

# Living to Please God

by Alan Martin

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life that is pleasing to God through faith, growth, and discipline.*

**Scripture:** Mark 4:21

**Topics:** "Pleasing God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living a life that is pleasing to God. He warns against engaging in activities that do not contribute to spiritual growth and urges listeners to prioritize their relationship with God. The speaker uses examples from Jesus' life to illustrate the need for continuous learning and growth in faith. He also highlights the significance of being disciplined and self-controlled in all aspects of life. The sermon concludes with a reminder that only those who live in a way that pleases God will enter the kingdom of heaven.

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## Transcript

If you have your Bibles, turn to Hebrews chapter 11. May the Lord in His kindness, according to the intention of His will for leaving this word with us, may He grant us a spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of Him. May this word have its purpose in our hearts.

May it cast down imaginations and every high and lofty thought that is simply there to set themselves up against the true knowledge of the living God. In Hebrews chapter 11, read with me in verse 5, about one of our forefathers, Enoch. By faith, Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, and he was not found because God had taken him.

For before he was taken away, he had obtained this witness. What witness had he obtained? That he walked with God in the Hebrew Scriptures in the Septuagint. That he pleased God.

That's what it says in the Septuagint. That was a summary of his life. He pleased God and God took him.

That's what we need to be known for. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. The Apostle Paul said this is what he made his entire ambition. Here in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verses 9 and 10.

Same word here where it says each of us should desire or make it our goal to live a quiet and peaceable life. Here the Greek word is to love the honor. Paul says here in verse 9, Therefore we choose to love the honor, whether present or absent, to be well-pleasing to Him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may receive the things done in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad. And regardless of what you and I do, it's not so much important what it looks like. The result had better be that it was pleasing to God.

That's what we make our goal. Not the specifics of what each of us are called to do. Not everyone is called to preach or be a missionary.

I don't care if you make split logs or sell doughnuts or make ice cream cones. You do it to please God. That's why you do it.

That's the goal of it. In Ephesians chapter 5, Paul talks about in his letter to the church of Ephesians how important this is. Ephesians chapter 5 verses 6-11 Let no one deceive you with empty words.

For because of such things he previously mentioned, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be partakers with them. Have no fellowship with them.

You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light. For the fruit of the light, or the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth and proving, proving what is pleasing to the Lord.

The Greek word comes from the idea of do you prove by testing? Don't just in your own mind, well it seems good to me. The things that you do, you had better prove by testing whether it's pleasing to the Lord. There is a way that seems right to a man.

Every man does what's right in his own eyes, but if it's not pleasing to the Lord and you've not made the effort to prove that it is, you're going to find yourself in an awkward position if he's not pleased with you. In Colossians chapter 1, two books from Ephesians, Colossians chapter 1 verses 9 through 10, Paul's prayer for the saints there at Colossae is recorded in the first part of his letter to them. For this reason we all feel since the day we heard it, that's talking about of their faith, do not cease to pray for you and ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding that you may walk worthy of the Lord.

Some of these verses say pleasing Him in every way. Fully pleasing Him or pleasing Him in all things. Being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

This whole message this morning on my heart is a time for us to examine is that our modus operandi? Is it the reason we do everything to be pleasing to Him? The only safe way to live. And you're going to find in Scripture it's not just a nice option if you want to be extra spiritual, it's a matter of life and death. You know, you want to hear God say to you well done and well come? He must view how you've lived well if He's going to welcome you.

And He must view how you've lived as you have done well in order for Him to say well done because He's not going to lie. To some people He's going to say depart from me ye evil doers. They weren't well doers, they did evil.

It's not just for those who want to be extra spiritual. Those who please God will go to heaven. Why should God keep people around that He took no pleasure in? You and I don't.

When something no longer gives us pleasure we either sell it in a garage sale or throw it away. God has created hell for that purpose. Alright, a question.

Where can you and I look for an example, a model of someone who we know from the Scripture was fully pleasing to the Father? Enoch? He walked with God. Alright, that was easy. Is there another one that we might have a little more detail about? Jesus, how do we know that He was well pleasing to the Father? At His baptism, at His baptism a voice from heaven was heard.

