



Series: **PEOPLE PLEASERS**
Characteristics of a People Pleaser
Part 1

“They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” (John 12:43)

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Midweek Service
Text: John 12:42-43

Introduction: People Pleasers do not please God.¹ Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). Neither can you serve both God and people at the same time as your ultimate masters. You can serve people on God’s

behalf and in God’s service, but you cannot serve people in place of God or when it conflicts with God’s will and call that serving God at the same time.

Paul said it this way, “...do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10).

We come to our main text in **John 12:42-43**, and we read about the chief rulers who professed to believe on Christ, yet were actually people pleasers. We read: “...among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: 43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”. The chief rulers was another name for members of the Sanhedrin. They were the ruling Pharisees. Before we go condemning the Pharisees, let’s understand these were sincere, zealous people. They were just blind. I think this study is going to shock you because we are all so blind to the idols in our own heart. God wants your heart—He wants your whole heart. That’s what this study is aiming at.

“Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”
- THE APOSTLE PAUL

Introduction

The problem of pleasing people is idolatry in the heart. We want to be loved. To want to be loved is natural, but when we put it in the place of God, it becomes an idol. It begins to be our drug. We depend on it. It gets us through the day whether we are walking with God or not. We want to be approved of people more than we want God’s approval. People pleasers are controlled by people and struggle doing God’s will. The root of people pleasing is pride. Pride is prevalent and widespread in every human heart. Therefore, do not be surprised that almost every one of us have a deep struggle with this idol of the heart.

The Anatomy of an Idol

An idol is anything that takes the place of God. Truly the heart is an idol making factory. We are prone to make cheap substitutes for God in our hearts. Whenever we neglect God in our lives and then we replace Him with a cheap substitute, we have become idol worshippers.

There are Two Sides to Every Idol

There are two sides to every idol. One side is DESIRE for something. The other side is FEAR of losing it. People who love money fear losing their wealth.



¹ Some ideas for this study are adapted from *Pleasing People* by Lou Priolo © 2007 and *When People are Big and God is Small* by Edward T. Welch.

People who love to be in control fear being unable to control the circumstances and people that surround them. The person who loves pleasure is often afraid of missing out on an opportunity to gratify his fleshly desires. A people pleaser gets his fill by the approval of others.

The flip side is the fear of losing someone's approval or respect or the fear of being rejected. Sometimes there is even a fear of conflict. We all struggle with letting people take the place of God. **Let's get started by taking the People Pleaser Inventory. As you take this test, let God speak to your heart. Be very honest. This is not about condemning or judging you, but for your spiritual growth!**

1. A people pleaser **fears the displeasure of man** more than the displeasure of God.

Background: There were some of the chief rulers in Jesus' day that believed in Christ, yet it says in **John 12:42-43**, "because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: 43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." They were afraid of being excommunicated from the synagogue, which meant they would be looked upon as rejects and cult members.

Now we don't live in Jesus' day. We live in 2010, where our hearts have the same tendencies. Do you have an approval addiction? If you suffer from fear of rejection, you have an unhealthy need for approval.

- Do you give into peer pressure rather than take a stand for God?
- Are you afraid of being hurt by people and reluctant to trust people?
- Do you worry what people think of you?
- Are you willing to lie rather than risk losing a friendship?
- Do you cringe at the thought of being alone and unloved?
- Do you put off necessary conflict and confrontation if someone near you is sinning?
- Do you get angry when your loved ones or your spouse (if you are married) or your friends make seem to lack respect for you?
- Do you tend to run and hide when you are disrespected?
- Are you afraid to tell people forthrightly what the Bible says, even though they may get mad, but in the long run you know it might help them? A people pleaser is not a peacemaker, but rather a peace-lover. Peace at any cost is the motto! A peace-lover would rather be at peace with people than at peace with God.

We are called to please God alone. We are to be like Jesus who said in **John 8:29**, "I do always those things that please him [the Father]".

