

You Can Please God

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, last week we started this little back-to-back series on you can't please people, but you can please God.
- That's this week. And we talked last week why you shouldn't bother with pleasing people, why you shouldn't make that your goal, your singular goal in your life.
- Why shouldn't we live that way? Well, we said last week you don't need it for so many, and I think probably for most people, pleasing people.
- And people become an idol. They become our salvation. They become the thing that we look to to tell us that we're good, that we're accepted.
- And as Christians, we have to really come to terms with the fact that we don't need their acceptance. We don't need their approval because we already have God's approval in Jesus Christ.
- [1 : 0 8] He has passed the test, and He has given us the grades. And so we have His favor. We have His pleasure. We don't need people to accept us in that way.
- And we talked about we don't need it, and then we said that it really is a pointless thing to try. It's an impossible thing to try to gain. What were some of the reasons that we talked about last week?
- Why is it impossible really to please people, to live like that, to really please most of them most of the time? What were some of the things that we said?
- All people are different, and why is that a problem? And so what are you going to get yourself into? Yeah.
- You're going to get into arguments. When you try to please one, what's going to happen? You're going to offend someone else. In trying to please one person, you're going to end up offending someone else.
- [2 : 1 4] I'm sure you've been stuck in those positions, where you really, your choice was going to please some people, and it was going to offend other people.
- That's not a rare occasion. That's pretty much our whole lives. So to please one is to displease another. Another reason, why is it so pointless to try to please people?
- Why bother with that? Or why not bother with that? Someone's saying something over there. Because we're all sinners.
- We're all sinners. And what does that mean? We try to change this approval, because it's all about sin. And if they let God be the man, or the man, or society, or whatever, you have to be the judge.
- Let God be the judge. Okay. Very good. So people are sinful. How are they going to treat you then? What's the problem with that?
- [3 : 2 0] They're going to treat you unfairly. They're going to be critical. They're going to misunderstand you. They're going to misjudge you. They're going to, they're not going to be fair. And so why live and die for judges that are going to treat you unfairly?

If not this moment, eventually they will. In God's words to Isaiah, who is man that you are mindful of him? Who's he that you should regard him?

He has just the breath in his nostrils. And then you remember, we talked about Ephesians 4. Paul said, I insist on it in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking.

They're darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. So you see the words that describe fallen men, darkened, ignorant, futile.

Now, afterwards, someone said to me, I was thinking along the lines of those are the people on the outside. And but you were saying that we need to think about Christians along that same way.

[4 : 39] And what about believers? And that's a good question. Now, that describes unbelievers. Does Ephesians 4, though, the passage I just quoted, does that in any way describe believers?

As they actually are. What do you think? Well, sometimes, right?

It's not the way it should be. But do Christians have darkened mind and futile thoughts sometimes? Yeah, they do. Can they be ignorant?

Yeah. I mean, they're not supposed to be. But Paul is saying, I insist on this in the Lord that you no longer live that way. That's assuming what? It's assuming that to some degree they are living that way.

Now, he wouldn't say that if we didn't still live that way to some degree. And so how do we think about our own Christian thinking? How do we think about our minds?

[5 : 46] Well, we need to say the lights have come on. I'm not blind anymore like I used to be. But I'm not what I'm going to be. There's a vast difference between what I used to be and what I am now.

And there is a vast difference between what I am now and what I am going to be. So right now I'm in this in-between place. So is anyone here perfect in love and perfect in charity and judgment and fairness?

Can anyone raise their hand and say, yeah, I'm always kind in my judgments. I'm always fair. I always understand. No, we can't say that.

And so just being realistic, we have to say Christians can still be this way. Even Christians can still be unfair and ignorant, hypercritical.

They can be judgmental and harsh in their evaluations. They can misunderstand. And I guess if you don't think that's you, then I'm probably talking about you.

[7 : 01] Remember Ecclesiastes. Don't pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you, for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

Is that just an unbeliever's problem? Is Ecclesiastes, that proverb, just for them? No, it's for us. We know we've done that to others, and it's going to happen to us.

