying these gifts and loving God supremely. In order to diminish the tension, it’s tempting to try to suppress joy in earthly things in order to love God more. But is this what God intended for his people?

In his new book, Strangely Bright: Can You Love God and Enjoy This World? (Crossway, August 2020), author Joe Rigney reflects on this dilemma. “My guess is that many of you have asked that question and felt this tension too. You’re torn by your desire to love and honor God above all things and your unavoidable and inescapable delight in earthly things. You’ve felt a kind of low-grade guilt whenever you really enjoy an earthly pleasure. . . . Often these vague feelings are rooted in our beliefs and convictions. We know that God is infinitely valuable, and that our family and friends and food are not, and therefore, we feel that there ought to be a larger gap between our love for them and our love for him.”

Strangely Bright seeks to resolve the biblical and experiential tension Christians feel by showing readers that they can delight in God and enjoy his good gifts. “Our calling is to enjoy God in everything and everything in God, while knowing deep in our bones that Jesus is better than every earthly good,” writes Rigney. Each chapter of the book is anchored in a passage of Scripture, and Rigney discusses topics such as how:

• God’s word and God’s world work together to “show us what he’s like and teach us how to relate to him”;
• both self-denial and generosity guard against the dangers of ingratitude, idolatry, and sinful indulgence; and
• suffering, death, and the loss of good gifts impact the ability to love God and his gifts.

“In and through all these things, I want to work with you for your joy in the living and personal God who delivered you from sin and death through the work of his Son and Holy Spirit and gives you all these things that you might enjoy him and them and him in them forever,” writes Rigney.

Rigney is also the author of The Things of Earth (Crossway, December 2014), which is a more robust treatment of the topics discussed in Strangely Bright.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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