

“This is a great book. Tim makes important theological distinctions with a lightness of touch and helpful illustrations so that the reader is learning deep truths of the faith without really noticing. He then helps us to take practical steps to enjoy different aspects of Jesus’ character and work; each chapter concludes with numerous suggestions of how to let the glory of Jesus make a difference each day. Some of the chapters left me very greatly affected and rejoicing deeply.”

MATT FULLER, Senior Minister, Christ Church Mayfair, London;
Author, *Reclaiming Masculinity and Time for Everything?*

“Reading *Enjoying Jesus* has been an extraordinary blessing, causing me to enjoy Jesus anew. As I progressed through the book, I found myself gazing at Jesus with fresh insight and affection during both ordinary and challenging moments of the day and in wakeful hours at night. Towards the end of the book, Tim writes, “When your eyes are fixed on Jesus, you’ll realise you are rich”, and with his characteristic clarity and warmth, he leads us to that treasure. *Enjoying Jesus* combines rich biblical teaching, pastoral wisdom and personal testimony in a way that will draw you closer to Jesus, with a substance and intimacy you might not have thought possible. Read it slowly and delight in the reality of Jesus’ presence and kindness.”

JEN CHARTERIS, Executive Director, Crosslands

“Christians talk easily about “having a relationship with Jesus”. But what do we actually mean—really, practically, today? Tim Chester wants normal, ordinary Christians to genuinely enjoy Jesus, not just to know about him in the abstract. This gentle, warm book is an invitation to experience Jesus’ presence, love, grace and compassion in our everyday lives. I really enjoyed reading it and think you will too.”

MARCUS HONEYSETT, Director, Living Leadership

“Refreshing, devotional and deeply Jesus-centred. This book takes us on a journey of biblical reflection to discover a deeper delight in the Lord Jesus. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it.”

JOHN RISBRIDGER, Director, Catalyst Leadership and Theology Training Course; Chair, Evangelical Alliance Council

“The greatest problem Christians have today is that they don’t enjoy Jesus as they could. This is the root of so many of our fears and woes. In this beautiful book, Tim Chester helps us to appreciate all that Jesus is and to see the practical and transformative difference that he can make in our daily lives. It is like a trip to the Caribbean for the soul.”

MICHAEL REEVES, President and Professor of Theology, Union School of Theology; Author, *Rejoice and Tremble*

“How many Christians seek to live faithfully for Christ but find the experience of actually enjoying him all too elusive? In this precious book, Tim Chester shows us that the Jesus we meet in Scripture—compassionate, strong, welcoming, loving, life-giving, *glorious*—is the same Jesus who is present and active in our lives each day. By alerting us to our Savior’s manifold expressions of love and care, Tim motivates us to move toward Jesus and find in him all the comfort, grace and joy he offers to his own.”

JEFF PURSWELL, Director of Theology and Training, Sovereign Grace Churches

“What a magnificent book! And what a marvellous Saviour! As ever, Tim Chester relates historical theology, faithful exposition and warm application to the spine-tingling reality of the right-here, right-now ministry of the risen Lord Jesus.”

DAVE GOBBETT, Lead Minister, Highfields Church, Cardiff, Wales

TIM CHESTER

ENJOYING



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MIKE AND EMMA'S TUESDAY AFTERNOON

Sunday morning. Tears are rolling down Emma's cheeks. Beside her Mike is singing with gusto. She can sense the sermon has touched his heart as well as her own. Their pastor has just preached on God's love to us in Christ. Christ is worthy, and we are worthy in Christ. Emma feels as if all her insecurities are wrapped about with the righteousness of Christ.

Tuesday afternoon. The week has got off to a shaky start... Monday morning had quickly descended into chaos. Emma is still finding the odd loose cornflake after Poppy had spilt the box across the kitchen floor. Now Emma stands in the playground, waiting to collect Sam and Jamie from school. Everyone else looks so put together. She moves the strap of her bag to cover the food stain on her t-shirt. Again, she feels all her inadequacies as a wife and mother, juggling work and church commitments and school pick-ups—she feels the guilt of not quite being good enough at any of it.

