

SLIDE 1

What Does it Take to Please God?

Mark 7
David Dahms
April 25, 2010

Introduction

Have you ever wondered what does it take to please God?

Obedience?

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Certainly Jesus does say,

John 14:15 (ESV)
15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

All of us would certainly admit we have kept his command less than consistently.

Avoiding Sin?

How about Avoiding sin? Will that please God? Is that what He wants?

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Again, Jesus asserts that is very important, using hyperbole to teach:

Matthew 5:30 (ESV)
30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

And Jesus emphasizes this not just once but at least twice:

Matthew 18:8 (ESV)

8 And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire.

But as I look around the room, I'm not seeing too many missing hands and feet. And I have never heard anyone say who has lost a foot or hand, "Yep, I lost it to Christ. I wanted to please him, and so to stop sinning, I it had to go."

Love?

And then there is the big one:

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Matthew 22:36-40 (ESV)

36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Surely that is it? That will do it! Love God whole heartedly, and that will do it. We can be sure that God is pleased. Right?

But even that standard is very illusive. So is there any hope? Anything that is within our reach that we can know will please our Lord and our God?

In Mark 7 Jesus opens the door to understanding to what pleases God. He uses a challenge by the Pharisees to show us what really concerns God, and what really pleases Him. Will look there with me?

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Mark 7:1-8 (ESV)

¹ Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, ² they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. ³ (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, holding to the tradition of the elders, ⁴ and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.)

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⁵ And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” ⁶ And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁷ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ ⁸ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

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Mark 7:9–13 (ESV)

⁹ And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ ¹¹ But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban” ’ (that is, given to God)— ¹² then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, ¹³ thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

This and the following account are what some scholars call pronouncement stories. The pronouncements of Jesus in vv. 6–8, 13 are the most important parts of these passages.

Sometimes we Christians are dismissed because we hold the Bible in such high regard. But did you notice--Jesus holds the Bible, the word of God, in highest regard. In fact it is his regard for the Word of God that is the basis for his correction of the Pharisees.

In this passage we discover two very important things that please God.

He is teaching us:

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One is that our words come from our heart, and that our heart honors the word.

Now what does that mean?

To understand it let's begin with the words of the prophet Isaiah which Jesus quotes:

SLIDE 9**Isaiah 29:13 (NIV)**

¹³ The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.

In their fastidiousness of their hand washing, the Pharisees forgot that God didn't primarily give them the law for good hygiene, but so it could hold up their hearts to the light!

By focusing on the importance of maintaining their tradition, that is their interpretation of what it means to follow the letter of the law, the Pharisees completely missed the most important thing that was happening.

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Jesus was transforming common “unclean” fisherman and tax collectors into fully devoted followers of God.

And that is the very thing that the Pharisees were suppose to be doing, but they were stuck in hygiene.

Illustration:

SLIDE 11**Jesus People USA**

The problem I was having is I was focusing on the pipes rather than the fact that God was transforming people on the upper east side of Chicago!

So here is the point:

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Jesus is very unimpressed with outward signs of loyalty to the law, which are not consistent with what is really in a person's heart.

Here is what JPUSA has become.

We number about 500 people who live together at a single address on Chicago's North Side. We hold our goods and property in a common fund, looking to the model of Christian community depicted in New Testament (Acts 2:44-47, 4:32-35). Living communally and pooling our

resources in this way has enabled us to minister to one another and those outside the community in ways that might not have been otherwise possible. This, of course, does not mean we believe God wants everybody to live in this way, or blesses us in some special way because we do. The community is primarily self-supporting, generating about 90% of our income from a variety of community-owned and operated businesses. These include a roofing supply house, t-shirt printers, and a sheet metal shop.

You can do things on the outside but it ranks little with God if the motive isn't authentic on the inside. In other words, if your heart doesn't thrill with love for God then give up trying to justify yourself by outward appearances—like attending church.

So this is an invitation to stop faking it. God is saying, both in Isaiah and Mark—
“Look you don't have to put on an outward show for me. Your actions mean nothing to me if they are not coming truly from your heart.”

Deep down inside, isn't this what all of us want? Authenticity.

How many women care at all about getting flowers or being asked out on a date if it is considered a duty? What they want to know does their man LOVE them.

How many husbands want physical romance with their wives if their wives approach it as their duty rather than desire? What they want to know is their wife aroused and drawn to them.

And if we Females and Males, just in these simple illustrations understand the importance of love flowing from the heart—how much more does God know it when he can see our hearts? When he sees our hearts want to please Him above all other.

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1 Samuel 16:7 (ESV)

⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

How does God want to be loved? Authentically. We are not fooling God. He knows everything anyway, even our nuances, so there is no use trying to do anything less than authentically.

So...

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Let your actions be consistent with your heart, and let your heart love God authentically.

So how do we do a self check on this?

Look at what comes out of us!

The word “hypocrites” in v. 6 originally referred to an actor who wore different masks during a play. Here it refers not to those who deliberately play a part but to those whose lives are inconsistent with their profession.¹

The self check that this passage leads us to is—do we honor God with our lips, but our hearts are far from him?

And two, the way to tell this is by seeing what is coming out of us.

The truth about all of us is that we live far below what we believe.

So what do we do about it. Try harder? Or do we trade yokes.

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Matthew 11:29–30 (NIV)

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Is what is coming out of you from pressure?

Self pressure to live such and such a life and have such and such? To appear to be someone you are not? Trade yokes. Love god authentically from the heart.

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Jazz Great Charlie Parker on Authenticity

If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn.

—Jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker (1920-1955)

¹ Brooks, J. A. (2001). *Vol. 23: Mark* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (116). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.