

“Pleasing or Pleasure?”

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 • Luke 3:21-22

Introduction

The grocery store checkout line is one of our great downfalls in America. Just when you thought you'd picked out everything you wanted or needed, the checkout line is packed with last minute items that catch your eye. One of those “eye-catchers” is usually a collection of magazines that are provocative – provocative from a point of sexuality, diet, gossip, hobbies or all of the above.



When we see those *images, it captures our imagination*. The problem is that we really can't rid our minds of those images by thinking about them or concentrating to “get them out.” Rather, we have to shift our imagination away from those images by igniting our imagination with other images or interests. It's difficult because those images are linked to things which bring us pleasure.

Pleasure is something everyone desires. But we can shift our object of pleasure. We can desire what pleases us or we can decide to please God. Pleasing God is the solution to moving away from pleasing ourselves. This is closely linked with our sexual and physical desires. Paul links these two together and knows it's a process, not just a decision. He starts with these words, “Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living....do this more and more.” We have to decide what we're into -- pleasing or pleasure?

Sermon Notes

We can _____ how to live in a way that _____ God.
The problem is we tend to desire our own _____
over God's _____.

Our _____ and our _____ are linked
because our _____ and _____ are linked.

When we reject _____, we reject _____.

Your Own Thoughts

Small Talk

1. What's one thing you can/could do that would please your parents? Why would this make them so happy?

2. Share with your Life group something silly that brings you pleasure. What about it just causes you to smile?

Text Talk

1. Paul says these new Christians were instructed about how to live pleasing to God. What specific teachings can you think of (from Paul's teachings in the New Testament) that Paul might be referencing?

2. Why, according to Paul, do we need to learn how to sexually control our physical desires?

3. How can we wrong each other in this regard (vs. 6)?

4. What does the Holy Spirit have to do with any of this?

Life Talk

1. A minister who was in his mid-forties was mentoring a young minister in his twenties. At their weekly lunch together, the younger looked at the older and said, "I can't wait until I'm forty so I don't have to deal with sexual temptations." The older minister smiled and replied, "I didn't know what sexual temptation was until I turned forty." This is a true story. How does it resonate with you?

2. Magazine Illustration (provided by your group leader).

3. Paul points out that the Thessalonians are, in fact, living in a way that pleases God. Then he encourages them to do this “more and more.” What does this tell us about living a holy and sanctified life?

4. Should the fear of God’s punishment be our primary motivation or should our desire to please God be our primary motivation when it comes to Christian living? Why or why not?

5. How does our culture try to pull us into impure thinking and living?

Beyond Talk

Share with your group one thing you can add to your mental make-up spiritually that will “push out” some thing or some thought sexually that distracts you from living for God.

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