

The Characteristics of a God-Pleaser

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 November 2007

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] The book is *Pleasing People, How Not to Be an Approval Junkie*! It has two parts. Part one, our problem. Part two, God's solution.

So far we've been looking at our problem. And indeed it is our problem, isn't it? Every one of us, I think, have probably seen ourselves in the first half of the book.

This problem of being in bondage to the approval of others or at least being too concerned about what people think of us and pleasing them, being controlled by their smiles and their frowns.

Has anyone altogether escaped unscathed the first half of the book then with this problem? I think that we have found it to be as universal as pride itself because we see that those two are very intimately related.

So hopefully the problem has been sufficiently set forth so that you will now know an approval junkie when you see one. You will be able to identify that approval addict within and those different behaviors and tendencies within our own hearts that are just this, this problem of seeking to please people.

[1:31] Well, we begin today, then, the second half of the book, God's solution. And isn't God good to have a solution to every one of our problems? To not just let us wallow in our problem or to try to find our own way and dig our own way out of it?

Just as the Bible is full of texts that identify this problem, so it's full of other texts that identify the solution, the answer to our problem.

Now, the answer has already been pointed to in several of the other classes that we've already studied, the earlier chapters. We weren't made to completely wait to the second half till we saw glimpses of the answer, but we're given four tastes of it.

And the answer is this. If you would fear men less, then learn to fear God more. If you would be free from the bondage of seeking the approval of others, learn to be a seeker of the approval of God.

Or, just in short, the solution to being a people pleaser is to be a God pleaser. It's just that simple. I say, in theory, it's that simple.

[2:49] It's clear to us, isn't it? That if I'm seeking to please God, that pleasing people no longer is as important as it once was. Now, the motto of the God pleaser is 2 Corinthians 5.9.

So we make it our goal to please Him. That's the God pleaser's motto. We make it our goal to please Him.

2 Corinthians 5.9. We make it our goal. We aim at this. This is our aim, our ambition. This is what we're after in anything that we are doing.

It's the bottom line with the God pleaser. His top priority in life is to please the Lord. Richard Baxter, who's quoted often in this book by Lou Priolo, writes of the blessedness of the God pleaser, the happiness, the wonderful state and condition of a God pleaser, who in every temptation remembers that God is watching and counts that more important than any other consideration.

And in every duty is so concerned about the will and pleasure of his God that he considers the observation and thoughts of men as he would the presence of a bird or a beast.

[4:05] Now, sadly, the presence and observations of men weigh in more heavily than the birds or a beast in our presence.

Ever been in a public place and you're ready to eat and your normal habit is to bow your head and to thank the Lord before you eat. But just the presence of certain people in the room or the area causes you to forego your usual practice.

And that just out of fear of what they might think. Wouldn't it be great to have their presence to weigh in no heavier than the presence of a bird or of a kitten, a dog?

You don't change and alter your life because a birdie's watching you. Well, what will enable us to live so free from the approval of men?

It's to be a God pleaser and to have God so overshadow and overpower us with the thought that he is there, that there is this God to please, that man seems so insignificant to us.

[5:19] That's a glorious blessedness of the God pleaser. That man is blessed then who considers the smiles of man as insignificant. If God is frowning.

And he considers the frowns of men and their criticisms as nothing. If God is smiling. Baxter concludes, Truly, I cannot understand how any other man than this can live a life of true and solid peace and joy.

The God pleaser. If God's approval and favor don't give you peace, nothing can rationally give it to you. Nothing can rationally give it to you. If the pleasing of God doesn't satisfy you, though men, though good men, though all men should be displeased with you, I don't know how or when you will ever be satisfied.

So the God pleaser is the satisfied man. He's the joyful man. He's the man at peace. Not enslaved to the fear of men. So we see the son of man, don't we?

The son of man. The son of man. Unmoved and at peace, even when men were accusing him and condemning him. Because he had the father's approving smile at all times.

[6:38] He heard in his conscience, his father's approving voice, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. And that caused all the frowns and hatred of men to not move him.

He had his father's smile. Well, the author wants us to know then what a God pleaser looks like, how he acts, how he thinks. And so today we're considering the characteristics of a God pleaser from chapter 8.

Characteristics, marks of a God pleaser. First of all, the God pleaser realizes that he cannot please God apart from being a Christian.

Turn with me to Romans chapter 8. And this is an important point. The God pleaser realizes that he can't please God apart from being a Christian.

Romans 8 and verses 8 and 9. Well, we'll back up to verse 6. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.

[7:50] The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Those who are controlled by the sinful nature. Those who have not been born again by the Spirit. Those in whom the Spirit does not live. They cannot please God no matter how hard they try.

