

DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE KEY TO PLEASING GOD

Mark — Week 31

ICEBREAKER: How long, on average, does it take you to fall asleep once you turn out the lights?

OVERVIEW: Christians do all sorts of things to try to please God, yet much of what is done in the name of “religion” is either a waste of time, or ironically, displeasing to God, and a distraction from true religion. In this discussion we will go deeper with the sermon on Mark 7:1-13 and try to get at the heart of what it means to truly please the Lord.

1. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend’s message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain. (Or what was your key takeaway from Sunday’s message?)
2. Read James 1:19-27.
 - List all the commands in this passage, dividing them according to “things to do,” and “things to avoid.”
 - Things to do:
 - Things to avoid:
 - V. 22 says to be doers of the word and not hearers only. In other words, God values obedience, not merely knowledge. How do we risk deceiving ourselves if we are hearers and not doers of the word?
 - V. 25 promises a blessing. What is the blessing, and who is it for?
 - Vs. 26-27 contrast religion that is useless, and religion that is pure and undefiled. What is the difference?

3. Read Mark 7:1-6. The first concept that we learn about pleasing God is that the only opinion that matters is God’s. The Pharisees and scribes thought that they were religious, and that Jesus and His disciples were irreligious. It turns out that they were wrong. Why is it important to remember that God’s opinion is the only one that matters when it comes to pleasing Him?
4. How has the opinion of others distracted you and hindered you from pleasing God? How can you better focus on God’s opinion?
5. Read Mark 7:7. The second concept about pleasing God is that man-made traditions don’t please God. God was not impressed with their man-made traditions like hand-washing. In the sermon many religious rituals and practices were mentioned, such as “wearing your Sunday best.” Can you think of any religious rituals or practices from your past (or present) that don’t actually please God?
6. How can we make sure that our actions please God, and aren’t a waste of time or a distraction from pleasing Him?
7. Read Mark 7:8-13. The third concept is that the key to pleasing God is submission, not tradition. In this passage Jesus revealed that what God is ultimately looking for is obedience. Do you think that people sometimes use man-made religious practices and rituals to cover up for their lack of obedience? Explain.
8. Why is obedience important to God? What do you need to do to grow in obedience?

The Last Word: The key to pleasing God is submission, not tradition.