This is my beloved Son and with whom I am well pleased. Okay, do you realize that this was said of Him before He even began His ministry? He hadn't even begun to minister yet. So what had He done that had been so well pleasing? Okay, let's look in the Scripture.

Turn with me to Luke chapter 2. It says that everyone who claims to live in Him ought himself to walk even as He walked. So why don't we just take His walk even before His ministry and measure our walk by it? Okay? And to see if we are well pleasing. Luke chapter 2, verses 39 and 40.

Let's begin there. So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. And now speaking of Jesus, and the child grew and became strong in spirit.

First thing we'll look at. You know, God is pleased when we grow. Are you growing? Are you growing and becoming strong in spirit? Even in your old age, are you finished growing? Is your love growing cold? Or is your love growing stronger? Is your walk becoming weak? Or is your walk becoming stronger? God is pleased when we grow and become stronger.

Look what it says in 1 Peter chapter 2. 1 Peter chapter 2. And for the sake of brevity, if I don't give you a lot of time to turn there, have patience with me. I will tell you where the reference is. 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. It states this.

You don't need to have any extra Bible drill training when you attend this church. You just keep up. Just learn.

Therefore, laying aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, crave the pure spiritual milk of the Word, so that you may what? Grow thereby. Okay? Alright, we need to grow thereby. Ephesians chapter 4. You know babies are cute.

Well, they're babies. But you know something that says clearly in the Word? God doesn't want us to stay babies. He is pleased when we grow out of infancy.

Ephesians chapter 4. Read with me verse 14. And I'll just set the stage. He gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God unto a complete or a perfect man under the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, in order that we no longer be infants.

Well, I'll just say this. If you stand before God as spiritual infants, when you've had time to grow, you'll go to hell. You will have failed your goal in pleasing Him.

You stand before Him an infant, and you'll die an infant separate from Him forever. He's not pleased when people stay spiritual infants. It's not His will.

We are to crave pure spiritual milk so that we can grow. And we are to grow up all... He does not want us to stay infants. How do we know that? What's another place we're told that? Look in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. It is possible to be a believer and be an infant in Christ.

To be born again and be an infant in Christ. But what is an infant in Christ called? 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 1. What does Paul call an infant in Christ? Carnal. Does God want to take a carnal people to heaven? No.

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Who is going to go to heaven? God is going to take a spiritual people. We've come to the New Jerusalem, to the City of the Living God, to thousands upon thousands of angels and joyful cities, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect.

And if you show up there as a spiritual infant because of your own neglect, prepare to hear Him say, depart from Me. You didn't grow. You didn't become stronger.

God is pleased when we grow stronger. And we know it's supposed to happen by personal responsibility. Hebrews chapter 5. Hebrews chapter 5 verses 11-14.

The writer of Hebrews explaining the difficulty that teachers have when they're trying to speak to someone who by their own choices are not able to hear and grow properly. Hebrews chapter 5 beginning with verse 11. Of whom we have much to say, speaking about Jesus' role as the high priest, of whom we have much to say, but it's hard to explain since ye have become dull of hearing.

You don't hear well. For though by this time you ought to be teachers. Do you see that? There's a time period where someone should go from being a spiritual infant to someone able to teach others about the way of righteousness.

Clearly. And if you are an infant by your choice, by neglecting your salvation, prepare to find out when you stand before God He was not pleased with your progress. By this time you ought to be teachers.

But you need someone to teach you again what are the very rudimentary principles of the oracles of God. And instead of coming to need solid food, you come to need milk. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in what? The word of righteousness.

That which is very pleasing to God. He's just a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age.

Full stature. Fully mature. That is, how did they get there? How did they get there according to the last part of verse 14? Who by reason, here's the reason, they are of full age spiritually.

They have exercised their senses. You know what the word here is? They've gumnadzoed them. We get our word gym.

They've been to the spiritual gym and they have been working out spiritually. They have disciplined themselves. They have gymnazed themselves to be strong spiritually.

And if you are a spiritually pitiful infant because you refuse to go and practice some self-discipline, prepare to stand before God and hear Him call you to account for being an expert in a lot of things while an infant

spiritually. It does not please God for people to stay spiritual infants. And it's not just a matter.