Peter's example: Think about Peter. In his words, he sounded like a loyal follower of Christ—a God-pleaser. Remember in **Matthew 26:34**, "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." What was Peter's response? "Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (v. 35)!

Peter was sincere, but when it came down to it, he feared man's rejection more than he feared displeasing God.

2. A people pleaser **would rather be silent** than confront with the truth.

Background: Remember the chief rulers had their whole lives built around God. They went to synagogue to pray and to hear the Word of God. But when it came time to pay a price for pleasing God, the rulers decided to hang out in the shadows.

Paul asked, "...do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

Proverbs 27:6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." The chief rulers who stayed quiet did so in selfishness and pride. The Gospel might have wounded many and resulted in the salvation of their loved ones and neighbors, but they stayed quiet.

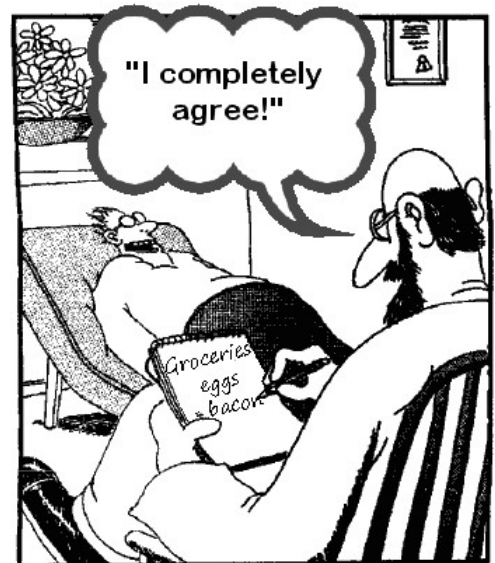
- You may be a very active church member, yet you fill up on love from people instead of God. God wants you to be satisfied in Him so that you can minister to people. It's ok to get comfort and love and help from the saints. That's important. Yet love also means that you sometimes have to tell someone the difficult truth about a sinful action or habit in their life.

3. A people pleaser **struggles with insincerity** rather than confronting a problem with the truth.

Background: The chief rulers seemed to believe in Jesus, but they stayed silent and went along with the religious system that they did not like. They stayed "nice" so as not to cause trouble for themselves and for their family.

- Is your identity bound up in being "nice"? Sometimes we may think it is better to be truthful than nice! People pleasers struggle with being insincere.

Romans 12:9, "Let love be without dissimulation." Dissimulation is hypocrisy. In other words, Paul was saying, "Let your love be genuine".



Are you a "YES" person?

Are you a "YES" person? Do you just agree for the sake of agreement? If you are not willing to gently and lovingly "speak the truth in love", then you may, though unintentionally, plant a fake, plastic, ingenuine spirit in the Body. We don't want that. Jesus said, "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:37).

4. A people pleaser's **speech is designed to flatter** others so they will think well of him.

Background: The chief rulers—those in the Sanhedrin—among whom were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimethea, had a motive of fear that drove them instead of love. They were afraid of being exposed because of the possibility of getting "put out of the synagogue" (John 12:42).

Paul says in **1 Thessalonians 2:4-5**, "...we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. 5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness".

A person who gets his acceptance and approval from God can speak boldly and freely and speak the truth in love. He knows flattering speech is a sin.

- **Flattery is a form of lying, and it is a transgression against the 9th Commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness".**

Most people love people who treat them kindly. The people pleaser abuses this trust and either knowingly and unconsciously flatters the person he is talking to. The people pleaser doesn't want to deal in the truth. Remember if Christ is in us, we will desire truth, and we must put to death all lying.

- **Another important thing to remember is that flattery does not work! Proverbs 28:23** says you get more respect by confronting with the truth than flattering. "He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue."

5. A people pleaser **makes excuses** when corrected or confronted.

Background: It was comfortable for the members of the Sanhedrin to hide in the ease and comfort of their normal daily life and place of esteem in the synagogue.

