

We Aim To Please
Pastor Kevin Landis
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ICE-CREAM SUNDAE // Let me tell you about how an ice-cream sundae shaped me into the person I am today. I know what you are thinking: “Kevin, there is no way you were shaped by an ice-cream sundae.” Fair enough, but I can explain.

- In church, back when I was a kid, my children’s pastor shared an impactful object lesson using an ice-cream sundae. Here is the gist of it:
 - He asked the question, “Are you a SUNDAY Christian, or a SUNDAE Christian?”
 - “Are you a Christian—like one measly scoop of bland vanilla—only one day per week at church on Sunday?”
 - or
 - “Are you a Christian nonstop—like a delicious ice-cream sundae full of several toppings—for every day of the week?”
- This simple object lesson made something hyper clear to me at a young age: Being a Christian is not just something I do one day on the weekend; instead, I must be a Christian every single day.
 - SUNDAY Christians leave their faith at church, so it makes no impact in the rest of their lives.
 - Ice-cream SUNDAE Christians live their faith daily throughout the whole week.

I’ve never forgotten that object lesson. Firstly, because we all ate ice-cream sundaes in church that morning. (With chocolate on my face, I committed to be an *Ice-cream SUNDAE Christian*.)

- Seriously though, I never forgot that picture because the application made sense to me; it was clear... I wanted to follow Jesus **consistently**.
 - “Kevin, don’t say you are a Christian on Sunday if you behave like a devil on Monday through Saturday.” Clearly, we have an integrity issue if we act differently at church than we do elsewhere.
 - But this is about more than just church attendance and good behavior. As a kid I was challenged to ask myself: How big is this decision to follow Jesus? Perhaps it’s a compartmental decision. “The choice is allowed to effect one or two days of my week—maybe I’ll allow a whopping four days of piety!”
 - Or, is the nature of my decision to follow Jesus such that Christ has permission to impact my entire life?

The many toppings on an ice-cream sundae represent each day of the week, and each day of the week represents every single thing that we set our hands to do. Certainly, being a follower of Jesus encompasses following and pleasing God not just on the weekend but in all things.

SUMMARY // Last week, Pastor Ackland finished a series focused largely on what Christians do each Sunday in church; our attention today is on Christ-followers and the rest of their week—whether it’s at home, in the store, during sporting events, at work, etc.

- When viewing daily life in light of God’s presence, Christians use everything as an opportunity to honor the Lord. If we are following Jesus then our slogan in all things is, “We Aim to Please!”
 - Before we continue, let’s pray.

WE AIM TO PLEASE ...IN SACRIFICIAL WORSHIP // Romans 12:1 is a famous New Testament passage—you've likely heard or maybe even memorized it. This verse is popular for good reason. "... here Paul ...summarizes what the Christian response to God's grace in Christ should be" (Moo).

- Romans 12:1 says, *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship"* (NIV).
 - In Paul's letter to the Romans, this verse stands as the pivotal transition from an explanation and defense of the gospel to its transforming power in Christian conduct.
 - Paul says, *"in view of God's mercy."* Through Jesus' death and resurrection God...
 - [1] rescued us from the disastrous effects of sin;
 - [2] pronounced us 'righteous' in His sight;
 - [3] secured our hope for salvation from wrath in the last day.
 - After explaining this Paul "urges Christians to manifest the power of the gospel in specific areas of day-to-day life" (Moo). He transition to the practical and essentially says, "Let what Christ has done impact all you do."
 - Paul says, *"...offer your bodies as a living sacrifice."* Now, the early Christians were well aware of the sacrificial imagery here. And they knew they no longer needed to offer a spotless lamb to God because Jesus became the ultimate perfect sacrifice for their sins.
 - Now, Paul uses that imagery to say that they themselves, their "bodies" (meaning the 'whole person') become a living sacrifice, *"holy and pleasing to God."*
 - The Early Church Father Chrysostom commented: *"And how is the body ...to become a sacrifice? Let thy eye look on no evil thing, and it hath become a sacrifice; let thy tongue speak nothing filthy, and it hath become an offering; let thine hand do no lawless deed, and it hath become a whole burnt offering"* (Moo).
 - ▶ Chrysostom describes refraining from all that makes us unholy. Think of it this way, if you want to keep your clothes clean then quit jumping in the mud. That way you will remain presentable.
 - A. W. Tozer said it well: *"No worship is wholly pleasing to God until there is nothing in me displeasing to God."*
 - ▶ Much of what we might do throughout the week has potential to negatively impact our worship. Take our mouths as one example. James writes, *"9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be"* (3:10 NIV).
 - ▶ One important way that we aim to please God is that we cut out all that displeases Him. We sacrifice it.
- [...]
 - I wish to add that *"True and proper worship"* is more than the things we *don't* do. Worship also consists of the things we *do* do. It involves the whole person and is not limited to the songs we sing but extends to our every action.
 - When we *"offer [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God"* it means that we are worshipping 24/7. Our home life, work life, social life, become *"true and proper worship."*

I've held a number of jobs... I remember my banking work, and my banking worship. I remember my landscaping work, and my landscaping worship.

WE AIM TO PLEASE ...IN EVERYTHING WE DO // Colossians 3:17 says, *“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”* (NIV). Did I read that right? “In 30% of what you do...”? “In only the things your spouse sees you doing...”? “In just those things you wanted to do...”? No. *“...whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus,”* A statement cannot get much more comprehensive. It covers everything!

