

Introduction:

Two assumptions regarding this topic:

1.) God is a person who can be pleased or displeased.

- God is a personal being not an impersonal force. Because God is invisible, doesn't mean He is impersonal. God is self-conscious, and conscious and active in His world. He is not a "far off" God indifferent and inactive in regard to His world. He is also a moral being, meaning that He has real responses to good and evil. He is not indifferent to the difference, but has pleasure and joy in real good, virtue, and nobility.
- As such, He can be pleased (given enjoyment, satisfaction, or gladness). The opposite is true, He can be displeased (not only the absence of pleasure (as defined above) but also to cause annoyance, vexation and dissatisfaction).

2.) We can live in a way that can either please or displease him.

- We must be careful in our application of the doctrine of "total depravity." This doctrine is the teaching that humankind, in all of our faculties, are effected and corrupted by sin. Our emotions, will, and thinking are all tainted by the reality of our own sin. I believe this is certainly true.
- One could easily draw the conclusion that, no matter how hard I try (because I am a sinner) I can never please God. In one sense this is true, and in another it isn't.
- You cannot please God by meriting your salvation. You can never "measure up" to the standard of perfection required by God's law to satisfy moral goodness, and this is why I need Christ.
- This leads almost inevitably to a defeatist view of sin and despair. Someone views themselves as so corrupt that nothing is accepted of God.
- You have been saved by grace, and your sincere efforts to please God, though imperfect, are indeed pleasing to Him. He is not the perfectionist parent that is always nitpicky and always criticizing, but rather the loving and accepting Father who receives the offerings of His children as they learn and grow.
- The reason I take so long to go through this is that in my pastoral experience God is often depersonalized, and especially in Reformed believers this can be a tendency.

I. WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO ASK YOURSELF WHETHER YOU DESIRE TO PLEASE GOD

- One's desire to please God is an indicator as to their true spiritual condition. If God has worked in a person, something has fundamentally changed. There has begun a work of inner transformation and way of thinking.
- 2Corinthians 5:15 – ...should live no longer for themselves, but for Him....
- We are all living to please someone. There are ultimately only two choices.
Only two choices on the shelf. Pleasing God or pleasing self
- Even men pleasers are ultimately pleasers of self. We like what other say, do, think about us.
- Indifference or lack of concern in this area is a real indication as to the lack of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- 2Corinthians 5:9 As a result, Christian to then actually make it their supreme aim/goal/purpose in life to please Him
- There is no greater pursuit than this. This is part of what makes us uniquely human. To live life without this supreme purpose is to truly dehumanize us in our created purpose.

II. WHAT YOUR PRIMARY MOTIVES TO PLEASE GOD SHOULD BE

1.) To give God pleasure

- We recognize that God is worthy of obedience. He has been merciful, patient, loving, and gracious. But it is possible to have this mindset without what God desires and requires, to have loving obedience.
- For the Christian, there is a love for God. Like in other relationships, we desire to give pleasure to those we love. We desire that they smile, laugh, be happy, and enjoy themselves. Likewise, we desire God's smile and delight in what we do.

2.) To receive pleasure

- When someone is pleased that we love, we take pleasure from that itself. We desire to give pleasure, and when one is pleased we receive the blessing of pleasure even from that. There is a certain sense of satisfaction in knowing that God is pleased.
- Living the Christian life includes the redemption of those things that we desire to use primarily for our own pleasure and use them to please God and find pleasure in Him. More is going on here than "raw obedience." Sometimes that is appropriate and all that we can give as we wrestle and fight against remaining sin. But that is not the highest goal. A desire to please is driven by love, appreciate, a sense of acceptance.

III. WHAT YOU MUST DO TO PLEASE GOD

A. Believe

- This is first and foremost. By believe I mean believe on the Lord Jesus for your salvation. It is to accept His righteousness on your behalf. Apart from this, you will not be accepted by God no matter how hard you try.

- Romans 8:5-9 Those in the flesh cannot please God. You must have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you.
- Ephesians 1:13 This is given when you believe which is only given when you believe on the Lord Jesus

B. Pray

- Heb13:21_2Thes1:11 Prayers for God's work to in the Christian what is pleasing to Him.
- You need God's help to do this. This isn't something you can accomplish on your own, by your own strength or ingenuity. If there is to be a pleasing of God then you need the inner working of the Holy Spirit to help you.
- Among all the things you desire and express in prayer, this is something you can always ask. This is of supreme importance, whatever the details of your life. You can always pray this for yourself and should pray for others.

C. Obey

- Ephesians 5:8-10 finding out what is acceptable (or pleasing)
 - Colossians 1:10 fully pleasing Him, being fruitful
 - As you walk, you learn. If you aren't walking according to what you have already learned, then you won't find more. This requires diligence and discipline. This isn't something that happens naturally.
 - Any relationship you have is work, and this one is no exception. But the love expressed and the benefits received are worth it.
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- Seeing that all this is true, you need always to be renewing your mind as to how to do this. You need to reflect on your life, how you live, what you think and what God says about those thoughts.
 - You can find help as you read the Word, and spend time in prayerful self-examination. This is what is meant by looking into the mirror of the Word.
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- I hope it is clear that the Christian walk is not abstracted, but a relationship of love and desire for real pleasure.
 - Too many in my own pastoral experience of a sense of "ought-ness" about their Christian life. But we will see there is the real possibility of delight and pleasure. It will never be perfect in this life, but there should be something of the foretaste of everlasting joy that we are beginning to experience here and now.