It's really not just a matter of, well, that would be neat. We can be kind of extra-spiritual and you can be one who leads in church. Do you realize what it says of those in 1 Corinthians 9 when Paul says, those who came out of Egypt? Here when he's describing all who came out of Egypt and all who passed through the sea and all who drank from the rock and all who ate the spiritual manna and they were baptized into Moses and in the cloud and in the sea and they drank from the spiritual rock that was among them and that rock was Christ.

This whole description of them, it says here in 1 Corinthians 10, what it actually says was, nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them. In the Greek, it's most of them. And what happened to the ones He was not pleased with? They died where? Outside of the promise.

You see, where I get it from the Scripture that if you die without having obtained the witness that you were pleasing to God, you will die outside of the promise. You will not enter the kingdom He has prepared for you. So Paul says, he has an example.

He has a means to take care of this. Chapter 9 verse 24. Okay? Chapter 9 verse 24 is the solution to this.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize. Run in such a way that you may obtain it. Now here's what he says.

Everyone who competes for the prize is what? He is temperate or he is self-controlled or he is disciplined in all things. Let me ask you that. Is your spiritual life that way? Everything you do, you check it out whether it's healthy for you spiritually.

Or do you categorize, well, that's my spiritual life, that's Sunday and that's Wednesday, or this is my little morning devotion. Hey, but the rest of this time, this TV show, this movie, this radio, this magazine, this activity, hey, that's okay because I fulfilled my little spiritual requirements. Or is it everything measured by is this going to cause me to grow? Is this going to cause me to be strengthened? Is this well-pleasing unto God? If you don't live that way, don't expect to go to heaven.

Because it's only those who live that way are well-pleasing to God. Heaven is not a big, wide-open gate for the masses. It's a narrow way and a very small gate and only a very few find it.

So Jesus uses this word in describing it, agonize to enter. I encourage you to do so. Let's look back in Jesus' life, back in Luke 2. Keep your finger there.

We'll go back there a couple more times. Luke 2, verses 46 and 49. See how Jesus Himself did this? Interesting story here.

Where did His parents find Him when they looked for Him for three days? They found Him in the temple. What was He doing? Verse 46, So it was that after three days they found Him in the temple. Where? Sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. Now, where are you going to find someone interested in righteousness? You're going to find them sitting in the midst of those who have it. Are you sitting in the midst of the teachers? Are you waiting for the teachers to chase you down like some unfaithful little puppy who doesn't know where to come when the plate's set out there all the time?

We have Bible study here all the time.

We gather for prayer all the time. Saints gather for all the time. And if you want it, you come for it.

And if you're not interested, you're only showing the world and others that it's not that big a deal to you. You can go where you want to go. You'll hear what you want to do.

And what is a favorite thing of you? You pursue it all the time. Jesus showed what He was interested in knowing by where He was sitting in the midst of. He who walks with the wise becomes wise.

But a companion of fools comes to ruin. Because He's not interested in wisdom. And if you want wisdom, it's there.

And you'll show you want it by sitting in the midst of those who have it by the grace of God. And if you're not interested, you'll show it by your actions. Because you'll always do the things you want to do.

You'll always make time for the things you want time for. Wherever a man's treasure is, that's where his heart will be. Jesus made this very clear in Mark 4. If you want to see this real quick in Mark 4. Verses 21-24 says this.

Mark 4, 21-24. And He said to them, Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Any of you ever lit a candle? How many of you have ever lit a candle? The lights have gone out thanks to our faithful electric company. And you go and you light a candle.

And the first thing you do after you light your candle is grab a bowl from the cupboard and stick it on top. None of you do that. That's what He's asking.

For there's nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. So why is everyone else getting this message in parables then and the disciples get it plainly? Well, that's answered in verse 33. And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as much as they were able to hear.

But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to who? Everyone who is His disciple understands it all. You know what disciple means? Learner.

A disciplined one. A disciple. One who is disciplining himself to learn Christ gets it all explained to him.

You ever wonder why someone has so much spiritual understanding and they're the same number of years you have in the Lord? Is it possible that they're the ones who go and spend time alone with Christ so He can explain to them everything you heard when you were together? It says, be very careful how you hear. To him who has, much shall be given. And he shall have an abundance.