So people are different. People are sinful and selfish. And then the third point was, even Jesus couldn't manage to make people happy. And he was perfect. And he went around doing good.

And he could say to his enemies, have any of you, can any of you point out a single sin that I've done? Have I in any way been unkind, harsh, judgmental, unfair to any of you?

No, Jesus himself couldn't please everybody. And so he didn't try. He didn't bother with that.

[8 : 01] He didn't let their disfavor bother him. He was trying to please the Lord. That was the one person he was trying to please. When he woke up in the morning, he didn't think about what will make all of these people happy.

How can I avoid their bad opinions? He just thought, I want to make the Lord happy. I want to make my father in heaven happy. That was his singular focus. So that's what I want to talk about today.

Pleasing God. You can please God. Jesus lived for that. And it was a life worth living. Man is fickle. You can't please him.

Man is changing. That's what someone brought up afterwards to me. That's one more reason you can't please man. Because the thing that pleases him one day is going to be something different the next day.

And you know that. I know myself over the last 10, 15, 20 years. I can look back over my adult life and say, you know what? My opinions, my evaluations have changed.

[9 : 01] If you would have come to me 15 years ago and said such and such, I would have been like, yeah, you're really smart. I agree with you. And if you came to me now and said the very same thing, I'd say, well, you're probably not.

You're not thinking about that very clearly. I don't like that opinion. Who's changed? Well, I've changed. Men are changing. God doesn't change. So we can please him.

So we want to talk about you can't please man, but you can please God most of the time. And I hope this is an encouraging lesson to you. I am afraid that many serious minded Christians have a view of God that is high and holy and exalted.

And that is good. But they they make it and they have then a view of God that is harsh, that he's impossible to please. And that's not the Bible's picture at all.

So I want to talk about five really quick thoughts as we begin. Five quick thoughts about why pleasing God is an easier, better proposition than trying to please man.

[10 : 08] So we're going to talk about those things. And then we're going to talk about after that, we're going to talk about what are some of the things? What are some of the clear ways that God says, if you do this, this pleases me. This is the kind of life that delights me, that I enjoy, that brings me pleasure.

So these five quick thoughts, why it's better to please God than man. Number one, it's better. It's easier to please one master, one boss than many.

It's easier to please one master rather than many. One movie has a scene like this and this guy is getting interviewed and this is how it says, well, Bob, I have eight different bosses, eight bosses.

Yeah, Bob, eight bosses. If I do anything wrong, I have eight different people coming to me and telling me I'm doing it wrong. And Bob, that only makes you work hard enough not to get in trouble, not to lose your job.

Eight bosses. So why can you please God and not man? Because there's only one God and there's a lot of men.

[11 : 19] It's easier to please one boss than lots of them. So let's pretend that you're the CEO or you're the assistant to the CEO of Goldman Sachs, the big bank.

And, you know, you can imagine, or I'm just saying any sort of big corporation, any big business. Now, you're the assistant to the CEO. You're their servant, basically.

You don't have to make every middle manager happy, do you? You don't have to worry about what some VIPs think of you. You don't have to worry about what every Joe Schmo who comes into the office thinks about you and your job and your performance, everyone who comes along.

Your job is pretty simple, isn't it? I make the CEO happy. He likes what I do. He likes and values my performance.

If I do that, if you do that, you're good. Other people can be unhappy. But if he's happy, I'm safe. Nothing else matters. Jesus had one boss.

[12 : 27] I live to please him. I'm trying to please him. I do that, and I'm good. And so hip, hip, hooray.

You know what? We only have one master. One Lord. We try to please him. You try to please him. That's all you need to worry about. You try to do right by him, and that's all you need to worry about.

Trying to please man. I just thought of this. You know, you've seen the phone book. They're a dying thing, but you've seen them. The phone book, then, is your list of masters.

If you are intent on saying, I have to please people, then every single person you meet is a potential master. It is your master. He is your master. She is your master. Or has the potential to be your master.