Now, why is that? Why is it the case that no acts of an unconverted man or woman are found to be pleasing in the sight of Almighty God?

Chuck? Okay, it's only through Christ that we please God. And I'm asking you, why is that? I'm sorry? Why? Because of our sin.

And Mike? Okay, we see here that God is holy and man is sinful. And our very nature, our very heart, our mind as it thinks, our desires and our affections and our will is absolutely hostile toward God.

[9:04] It's contrary to God, so that we cannot please God. God's going this way, we're going that way. So, the conclusion is those controlled by the sinful nature, those who have nothing more than what they were born with, the sinful nature, cannot please God.

They lack ability. That's a word of ability. They're not able to. Because God says, these are my commands. This is what I want you to do. And we don't want to do that by nature.

So, we're unable to please God. We lack ability. We also lack understanding. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says that the natural man does not understand the things of God because they're only discerned spiritually and he doesn't have the spirit.

They lack ability. They lack understanding. They lack proper motives and attitudes. What motives and attitudes are required, if anything that we do is to be pleasing to God?

What are some of the attitudes and motives that must be present if what we do is pleasing to God? Faith.

[10:17] Okay. Without faith, it's impossible to please God. Hebrews 11:6. I think we're going to get more of that in the weeks to come. There. What? A humility. Okay. A humility.

And a dependence upon God. Last. Obedience. An obedient attitude. All right. That speaks of a submission which the unregenerate man doesn't have.

He doesn't have that submission. But a submission to obey. An attitude of obedience. Ed? Love. Love. Isn't that what 1 Corinthians 13 says? That you can give your whole body, you can give all that you have to the poor, you can give your body to be burned, you can have the greatest gifts, you can do all sorts of miraculous things, but if you don't have love, it's all nothing.

It doesn't add up to anything in God's sight. You must have the attitude of love. Love for God, love for man, the two greatest commands. Without that, it just doesn't weigh in as pleasing to God.

Another. 1 Corinthians 10, 31. What do you need as a motivation for it to be pleasing in God's sight?

[11:31] God's glory. Why are you doing what you're doing? To see God glorified. Not to draw attention to me in front of men, but to draw attention to God and to show how glorious He is.

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. That motive, that attitude, must be there. So, as Chuck stated at the outset, apart from Christ, nothing that we do is pleasing to God.

Even our attempts at righteousness, even our attempts to be righteous, do not please God apart from Christ. In fact, they not only do not measure up as a positive righteousness before God, they actually are another negative.

There's something obnoxious to God. There's something that He finds just downright obnoxious. That we should think that we would have a righteousness apart from Christ that He ought to be pleased with.

That I came to church today, so God ought to be pleased with me. Because I didn't go elsewhere. Or I gave money to the church. Or I volunteered at the homeless shelter. God ought to be pleased with me because I did these things.

[12:46] They don't add up and impress God. They rather are just splendid sins. As Augustine said, Romans 10.3, just a page over, they did not submit to God's righteousness in Christ, but sought to establish their own righteousness.

That's what's so offensive to God about even man's attempts to be good apart from Christ. They are not submitting to God's righteousness. God's way of righteousness is through Christ.

It's the only way you'll be righteous in my sight. And we say, no, I don't need Christ to be righteous. I just need to try and do a little more good works. And God ought to be happy with me.

And I ought to be righteous before Him. That's proud self-righteousness. And it's a stench in God's nostrils. All our righteous deeds are as filthy rags.

Isaiah 64.6. So in order for man's actions to be pleasing to God, his standing before the Holy One needs to be changed.

[13:52] We need to be in a right relationship with God for our actions to be pleasing to God. And how do we get in a right relationship? With God. It's through faith in Jesus Christ.

When we trust in the Savior, a great exchange happens. Our sins go on His account and He suffers for them at Calvary. And His righteousness goes to our account so that before God we're declared righteous and we're seen as righteous in His sight.

Our sins for His righteousness. And that's what makes us right with God. Being found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own which comes from the law.

but that which is through faith in Christ. The righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Philippians 3.9. And so if I'm trusting in Christ, I am repudiating any righteousness of my own.

I'm saying, I'm empty. I don't have righteousness and that's why I come to you, Lord Jesus. I need righteousness. I'm not right with God and nothing I do could make me right with God. So, Lord Jesus, make me right with God by your righteousness.

[15:01] So we'll only look to Christ for righteousness if we're convinced that we have none of our own to put us in right standing with God. Now, until we're right with God, then none of our deeds are pleasing in His sight.