But him who has not, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him. And that's happening in the world today. There are those who know less of the Lord today than they did when they first started.

Because they're living by what they think they know and they're not in the midst of the teachers. They don't come to Bible study. They don't assemble with the saints because they think they know enough already.

Woe to them. Woe to them. They'll find out if by deliberate choices they have failed to be pleasing to God.

They'll be suddenly surprised that they gave their life to the meaningless and threw away the pearl of great price. And this is a message to just make a clear warning against that. How in the world will I finish this in time allotted? I'll try.

Back to Luke 2 again. Verse 40. Not only did he grow and was becoming strong in spirit, what else in the latter part of verse 40 does it say he was? He was being filled with wisdom.

I'm just going to mention one verse from this passage just for brevity's sake. One verse. Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

It's a command. Foolishness is a choice. It's a choice to be ignorant by not pursuing to know.

Wisdom cries out to the fool every single day. All you who are simple, leave your simple ways and you will live. That's what wisdom cries out every day.

You must leave simplicity to pursue knowing. And we had better not be foolish. We had better understand what the will of the Lord is.

Because God says, this is good and acceptable before God who wants all men to be saved. Amen? We always say amen to there. What's the rest of that Scripture? Someone quote me the rest of that Scripture.

This is good and acceptable before God who wants all men to be saved and come to the full knowledge of the truth. It's just as important. God wants to be known.

He wants to be understood. He has hidden certain things. He's made them a mystery.

You know why? It's the glory of God to conceal a matter. And it's the glory of kings to search it out. Where are you going to find treasure on this earth? When's the last time you found a diamond just walking out there on the road? When's the last time you came across valuable gold just walking along? You dig.

You dig. You search. And you go where you know there's report that it is.

It's amazing. When they heard report that there was gold found out in California, thousands of idiots ran out there. Excuse me.

Sorry. Some of them actually found it. I guess they weren't the idiots.

They were the successful ones. But I mean, they sold everything for something that perishes. It perishes.

It doesn't even last. And God is giving His knowledge to men. And there are certain men who have it.

And He's making it known to anyone who wants it. But if you are foolish enough to not avail yourself to it, you will show your own folly. And it's going to be fully exposed in the day you stand before Him and give an account for how little you cared about what was well-pleasing to Him.

Be careful. Luke 40. Last thing that I want to mention about this verse 40 is that not only was He filled with wisdom, but the grace of God was upon Him.

How important is this? Well, this grace is not talking about unmerited favor. Not here. Every favor Jesus had was merited by His walk.

This is the same kind of grace that was upon Him like it was on Noah. Well, the whole world was filled with wicked and every thought of men was only evil continually from their youth. Noah found grace in the eyes of God.

And this was a testimony of Noah. He was blameless and righteous among the generation at this time. That's why he found grace with God.

And that kind of grace had better be upon us. You know what the Scripture says? It says, the grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared unto all men. And what does that grace do? It child trains us.

It takes us from infancy. It takes us from infancy and literally trains us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. That grace had better be upon us.

You had better be being trained by God to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow. That grace had better be upon you. And you know what He said about that grace? In 2 Corinthians 9, verse 8, He is able to make all of this grace abound to you.

He's able to make it abound to you so that having all sufficiency for all time, you may always have more than you need for every good work. Is this grace upon you? When the grace of God is upon you, you're well pleasing to God. And it says, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace reign in life? That's Romans chapter 5, verse 17.

If you want to be well pleasing to God, you had better be growing. You had better be becoming strong in spirit. You had better not still be an infant.

You had better be being filled with wisdom because you are pursuing it with all your heart. You had better have the grace of God upon you and you'd be learning to deny the things that are ungodly. And you had better be learning, being trained to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.

That's pleasing to God when this is happening. And lastly, verse 51 and 52 of chapter 2 of Luke, says this, And he went down with his parents and came to Nazareth, was submitting to them. And his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

And Jesus was advancing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. I like this word advancing. I just want to focus on this one word.

It's pro-e-copte. Pro is towards and copte is cut. Brother or sister, he was cutting a straight path.

