

What Pleases God?

Hebrews 13:20-21

Preface

Play video clip which shows lady not happy with her gift from Jesus because it is not as big as the gifts others received. Therefore she does nothing with her gift.

God has given each of us gifts and opportunities to use for His glory. Often we envy the bountiful gifts others receive. But God isn't going to bless us with more gifts until we use the ones we have been given.

In order to please God, we must use and cultivate the gifts He has given us. Our gifts are not limited to our talents. They include our circumstances and position in life. God desires to be pleased and impressed with how we use our gifts and talents.

Scripture

²⁰ May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21 NIV

Introduction

Illus: Pam and I have never had a king size bed. For the last few years she has been saying we need one. She claims I hit her during the night and take up more than my share of the bed. I find the queen size bed to be just right but never the less, now is a good time to upgrade. Our son has moved out taking his bedroom suite with him. We can move our old bed to his room which will now be for guests.

So last week while we were on a little vacation in the mountains we visited a place that sells rustic furniture at reasonable prices. The man had several king size beds, all of which looked perfectly fine to me. However, they were not quite what Pam wanted. She kept saying they were too “chunky” and she wanted something more “twiggy”.

The owner said they were extremely slow and he was eager to make a sale one way or another. So we walked over to the shop where they make the furniture and she began to tell him and the craftsman exactly what she wanted. Telling them exactly what she wanted

involved all sorts of hand motions and body expressions that would confuse the charades champion of the world.

I must confess, I was the first to give up and walk away. Shortly behind me was the owner. We both left the craftsman to deal with her and the animated explanation of what she had in mind.

The craftsman (furniture maker) was a small man probably in his late 50s or early 60s. He was a very nice and patient man who had once been a banker in Atlanta. He gave up banking to do something he loved; making rustic furniture. I admire that bold step.

The owner instructed us to come back the next day and see what they have done to determine if it was what she wanted. After being married to my wife for 28 years, I couldn't understand what she wanted. I didn't think for a minute the craftsman would understand what she wanted and be able to please her on the first try.

The next day, we drove up and the owner was outside. He met us and we all walked over to the shop where the bed was already made but not quite finished. The craftsman rushed over to meet us. Pam began to look over the bed. It seemed like it took 10 minutes for her to say anything. As for me, it looked wonderful but would the “picky one” be pleased?

Finally, with an entirely new set of hand motions, she looked at the craftsman and virtually shouted, “I love it!” She went on and on about it how it was just what she had in mind. Pam was happy as the bed was just as she had imagined. The owner was pleased as he knew he had the sale. I was relieved to know the searching was over.

But the most satisfied person in the group was the craftsman. I stood back and watched he and Pam conversed. He would explain some of the details and things he did just for her and she would express her pleasure with his attention to those details.

I will never forget the look of joy in the face of the furniture maker as he realized the pleasure he had brought to my wife. He was beaming with the pride of knowing he had done a good job and greatly pleased the customer.

I later pondered that moment. I wondered how Christians can experience that same sense of satisfaction in knowing we are pleasing our Heavenly Father. We were made to long for that same feeling of having done a good job for the Lord.

What can we do to feel the great sense of satisfaction in knowing we have pleased our Creator? When is God pleased with His children?

1. When His Children Pray with Sincere Hearts

God is not amused by fancy well thought out prayers that expound our knowledge of the Bible and the English language. In fact, God's favorite prayer is one where we confess our sin and declare our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior. He rewards that prayer with amazing grace.

God wants to hear from us daily and sometimes hourly or even constantly. God wants us to seek Him and pray for His guidance and answers. Most importantly, God wants to hear from sincere hearts.

If you are hurting, God wants to hear you say you are hurting. If you are lonely, scared, excited or apprehensive, God wants to hear you say what you are feeling to Him.

Philippians 4:6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

No one likes to be misguided by half truths and carefully crafted words. Such words become especially painful when we already know the real truth.

Illus: I can remember when our children were young. Sometimes we would hear through the grapevine about something that happened in their life. It would disturb us that our children had not told us about the circumstance. We knew about it and we were eager to wrap our loving arms around them. We waited with great anticipation for them to share their experience and their feeling honestly with us.

