

Pleasing God

By

Sandra Kerkum

Living according to God's will › Living with God

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The Apostles Paul and John wrote about it; David and Solomon wrote about it. Whether quoting Jesus or sharing what the Holy Spirit had placed on their own hearts, it is the importance of something that should be at the center of the Christian life: pleasing God.

1. Just how important is it to 'please God'?

Christians who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior can rejoice in the knowledge that their sins have been washed away and that their transgressions have been removed from them, "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12). That is, of course, wonderful news! However, once salvation is safely secured for their eternal destination, some Christians forget to contemplate their current and future choices in life. In the worst case scenario, they believe their actions and decisions have become invisible and irrelevant to God, because of salvation. But God sees everything we do (Hebrews 4:13; Proverbs 5:21; Job 28:24; 34:21). That

is a blessing, because it is His daily involvement in our lives that provides comfort, strength and guidance. However, would we really want our Lord Jesus to see that the people He died on the cross for, gladly return to their former sinful lifestyle? Commit new sins, in the knowledge that Jesus has already suffered for them? Really.....?! This article looks into the choices we make in everyday life and weighs up why we should prioritize pleasing God over pleasing ourselves.

2. Who said what on pleasing God?

It is Paul who reveals the most important component for pleasing God: faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please Him,” he writes in Hebrews 11:6. Paul also tells us what is the most obvious obstacle between us and pleasing God: our flesh. “They who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8). He urges the Thessalonians to “please God”, (1 Thessalonians 4:1) and tells the Corinthians (in 2 Corinthians 5:9) that we must “make it our aim to please Him” wherever we are.

John had heard Jesus speak about doing God's will (John 5:30 and most obviously in John 8:29) and used this teaching in one of his own letters (1 John 3:22) in relation to prayer: "Whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him" – suggesting that NOT doing 'what pleases Him' will affect the result of our prayers.

Solomon echoes this in Proverbs 16:7, where he suggests that pleasing God may even produce blessings that were not prayed for: "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7).

David made a number of mistakes in his life, but his heart was turned to God and to pleasing Him. In the realization that "the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him" (Psalm 147:11), David's aim was to ensure that God sees his intentions (Psalm 19:14; 40:8).

3. What does 'pleasing God' mean in MY life?

When we're considering how to please our parents, siblings, spouse, friends or co-workers, most of us know

quite well what will please them and what won't. We know this because we have an intimate relationship with these people. We have known them for a long time and have discovered what makes them happy and what doesn't. We know what presents they like, which foods they are likely to order at restaurants, what colors to paint their home with, flowers they like, holiday destinations, etc. etc.

Given the importance of pleasing God, we should make the same effort to find out what God does and doesn't like. Having faith is the first step, but responding to the greatest gift we will ever receive in life – being saved by Jesus – requires us to make a lot more effort for God. 'Pleasing God' is about the things that we do, and the things we don't do. We do respond to Jesus's call to spread the Gospel (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, John 15:16); observe His commandments (John 14:15), and seek to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). We don't allow our flesh to determine our actions (therefore no "sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery,

enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these”) because, as this verse (Galatians 5:21) continues, “as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God ”. And why would it be that ‘those that do such things’ will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Well – because ‘such things’ do not please God, at all. All evil needs to be removed, to make place for “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).

4. Can our failure to please God make us lose our salvation?

Most Christian scholars agree that that is not the case, but you should seriously ask yourself why you should want to cause grief to the Lord. It is our place to show Him gratitude for what Jesus has done for us. So, if you’re prone to, let’s say, jealousy, fits of anger, [and/or] rivalries, you should make a deliberate effort to end this. You don’t have to do this on your own, remember: “whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His

commandments and do what pleases Him”. But your desire to please Him must come “from the heart,” (Ephesians 6:6) – it must be YOU who is determined to end this “ jealousy , fits of anger, [and/or] rivalries”, and it must be you who is committed to making this work. Expecting God to remove any jealousy, fits of anger or rivalries from your heart and sitting back while He makes that happen, isn’t ‘pleasing God’. Can a failure to please God cause your salvation to be removed from you? Well, no, if you’re a born-again Christian you will not find yourself before the great white throne described in Revelation 20:11-15. But “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). This ‘receiving what is due us’ WILL reflect our actions. It is unwise not to seek to please God.

5. Should we attempt to please God because we fear Him?

God is a loving God, Who loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son, “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). As mentioned above, this promise stands. We do not need to fear God once we have accepted Jesus as our Lord. But our actions are not without consequences. God WILL help us deal with issues, “for it is God Who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13) but we have to make an effort, trying “to discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8 – and please do read Paul’s full warning in Ephesians 5:3-9 about who will NOT inherit the Kingdom of Christ and God).

The Apostle Paul emphasizes not fear, but willingness should motivate our decision to please God: “Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the Word of Life” (Philippians 2:14-16). We’ll let Paul have the final word on the matter: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers [and sisters!], by the mercies of God, to present

your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:1-2).

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Sandra Kerkum · <https://www.biblword.net/> · info@biblword.net