

Sermon Series - God Pleasers: 49 Days of Faith
Part 3 - "Following God's Directions"
Pastor Dale Campfield - July 17th, 2011

Intro:

Matt 28:19 "Go and make disciples of all nations..."

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Current Sermon Series: "God Pleasers" – 49 Days of Faith

Theme Verses: Hebrews 11:6 "Without faith, it is impossible to please God."

Sermon Topics

Expecting the Best, Taking Risks in Faith, Following God's Directions
How to Keep on Believing, Taking the Initiative. Stretching My Imagination
Persisting in Faith

How do you get God's approval? By being more good than bad? No. By keeping the Ten Commandments? No. By promising to be perfect? No. By being religious and going to church? No. The Bible says there's only one way to get God's approval. There's only one way to get God's smile on your life. In Hebrews 11:6 it says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." The only way you can get God's approval is by faith in Jesus Christ, His Son. You may be a great person but without faith it's impossible to please God. You may do all kinds of great things in your life but without faith it's impossible to please God.

Would you say that faith is a pretty important issue? Yes, it is. It is vital that you learn how to live by faith. That you strengthen your faith. If you want to make an IMPACT in life; being a God pleaser – you've got to have faith!

For forty-nine days, between July 3 and August 14 2011, we'll be in a seven week or 49-day series called "God Pleasers – 49 Days of Faith." In this series we're going to stretch your faith, we're going to challenge your faith, we're going to deepen your faith, we're going to strengthen your faith and you're going to see all kinds of amazing things happen in your life as your faith grows.

How do you get more faith? You say, "I'd like to get more faith. How do I get it?" The Bible tells us that faith comes by hearing the word of God. Faith comes from this book – this is faith-food – and the more you get into this book, God's word, the Bible – the more your faith will develop. So we've figured out a way in the next forty-nine days to deepen your faith and get you into the Word.

Matthew 9:29

"According to your faith it will be done to you."

Jesus is talking. This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible because God says it's your choice. You get to choose. "According to your faith it will be done to you." You get to choose how much God blesses your life. You get to choose how many answers you have to prayer. You get to choose how much God gets to use you in His plan for the world to make an IMPACT. How? "According to your faith it will be done to you." God says, "If you've got a lot of faith, we'll get a lot done in your life. If you've got a little faith, we'll get a little done in your life. If you've got no faith, you get nothing done in your life. 'According to your faith it will be done.'" Faith is the key that unlocks the door to heaven. If you want to be a God Pleaser – You've got to have FAITH!

It is very important that you grow, develop, you strengthen your faith.

Today's Sermon Title: "Following God's Directions"

We're in this series on "49 Days of Faith". One day a Roman army officer came to Jesus and said, "I have a servant who's very ill. In fact, he's paralyzed and he's suffering in bed." Jesus said, "I'll go to your house and heal him." And the Roman centurion said, "O Lord, You don't need to do that. I understand authority and I'm not worthy for You to come to my house. But I know this obedience and authority thing. I'm a captain in the army. I give commands to my soldiers and they obey immediately. I make commands to my servants and they obey me immediately. They do whatever I tell them to do. So I understand authority and obedience. You don't need to come to my house, Jesus. If You just say the word from right here I'm sure he'll be healed instantly."

Luke 7:9

"Jesus looked at that man and said, 'This is the greatest faith I've ever seen in Israel.'"

The greatest faith. **Why? Because faith and obedience are interlocked.** When you trust someone you do what they say. If you don't do what someone tells you to do it means you don't trust them. God has linked faith and obedience together so that all of the promises of God are conditioned upon you following the directions that He gives you.

Notice...

Deuteronomy 5:33

"Follow all the directions the Lord has given you. Then life will go well for you."

God has made some incredible promises in His word about obedience. And He gets very, very specific. In fact, there were so many promises about obedience in God's word I couldn't list them all. I just picked and chose a few of them. Notice what God promises if we obey Him.

- God blesses those who obey Him.
- God saves those who obey Him.
- God watches over those who obey Him.
- The Lord takes care of those who obey Him.
- You will be helped – God helps those who obey Him.
- He gives us what we ask for because we obey His commands.

The Bible says that if you follow God's directions...

- You will be happy.

- You will live longer.
- You will lack nothing good and you will have all that you need.

The Bible says if you obey and follow God's instructions...

- You will live in perfect freedom.
- You will have greater wisdom.
- You will dwell in security and peace.

He promised that...

- You will be prosperous and successful.
- You will be great in the kingdom of heaven.
- You will be rewarded for eternity.

Obedience is the premise behind all of the promises. God gives us His promises by grace. But we enjoy His promises when we follow the direction, the instructions.

