# What Pleases God? | Find Out Here

***Summary:*** Without certain things it is impossible to please God. One of those things is faith (Hebrews 11:6), and without it we cannot please the Lord. Personally, I don't want to *displease* God! So let's take a look at His Word the Bible to see *what pleases* Him.

*Ephesians 5:10* ***Find out*** *what pleases the Lord.*

God wants us to *"find out"* what pleases Him. Thankfully, we don't have to guess. The Scriptures of the Bible tell us very plainly what pleases God. Let's go see and change our lives accordingly.

*1 Samuel 12:22 For the sake of his great name the Lord will not reject His people [Israel], because the LORD was* ***pleased to make you his own****.*

Right at the outset, be assured of a great truth from God's Word: He is "pleased to make you His own," to make you **His son or daughter**. God happily, not reluctantly, includes the faithful in His family.

We have a fuller revelation of this blessing in the New Testament. John 1:12 tells us that "to all who did **receive [Jesus]**, to those who **believed** in his name, [God] gave the right to **become children of God**." By repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are born again (John 3:3,7) and become God's sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18).

Jesus Christ, the Savior who died for our sins and rose again, "is not ashamed to call [us] brothers and sisters" (Hebrews 2:11). Imagine that! The divine Son of God, the co-creator of the universe (Ephesians 3:9), the one to whom God the Father has

given "all authority in heaven and earth" (Matthew 28:18), is pleased to call born-again believers his brothers and sisters.

*Numbers 24:1 ...Balaam saw that it* ***pleased the Lord to bless Israel****...*

God doesn't dole out His goodness grudgingly to His people. No! It pleased Him to bless His people Israel under the Old Covenant. And it still pleases God to bless His New Covenant people today—"I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6, KJV).

Don't think of our heavenly Father as some stern, distant, uninvolved God. Not at all! Quite to the contrary, God loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die for our sins, so that repentant believers could be forgiven and adopted spiritually into the family of God. And His ongoing care for His born-again children is warm, loving, and freely given. It pleases the Lord to bless His people!

*Luke 12:32, NKJV Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good* ***pleasure to give you the kingdom****.*

As noted earlier, by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, we are born again *into the kingdom of God* (John 3:3,7). And Jesus has told us that our Father is pleased to give us the kingdom. Where God the Father and His Son Jesus reign, there is life, health, healing, deliverance, spiritual power and authority, the presence and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and so much more.

And it is God's good pleasure to *give us* these things. We don't need to go about life on this earth downcast, fearful, and hopeless. To the contrary, Jesus brought the kingdom of God to earth (Mark 1:15), and He is pleased to send His followers forth into kingdom ministry (Matthew 10:7-8) with His blessing and empowerment.

*1 Chronicles 29:17 I know, my God, that you test the **heart** and are **pleased with integrity**.*

**Integrity!** That's what God looks for in people, and He finds it by "test[ing] the **"heart."** He is pleased not so much with their "charisma" as He is with their integrity. Dictionary.com's good definition of integrity is: "adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty." Some synonyms of integrity are: honesty, probity, rectitude, honor, good character, ethics, morals, righteousness, morality, virtue, decency, and fairness.

My practical, working definition of integrity is simply this: "You *know what's right* to do, and *that's* what you do."

Notice where God looks to evaluate our integrity. He "tests the heart." It's not our outward actions or what we say that is the primary test of integrity, but God's direct inspection of our hearts. Remember Jesus' words in Mark 7:21-23, KJV: "For *from within*, out of the *heart* of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things *come from within*, and defile the man."

Jesus also told us that *good* things (in our current discussion, integrity) come from our hearts: "The good man out of the good *treasure of his heart brings forth what is good*" (Luke 6:45). And this is where we can please the Lord in the matter of integrity. That is, as the apostle Paul said it, "*striv[ing] always* to keep [our] *conscience clear* before God and man" (Acts 24:16). God will be continually pleased with our efforts, by His grace, to keep our consciences clean and our hearts full of integrity.

*Psalm 69:30-31 I will **praise** God's name **in song and glorify Him with thanksgiving**. [31] This will please the Lord more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hoofs.*

God is pleased with our *praise*, our heartfelt *songs* of worship to Him, our *thanksgiving* to Him for His goodness and His many blessings to us. And remember, God doesn't care one bit how well or how poorly you sing! Remember that people typically "look at the outward appearance, but the *Lord* looks at the *heart*" (1 Samuel 16:7). God sees the joy in your heart as you praise and worship Him in song and in thanksgiving.

This verse should remind us that the church worship service is *not an afterthought*! In fact, worship in song will continue throughout all eternity, as we see in various heavenly scenes in the Book of Revelation. Preaching ceases in heaven. And we will have no need of the spiritual gifts. But worship of the Lord will joyfully continue forever!

*Proverbs 15:8 The Lord detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the* ***prayer of the upright pleases*** *him.*

Prayer pleases God! At home and in church. The early church went to the temple for the "hour of prayer" (Acts 3:1, KJV). It gives us an excellent opportunity to get in touch with the Lord, to honor Him, and to ask His blessing upon the upcoming service. It provides us regular times, via corporate prayer, to please God. And the same obviously holds true for our individual times of prayer.

"The prayer of the *upright* pleases [the Lord]." Psa. 66:18 (KJV) says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." This offers a possible clue to why some prayer is not answered — that is, there may be unrepented sin in the life of the person offering the prayer. Remember, it is not just prayer in general, but "the prayer of the *upright*," that pleases the Lord.

