

God Judges  
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2 Kings 17:7-20

Are you familiar with the “pleaser” personality type? What is that? Why is it a problem if taken to the extreme?

What’s the difference between a nice person vs a people pleaser? WebMD:

- *Agreeing with whoever is in front of you*
- *Apologizing for things that are not your fault*
- *Not being able to say no*
- *Changing your personality depending on who’s around you*
- *Your worth depends on how others see you*

What are the negative effects of being a “pleaser”?

Does that mean we should never try to please someone? What about doing things that please someone you love? How can that be a “healthy” form of pleasing? How can doing things to please a loved one actually bring YOU joy?

- Doing things to please someone who truly loves you is healthy because it’s a “two-way” street. Each of you mutually desires to please the other.
- The One Who loves all of us more than anyone can is God Himself.
- He created us, gave us life, loved us before we even existed, He gives us the very breath we breathe. We can’t “out-love” or “out-give” Him. The more we return His love the more love He gives us. Best of all, He doesn’t make us earn His love. *“For God so loved us...He gave us His Son.”*
- With a Heavenly Father like that, why wouldn’t we want to PLEASE HIM?
- The point: It’s only good to be a pleaser if the One we are pleasing is God.
- The nation of Israel couldn’t seem to understand that concept.
- In this text we see the Northern Kingdom of Israel exiled as captives to Assyria. Why would God allow that to happen to His chosen people?

**7** This disaster came upon the people of Israel because they worshiped other gods. They sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them safely out of Egypt and had rescued them from the power of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. **8** They had followed the practices of the pagan nations the Lord had driven from the land ahead of them, as well as the practices the kings of Israel had introduced. **9** The people of Israel had also secretly done many things that were not pleasing to the Lord their God.

**[Jump to verse 11]** So the people of Israel had done many evil things, arousing the Lord’s anger. **12** Yes, they worshiped idols, despite the Lord’s specific and repeated warnings. **13** Again and again the Lord had sent his prophets and seers to warn both Israel and Judah: “Turn from all your evil ways. Obey my commands and decrees—the entire law that I commanded your ancestors to obey, and that I gave you through my servants the prophets.” **14** But the Israelites would not

listen. They were as stubborn as their ancestors who had refused to believe in the Lord their God. **[Verses 15-17 describe their idolatry in detail. Verse 18 declares God's punishment]** **18** Because the Lord was very angry with Israel, he swept them away from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah remained in the land. **19** But even the people of Judah refused to obey the commands of the Lord their God, for they followed the evil practices that Israel had introduced. **20** The Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel. He punished them by handing them over to their attackers until he had banished Israel from his presence.

- Verse nine: *“The people of Israel had...done many things that were not pleasing to the Lord their God.”* Question: If they were not living to please God whom WERE they living to please? [Key words: pleasure & pressure]
- When people want to go their own way they sometimes ask, *“Doesn’t God want me to be happy?”* Why do loving parents set appropriate boundaries instead of letting their children do whatever they want?
- Verse 15 says the people of Israel, *“...worshiped worthless idols, so they became worthless themselves.”*<sup>ii</sup> That word “worthless” means *“emptiness or vanity.”* Life without God is vain, futile, and empty; but it can be worse.
- **Romans 1:28–29 (NLT) — 28** Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. **29** Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.
- Rejecting God leads to emptiness in life. Satan will tempt us to fill that emptiness with the “every kind of wickedness.” None of it satisfies.
- The ultimate consequence: A life of rejecting God leads to an eternity of suffering separated from Him. How can we avoid that?
- **1 John 2:15–17 (NLT) — 15** Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. **16** For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. **17** And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.
- It’s only good to be a pleaser if the One we are pleasing is God!
- That begs the question: What pleases God? What does God want from me? Here is a very brief overview from scripture:
  - **2 Peter 3:9 (NLT) — 9b** He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.
  - **John 1:12 (NLT) — 12** But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.
  - The first step to pleasing God is to accept His free gift of salvation and make Him the “boss” of my life. When we do that He places His Holy Spirit inside us so we CAN do our best to please Him.
  - **Matthew 22:37–39 (NLT) — 37** Jesus replied, “ ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’