In the same manner, God already knows our heart. He knows exactly what is going on in our lives. He knows our desires, our fears, our emotions and even our ambitions. Nothing is hidden from Him, not even our hiding. God is eager for His children to speak with Him openly and He is eager to answer our prayers with guidance and comfort.

1 Peter 3:12 assures us of God's eagerness to hear our prayers. It reads, "¹²For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer"

It pleases God when His children pray with sincere hearts.

2. When His Children Listen and Respond in Faith

Just as God is eager to hear the desires of our heart, He is also eager to have us listen to His words of guidance and instruction. For most of us, we spend time speaking to God but very little time listening to God's response.

If we will listen, God always has an answer to our prayers. Sometimes the answer is no, sometimes the answer is wait and sometimes the answer is go. But we must learn to listen for His answer and not just what we want to hear.

Sometimes our requests are simply not consistent with God's ways. On one occasion, Jesus and the disciples were denied the right to travel through a certain part of Samaria. That denial aggravated the disciples so much that they requested Jesus to destroy the entire region with fire from heaven. Jesus said, "No, I didn't come to torch people; I came to transform people. No, I'm not going to grant that request."

Though the disciples walked with Jesus, they were fully capable of making inappropriate requests of Him. And when the requests were wrong, Jesus said "No."

You and I sometimes make self-serving request and we do not like God's answer. But God loves us too much to say yes to wrong requests.

⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:9 NIV

Sometimes we are like our children. We can't stand to hear the words "Not Yet." We must learn to wait on God and His perfect timing. When we wait upon the Lord, our faith is strengthened; God is glorified and thus pleased.

When we exercise faith and trust in the Lord, our prayers become even stronger before God. James writes, "*The fervent prayer of a righteous person has great power.*" For that statement to be true, the opposite must be true. The prayer of an unrighteous person lacks great power.

God is pleased when we listen to His voice and His word and live by faith in Him.

3. When His Children use their Gifts for His Kingdom

Illus: Last year several people from our church went to a wonderful Christmas program in Mobile that was performed by students from the University of Mobile. At one point Dr. Breland was speaking about the talent of the students. He mentioned that people often speak of a young person's potential. He said, "I get tired of hearing about people's potential. I want to know what you are doing right now. How are you using your potential now?"

I suspect God feels the same way. He probably grows weary of our big talk and promises about what we plan to do for Him.

We've all seen the little round wooden pieces that read "Round Tuit". I suspect God has a huge warehouse full of those things and I doubt He finds them very amusing.

Illus: I watched yesterday at our church work day as one by one people showed up to pitch-in and help. Each gave of their time, talents and resources to help get the renovations along. I was proud but God was pleased.

Each and every one of us has gifts, talents and resources God has given us. We must take inventory of our gifts and make sure we are serving God to our fullest ability with them. Notice I said to "our fullest ability."

Paul warns Timothy not to neglect his gift from God. If you have the gift of singing, you should sing every chance you get. If you have the gift of teaching, cooking, encouraging, or any other gift, you should be praying for God to open doors and give you every opportunity to use that gift for His glory.

Wherever you go, whatever you do, you and I must do everything as if we are doing it for the glory of God; because we are!

1 Peter 4:10 says, *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."*

Our gifts are to be faithfully used to administer God's grace to others.

We are all stewards. God has entrusted us with certain gifts in order that we might use them for the good of His kingdom.

Too many people are sitting on their gifts and resources God has given them. God desires that we commit all of ourselves and all of our resources for His glory.

God is pleased when His children use their gifts for His kingdom.

Conclusion

Only a craftsman that takes pride in his work would be eager to stand before the customer and hear their reaction to his work. Only one who has done their best is willing to accept the praise or criticism.

In the same manner, God's Word says we will stand before Him and hear an account of what we have done with our gifts and opportunities.

Sure we please Him today as we attend worship. The question is will we please Him tomorrow in our places of business? Will we listen to His instruction and live our lives by faith, trusting Him in every circumstance?

The Bible says, "God is looking to and fro for those whose hearts are fully His."

Is your heart fully His?