

## Pleasing God

We frequently discuss character, heart, contrite spirit and growing in the image of Christ. Preparation and learning how to achieve this is found throughout God's Word. We concentrate the majority of our studies in these areas, so we are ready to share God's Word and truth with those He sends our way. In addition to ingesting the Word of God, regular repairs of our own spiritual condition is necessary. Cars, equipment, and relationships can break down without regular maintenance. How we live and exemplify our Christian faith is critical. Of course, God is pleased ***if*** we love Him first but as we all know that is just the beginning.

It is so often said, "we need to do this, or we need to do that, or we should be doing this or that," pardon me for changing the wording a bit, "***I*** need to this and ***I*** need to that." It is time to take the mouse out of our pockets and stand before God and seek Him for what needs to be completed ***in us*** in our walk with Him. Not to be blunt or selfish, but the time has come to get out of our comfort zones and realize where we are and ***who*** we are walking with. Me first, I am front row center (we did a lesson a while ago). I always tell Andrea; I need the most work. With the mileage I have on me it is no wonder. My odometer has gone around a couple of times and

is now broken. None of us know just how many miles we have left, so a spiritual overhaul and regular maintenance is always in order.

**Haggai 1:7-** “Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Consider your ways.”

Simply, this is an examination of our behaviors and our ways. Can others recognize a change in us, or can they see Christ Jesus in our demeanor?

**2 Corinthians 5:9-11-** “Because of this, we are also laboring *so that*, whether present or absent, *we* may be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive according to the things *done in his body—what he has practiced, whether good or evil*. So then, *because* we know the fear of the Lord, we are persuading men; but we are fully known to God, and I hope are also fully known in your consciences.”

Remember, God knows our hearts.

In reading 2 Corinthians 5:9-11, our labors are to be well pleasing to Him. God does not want us out there on a street corner or in a parking lot handing out

pamphlets drawing attention to ourselves. It is not a numbers game. He knows our motives for everything we do. Are there things we *can* be doing to become a better witness? Certainly. God provides all the building blocks for our character development and Jesus sets the example.

There is so much more to pleasing God than “doing.” We so often equate “doing” with “things” rather than substance, quantity rather than quality. It is just part of human make up to get noticed for achievement. Look at all the charity work churches do but fail to keep God’s Commandments. Do you think God is more pleased by their works over honoring His Son Who died for their sins?

I remember the Pentecostal church we used to attend would always take attendance (as most churches do). Even further, they would do a count after an “altar call” to see how many people were “saved” that day. The same mind set existed on the missions trips I did to Costa Rica years ago. They would have altar calls at the end of the week’s training to get a “body count” to see how many came to Christ and were saved. Unless they were pulled from a fire, nobody was ever saved at that time.

**Matthew 23:15-** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel the sea and the land to make one proselyte, and when he has become one, you make him twofold more a son of Gehenna than yourselves.”

God is not impressed by numbers. Throwing your arm out of socket to get God to notice your accomplishments may get you the kind of attention you do not want.

**Matthew 23:5-6-** “And they do all their works to be seen by men. They make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments; And they love the first place at the suppers, and the chief seats in the synagogues,”

Body counts, boxes, or pamphlets, it does not work that way. Doing things out of the flesh will profit nothing.

**Romans 8:8-** “But those who are in *the* flesh cannot please God.”

Many people confuse this work of pleasing God to *witnessing* to the unbeliever.

They think it falls upon them to “help” others change their destination from hell to heaven. They forget that God is the One doing the calling. But isn’t this what the Great Commission tells us to do?

**Matthew 28:19-20-** “Therefore, go and make disciples in all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even until the completion of the age.” Amen.”

***If*** you read the scripture closely, “go and make disciples” stands out and stands alone. Who is Christ sending out? What is He sending them out to do? Christ is sending His Disciples out to teach the followers to become more disciples. They are going out to train the trainers in the existing churches. Nations can also mean “peoples.” Read the first line or two in most all of the New Testament Books and see who the author is speaking to, “the saints” or the “church at...”