Meanwhile Mike is keeping his head down. The office banter has taken an ugly turn. It turns out the new recruit in sales is a Christian. "One of those religious nutcases," someone says. "Like me," thinks Mike. "Like Mike," says one of

his colleagues. “Oh yeah,” another colleague adds, swearing in disbelief. “Mike believes in all that God stuff too! You joining us on Friday?” They already know the answer. He never joins their long drinking sessions. Mike smiles lamely and gets on with his work. At least, he pretends to. It’s lonely being the only Christian in his huge department.

When Mike leaves the office to walk to the station, his thoughts go—as they often do—to his deeper loneliness. He thinks of Rosie, their fourth child, who was born with a malformed heart and died at three months old. Two years ago, people had been so kind and thoughtful, but then they’d moved on—they had their own lives to live. Mike understands that. Eventually even he and Emma had stopped talking about Rosie. What was there to say? But he still grieves for Rosie—still feels her loss. If he brought it up, it would only make Em start crying again. So he nurses his grief alone.

Sam and Jamie are their usual selves as they burst from the classroom. Like dogs let off a leash, they race around the playground. Emma wishes she could put them on leashes as she steers them towards the car—ever since Rosie’s death, she’s been so much more fearful for her children. Every snuffle sets her heart racing. Every journey is spent on high alert. She leaps forward to stop Sam careering into the road. Eventually, Sam and Jamie climb into the car. Safe and sound. What about Poppy?! Where is she? Twenty metres behind, Poppy dawdles along, oblivious to her mum’s panic, fiddling with a leaf.

Mike stands in the train carriage peering through heads to see out of the window. What a grey day. Mike feels in need of a hug. Or just a smile. A couple of teenagers chat animatedly about their shopping trip, oblivious to everyone else, and the regular commuters all do their best to ignore each other, as usual.

Back at home the boys are watching TV, and Poppy's playing in her room. So Emma sits down to prep her Sunday-school class. It's got to be done today because she'll be working the next two days, which means "the big juggle", as she calls it, only gets harder. She sighs. "Why did I agree to do this?" she thinks. "It's not as if I've got nothing to do." At first, she'd been glad to help out. But now it just feels like a burden—another demand in her demanding life.

As Mike's train noses out into the suburbs, people start disembarking. Four stops down the line he finds a seat. He sinks onto the upholstery. Another day done. Tomorrow he will have to do it all over again. At least he'll be working from home on Thursday—though time out to do the school run will mean working into the evening. He sighs. How many years before retirement? He does the maths—too many.

Mike begins to think about walking through the door and being engulfed by the kids. A smile spreads across his face. There will be an hour of fun and games—an hour full of laughter and love. And no doubt some tears when someone gets over excited. Then the children will be packed off to bed, and he and Em can slump on the sofa together. Will there be a match on? What day is it? Tuesday. The night of the church prayer meeting! Mike's groan is loud enough to make the man with headphones across from him look up from his phone. No one would notice if Mike skipped the prayer meeting just this once. Or better still, he could offer to babysit so Emma can go. That way he will look servant-hearted while lining up an evening on the sofa. Result!

With dinner hastily put in the oven, Emma goes back to her Sunday-school prep, but her anxieties creep in again to distract her. There's just too much in the world to worry about. Food scares. Global warming. Rising crime. Online bullying. How can she keep her children safe? The weight of it all seems too much to bear.

“Lord Jesus, help me not to worry so much,” says Emma. She thinks about her children again. She thinks about all the new challenges they’ll face as they grow up that she doesn’t feel equipped to help them with. “Agh,” she says to herself. “I’m trying to pray about worry, but all I’m doing is worrying some more! Why am I so bad at praying?” She gives up and goes to check on the dinner.