*Ezekiel 18:23 Do I take any pleasure in the death of* ***the wicked?*** *declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not* ***pleased when they turn from their ways*** *and live*?

God is pleased with a changed life, turning from wicked ways to God and to His ways. Jesus said that "there will be *more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents* than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (Luke 15:7).

Sad to say, in this 21st century, at least in American Christianity that I am able to observe first hand, there seems to have developed a very shallow understanding of what salvation is. In the minds of many, salvation seems to be little more than a get-out-of-jail-free ticket, without the necessity of a repentant, changed life. But what pleases the Lord is when we come to Jesus in faith, repent of our sins, and pursue a life of holiness (Titus 2:11-14). This pursuit of a changed life, not an erroneous concept of "loose" grace, pleases God and is consistent with the angel's words to Joseph: "…she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall **save** his people **<u>from</u> their sins**" (Matthew 1:21, KJV). The apostle Peter spoke a similar message at Pentecost: "…Be **<u>saved from</u>** this crooked (perverse, wicked, unjust generation" (Acts 2:40).

*<u>Romans 14:17-18, 21</u> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, [18] because anyone who **serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God** and approved by men.... [21] It is **better not** to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will **cause your brother to fall**.* conduct in the light of whether or not it might cause a brother to fall.

• By *limiting our supposed "freedom"* for the sake of others!

• By *not drinking alcohol* for the sake of others whom we might cause to stumble!

• By evaluating all our conduct for its *impact on others*.

As the apostle wrote, "Serving Christ in this way [that is, avoiding any conduct that might 'cause your brother to fall'] is **pleasing to God**." If you are a Christian "social drinker," I encourage you to ponder these verses carefully.

*2 Timothy 2:4, KJV* ***No*** *man that warreth* ***entangleth*** *himself with the* ***affairs of this life****; that he may* ***please him*** *who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

God is pleased when we do not love the world and do not follow its ways. For example:

• the world's ways of immodesty in clothing

• the world's ways of talking and vulgar joking

• the world's ways of materialism and greed

• the world's sexual depravity

• the world's ways of entertainment, which glorify almost everything except God!

Ask the Lord to give you illumination on your relationship with this world, with "this life." And evaluate how you're doing in that regard in light of verses like these:

1 John 2:15, KJV Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. **If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him**.

James 4:4 You adulterous people, don't you know that **friendship** with the **world means enmity against God**? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an **enemy of God**.

Romans 12:1-2a …offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, **holy and pleasing to God**—this is your true and proper worship. Do **not conform** to the pattern of **this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

The time-honored phrase about our threefold enemy — the world, the flesh, and the devil — is biblically sound. God has put us in this world to *be lights* in the darkness (Matthew 5:14). As Jesus said, He has "sent [us] **into** the world," but we are **"not of** the world" (John 17:16,18). By working for the Lord in this world, but not being entangled by it, we "please Him who hath chosen [us] to be a soldier."

*Hebrews 11:6 And **without faith it is impossible to please God**, because anyone who comes to him **must believe** that he **exists** and that he **rewards** those who earnestly seek him.*

Last, but certainly not least, **faith!** It pleases God when we believe *in Him* (who He *is*) and when we believe that what He says, He will *do*. That is, He will *reward* those who diligently seek Him. Without this kind of faith, the Scripture declares, it is impossible to please God.

In a word, God is *pleased* with men and women of faith. In fact, simple, strong faith in Him is a key, Jesus said, to doing the works of God: "Therefore they said to Him, 'What shall we do, so that we may **work the works of God?'** Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you **believe in Him [Jesus]** whom He has sent'." (John 6:28-29) And Jesus says further, "Very truly I tell you, whoever **believes in me will do the works I** have been doing, and they will **do even greater** things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12).

Faith in Jesus brings us salvation, healing, the baptism with the Spirit, answered prayer, the ability to live a holy life, Holy Ghost power for ministry, and so much more!

Our opening verse (Ephesians 5:10) exhorted us to "find out what pleases the Lord." Our walk together through Scripture has shown us a number of those God-pleasing things:

• It pleases God to bring us **into His family** by the new birth.

• It pleases Him **to bless** His people.

• It pleases Him to **give us the kingdom** of heaven.

• God is pleased with a **heart of integrity** in His people.

• Our **songs of praise, worship, and thanksgiving** please Him.

• The Lord is pleased with the **prayer of the upright**.

• He is pleased when we **turn from** our wicked ways and follow Him.

• It pleases God when we **adjust our conduct** so as **not to cause others to stumble** or fall.

• He is pleased when we keep ourselves **from entanglement** with this world.

• God is greatly pleased with **our faith**. By contrast, without faith we cannot please Him.

Although we haven't touched on them in this message, let me add in closing a few more things that please the Lord:

- Holiness (Romans 12:1)
- the preaching of God's saving Gospel (1 Corinthians 1:21)
- our not being "people-pleasers" (Galatians 1:10)
- sacrificial, selfless devotion to God (Romans 12:1)
- generous support of those in fulltime ministry (Philippians 4:18)
- bearing fruit by our good works (Colossians 1:10)
- growing in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10)
- interceding in prayer for others (1 Timothy 2:1-3)
- taking care of our elderly family members (1 Timothy 5:4)
- sharing what we have with others (Hebrews 13:16)
- children obeying their parents (Colossians 3:20)