Based on all of these promises and they're pretty incredible is God a liar? No. God says I will do these things in your life if you follow My direction. The manual for life.

Based on that let me ask you some very pointed questions.

Do you think that following God's directions, do you think that obeying God is a good idea or a bad idea? A good idea.

Do you think it is smart or is it stupid to disobey something God's told you to do? It's stupid. It's dumb!

When I don't understand something that God tells me to do, when I don't understand a command, will it be more beneficial to me if I do it anyway or if I do what I think is best? Do it anyway!

God commands us to obey - by faith.

God often gives us rules and commands in His word – and they're not suggestions; they're commands – but He doesn't explain why. He wants you to do them of faith. Sometimes they sound unfair. They sound like they're meant to cramp your style, that God is some kind of kill joy, that He's limiting you. For instance, the Bible is very clear no sex outside of marriage. It's real clear about that – over and over. Sex is for husbands and wives in the bonds of marriage. The Bible says when somebody hurts you, you are to forgive them. The Bible says you're to take the first ten-percent and tithe it back to God. The Bible says when people do evil to you, you are to do good back to them.

A lot of these commands, they don't make sense from a human standpoint. But God says do it. It's a matter of trust. So then the big question is will I be blessed by obeying what God said to do even when I don't understand it or by making up my own set of rules because I know more than God? There's no question about that.

Obedience is a demonstration of faith.

Obedience unlocks the key to all of God's blessings in life.

God promises to reward you if you'll just follow His directions.

As your pastor, I don't want you to miss out on all the promises. I don't want you to miss out that God will bless you and save you and watch over you and take care of you and help you and you'll be happy and live longer and you'll lack nothing and you'll have what you need and you'll have perfect freedom. And God will prosper you and make you successful and you'll be great in the kingdom of heaven and be rewarded. I don't want you to miss out on that. So today I want us to look at how to receive the promises of God. What you must do in order to appropriate all these things in your life. The Bible is very clear. You do four things.

How to Receive God's Promises

When you know what God wants you to do, when you know what the will of God is, you do four things.

1. Obey God Immediately

You don't delay. You don't wait. You don't procrastinate. You don't put it off. You don't make excuses. You don't drag your feet. Just do it. You do it now. You don't do it later. You do it now.

Psalm 119:32

"I will quickly obey Your commands."

Ps. 119:60

"Without delay I hurry to obey Your commands."

If there's any time in life you really ought to hurry it's when God tells you to do something. Don't delay on that. You hurry. You obey God immediately whether you feel like it or not. Whether you understand it or not. Just do it immediately.

You don't have to understand something to benefit from it. I don't understand how heavy planes fly in the air but I fly all the time. I don't understand how computers work but I sure like e-mail. I don't understand internal combustion but I've driven a car for years. You don't have to understand something to enjoy it, to benefit from it. And you don't have to understand God's commands in order to obey them and benefit from them.

Every parent knows that you'll tell a kid something sometimes they'll say, "Why should I do that?" and you say, "Because I said so." Behind those five words you're actually saying, "Because your little brain isn't big enough to understand it and one day you'll understand real reality but right now trust me. I know better than you. I'm doing this for your own good so you do it." All of that is behind, "Because I say so."

And God sometimes tells you to do something and you say, “Why?” and He says, “Because I say so. Because I know more than you. I don’t owe you an explanation. One day you’re going to understand. But just do it.” It is pretty audacious to question the creator of the universe, “Are You sure, God?” You say, “What if I don’t have a good attitude?” You still obey. “You’re telling me to obey God with a bad attitude?” Absolutely. That’s far better than disobedience.

You parents, if you say, “Kids, I want you all to clean your room but you don’t have to do it until you have an enthusiastic attitude.” They’re never going to do it. You do it in spite of.

Adults I’ve talked to do this all the time. “I don’t feel like forgiving and reconciling with my spouse.” Or “I don’t feel like breaking off this affair that I know is wrong.” So what? Who cares what you feel? You do the right thing anyway. Only immature people go by their feelings. Mature people do the right thing in spite of their feelings. You’re very emotionally immature if you live by your feelings.

What do you do? You do the right thing. You obey God immediately in spite of a how you feel. Then after you have obeyed then you can work on your sorry attitude. That will come along later. Feelings will come later. You do the right thing because you know it’s the right thing to do and your feelings will play catch up.

Here’s a principle: In the Bible, anytime God gives a stated command without a specific date (like “On the first of every week, do this...”) He means to do it now. For instance, when Butch calls the Campfield family to dinner. She says, “Come to dinner at 6:00.” She means 6:00. If she says, “Come to dinner at 5:30,” she means 5:30. If she says, “Come to dinner,” that means now, right now! Not another ten minutes. It means now. You respect her and come to dinner immediately.