The people pleaser wants to be approved more than he wants to be careful in his walk with God. Part of people pleasing is laziness. That does not mean the person is not outwardly diligent. It is a desire for ease. People pleasers hate the pain of disapproval and disrespect and loss of status. When correction comes, he has the naive attitude that his love for the Lord covers a multitude of sins. He's not willing to pay the price for following Christ.

When it comes right down to it, people pleasers are dealing with pride in the heart. Our pride keeps us from dealing forthrightly with our sin and giving everything over to God.

You can know that you are a people pleaser if...

- You rarely confront sin in the life of another believer
- You rarely challenge or even question the opinion of others
- You prematurely terminate conflicts (usually by yielding, withdrawing, or changing the subject)
- You rarely reveal to others the truth about who you really are inside (especially concerning struggles with sin)
- You shade the truth (lie) in order "not to offend others".
- You find clever ways to introduce your accomplishments or popular people you know into the conversation
- You may fish for compliments
- You listen attentively when others talk of things that displease you because you would rather act as if you agree than be rejected
- You may put yourself down in order that others will rush to your aid and defend you and compliment you
- You find it difficult to say "NO" to those who make requests of you, even when saying "yes" is not the best choice.

Conclusion: Next week, we will look at five more traits of people pleasing. This is something we all deal with. This series is meant to help you, not to leave you hanging. There is help with Christ. My hope is that this series will root out any insincerity among us, and that our delight might be in Christ and in pleasing Him. My hope is that we can truly serve people from the heart, but that sometimes means a gracious confrontation, and of course a restoration. We need to love each other enough to follow Christ opening and admonish each other, no matter what the cost. We cannot serve two masters. Paul said it this way, "...for if [we] yet pleased men, [we] should not be the servant[s] of Christ" (**Galatians 1:10**).

Name: _____

PEOPLE-PLEASING INVENTORY

RATING SCALE	POINTS	
Never (or Hardly Ever)	5	90-100.....not an approval junkie
Seldom	4	80-89.....struggling approval junkie
Sometimes	3	70-79.....bona-fide people pleaser
Frequently	2	69 or below....approval addict
Always (or Almost Always)	1	

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| 1. I listen with anxious attentiveness when others discuss that which pleases or displeases them. _____ | 11. I avoid conflicts rather than trying to resolve them. _____ |
| 2. I strive to be politically correct more than biblically correct. _____ | 12. I take unnecessary precautions to protect my good name. _____ |
| 3. I like to go “fishing” for compliments. _____ | 13. I become angry when I am contradicted by others, especially when being publicly contradicted. _____ |
| 4. I gossip about others to people whom I believe will be pleased with me for giving them such luscious tidbits of information. _____ | 14. When meeting new people, I spend more time thinking about how to impress them than how to minister to them. _____ |
| 5. My desire for a good reputation is predominantly based on how such a reputation will benefit me rather than how that reputation will serve as a means to a greater end, such as the glory of God, the good of others, or some other unselfish objective. _____ | 15. My fear of being rejected paralyzes me to the extent that it keeps me from getting close to others. _____ |
| 6. I value the approval of certain individuals from whom I expect to receive certain honors more than the approval of those from whom I do not expect to receive such honors. _____ | 16. I forget that being rejected by others is part of the “suffering for righteousness’ sake” that is my reasonable service to God and part of my calling as a Christian. _____ |
| 7. I worry about what people think of me. _____ | 17. I long to be noticed more than I long to be godly. _____ |
| 8. I am willing to sin rather than face the rejection of certain individuals. _____ | 18. I give in to peer pressure rather than standing up for what I know is right. _____ |
| 9. I struggle with being a respecter of persons and showing favoritism. _____ | 19. I do not witness to others as I should because I fear being criticized or rejected. _____ |
| 10. I believe that being rejected is one of the worst things that a person could possibly experience. _____ | 20. I overreact to criticism by dwelling on it too long or unnecessarily allowing it to depress me. _____ |

Total Score: _____