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GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Can We Please God?

Use with the full teaching and a Bible. Watch or read first, complete the questions, then discuss and apply. For family or homeschool use, an adult may choose a shorter section and accept spoken answers.

The summary is a reading aid. Test the teaching's explanations against the cited passages. Keep the answer key and facilitator notes separate when distributing learner pages.

Open the teaching

Teaching summary

This teaching examines the claim that people either cannot please God or are already fully pleasing to him regardless of what they do. It tests that claim by asking whether God cares about sin, obedience, and keeping his commandments. Since breaking God's law is identified as sin in 1 John 3:4, the teaching asks whether choosing not to sin - and therefore choosing obedience - can be pleasing to him. It then turns to Scripture to determine what God says is pleasing.

Proverbs 16:7, Ecclesiastes 7:26, 2 Corinthians 5:9, and Ephesians 5:10 are cited to show that Scripture speaks of people whose ways are pleasing to God and urges believers to make pleasing him their ambition and to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Ephesians 5:7-10 adds the context that those who were formerly darkness are to walk as children of Light, with goodness, righteousness, and truth. The teaching identifies this light with God's law, or Torah, using Proverbs 6:23, and connects the light with Yeshua, the Word made flesh described in John 1:14. From this, the teaching concludes that obeying God and walking in his light pleases him.

The teaching then gives practical examples of actions that are pleasing to God. In Philippians 4:14-18, the help the Philippians gave Paul is described as a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, and well-pleasing to God. Colossians 3:20 says that children obeying their parents is well-pleasing to the Lord. Hebrews 13:15-16 identifies praise, doing good, and sharing as sacrifices with which God is pleased. Hebrews 13:20-21 speaks of doing God's will and of God working in his people what is well pleasing in his sight, while 1 John 3:22 connects keeping his commandments with doing the things that are pleasing in his sight.

Yeshua's own example reinforces the teaching's point. Matthew 11:26 and Luke 10:21 describe what was well-pleasing in the Father's sight, and John 8:29 records Yeshua saying that he always does the things that are pleasing to the Father. The teaching summarizes several ways Scripture shows that people can please God: walking in the light, which it identifies as Torah; helping others; honoring parents; offering sacrifices of praise; doing God's will, which it identifies as following Torah; and keeping all of his commandments.

Finally, because Yeshua always did what was pleasing to God and is cited as the example believers are to follow in 1 Peter 2:21, the teaching concludes that believers should always strive to please God. It rejects the idea that obedience is irrelevant to whether God is pleased and emphasizes that God cares what people do. The closing challenge is that if God cares about obedience and conduct, his people should care about pleasing him as well.

Summary points

- Scripture shows that people can act in ways that are pleasing to God.
- Believers are to make pleasing God their ambition and learn what is pleasing to the Lord.
- Walking as children of Light in goodness, righteousness, and truth is connected with pleasing God.
- The teaching identifies God's light with his law, or Torah, and says that walking in that light pleases him.
- Helping others and sharing are described as sacrifices that are pleasing to God.
- Children obeying their parents is well-pleasing to the Lord.
- Offering praise to God is a sacrifice that pleases him.
- Doing God's will and keeping his commandments are connected with doing what is pleasing in his sight.
- Yeshua said that he always did the things that were pleasing to the Father.
- Because Yeshua is our example, believers should strive to please God through obedience to what he instructed.

Fill in the blank

Use the teaching and the cited Bible passages. Equivalent wording is welcome when it expresses the same meaning.

Basic

1. Second Corinthians 5:9 says our ambition should be to be _____ to him.

2. Ephesians 5 teaches believers to walk as children of _____.

3. The help the Philippians gave Paul was called a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, and _____ to God.

4. Colossians 3:20 says children should be obedient to their _____.

5. Hebrews 13 says believers should continually offer a sacrifice of _____ to God.

6. First John 3:22 connects keeping God's _____ with doing the things that are pleasing in his sight.

Challenging

1. Proverbs 6:23 is used to show that God's law, or Torah, is _____.

2. John 1:14 describes Yeshua as the Word made _____.

3. In Philippians 4, the Philippians are commended for sharing with Paul in his _____.

4. Hebrews 13:16 says not to neglect doing good and _____.

5. John 8:29 records Yeshua saying that he always does the things that are _____ to the Father.

6. The teaching cites 1 Peter _____ to support that Yeshua is our example.

Group discussion

Discuss with respect, support answers from the passages, and allow time to think. Use the lines for brief notes or a notebook for longer responses.

1. What claims about pleasing God does the teaching challenge, and how does 1 John 3:4 help shape its argument about sin and obedience?

2. How does Ephesians 5:7-10 connect walking in the Light with learning what is pleasing to the Lord, and how does the teaching relate that Light to Torah?

3. Why does the teaching use the Philippians' help for Paul, doing good, and sharing as evidence that our actions toward others can please God?

4. How do Hebrews 13:20-21 and 1 John 3:22 connect pleasing God with doing his will and keeping his commandments?

5. What role does Yeshua's statement in John 8:29 play in the teaching's conclusion that believers should strive to please God?

6. According to the teaching, how should knowing that God cares what we do affect the way believers think about everyday obedience?

Answer key

For the leader or parent. Answers follow the teaching; references help you check the wording and context. Accept equivalent wording where appropriate.

Basic

1. pleasing
2 Corinthians 5:9

2. light
Ephesians 5:7-10

3. well-pleasing (also: pleasing)
Philippians 4:18

4. parents
Colossians 3:20

5. praise
Hebrews 13:15

6. commandments
1 John 3:22

Challenging

1. light
Proverbs 6:23

2. flesh
John 1:14

3. affliction (also: trouble, distress)
Philippians 4:14

4. sharing (also: sharing with others)
Hebrews 13:16

5. pleasing
John 8:29

6. 2:21
1 Peter 2:21

Facilitator notes

These are suggested directions for discussion, not a required script or a test of identical wording. Invite participants to explain the passage and consider a faithful practical response.

1. The lesson challenges both the claim that pleasing YHWH is impossible and the claim that conduct never matters. Since sin is lawlessness, obedience matters to him. Keep this distinct from earning salvation by personal merit.

1 John 3:4; teaching opening; Ephesians 2:8-10 (further study)

2. The passage calls former darkness to live as children of light in goodness, righteousness, and truth. The teaching connects this with Torah through Proverbs 6:23 and with Yeshua as the Word made flesh.

Ephesians 5:7-10; Proverbs 6:23; John 1:14

3. Paul calls their practical help an acceptable sacrifice pleasing to YHWH. Hebrews also joins praise with doing good and sharing. Ask for one realistic way to meet a need without overlooking the heart behind the action.

Philippians 4:14-18; Hebrews 13:15-16

4. Hebrews emphasizes YHWH working in his people through Yeshua so they can do his will. First John connects keeping his commandments with pleasing conduct. Obedience is a response to his work, not a purchase of acceptance.

Hebrews 13:20-21; 1 John 3:22

5. Yeshua consistently did what pleased the Father. The teaching joins his statement to Peter's call to follow his example. His example gives believers a direction for growth, rather than a reason to excuse disobedience.

John 8:29; 1 Peter 2:21

6. Look for a concrete step of faithful obedience, praise, generosity, or service. Encourage reliance on YHWH and continued growth. The wider biblical framework is salvation by grace through faith, with good works as its fruit.

Hebrews 13:20-21; Ephesians 2:8-10 (further study)

Put it into practice

Choose one response to the passages you studied. What will you do, and when will you revisit it? Share only what you are comfortable sharing.