How many of the prophets of the Old Testament were sent out to “evangelize” or “convert” gentile nations other than Jonah or Daniel? Most had limited contact and did not actively seek to persuade any other nation, perhaps just to deliver a message of correction or other prophetic warning. God made His covenant with the Nation of Israel (**1 Chronicles 16:17**) and dealt with the other nations when they came into contact with them.

Nowhere in God's Word did He command them to go out and make disciples of the other nations in the Old Testament. It was God's desire for others to be attracted to the abundant blessings bestowed upon the "obedient" nation of Israel and their example. We clearly see from history how they failed to please and often angered God by their disobedience.

The over-enthusiastic and misinformed focus so much on the marching orders they fail to understand the instructions. Promoting a "one and done" theology of the "sinners prayer," alleviates the need for knowing and understanding God's Word. They fail to know John 6:44, 65 and 1 Peter 3:15 (or any scripture that fails to support their doctrine). That is why saying a "sinner's prayer" and having a Bible does not make you a Christian any more than having a NASA patch makes you an astronaut.

We are not to cast our pearls before swine.

**Matthew 7:6-** "Do not give that which *is* holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn around and tear you in pieces."

Spewing lines of scripture to an unbeliever in a parking lot makes as much sense as a solar powered flashlight...God is not pleased.

It is understandable how someone new to the church and to the Body of Christ can be over zealous in wanting to please God and so desire to share their new joy with family and friends. But all too often they end up alienating themselves from their former relatives and acquaintances. They so much want to share this new found joy, they draw their sword with a dull edge. An improper knowledge of scripture can lead to a blank stare and unanswered questions.

To the world, the Bible is just a book, a fairy tale, words printed on pages. A book for the foolish who grasp at hope of an invisible God and salvation of a martyred Savior. So, when you try to witness an uncalled family member or friend, they will not grasp what you are trying to convey. It is better to wait and have someone approach you with a biblical question and *you* have the ready answer (1 Peter 3:15) than be like a Jehovah's Witness knocking on somebody's door.

This definitely does not mean "don't witness" when the opportunity arises. It is an *encouragement* to know the Word of God even more. God wants *us to change*. He wants His light in us to shine so much that it draws others.

**Matthew 5:16-** “In the same way also, you are to let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father Who *is* in heaven.”

These “good works” will fall in line and be well pleasing to God in time with your spiritual growth. It takes work.

**Colossians 1:10-** “That you may walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God;”

The character building essentials for becoming a good witness can be found in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Just as a reminder, I have listed Matthew 5:3-12, but I highly recommend frequent reading of chapters 5 through 7 as it exemplifies the mind of Christ. If you truly desire to please God, resemble His Son.

**Matthew 5:3-12-**

3. “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4. Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
5. Blessed *are* the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.



6. Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.
7. Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall find mercy.
8. Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
9. Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called *the* sons of God.
10. Blessed *are* those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11. Blessed are you when they shall reproach you, and shall persecute you, and shall falsely say every wicked thing against you, for My sake.
12. Rejoice and be filled with joy, for great *is* your reward in heaven; for in this same manner, they persecuted the prophets who *were* before you.”

Character building into the image of Christ will enhance our spiritual abilities we are developing. Spending time with God in prayer and study will yield more of His Spirit within us. (Do not limit your prayer life, remember **1 Thessalonians 5:17.**)

To those who have repented, been baptized, and received the gift of God’s Holy Spirit, we have been given the wisdom and understanding of His word. We are fed constantly from His word and through His Spirit. Our efforts are redirected from pleasing ourselves and others to pleasing God.

**1 Thessalonians 2:4-** “But even as we were approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, we speak in this manner: as *those* who please not men, but God, Who proves our hearts.”

Our relationship with God is reflected in our daily mannerisms and how we serve Christ and one another. Regular maintenance and inspection will keep our concentration on pleasing God beyond our love for Him first and also our faith, knowledge, our growth, and yielding spiritual fruit.

**Romans 14:17-19-** “For the kingdom of God is not a *matter* of eating and drinking; rather, *it is* righteousness and peace and joy in *the* Holy Spirit because the one who serves Christ in these things is well pleasing to God and acceptable among men. So then, we should pursue the things of peace and the things that edify one another.” Amen.