HIGHER AIM WITH DR. CURT DODD

A Heart That Longs To Please God

Living To Please God | Part 1 | 1 Thessalonians 4

INTRODUCTION

Are you a pleaser? Many of us feel a strong need for people to like us. Sometimes that need grows so important to our emotional well-being that we end up on the wrong side of an issue, choosing approval over standing for what is right. Even in our relationship with God, our perspective can become inverted. Instead of asking how we can please Him, we expect Him to please us.

In *1 Thessalonians 4* and *5*, Paul gives the church one overarching theme: how to live a life that pleases God. "We instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more" (*1 Thessalonians 4:1*). If there is anyone whose approval we should long for, it is our heavenly Father. As we begin walking through these verses, Dr. Dodd shows us why we please God and the first three ways God calls us to do it.

KEY POINTS

1. We Please God Because We Love Him

In a healthy marriage, we want to please our spouse. Not out of fear or obligation, but because we truly love them. The same is true in our relationship with God. We are not motivated by guilt or by fear that God will punish us if we fail to act loving. We long to please Him because we love Him. Love is the greatest motivation for a life that honors God.

2. Live Pleasing God Intentionally

Walking with Jesus is a personal choice. At salvation, as the Holy Spirit convicts and draws us, we choose to turn from our sin, repent, and throw ourselves completely on Christ. No one can make that decision for us. That same intentional choice must continue every day. Are you intentionally seeking to please God right now? The Holy Spirit who lives inside you will show you whether you are serious about pleasing Him.

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3. Live Pleasing God Authoritatively

The language of verse 1 pictures a military command passed down through the ranks so that every soldier moves as one. When we surrender to Jesus as Lord, we join His army, and He wants us to hear His commands and respond right away. Paul called himself a *doulos*, a bond servant or slave of Christ. We are not our own; we were bought with a price, and our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*). Since Pentecost, the Spirit lives within every believer, revealing sin and guiding us on the path that pleases God. We live under His authority, not because we have to, but because we cannot help but want to.

4. Live Pleasing God Sexually

Verses 4 and 5 call each of us to "control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God." Sexual purity was a major issue in Paul's day, and it is again in ours. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that if your eye or hand causes you to sin, cut it off (*Matthew 5:29-30*). In other words, be decisive. Get out of the compromising relationship, and don't play with fire. God created sex, and it is good within the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman for life. Dr. Dodd urges believers to turn from living together outside of marriage, to get rid of pornography, and to stop flirting for the sake of feeling desired. He also warns against applauding or approving sexual sin of any kind, whether in our families, among our friends, or on social media. No one sin weighs more than another, and every sin calls for repentance.

God is not in the business of making us happy; He is in the business of making us holy. That does not mean being "holier than thou," but being real and deeply in love with Jesus. The early Christians lived in a culture as decadent as ours, yet their lives stood out. Because we love Jesus, there should be something different about how we live and the decisions we make.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In what areas of your life are you tempted to please people more than you please God? What would change if pleasing Him became your first priority?

2. Dr. Dodd says we please God because we love Him, not out of guilt or fear. How does love change the way you think about obeying God's commands?

3. Jesus said to "cut off" whatever leads us into sin. Is there a relationship, habit, or influence you need to step away from to live a life of purity that pleases God?