Games We Play with God

Game #1: The Play Deaf Game

Kids are born knowing how to play the game of delayed obedience. They’re playing their games or video. Whenever you say, “Come to dinner,” the first game they play is, Play Deaf. “I didn’t hear you. I didn’t hear you say that.”

We do that all the time with God. “I can’t hear You, God.” He’s talking loud and clear. But I’m not listening. You’re trying to pretend you’re deaf when you know God’s talking to you. You know He’s talking to you, like He is right now.

Game #2: The Imagine God is Talking to Someone Else Game

The second game we play is Imagine Mom is Talking to Somebody Else. “Oh, you meant me come to dinner?” Who do you think I met? The little fairy in the corner?

We do this with God. “This verse here in the Bible, surely that’s not for me and my circumstance. No, that’s got to be for somebody a long time ago, a long way away. Surely You’re not talking to me, are You?” in order to delay obedience.

When we delay obedience, it means we're questioning God. "Do You really know what's best, God? I know You said this in the Bible, but do You really know what's best? And do You really have what's best for me in mind? Surely You didn't mean me when You said that?"

Game #3: The In Just a Minute Game

We tell our parents, okay, in just a minute. I've discovered that many adults use counseling to delay obedience. They know the right thing to do but they don't want to do it. So they just keep going to counseling, going to counseling, thinking, "If I just keep talking about it then I won't have to do what I know is the right thing to do." To confess, repent, forgive, to be forgiven, on and on. You talk to someone: "How long have you been in counseling?" *Ninety-nine years.* I could have saved you ninety-eight of them if you'd just done the right thing the first year. You're using that to delay what you know is the right thing to do.

Question: What if God responded to your needs at the same speed in which you obey Him? When we get in trouble, we want God's help immediately. "God, I need You help now! I need it fast!" and God would say, "I'll think about it. I'll get around to it one of these days. But right now I'm a little busy. I intend to help you but it will be awhile."

If you want the blessings of God, all the ones I just read, if you want those in your life, you must obey God immediately. When He tells you something to do you follow the instructions. Delayed obedience is disobedience.

If you want all the blessings of God in your life, you must also ...

2. Obey God Completely

Not just instantly or immediately but completely. You don't say, "I'll take this one and not that one... I like this command but I don't like that one... I'm going to follow this one but I'm not going to follow that one." You need to not be partially obedient, but totally obedient.

Psalm 119:4

"Lord, You gave Your orders to be obeyed completely."

In order to do this, to obey God completely, **you need to understand two very important truths.**

A. God's standard of right and wrong has never changed. It never has. It never will. If something was wrong 6000 years ago it's still wrong today. If it was right 10,000 years ago, it's still right today. Lying was wrong in the Ten Commandments. It's still wrong today. Truth doesn't change. Culture changes, popular opinion changes. Lots of things change but truth does not change. It is eternal forever. And what's right is right and what's wrong is wrong. Regardless of what the popular opinion polls say.

B. God has a bigger perspective than you. He sees things you can't see. You trying to see from God's perspective would be like an ant trying to see from your perspective. It isn't going to happen. You're not capable of seeing it all like God sees it all. You need to trust Him.

James 4:11

“Your job is not to decide whether God's law is right or wrong, but to obey it.”

The oldest temptation is not lust, it's not lying, it's not gluttony. The oldest temptation is the temptation to doubt God's word. When Satan came to Eve in the Garden of Eden his first temptation was *“Did God really say you shouldn't eat of this tree? You can eat of everything else in the Garden of Eden but you're not to eat of this tree. Did God really say that?”*

Every time you're tempted he's still using that same line on you in your conscious. “I know the Bible says don't do this. But did God really say... Is it really for me? I know the Bible says I'm supposed to do 'this' but really, does that apply in the 21st century.” “ Did God really....?” is to doubt God's word. Don't let Satan mess you up like that.

How many of you are very detailed people? You like to deal with the details.

God is a detail person. God cares about the little things of life. God cares about details. Surely in your spare time you've done an exhaustive study of the book of Leviticus. God cares about details. Have you ever looked at nature? You pick up a little flower and look at the intricacies inside that flower. God cares about details. The Bible says that every hair on your head is numbered by God. God cares about details.

Because God is a God of detail, He is infinitely interested in every detail of your life. He is infinitely interested that when you obey Him you don't just obey Him but why you obey Him and how you obey Him. Are you doing it in the right way and for the right reasons?

Let me tell you what love is... Love is when you say, I'll do it the way you want it done. That's love. I will do it the way you want it done because I love you. And faith is, “I'll do it the way you want it done because I trust that you know the best way to do it.” When you love God and when you trust God you say, “God, I'll not only obey You, I'll obey You the way You want me to do, when You want me to do it, for the right reason You want me to do it. I'll do it Your way because I love You and I trust You.”