Mike picks up a stray newspaper from the train and starts scanning the headlines. War. Famine. Corruption. It’s all just as gloomy as usual. He starts reading an article about sex trafficking: young women being duped into prostitution with the promise of a better life. He thinks of Poppy, and his blood starts to boil in anger. Some arrests have been made, but the trade goes on. What can he do? The problems are overwhelming.

The dinner looks ok. “Another 10 minutes should do it,” thinks Emma. Enough time to have another go at praying. But her head is all over the place. Her mind flits from dinner to Mike to work to Rosie to her Sunday-school lesson and back again. There’s so much to pray for, and yet she can’t even get started.

Mike puts the newspaper down. Reading it is only making him feel depressed that the world seems to be moving further and further away from God. Christian values that were once mainstream are now considered the height of prejudice. He thinks about the conversation in the office when his colleagues laughed at his faith. He’d been thinking of inviting a couple of them to next month’s guest service. But what’s the point? No one’s going to come.

Emma turns the oven down, picks up her phone and starts scrolling through her social-media feeds. Charlotte is looking fantastic in a new dress. Kalisha is saving the world again—she works for a charity and always seems to be flying off somewhere new. Jasmine has posted a selfie in

which she's sitting at a café table with the Eiffel Tower in the background. Emma looks at her food-stained t-shirt and her messy kitchen. It's hard not to feel a bit jealous!

Mike leaves the station and starts walking home through the rain. "Think some happy thoughts," he tells himself. He thinks about their summer holiday. Too risky—last year was a total wash-out. The weekend—he imagines watching the match on TV. But then he remembers the problem with the washing machine and the list of all the other chores he is supposed to be looking at whenever they have time. His heart sinks. What is there to look forward to?

Enjoying life with Jesus had felt so real on Sunday morning. But two days on and already Jesus feels far away. What does it look like to enjoy Jesus on a Tuesday afternoon?

INTRODUCTION: ENJOYING JESUS TODAY

“**G**rowing in love for Jesus was not a focus in my church,” someone told me recently. “He was talked about, of course. But not as someone with whom you might have a relationship.” Does this experience sound familiar to you? People talk about “knowing Jesus” or having “a personal relationship” with him, but what is often actually meant by that is just “being saved”. Jesus can just become a mechanism that God uses to save people. Too often there’s little sense of a lived experience of Jesus—of enjoying him and being a joy to him, of loving him and being loved by him, of interacting with him day by day.

What does it mean to *enjoy* a relationship with Jesus Christ here and now?

I’m not asking what Jesus expects of you; this is not a book about ethics or social action or evangelism—important as all those topics are. Nor am I particularly asking about how Christ’s work on the cross makes a difference to our future. I’m interested in what it means to have a real, living relationship with Jesus. What is the give-and-take, the to-and-fro of our day-to-day interaction with Jesus?

How is he acting towards you in this moment, and how should you respond?

Maybe your Christian life has lost its sparkle—you do your duty but without much zest. Maybe you feel like you and Jesus get on well enough on Sundays at church, but you would love to experience him more in everyday life. Maybe you're a new Christian, and you want to know how you can begin enjoying your relationship with Jesus more fully. Perhaps you often feel Jesus near to you, but still you long to go deeper.

Or maybe your experience is like mine—a few years ago, I realised I had a strong sense of a lived relationship with the Father and the Spirit, but less so with Jesus. I normally pray to the Father, so I experience him hearing and answering my prayers. I believe he governs the events of my life, using the ups and downs of my day to make me more like Jesus. I also have a sense of the Holy Spirit's help. It's not that I'm always getting tingles down my spine, but I know that every good impulse within me comes from the Spirit.

