

How to Live a Life Pleasing to God

Can our daily activities be seen as more or less pleasing to God, or even displeasing to God? Does God's blessing on our lives and ministries depend at least in part on our daily obedience to Scripture? This workshop will provide an affirmative answer to such questions, answers to theological objections, and practical application.

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I. The importance of pleasing God

A. Pleasing God should be the overall goal of our Christian lives

we have not ceased to pray for you...to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Col. 1:9-10 ESV)

Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. (1 Th. 4:1)

B. Pleasing God was the goal of Paul's ministry

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (2 Cor. 5:9)

so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who test our hearts. (1 Th. 2:4)

For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Gal. 1:10)

C. Pleasing God summarized Jesus' entire life

and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17)

And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him. (John 8:29)

- D. This idea is taught using several different terms in NT: *euarestos* (“pleasing, acceptable”), *eurasteō* (“to please”), *areskō*, *arestos*, *apodektos*, *euprosdektos*, *eudokia*, *eudokeō*

II. What kinds of things please God?

A. Faith

Hebrews 11:6

B. Worship

Hebrews 12:28

C. Obedience

Presenting our bodies as sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2)

Not putting stumbling block before a brother by what we eat (Rom. 14:18)

Sending a gift to Paul (Phil. 4:18)

Obedying parents (Col. 3:20)

Doing God’s will (Heb. 13:21)

Offering to God acceptable worship w/ reverence and awe (Heb. 12:28)

Having faith (Heb. 11:6)

Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord (Col. 1:10)

Speaking the true gospel (Gal. 1:10)

Not speaking to please man (1 Th. 2:4)

Keeping his commandments (John 3:22)

Praying for civil rulers (1 Tim. 2:3)

Giving support to needy parents and grandparents (1 Tim. 5:4)

III. Pleasing God by obedience is complementary, not contradictory, to justification by faith alone

A. We are not justified by works but we are called to do “good works” (Eph. 2:8-10)

Justification by faith alone does not imply
sanctification by faith alone (we also put in effort);
or pleasing God by faith alone

B. Pleasing God by obedience must flow from faith in God and must rely on the power that comes from God

Heb. 11:6; Rom 14:23; John 15:5, Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 15:10, Phil. 2:13

→but we cannot be passive about this! Obedience is something we do, not something that “just happens” to us, or that we do when we feel like it.

IV. Pleasing God by obedience and faith can be learned

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 (*euarestos*, “pleasing”) and perfect. (Rom. 12:2)

and try to discern what is *pleasing* to the Lord (Eph. 5:10) → you get better at this over time

Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. (1 Th. 4:1)

V. Pleasing God by obedience and faith is the opposite of displeasing him by our disobedience and unbelief

(→therefore, avoid conscious, willful sin!)

Eph. 4:30; Rev. 3:19; Heb. 12:5-11; Westminster Confession of Faith: God’s “fatherly displeasure”; 1 John 1:9

VI. Pleasing God by obedience and faith will lead us to experience more of his favor (or “grace”) on our lives

A. There is a close relationship between pleasing God and experiencing his favor

B. In OT “grace” often means God’s “favor” on someone

Gk. *charis* in LXX is the ordinary translation of Heb. *khēn*, “favor”
Gen. 6:8 Noah; Ex. 33:12, 17 Moses; Prov. 3:34; 12:2, 18:22

C. In NT “grace” translates *charis*: “a beneficent disposition toward someone, favor, grace, gracious care/help, goodwill” (BDAG)

D. Several NT examples of receiving more grace (more “favor”)

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb. 4:16)

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. (2 Pet. 1:2)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 3:18)

But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6)

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Pet. 5:5)

Also see: 2 Cor. 9:8; Rom. 12-6; Acts 4:33; 6:8

Also: The greeting and closings of all of Paul’s epistles wish more grace for readers.

E. But how can God be pleased with our obedience? Can there be any value in it?

→these are not “bad works” but “good works”

They are never perfect, but neither are they totally evil, 100% worthy of condemnation – they are mixed

F. “walk worthy” verses:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (Eph 4:1)

so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Col. 1:10)

we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory (1 Th. 2:12)

G. What kind of rewards/blessings does God give for obedience?

more answers to prayers (1 John 3:22)

We bear more fruit (Col. 1:10)

God draws near to us (James 4:8)

We will love life, see good days: (1 Pet. 3:8-10)

God will care for us, hear our prayers (1 Pet. 3:8-10)

Caring for our material needs (2 Cor. 9:8)

He rewards those who see him (Heb. 11:6)

VII. However: Pleasing God by obedience and faith may lead us along a path of suffering in this life

Phil. 1:29-30; 1 Pet. 2:19-10; many other NT verses

VIII. Pleasing God by obedience and faith gives us the joy of thinking that God is pleased with us most of the time