You know what it says in Proverbs 11, verse 5, it says, The righteousness of a blameless man makes a straight way for him. But the wicked are brought down by their unfaithfulness. When righteousness, when you are seeking first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, you know what it's going to make for you? A straight path.

You are going to be cutting right through the thick and lies and deceptions, and all the gray, and all the, is this okay things? You know, see the difference is, if your eye be single, your whole body is full of light. When someone's single focus is to be pleasing to God in all things, they are concerned about everything they do, and they want to test it to make sure God is happy. But what if, what if that's not your main motivation? What if you're satisfied with just a little bit of heaven, and a little bit of Jesus, but you want to make sure that you enjoy your trip? What if pleasing yourself is part of the double focus? You know, cross

eye, will you see double? What happens? You know, can you really live to please yourself, and to please God at the same time? Impossible with man, but there is a way.

With man it's impossible, but there is. You can do all things. You can find your greatest pleasure in pleasing Him.

And when your greatest pleasure is bringing pleasure to Him, then it says of Christ, for it is low, it is written of me in the volume of the book, I delight to do thy will. When you delight in doing the will of God, you've got it made. He who does the will of God shall live forever.

You've made it. And you live that way. One last exhortation and we're done.

Actually, but this exhortation has a positive and a negative side. Okay? Positive and negative. Here's the positive.

Okay? Most good batteries have a positive and negative side. Okay? Hebrews chapter 13. Positive side of this admonition.

Hebrews chapter 13 verses 20 and 21. This is my prayer for us. I so agree with the writer of Hebrews as he was expressing his desire before God and to those he was writing.

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect, complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well-pleasing in His sight. Wow. May He do that.

That's the positive side. May God so work in us everything that He is well-pleased with. Here's the negative side of that admonition.

Romans chapter 1. It's amazing we touched upon this in Sunday school. Romans chapter 1. Speaking of a people who know certain things are right and wrong. I can say very comfortably, every single one of us here very comfortably fit in this verse as at least at the minimum of those who know God's righteous judgment.

Because He says everyone knows it. The heavens declare it. The skies proclaim the work of His hand.

All men are without excuse. Everyone knows God's righteous judgment. They all know it.

It says in verse 32, Who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things deserve death, not only they do the same, but what's the scary part of the last part? It says in the New King James, they also approve of those who practice them. The literal Greek word is, they think well with. Eudaiko is the same word for pleasure.

When you think well of something, it pleases you. A simple admonition. No, not a simple.

A life or death admonition to every person here. If you take pleasure in something God hates, you're going to hell. Plain and simple.

Justify yourself. Call me a legalist. You'll burn in hell while I spend time with the Father forever.

If I am found pleasing in His sight. The argument is not with me. You had better test all things and find them pleasing to Him.

Because it says, the last verse comes to my mind. 2 Thessalonians So that all will be damned who have received not the love of the truth, but taken pleasure in unrighteousness. Thought well of unrighteousness.

May God have mercy on us. Let's pray. Father, according to Your tender mercy, may You cause the fear of the Lord to fall upon Your people.

May You pull down the arrogant pride that You dress Yourself in battle garments to resist. And may every person here who humbles themselves and trembles at Your Word find You faithful to pour out grace upon. May Your Word be fulfilled to the blameless You show Yourself blameless.

To the pure You show Yourself pure. But to the crooked You show Yourself perverse. May everyone who wants to know You with a pure heart see You clearly.

May everyone hungering and thirsting for righteousness be filled. And may according to Your great mercy, may sinners be turned from the error of their way, that they could be saved from death. May You grant them repentance back to a life totally given over to pursue and do what brings You pleasure.

We acknowledge we breathe Your air. We enjoy the laws of Your creation. We partake of the food You've provided.

In You we live and move and have our being. And some here, Father, are using the very being and life You're giving them on their own wicked and evil lust. Deliver them, Father.

Deliver them. Have mercy. May the fear and the terror of God, Your hatred for sin, but Your willingness to be merciful to all who forsake it be upon us all.

In the name of our Lord Jesus, according to Your will we ask. Amen. Sober word.

Excuse me for being a little long. Randy's going to come forward and just take our prayer request. I don't believe we have room for any announcements.

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