So, one boss. Worry about one master. That's a lot easier. Number two. The one master is wiser than men, and he won't mistreat you or misunderstand you.

[13 : 28] So, how many times have people misunderstood you? Your intentions. Your heart. What you were trying to do.

How many times have your words or your actions been misjudged? Or handled without wisdom or understanding?

How many times have you thought, if they just gave me the benefit of the doubt, they wouldn't be so unfair? Or, if they knew what I was going through.

If they knew all the challenges that I was facing, they would understand this. They would understand me. People have said things to me that I knew.

Or, if they knew what I had been through that week, they wouldn't have said it. But they do say it. And then I go to the Lord. And the Lord has never misunderstood me.

[14 : 32] He has never. He knows what I went through that week. He knows what I'm going through. He knows how I'm made. He knows I'm dust. He knows he's not unreasonable.

He's never falsely accused me or falsely criticized me. Not one time. All of his accusations, all of his criticisms have been well-founded and well-deserved.

It's not that he never criticizes me. He's pointing things out in my life. It's never that he's never said, you know what? I'm accusing you of something.

He does. But you know what? Whenever I find him pointing the finger at me, putting the finger on something, it is something that is true. It is something real. It's something that I have to deal with.

He's never falsely accused me. So on the one hand, I can try to please all these people who are bent and broken and misunderstand me and are hypercritical, even some Christians to some degree.

[15 : 35] Or I can please the one, holy, good, loving God. It's not really a tough choice if you think about it.

It's not a tough choice. Number three, God judges the heart. And you might think, well, that's, isn't that bad? I mean, if I have a sinful heart, isn't that bad?

Well, maybe from one perspective, but from another perspective, and the way the Bible really looks at it from both perspectives of, yeah, God judges the heart.

All people have is the surface. God can see into the heart. He can see us for what we would have done. Had we the ability?

Had we the gifts? He can see our hearts. He can evaluate what we hope and dream. Could be. We read this last week.

[16 : 33] Judge nothing before the appointed time. First Corinthians four. Paul is saying to the Corinthians, judge nothing before the appointed time. But that doesn't stop Christians from doing it.

From being quick judges. From me being a quick judge. But. God can see into the heart. And he can't be fooled.

And he can't be kept in the dark. He judges your motives. He judges your intentions. I can't read your intentions. I can assume them.

But I can't. I can't know them. That's why there's hypocrites. That's why there's men that come become pastors and they preach for 30, 40 years.

And then it comes out. Well, that's not what they were all along. Well, how did they? How did that happen? Well, I didn't. We didn't know their intentions.

[17 : 33] We couldn't read their heart. But God can. And again, he knows what we would have done if we had the opportunity.

One old pastor said. You may be a hero. Or a martyr. In his eyes.

Without undergoing the labors of the one. Or the suffering of the other. His inspection. God's inspection. Opens a much wider field.

For praise. Than what the world can offer you. And so, let's say you try to do something. And it just doesn't work. And men, all they see is your failure.

But God says, you know what? I see why it didn't work. I see what he was going for. And that was a good thing. I know his heart. And so God can praise us for what we could have and wished we could have done.

[18 : 40] So, who would you try to please? Who should you try to please? The ones who will miss most everything. Or the one who can't miss anything. Number four.

God isn't a respecter of persons. God isn't a respecter of persons. It's about who you know.

They say. It's about who you are. It's about who you know. It's about who your parents are. Here's a sad fact.

Children of donors to Harvard. So, you have these people that make big donations to Harvard. Children of donors to Harvard are nine times more likely to be admitted to Harvard than non-donors.

Regardless of academic ability. Regardless of anything else. Hmm. I wonder what's going on there.

[19 : 45] Children of parents with lucrative positions. Somehow find places and jobs. Making lots of money.

When more qualified, more intelligent, more gifted people are passed over. Nepotism. Nepotism. So, my dad is in charge.

So, I get to be in charge, too. Nepotism. My dad has a big job. So, I get a nice job. It's rife. It's how the world works so much of the time.