They're the deeds of His enemy and they do not please Him. And I do believe that this is the difference between Cain's offering and Abel's offering. Genesis 4.4 says that the Lord looked with favor upon Abel and his offering, but upon Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.

You see, he first looked with favor upon Abel and then he looked with favor upon his offering and what he did. He must find favor in God's sight.

He must be in a right standing with God before even his offering is favorable in God's sight. Cain, God does not look upon the person of Cain with favor and therefore he did not look upon the

offering of Cain with favor.

And we read in Hebrews the thing that brought the favor of God upon Abel was that it was by faith that he offered a better sacrifice than Cain.

[16 : 22] By faith that looked away from himself in humility and looked to God's righteousness through His provided Redeemer. Through faith he offered a better sacrifice than Cain.

And so even our worship is not pleasing to God unless it comes through faith in Christ. 1 Peter 2.5 We're a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

All you do as a priest today in worshiping is only acceptable if you're in Christ and so you're able to offer them to God through faith in Him.

Something that Colossians 3.17 says that even our giving of thanks to God is only acceptable as we offer it through faith in Christ. Our thanksgiving must come through Him.

All of our approaches to God must be through Christ. So a God-pleaser realizes that without Christ he cannot please God.

[17 : 29] Well secondly the God-pleaser studies the Scriptures to understand exactly what it takes to please God. Ephesians 5 and verse 10.

Ephesians 5 and verse 10 he's talking to the children of light you who were once darkness but now you are the light you are light in the Lord. And he's giving us instructions in verse 10 just very pointedly says and find out what pleases the Lord.

Find out. A God-pleaser is a man on a treasure hunt. He's on a search. He's got a mission. He's out to find something.

And what is it he's looking for? He wants to know what pleases the Lord. And so he ransacks the Bible where the Lord reveals to us what pleases him.

A God-pleaser studies the Bible like a suitor studies his beloved's Facebook online or her diary to find out what pleases her.

[18 : 38] He wants to know what pleases her that he might be himself pleasing in her sight. And if he finds out that she likes to eat Chinese he'll learn to eat with chopsticks.

And if he learns that she likes poetry he'll become a poet. And if she learns that he likes or that she likes certain men's cologne he'll wear it though it costs a hundred dollars and makes him sneeze whenever he wears it.

He's finding out what pleases her and he's driven on in the pursuit by love. By love. He wants to be found pleasing to his beloved.

Now do you read the Bible that way? Do you read the Bible that way? Does your intake of the Word of God have anything of that element in it?

Oh it's Monday morning and I open my Bible and I am here Lord to find out what pleases you. because I love you and I want to do the things that bring you pleasure.

[19 : 45] Is there anything of that element in your Bible intake? That's what makes the commands as precious as the promises.

Because the commands reveal to me the heart of my beloved and what he wants me to do to please him. And so the God pleaser is found pouring over his Bible meditating on it memorizing it fashioning his life after it when he has decisions to make when he has sins to kill when he has crises to face trials to endure opportunities to minister it's to the Bible he turns because he wants to know how to please the Lord in that situation.

Indeed he must find out what pleases the Lord so that's a mark of a God pleaser. Thirdly this goal of pleasing God is something he is conscious of.

This goal of pleasing God is something he is conscious of. It's not like the senior year of high school you filled out the form and it asks you your ambition in life your goal in life what you want to be and you filled it out and you haven't thought of it since then have you gone back and looked what did I say I wanted to be it's not like that it's not that this is a goal that you write down in your diary and then just forget about it this goal of pleasing God is something that the God pleaser is conscious of the mind of the God pleaser is set on things above not on things of earth Colossians 3 2 and so the thing that weighs in heaviest with him is not man's opinions but God's opinions his mind is in heaven he's wanting to be sure he's pleasing that audience and so he's someone who thinks about this often it's a thing of the mind his mind is there will this be pleasing to the Lord how shall I do this in a way that God would be pleased if you were the secretary to the president of the

United States you'd be very conscious of wanting to please him and to please him as your boss and you would be right in doing so as Titus 2:9 tells us and so as you dressed in the morning and your demeanor in the office and your performance of your duties everything would be done with the awareness of his presence and whether or not it was done in a fashion that pleased him and in a similar way the God pleaser lives with this conscious awareness of God the God he is seeking to please and so we have those statements in the scriptures that he lives for him no longer for ourselves but for him and we live unto him and we live before him Psalm 16:8 I've set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand I will not be moved I will never be shaken because he sees the Lord the one he is seeking to please it's not just something again as we said that he decides once and forgets about he's very conscious of this