- You’ll notice also that the statement carries with it a level of standard. This instruction is like a quality assessment for the Christian’s life.
 - Imagine internalizing the passage for yourself throughout the day in all your affairs.
 - With these words I’m about to say... am I saying them *“in the name of the Lord Jesus”*?
 - With these actions I’m about to carry out... am I acting them *“in the name of the Lord Jesus”*?
 - With whatever work lies before me... am I working *“in the name of the Lord Jesus”*?
- What Christians must realize is that—willfully or not—the Christ-follower stamps Jesus’ name on everything he does. To be a “Christian” means to be a “little Christ.”
 - One friend of mine got into a heated dispute with a car mechanic. He admitted, “I wasn’t exactly graceful. It was bad.” I lightheartedly replied, “After loosing your temper, you made sure to tell him you are an atheist, right?”
 - Jesus’ reputation is at stake in the conduct of His followers. It was a risky move when Jesus left people like us to represent Him to the world. Sometimes I wonder...
 - What was He thinking inviting me to follow Him?
 - Does He know the kind of person He is dealing with?
 - True, it’s in our nature to easily misrepresent Jesus. Regardless of our tendency, Jesus’ purposed that we would get it right! After all, Colossians 3:1 says, *“...you have been raised with Christ...”* (NIV).
- All of Colossians 3 shows that, for Christians, “Nothing escapes the lordship of King Jesus because everything has been transformed in union with Christ” (McKnight). Christ followers are united with Him, so every part of their lives is changed.
 - A simple chapter outline looks like this:
 - 3:1-8 // The Christian’s new position with Christ
 - 3:9-17 // The Christian’s local church
 - 3:18-21 // The Christian’s family
 - 3:22-4:1 // The Christian’s daily work
 - For an example, let’s look at what Paul says about our work. The carnal tendency at work is to only do that which either attracts favor or avoids punishment.
 - Have you ever known an employee that did the bare minimum? It is hard to live a distinctive Christian lifestyle working like a lazy person.
 - In Colossians 3:23-24 Paul says, *“23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving”* (NIV).
 - Since Christians have a Boss in heaven and answer first to Him, the quality of their work is transformed. When you realize you are on the King’s business, it makes a difference in how you sweep, stock, and shovel.
 - Jesus leaves no stone unturned in our lives when it comes to us being united to Him. “When Christ comes to reign within an individual, that person becomes a new man or woman. A new husband; a new wife; a new parent; a new child; a new boss; a new employee. And that is the way God planned it” (Begg).
 - We are given a new life in every area “...so that we as men and women may be different for [Christ’s] glory” (Begg).

WE AIM TO PLEASE ...GOD ALONE // It may seem that pleasing God is a given when it comes to Christianity. Who is all this piety for if not God? If we are not careful, though, much of Christian practice gets caught up in pleasing everyone besides our heavenly Father. Jesus gave a stark warning to address our motives when it comes to walking out this Christian life.

- Matthew 6:1 says, “*Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven*” (NIV).
- Jesus illustrated the fault of pleasing others. He described “Christian” attention seekers who...
 - Give their alms flamboyantly (v. 2)
 - Pray loudly on street corners (vv. 5, 7-8)
 - Fast outwardly to be noticed (v. 16)
 - The person who lives his faith to catch the attention of others is actually only aiming to please himself. He wishes to please people only so that people will think better of him (see Lloyd-Jones). Piety, then, ceases to be righteous and becomes self-righteous.
 - Jesus repeatedly emphasized that, “*They have their reward in full*” (vv. 2, 5, 16).
 - Whatever esteem we earn from man’s feeble praise is empty.
 - [Slow clap] And that is all we’ll get when we please man.
- ...
- Alternatively, by aiming to please God, Jesus says multiple times, “*...your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you*” (vv. 4, 6, 18). I find that deeply comforting.
- When I look at the life of Jesus I see His striking example of living in view of God. “He lived entirely and always and only for the glory of God” (Lloyd-Jones). He simply said and did what the Father instructed Him to in each moment.
 - Jesus told His skeptics this, “*The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him*” (John 8:29 NIV).
 - I know there was talk of reward, which sounds great, but I can’t get over the fact that God does not leave alone those who do what pleases Him.
 - Consider that cooperation in your life:
 - “On your side there is determination, seeking, yielding, believing [and the opportunity to please God with all you do!].
 - “On God’s side is the love and grace, the promises and the atonement, the constant help from the Holy Spirit” (see Lloyd-Jones).

CLOSING // Jesus makes it abundantly clear that we are always in the presence of God. I’ve likely alluded to this point all morning because it is the main thing in my heart to convey. We all live in the presence of God! God sees you and me!

- The Psalmist knew it well, writing, “*7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast*” (Psalm 139:7-10 NIV).
- A major pitfall for the Christ-follower’s daily life is to forget that we all are constantly in the presence of God Almighty.
 - Thou God Seest Me // There is “...no better way to live, and try to live, a holy and sanctified life than just to be constantly reminding ourselves of that. Thou God Seest Me.”
 - “[Imagine the impact of waking up each morning with this reminder:] Throughout the whole of this day, everything I do, and say, and attempt, and think, and imagine, is going to be done under the eye of God. He is going to be with me; He sees everything; He knows everything. There is nothing I can do or attempt but God is fully aware of it all. ‘Thou God seest me’.
 - “Awareness of His presence will revolutionize our lives. ...If we only remembered it, hypocrisy would vanish, self [flattery] and ...feeling ourselves above others, would immediately disappear” (see Lloyd-Jones).
 - In God’s presence all that remains is, “I aim to please Him!”

Resources

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