We like to think of things as a meritocracy. Where you earn your way to the top. And that's true some of the time. But it's also not true some of the time.

So, it's about who you know in this world. But God is no respecter of persons. God's opinion. God's opinion. Can't be bought.

[20 : 49] It can't be prejudiced. It can't be unduly influenced. He takes each one of us as we are. Rich.

Poor. Someone. Nothing. He doesn't give. He doesn't bend justice in your favor.

Because you have lots of money. Or because of who you are. And he doesn't bend justice against you. Because you're poor. Or otherwise. So.

Last thought before we move on. So, we have that. Number four. God isn't a respecter of persons. Here's number five. The things that please God. Are only for our good.

Why should you try to please God. Rather than men. Because the things that pleases. The things that please God. Are only things that are for our good. So, when you please God.

[21 : 54] You do yourself good. That's the invariable connection. That's how it's always connected. So. To make people happy.

A lot of times. You have to hurt yourself. Some people. In order to please them. You basically have to damn your own soul. Isn't that true?

So, get drunk for me. Sleep with me. Lie for me. Look the other way for me. Go in debt for me. And on and on we go. In order to make them happy.

You have to do something illegal. You have to do something wrong. You have to do something that hurts your family. That hurts you. But everything that makes God happy. And pleases him.

Is for our good. In other words. Our God is good. And our God is fair. And when he says this pleases me. He is also saying.

[22 : 53] This is what will do you good. He's joined them together. The things that make him happy. Are the things that make you thrive. So, read the book of Proverbs. Isn't that the main motivation?

Look at Proverbs 1 through 9. He's telling the son. Son, this is why you need to listen to me. This is what you'll have. If you listen to me.

If you store up my words. If you get knowledge. What do you get? Oh, prosperity. Long life. Honor. Read the whole Bible.

Everywhere. And all of the time. It's God saying. I'm putting life before you. Choose life. Choose what's good for you.

The things that please me. Do you good. Then shouldn't we try to please him? Doesn't it make sense to please him?

[23 : 56] If he is tied. Pleasing him and our good together. Then it makes sense that we should in every circumstance say. What's pleasing to the Lord? I want to do that.

Because. I'm doing myself good. It's a win-win. He's pleased. And I. And I thrive. It's a win-win.

Because God is good. It's a win-win. Because God is good. You can't please people. But you can please God. Now I want to think about some ways that we can do that.

The Bible. Let me start by saying this. The Bible. Nowhere has an idea. That the Lord is impossible to please.

That for his people. It's just a gloomy cloud. And all they do is sin. And ask forgiveness. All they do is. They're at zero.

[24 : 52] And sometimes they get negative. And then they ask the Lord for forgiveness. And they get back to zero. That sort of relationship. Where he's either. With me. Like I don't. No real opinion.

Or he's displeased. The Bible. Does not know that idea. But you know what? A lot of Christians live with that idea. They live with that heart. Of. The best I can do.

Is. Get back to neutral. The Bible doesn't know that idea. Everywhere. It is saying. These are the things that really bring pleasure to God's heart.

God can be pleased. And so I want to start with children. Not because there are any children here. Because. I want.

I want to see that pleasing God is not a bar. That is impossible. To reach. So there's that saying without faith.

[25 : 49] That there's that verse without faith. It is impossible to please God. That is true. But. But the inverse is true with faith. It is possible. To please God. And so.

What are we talking about here? We can please him. Let's start with children. And I want you to see that pleasing God is not a bar that's impossible to reach. And again.

Why shouldn't we go around saying I can't please him. In our hearts. Everything I do is garbage. God's never happy with me. Let's start with children.

Colossians. Children. Obey your parents and everything. For this. Pleases. The Lord. Children.

Obey your parents and everything. For this pleases the Lord. Lord. So I tell Cademan. To brush his teeth.

[26 : 48] And he brushes his teeth. That pleases the Lord. The Lord sees. Cademan's actions. And he's pleased.