That was all well and good; but Jesus felt more distant. I knew my hope for the future depended entirely on his death and resurrection. But that was 2,000 years ago. And, with Jesus having ascended into heaven, he felt a long way off. A long time ago and a long way away are not a good basis for a relationship! I was full of gratitude and admiration, but a sense of a living, two-way relationship with him felt much less real.

That realisation set me on a voyage of discovery. Along the way, I was helped enormously by the 17th-century Puritan John Owen. From Owen's book *Communion with God*, I picked up two important principles:

1. God is known through the three Persons, so we relate to the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

2. Our unity with God in Christ is the basis of our community with God in experience.

Owen reinforced my hunch that I should be able to relate to all three Persons of the Trinity. That led to my book *Enjoying God*, in which I unravelled what it looks like to relate in distinct ways to the Father, to the Son and to the Spirit,¹ tracing the ways in which the triune God interacts with us in everyday life and how we might respond.

Now I'm drilling down further into what that looks like with Jesus. I'm going back to my original question: *what does it mean to enjoy a relationship with Jesus Christ here and now?* As I've sought to deepen and develop my own sense of enjoying a living, two-way relationship with the Lord Jesus over the past few years, he has become a constant presence in my life. He always was, of course, but now I have eyes to see his presence far more than I did. The result is a deeper, richer enjoyment of Jesus.

So this book is for anyone who would like to enjoy Jesus more!

Like *Enjoying God*, this book is built around two core ideas. Grasping the implications of these two truths will go a long way in helping us to appreciate how we find joy in our interaction with Jesus day by day. Here they are:

1. What Jesus was like when on earth is what Jesus is like now in heaven.
2. While Jesus in his body is in heaven, Jesus is also present on earth through the Holy Spirit.

You'll notice that both of these mention heaven and earth. In the first principle, we move from earth to heaven; in the second, we move from heaven to earth. We're going to discover that heaven is not as far away as we might first imagine. The geographical distance cannot be calculated—we are,

after all, talking about different realms. Heaven is beyond the reach of any telescope, even a hypothetical telescope that could see to the edge of the universe. But in all sorts of ways, heaven and earth connect through the work of the Holy Spirit. We'll explore this more in the next chapter.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY AND TODAY AND FOR EVER

The first principle is neatly encapsulated in one verse: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). Understanding this was a game-changer for me.

As much as any part of the New Testament, the letter of Hebrews emphasises the finished work of the cross. The writer repeatedly uses the phrase “once for all” (7:27; 9:12, 25-26; 10:10-14) to remind us that the penalty of sin has been in paid in full. The work of atonement is done and dusted. Yet, at the same time, Hebrews also emphasises that Christ’s saving work takes place now in heaven. Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice on earth and then presented that offering before God in heaven. “He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, so obtaining eternal redemption” (9:12). Jesus has ascended into heaven to intercede on behalf of his people before the Father. *The saving work of Jesus is taking place now.* This is why in Hebrews there are repeated references to the *present attitude of Christ to, or work of Christ for his people*—not just references to the ongoing effects of Christ’s finished work but to his personal, active involvement in our lives right now (1:3; 2:12-13, 18; 4:14-16; 6:19-20; 7:25; 8:1-2). “So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.”” (13:5-6).

This brings us back to Hebrews 13:8: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever”. New Testament scholar Floyd V. Filson argues that the word “yesterday” means the recent past rather than the eternal past. The emphasis

here is not on the eternal divine character of Jesus but on his recent experience as the God-man.² This means “the Jesus of yesterday that you read about in the Gospels is the Jesus of today who cares for you right now. And that Jesus is the Jesus of tomorrow, whatever tomorrow might bring. Right now Jesus cares for you—just as he cared for people in the Gospels.”³ Jesus is present with you now, speaking through his word, caring for you through fellow Christians, communicating his love in the Lord’s Supper, sympathising in your weakness, and providing help when you’re in need.