**38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

- We please God by Loving Him and loving others.
- Some people mistakenly think religious rituals will please God.
- **Micah 6:8 (ESV) — 8** He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
- Pleasing God isn't about religion but a changed heart. Justice, kindness (mercy) and walking humbly with God sound like Jesus' teaching.
- **Romans 8:29 (NLT) — 29** For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.
- We please God by striving to be like Jesus. Striving not arriving!
- **1 Peter 1:14–15 (NLT) — 14** So you must live as God's obedient children. ...you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy.
- Never perfect, but with the Spirit's help, striving for holiness.
- **John 14:15 (NLT) — 15** "If you love me, obey my commandments.
- We please God when we live in obedience to His commands.
- Warning: Some take trying to please God somewhere He never intended. We call that legalism. How does a legalist think we please God? What are they trying to gain by their rules and regulations?
- How can we be "God-pleasers" without being legalists?
- Step one: Understand the truth in **Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV) — 8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- We don't EARN eternal life by keeping rules. We're saved by grace alone.
- Legalists are all about the law until THEY break it; then they are ALL about grace. The truth is "all have sinned" and grace is the air we breathe.
- How can I tell if my God-pleasing has turned into legalism?
  - Do I strive to please God out of love for him or so He will love me more? [He can't love us any more than He already does!]
  - Do my God-pleasing efforts make me feel superior to others?
  - Do I judge others based on "rules" that are not in scripture?
  - Do I secretly think like the Pharisee, "*I thank God I'm not like them*"?
- "If pleasing God is following His commands, how is that not legalism?"
- Sophia Bricker writes, "*Legalism does not produce righteousness or godliness but rather increases pride. On the other hand, biblical obedience to Christ produces godliness and stems from a heart of love.*"<sup>iii</sup>
- Illustration: Two loving spouses do nice things for each other because they love each other. Not from obligation or to earn favor. It's out of love.
- Illustration: Ever do something for a loved one that wasn't necessarily fun for you but brought THEM joy? Often our joy comes from giving others joy.

- If you love someone you want to please them BECAUSE you love them. It's not a burden it's a joy!
- Final illustration: When the parent of a toddler is laughing and playing with that child both are delighting in each other. When playtime is over if that toddler dissolves into a tantrum wanting their own way, the parent doesn't stop loving them but the delight is disrupted by that "melt-down."<sup>iv</sup>
- If we're saved, our relationship with God is our ultimate parent/child love relationship. We want to please Him because we love Him! When we stop pleasing Him He doesn't stop loving us, but it disrupts our delight and His. When we do please Him it's mutual delight for both the parent and the child!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Living to please others or even ourselves is depleting and defeating.
- Living to please God renews and refreshes if it comes from a heart of love.
- **1 John 5:3 (ESV) — 3** For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

Warren Wiersbe: *"Love lightens burdens. Jacob had to work for seven years to win the woman he loved, but the Bible tells us that "they seemed unto him a few days, for the love he had to her" (Gen. 29:20). Perfecting love produces joyful obedience."*<sup>v</sup>

- Some might ask, "Won't living to please God (following His commands) take all the fun out of life?" They're confusing fun with joy!
- Pleasing God leads to that mutual delight between Father and child.
- That truth reminded me of the lyrics of an old gospel song:
 

*"The more I trust Him, the more I love Him  
Nothing good for me He'll deny  
The longer I know Him, the better I can show Him  
I couldn't stop now if I tried  
It gets sweeter as the days go by  
It gets sweeter as the moments fly  
His love is richer, deeper, fuller, sweeter  
Sweeter, sweeter, sweeter as the days go by"*<sup>vi</sup>
- It's only good to be a pleaser if the One we are pleasing is God.

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/what-is-a-people-pleaser>

<sup>ii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (2 Ki 17:15). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/god/what-is-the-difference-between-obedience-and-legalism.html?amp=1>

<sup>iv</sup> Adapted: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-pleasure-of-pleasing-god>

<sup>v</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 524). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>vi</sup> Sweeter As The Days Go By (Southern Classics Vol. 2) Lyrics © BMG Rights Management, Warner Chappell Music, Inc