When Cademan obeys. That makes God happy. So what does it take for Cademan? To please the Lord. Does he have to climb Mount Everest?

Does he have to do some great heroic feat? No. He has to brush his teeth. It pleases the Lord. That's the motivation that Paul is using.

And it's not a false motivation. It's not a deceitful motivation. It's not a lie. Why? We can tell. Our children. Okay. I know this is hard for you to obey.

But if you do this very simple thing. You're going to please the Lord. So. What pleases God? Oh. Brushing your teeth.

[27 : 47] Making your bed. Those are things that please the Lord. Eating your vegetables. Picking up your room. Doing your homework. When your parents tell you. That pleases the Lord.

It's. Again. It's not climbing Mount Everest. It's not heroic. It isn't amazing. It's not some difficult thing. That is just so impossible to reach. It is obeying your mom and dad. When they tell you to do something.

It pleases the Lord. What else pleases the Lord? Taking care of your mom and dad. And your grandparents. So. First Timothy five.

But if a widow has children or grandchildren. These should learn. First of all. To put their religion into practice. By caring for their own family.

And so. Repaying their parents and grandparents. For this. Is. Pleasing. To God. Caring for your parents. And your grandparents.

[28 : 45] That pleases. The Lord. So. Pam. And Jana. Taking care of Sharon. Taking care of their mom.

The rest of the family. They get her lunch. No one notices that. They make sure. She has her medication. All the things that. They need to do. To take care of her.

All the things that. We need to do. To help our elderly grandparents. Our parents. How does God feel about that? It pleases him.

It delights him. He has. He. Loves to see it. It brings him joy. To see. People. Doing that.

Becky holiday. I saw her. Taking care of. Melba. Every day. No one really. Noticed that. The Lord noticed.

[29 : 41] And it pleased him. Brings him to light. Our devotions. Are pleasing to God. Psalm 104. 34. May the meditation.

May my meditations. Be pleasing to him. So. Me. Reading. And thinking. God's thoughts. After him. So I'm reading. God's word.

And I'm thinking about it. And I'm meditating upon it. God looks at that. And he's pleased. Proverbs 15. 8. The prayer of the upright. Pleases him. Again.

Is this upright person. A perfect person. Did this person have this moment. Of perfection. And prayer. Where there was no sin. In his heart.

Well not on this side of earth. Or. On this side of heaven. So who is this person. This person that pleases the Lord.

[30 : 36] Well they're a sincere person. Not a perfect person. A righteous man. Who wants to please the Lord. And in worship.

He prays. And now does the Lord. Look at that. And see all of his faults. And frowns at him. And is disappointed in him. No. Proverbs 15.

Says he's pleased with him. It brings him pleasure. Pleasure. Pleasure. So why would. Praying to God.

Bring him pleasure. Couldn't it just be. That you're his child. And he likes to hear you talk. He likes to have communication.

He likes to know. What's on your heart. I know. And you know this. As a parent. When your. Child. Shares their heart.

[31 : 29] It brings you closer. It brings you delight. So God delights. In the prayers of his children. Or we could talk about giving.

Most of you. I'm sure. Regularly give. You tithe. To the church. Does God feel. Anything. With that. Is this just a purely.

Financial transaction. Philippians 4. 18. I've received. Full payment. And more. I am well supplied. Having received. From Epaphroditus. The gifts.

You sent. A fragrant. Offering. A sacrifice. Acceptable. And pleasing. To God. The Philippian church. Blessed Paul.

With his. Generous gifts. And. Again. Do you think. They were absolutely. Perfect. When they did it. They had no pride. They had no. They just had. 100% complete.

[32 : 26] Good motives. Without any. Reluctance. Or pride. I really doubt. That they were. 100% perfect. And yet. God was. Pleased. He was. Pleased. Jesus.

Had obeyed. The law. For them. And so. God. Judged. The Philippians. By the love. Of his heart. And he was. Pleased. With them. So.

Giving. Is pleasing. To God. So. Just think about. How much. We've talked about. Just so far. So. We can please him. Just by giving.