Faith is trusting God in the details of life.

Proverbs 3:5

“Trust God from the bottom of your heart. Don't try to figure out everything on your own.”

One day there was a man who was ill named Naaman and he had leprosy. He went to Elijah and said, “I'm a very famous man but I've got leprosy. What do I do?” and Elijah said, “I'll tell you what. Just to show your faith, God wants you to go down to the Jordan river and dunk yourself under it seven times.” Naaman says, “You've got to be kidding. It's humiliating.” Elijah says, “Yes, it's humbling yourself before God.” On the last time he comes up and he was cured of his leprosy. Was there special power in the water? Absolutely not. It was because he was obedient to God. He had faith. And he obeyed God completely.

Jesus says if you trust Me in the details of life, if you are faithful in the little things, it means you trust Me and I will reward you with bigger things in heaven. If you're faithful in little things you

will be faithful in much and you will have greater responsibility, greater rewards and greater joy in heaven. Incomplete obedience, partial obedience is not only disobedience. It's a lack of trust.

Obey God immediately and completely.

3. Obey God Joyfully

Psalm 100:2

"Obey Him gladly."

Psalm 119:16

"I enjoy obeying Your commands."

Psalm 119:47

"I find pleasure in obeying Your commands."

How was it enjoyable to do what God tells you to do? To follow the instructions, to obey His commands. How is that enjoyable? Three reasons.

1. Because I'll have fewer problems. If I follow the instruction manual for life that God the creator laid out it's going to have a whole lot more benefit and fewer problems in my life. When you're putting together a bicycle does it help to follow the instructions? Yes. So you'll have fewer problems in life, that makes it enjoyable.

2. I know I'm going to be rewarded in heaven and I can see all those promises that God has made.

3. It's enjoyable because I love God. I know what He's done for me so I love Him and I want to obey Him.

1 John 5:3

"Loving God means doing what He tells us to do."

In marriage, the longer you live together, the more you know what offends and grieves your partner – your husband or wife. You don't know that when you first get married but the longer you're married the more you figure out what will offend that person. Like blowing your nose at the dinner table or passing gas on the couch or leaving the seat up. You learn what offends your partner. But if you love that person, the longer you're married the less you do those things because you don't want to offend them. You love them. You don't want to grieve them. You love them.

When you walk with the Lord through many years the more you realize what God has done for you, how good He's been to you, the less you want to offend God. You enjoy doing the right thing. You enjoy keeping His commands. You do it because you love God.

You know how God measures your love? Not by what you say. ("I love You! I praise You!") God measures your love by your obedience. By how well you follow directions. Jesus said, *"If you love Me, keep My commandments."* That's how we prove our love.

I said earlier, it's better to obey God, even with the wrong motivation than disobey. If you do that you'll start letting the love develop in your life.

If you want the blessings of God in your life you obey Him immediately, completely, joyfully and...

4. Obey Him Continually

Life is not a 50-yard dash. It's a marathon. You obey God not sporadically. Now this year, not next year, yes the next year, no the next year after that. It's all your life.

Psalm 119:112

"I am determined to obey You until I die."

Have you made that choice? I have. I have made the choice that I am determined to obey God until I die. And the blessings in my life have been beyond my wildest dreams because I am determined to obey God for the rest of my life.

Psalm 119:33

"Just tell me what to do and I'll do it, Lord. As long as I live I'll wholeheartedly obey."

Just tell me what to do and I'll do it – make that your prayer. You say, "Why doesn't God tell me what to do? I've been praying what to do in this situation." I'll tell you why He hasn't told you. Because you're not already doing what He's already told you to do. God does not play games where you say, "God, tell me what to do and then I'll decide whether to do it or not." He's not going to tell you that way. No, you say, "In advance, I'm telling You I'm going to do whatever You tell me to do." That's faith. Then He'll tell you. Why should God tell you what to do in this circumstance that you're worried about when you're not already doing the things you already know to be the will of God and you ought to have done and haven't. Why haven't you already done it? Why is He going to give you further revelation if you have not acted on the truth He's told you?

Philippians 3:16

"We must be sure to obey the truth we have learned already."

The last two weeks in this 49 Days of Faith, I've been giving you a lot of truth about faith. Have you acted on it? Have you done anything about it? We kid ourselves thinking if I'm hearing about faith, learning and taking notes then I'm growing. No, the Bible says, "*Faith without actions is dead.*" You have to act on it. It's acting on faith that makes you grow. Not just listening and taking notes. It's doing something about it.

Conclusion:

If you truly want to please God, you must live by Faith – Following God's Directions in FAITH!

And as you do...

You watch... you wait... you'll see!