[23:05] I want to please him so he thinks of him as if he's right there because he is right there some of the commands in the Old Testament are a bit puzzling and commentators wrestle to try to give meaning to them and explain precisely why God made these commands Leviticus 19 and verse 19 is one of those you are to keep my statutes he says to the children of Israel you shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed nor wear a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together so don't plant corn and beans in the same field and don't make garments of flax and wool together and so on you ever wondered what the reasons for some of these commandments are in the

Old Testament I must confess that I didn't do my homework on this one and perhaps you could come up with many good reasons but whatever else God may have been teaching his people in such commands he was teaching them that in everything they did in life they were to be concerned about what pleases the Lord what does the Lord want I'm a farmer what does he want in farming how does he want me to plant my fields I have livestock what pleases the Lord in breeding my livestock I'm a seamstress I make clothing what kind of clothing should I make and by the way that was probably something every mother of the household did I put food on the table what kind of food are we to eat remember all the food laws the dietary laws in all these things

God was reminding them that he is to be pleased in the big things and in the small things and this is a mark of a God pleaser in all things the pleasure of his God is sought so perhaps we need to take inventory in our lives start with the first thing you do in the morning and go right through your day asking is this thing pleasing to the Lord don't miss anything go slowly through your day go right on through the week and hit all the areas what you do with your time your money your possessions your body your relationships everything perhaps there's something you haven't thought of recently in terms of whether or not you're doing with it what God is pleased with that's the mark of a God pleaser is there anything I should change in my life in order to bring it more into line with God's pleasure he thinks often of these things it's a very conscious thing with him is my life pleasing to the Lord I should imagine that that's a very conscious thing with him every time he reads the word of God he's not just reading just to find out what pleases the Lord but to ask the further question am I pleasing the Lord in this way every time he sits and hears a lesson from the word of God is my life pleasing according to this word from heaven that's a mark of a God pleaser he's conscious of pleasing his God in all things but then fourthly he considers changing not only his outward actions but also his thoughts and motives many of these things are just the reverse of what the first half of the book said and so I'm leaving out a lot of them because they just seem so much like repetition to me but you can see that that's true as you study the man pleaser in the first half of the book the God pleaser does just the opposite the people pleaser is primarily concerned about his appearances before others how he looks to them what they think of them what he says what he does the outward actions outward words but the

God pleaser is more concerned about what's on the inside what he really is the thoughts and the attitudes of his heart the motives the intentions and the desires because this is what really matters to God and so it really matters!

[27:45] to the God pleaser 1 outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart he checks what we think and what we are wanting as well as what we are doing the people pleasing Pharisee cares only for the outside of the cup and the platter Jesus says but the God pleaser cares for what's on the inside of the cup and the platter the inside of the heart he's more concerned with what God sees!

if you should listen in to the private devotions of the God pleaser you'd hear him saying things like this search me oh God and know my heart try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any

wicked way in me and leave me in the way everlasting you'd find him praying for sin killing strength of attitude you'd find him confessing thoughts and motives and lust and pride and greed and selfishness and carrying on the battle on his knees in areas like that that the world around him never sees because he knows that God sees them and he wants the whole of his being all that is within him to be found pleasing to the Lord that's the fourth mark of the God pleaser he considers changing not only his outward actions but also his thoughts and motives and then fifthly he's concerned about fulfilling not only his public duties but also his private duties what he is when only God is watching is just as important to him as what he is when he's in public after all it's God he's seeking to please whether he's in public or in private God is his all important audience of one so that means that there's far more to this man than what meets the eye some people only concern themselves with outward public duties because that's what men see again Matthew 6 and Jesus scathing rebuke of the Pharisees they only gave themselves to those outward things that people could see when they gave when they prayed when they fasted that's all they concerned themselves with and so the man pleaser may be found regularly in church prayer meeting public service opportunities but the God pleaser has a whole hidden life of prayer and praise and Bible reading and meditation that is not seen by men!

You've seen politicians who help out in soup kitchens when there's a camera nearby but take the cameras away and they don't give the poor and needy the time of day they're only concerned with public duties when the eye of men are upon them the God pleaser is the same in public and in private he's consistent when people are watching and when they're not because God is true again that true religion is home religion if it's real it works at home where the eyes of the public never see David said it Psalm 101 2 and 3 I will be careful to live a blameless life when will you come to me I will walk in my house with blameless heart I will set before my eyes no vile thing the God pleaser is concerned to walk in his house in private where no one sees what he sets before his eyes to walk before his house in a blameless way the man pleaser says I'd be embarrassed if my pastor found out that I watched that DVD that's the man pleaser the God pleaser says I will set no vile thing before my eyes nothing that would defile my conscience and displease my God so what we are at home when no one is watching is what we are and nothing more someone has said God God pleaser just as concerned about private duties as he is public ones and then sixth mark and the last one we'll look at this morning is when he pleases people he does it out of loving motives not selfish ones when he does please people his motive is different he does it out of true love rather than out of selfish motives we've noticed in the first half of the book