We do that. Every week. Pleasing God. By taking care of our parents. And our grandparents. By having our devotions. By praying. And thinking. About him. Those bring him pleasure.

When children obey. When we obey. How about. When we fear him. That's a. That's the. Position of your heart. Psalm 147.

[33 : 23] 11. The Lord delights. In those who fear him. Who put their hope. In his unfailing love. So. What does it take. To please God. You fear him. You respect him.

You honor him. You say. He's the most important person. In my life. And I have to consider. What he says. I have to think about. Who he is. Walking in faith.

Pleases the Lord. That's Hebrews 11. Enoch. Walked with God. And Hebrews 11. 5 says. He was commended. As one who pleased.

God. Enoch. Lived his whole life. Walking by faith. With God. And God says. I pleased me.

This is what I want to say. To. Maybe some of you. That need to hear this. There is not a storm cloud. Over you. With God. Frowning on you.

[34 : 23] All day long. You have. The sunshine. Of his face. And yes. Every now and then. A cloud of sin. Comes between you and him.

But you know what. For Jesus sake. He. Brushes that. Cloud away. He forgives you. So. Enoch's.

Whole life. Was one of fellowship. With God. Walking with him. Trusting in him. We don't really know. Anything about Enoch. Except.

He didn't die. He was just suddenly. Taken up. We don't know. His whole life. But you know. Most of his life. Was just lived. Ordinary. Just doing normal things. And yet.

That whole. Walk of life. Everything he was doing. God. Put a big smile. Over it. And said. This pleased me. What else. Pleases the Lord.

[35 : 18] Hebrews 13. 16. Do not forget. To do good. And to share. With others. For with. Such sacrifices. God is pleased. Doing good.

Sharing. Giving financially. Giving your time. Sharing with those in need. It pleases God. That's someone. After God's own heart.

Isn't it? When. When we see someone. Who needs us. And we. Go out and love. And we provide. For them. God is saying. That they're like me.

They have the same heart. As I do. God's pleased. God sees you. Donating. And is pleased. And you should know that. And you should live in the joy.

Of that. So. What are you doing? That can be described. As doing good. Again. This is not.

[36 : 14] Something epic. Or heroic. In first Timothy. Those widows. That the church needs to take care of. They need to be people. That have.

Lived lives. And known for their good deeds. Such as. Raising their children. That's a good deed. That moms do. Every day. In the room.

In the. In the house. Cooking. Cleaning. Raising the children. And getting them off to school. Or doing whatever they need to do. That pleases the Lord. It's a good deed.

Going to work men. Providing for your family. That pleases the Lord. So that you have something to share with those in need. So men.

Women. When you get up. You get dressed. You go to your job. That pleases God. Pleases God. Men are hard to please.

[37 : 11] But just think about. What we've talked about. All of these things. Please the Lord. So I'm going to end with. First Thessalonians chapter four. Finally brothers.

We instructed you. How to live. In order to please God. As in fact. You are living. Let me repeat that. Think about that. Finally brothers. We instructed you.

As how to live. To please the Lord. As in fact. You are living. There was this lifestyle. Lifestyle. That pleased God. And they taught him.

And the Thessalonians followed. And that's what they were doing. Now we ask you. And we urge you. In the Lord Jesus. To do this. More and more. And then you look.

In that passage. In first. This Thessalonians four. And he's going to tell them. What they need to do. How. What they have already been instructed in. What they are doing. And what they need to keep doing.

[38 : 06] More and more. That pleases the Lord. And he talks about. Just three things. Living in sexual purity. That pleases the Lord. Living in brotherly love.

Pleases the Lord. Minding your own business. Going to work. Providing for yourself. Pleases. The Lord. So Paul.

I want to say. As I look out. You are pleasing the Lord. If I look at the Bible. And say. This is what the Bible says.

Pleases the Lord. I see that. In your lives. But we just need to end with. Do it more and more.

It's not an impossible thing. Do it more and more. All right. Well. We're dismissed.