

# Do you please God?

Hebrews 13:1-16

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Everyone knows that we live in a “like” culture. Everyone is collecting “likes”. Even if you are not such a fan of social networks, it is part of our culture and says something about our human condition. Since the fall we started to look for our worth and self-esteem in the creation, instead of in the Creator. And without knowing it we find ourselves living to please others, desperately in need of pleasing others. And we lose sight of the most important question of our lives: **Do we please God?** Have you ever considered it? Do you please God? We will look for that answer today in the book of **Hebrews**, chapter **13**.

Hebrews is about encouraging the faith of the Hebrew Christians who previously practiced the Jewish religion. Because, given the trials and persecutions they suffered, they felt tempted to return to their old faith, which was not persecuted by the Roman Empire, while Christianity was. So the author presents Jesus as a high priest who intercedes for us in our sufferings, and encourages them to stand firm considering the joy that lies ahead. So when we get to the 13th chapter, the practical matters of faith are explained and the author is focusing on details. And we can focus our attention on responding to this question: **How can we please God?**

## 1. Right relationship with others.

*Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.<sup>2</sup> Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.<sup>3</sup> Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

I hope you have noticed that these first three verses of Hebrews 13 talk about relationships with other people: **My relationship with God can be seen in the way I live my relationship with others.** We cannot separate the vertical relationship with God from the horizontal relationship with our neighbor (Mt. 22:34-40). But that is not so simple for us. Especially since we live in the culture of individualism, which leads us to consume relationships. But those are not the kind of relations the Bible is teaching us about. In these verses we see a call to Please God through: **a)** The right relationship with church. Do we really love people at church? **b)** Hospitality. This is the difference between receiving and sharing. When you receive, you only take, as society teaches us. But God teaches us to share to bless each other. **c)** Even share the suffering of those in need, may our help will come from a sense of identification.

## 2. Right relationship with purity.

*<sup>4</sup> Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*

The author of Hebrews calls us to take care of the most valuable relationship that two human beings can have: marriage. And specifically, it is a call to sexual purity. Something necessary in the life of the follower of Jesus Christ, because it will matter in our relationship with God (Heb. 12:14, 1 Cor. 6:18-19).

## 3. Right relationship with money and material things.

*<sup>5</sup> Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." <sup>6</sup> So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"*

In these verses the author describes what our relationship should be with material things. The Bible exalts the value of contentment. This is not the same as conformism and not wanting to make any effort to get something, or not wanting to work. But contentment is being grateful for what you have, because you know it comes from God. You don't have to kill yourself working. It is a lie that if we get more, we will be happier. So the author is quoting Deut. 31:6 and Ps. 118:6,7 to remind us that we do not depend on the goods and resources of men, but that our trust and help come from God. Let's trust Him.

## 4. Right relationship with leadership and discipleship.

*<sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. <sup>9</sup> Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so. <sup>10</sup> We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.*

The Christian life is a continual discipleship. If we think that we no longer need to grow, we have to review our way of thinking. Specifically, this learning happens through respecting the leaders that God has placed and learning from those who are ahead of us on the road. This is a struggle, because we all think we know better and we don't want anyone telling us what to do. But isn't humility a biblical value? The Apostle Paul said: *"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ"* (1 Cor. 11:1). By following those who follow Jesus, we will actually be following Jesus, and we will be able to learn the truths of the faith and Christian character without being confused by strange teachings.

## 5. Right relationship with Jesus.

*<sup>11</sup> The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. <sup>12</sup> And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. <sup>13</sup> Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. <sup>14</sup> For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

This passage shows us the most important proper relationship in our lives to please God: the relationship with Jesus Christ. This is the one that makes the difference compared to everything else. If you don't have this, it doesn't matter how hard you try, how much money you have in the bank, or how many good deeds you do. Jesus delivered his blood on the cross to cleanse and forgive those who believe in him and receive him as Lord and Savior. God's forgiveness and God's approval for my life is just by grace, in a way that I could never earn. Jesus is the one who can fully please God, and if you receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, you too will receive that forgiveness and mercy, and it will change your life. Do you remember what happened when Jesus was baptized? A voice came from heaven; and what did the voice say? *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."* Do you want to please God? Well, you can't do it by your own religious effort; you can only please him through Jesus.

## 6. The fulfillment of the Christian faith:

*<sup>15</sup> Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. <sup>16</sup> And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

That leads us to these verses, the right kind of sacrifices which pleases God. Only in Jesus can we have the correct vertical relationship with God and the correct horizontal relationship with our neighbor. Then the Christian faith becomes tangible. You feel that you really have it despite your struggles and miseries. Understanding what Jesus has done on our behalf should, in fact, lead us to worship, joy, and enjoy life with God in a different way.

## Conclusion

**Do we please God?** Yes, if we have Jesus Christ. And this is a liberating grace, knowing that if you accept Jesus Christ, you don't have to worry about what others think, impressing with your hard work, earning a lot of money, showing off a better car. God sees you with joy through the one in whom He is pleased.

**How can we please God?** Once you have Jesus, you can and you must experience a change in areas of your life, because this grace and this love is not an excuse to live in a disorderly way. So you should add right relationships with others, with purity, with money and material things, and with leadership and discipleship (church). Through Jesus, you do not have to live to please others anymore and you can experience a change in these areas of your life.