[32:54] I think it was chapter two that there are situations when the God pleaser will please people indeed the Bible commands us to be pleasing our neighbor to be pleasing our bosses to be pleasing our spouse to be pleasing our children but even here the God pleaser is different from the man pleaser in the way they go about pleasing others there's different motives the in order to win favor and praise so that people will think more highly of him in order to get attention to himself or perhaps in order to use and get something from them a form of manipulation he might please others in order to be avoiding conflict or rejection but what all these motivations have in common is that they're self serving and self promoting so he pleases others to promote!

to please people in certain scenes but when he does he does it to please God supremely to please God who says to him love your neighbor as yourself yes your neighbor will be pleased when you love him like you love yourself but the God pleaser does so preeminently because God is the one who tells him to love his neighbor as himself and he wants to please God he wants to minister to others to edify them he is concerned with their needs with what's best for them his focus is on what he can give and not on what he can get a real check on whether our love for others and our pleasing others whether it's the love and the pleasing of others of a man pleaser or a God pleaser is this if I really love them then I'll you're pleasing men out of a motivation

Godward or manward do I give them what they want or what they need Luke 10 you remember the story of Jesus at the home of Mary and Martha and Martha comes and chews out the Lord because he wants she wants him to tell Mary who's out sitting at Jesus feet to come and help her with all the preparations for the food and Martha acts as if she needed her sister Mary to help her in the kitchen Jesus doesn't buy it he sees that it is only her perceived need and it's really just a want you just want her out there it's not something you need your real need is to sit here with Mary at my feet Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be denied her Jesus says Jesus love is true his love for

Martha is true he doesn't just give her what she needs Mary get out there and help her don't you see she's all alone no Jesus stops to teach her something about her real need what you want is Mary what you need is to sit here and to learn of me you have me right here the son of God in your midst sit and learn of me don't be so worried and upset about all these other preparations that you're missing the one thing needful so Jesus love is true he gives out what she needs not just what she wants and if your love for people is genuine then you too will give them not only love when they want it and love as they want it but you'll give as they need it and sometimes they won't be happy with you giving them what they need check your love for your children on that score check your love for your children people pleasers are not willing to risk upsetting even their children with truth or other people whereas

God pleasers do not shy away from necessary conflict or confrontation because more important than pleasing them is pleasing him and more important than giving them what they want is giving them what they need it's true love both for God and for man so he does not worry or fret when he displeases people if in so doing he is pleasing God well these are just six marks of a God pleaser again we could go on and on basically whatever we saw is true of a man pleaser the God pleaser does the opposite there was another book written on this whole topic by Ed Welch and the title of the book I think says it all and it summarizes the answer beautifully!

[37 : 49] God is small and what happens when people are big in your life and God is small is that you live for people's approval because they're too big in your estimate and God is too small when the fear of man is high it's an indicator on the dashboard of life that the fear of God is low when wanting the approval of man has a death grip on me it's an indicator that I'm not thinking highly enough of God when people are big and God is small so the answer is to keep our hearts and minds filled with big thoughts of our big God to see him for who he is and all of his majesty that man might take his less significant place such as a bird or a beast and in all of this God is for us brethren

God is for us in this aim at pleasing him it's not at cross purposes with the Lord he wants us to please him he indeed helps us and works in us to please him he's on our side in this matter of being a God pleaser let's close with Hebrews 13 and verses 20 and 21 and I apologize to those who teach after me if this is a text that is in one of the later chapters but it certainly is encouraging as we close to know that God is for us and working in us that we might reach this very goal that is our motto in life if we're a God pleaser and want to be one Hebrews 13 20 through 21 this doxology that comes at the end of this glorious book that sets forth the Lord Jesus as the only mediator for sinners may the

God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus that great shepherd of the sheep may that God that God of peace the one who brought back the Lord Jesus from the dead may he equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever amen and this tells me the same one with the power to raise Christ from the dead has power to work in me what is pleasing to him and he does it through Jesus Christ so that in the end all glory goes to him let's pray Lord we thank you for being the great God that you are open our eyes to see how wonderful you are that we would not fear men or live for their approval but more and more would be weaned from the fear of man which is a snare and come to know by experience the blessedness of being a

God pleaser do it for your own great namesake! Amen may