The love of Jesus for his people doesn’t fluctuate like the weather. It wasn’t diminished by his birth as a human being nor by his ascension into glory. So, as we think about what it means to enjoy a living relationship with Jesus now, when he is in heaven, we can begin by thinking about what it was like to enjoy a relationship with Jesus when he was on earth. What we see in the Gospels is a reliable indicator of what Jesus is like now. So, chapter by chapter, we’ll begin with a story from Luke’s Gospel as our starting point for exploring how Jesus continues to relate to his people today.

For now, when you read the Gospel, let me encourage you to observe how Jesus relates to people on earth and then think about him relating to you in a similar way right now from heaven. You might like to read Luke’s Gospel in parallel with this book with that perspective in mind.

A TWO-WAY RELATIONSHIP

Before we delve deeper into the ways in which we can relate to Jesus day by day, we need to establish something important about the dynamics of that relationship.

First, our union with Jesus doesn’t depend on us. Our relationship with Jesus is created by Jesus through the Holy Spirit—it starts with him and not with us. We didn’t go searching for Jesus; he came to earth to redeem his bride,

and now he sends his Spirit to win our hearts. We're united to Christ through faith, but even this faith is Christ's gift to us (Ephesians 2:8-10), which he delivers wrapped up in the regenerating work of the Spirit (John 3:3-8). So our relationship with Jesus is founded on Christ himself. It's one-way traffic. That's our great confidence and hope. Just as we didn't make this connection to Christ, neither can we unmake it through our sin or faithlessness.

But second, our on-going *experience* of that union (what John Owen calls our "communion" with Christ) *is* affected by our actions. When we resist Christ or ignore him, our sense of being connected to him weakens. When we respond to him in faith and love, then our sense of connection deepens. We are saved *by Jesus* into a two-way relationship *with Jesus*.

So there is always the potential to go deeper. However you feel about Jesus now, however close or distant you feel to him each day, you will discover that as you move towards him, there are deeper wells of joy available. My prayer is that, as you read this book, you will begin to spot the many, many ways in which Jesus is relating to you each day. And each day that will be more and more joy in him.

MIKE AND EMMA'S TUESDAY AFTERNOON

Tuesday afternoon. The week has got off to a shaky start... Monday morning had quickly descended into chaos. Emma is still finding the odd loose cornflake after Poppy had spilt the box across the kitchen floor. Now Emma stands in the playground, waiting to collect Sam and Jamie from school. Everyone else looks so put together. She moves the strap of her bag to cover the food stain on her t-shirt. Again, she feels all her inadequacies as a wife and mother, juggling work and church commitments and school pick-ups—she feels the guilt of not quite being good enough at any of it.

Emma thinks back to what she read in her Bible that morning as she sat in bed. A notoriously sinful woman had gatecrashed a party to anoint the feet of Jesus. Everyone had tutted at the woman, but Jesus commended her great love.⁴ “I want to love Jesus like that,” Emma thinks. What had Jesus said to the woman? “Go in peace.” Emma hears Jesus comforting her with the same words. *Your sins are forgiven, Emma. Go in peace.*

ACTION

We’ll end each chapter with a recommended action to put what we’re learning into practice. My hope is that these suggestions will help you enjoy your relationship with Jesus more. But they might feel awkward at first. If that’s the case, think of them as equivalent to a pianist learning scales or an athlete doing drills. Scales or drills don’t always feel like fun, but they help us to enjoy the pleasure of playing music or our favourite sport. Doing these actions will start to make relating to Jesus in day-to-day life feel a bit more like second nature.

Think of a Gospel story; it could be one you’ve read recently or one you’ve heard preached. Or think of a Gospel story that matches your current circumstances. If you’re stuck, start with Luke 7:36-50. Reflect on the attitude of Jesus to his people in the story. Then reflect on his attitude to you today.

REFLECTION

- How would you describe your relationship with Jesus?
- Think back over the past couple of days; in what ways have you related with Jesus?
- Do you have a favourite story from the Gospels? What is it about the story that appeals to you?