

On Purpose, 3

Making God Smile

Chapters 8-10; June 15, 2008

The last time I spoke, I said that *everything* is a test. God watches as we respond to people and problems and success and failure and illness and regret and frustration and ... everything! After church that day, I drove up to Canada.



At the boarder my car was searched by six men and a yellow dog. But, I smiled and thought, "*Everything's a test*". I even thanked 'em for their work! Then I opened the door to blond dog hair covering the dark blue velour interior. I smiled and thought, "*Everything's a test*".



Then I drove onto a freeway interchange and I had a yield sign. So, I slowed for an upcoming car that also slowed. But *I* had the yield sign! So finally (at 20 mph), he gunned it and gave me the finger. But I just smiled and thought, "*Everything's a test*" ... and *plus* I kind of won!



Then I stopped at a drive-through for coffee and was charged double. I pointed it out to the cashier, but she said it was correct. So, I paid it and showed her on the bill where she had charged me twice. And I thought, "You're not gonna charge me an extra \$1.50!"



When I pulled up to get my coffee, they said they already put the cream and sugar in it. I said, "Did you?" They hadn't. When I drove out and pulled over to add it, I realized there was no stir-stick. So, I mixed it with an ink pen, and said to God: "YOU WIN!" And He said: "And all it took was a half-cent stir stick"!

Now, I don't mean to imply that God is out to get us. But, when it comes to our pride, He wants us in touch with reality! And you know what? I think He really enjoyed watching that whole episode play out. I think it made Him smile.

The Lord takes pleasure in His people ... - *Psalms 149:4 NAS*

We can make the mistake of reading this and thinking: well yeah, when they're in church, *singing* and *praying* and being *quiet*! Or, we can make the mistake of subconsciously retranslating it as: "The Lord takes pleasure in His *other* people *and He more or less puts up with me!*" But, a big part of our created purpose is the joy and gladness and satisfaction that we bring to our Creator.



[The Apostle John said] You created everything, and it is **for your pleasure** that they exist and were created. - *Revelation 4:11 NLT*

Shar and I created our own two people: Keaton and Shaz. And we take pleasure in our people.

And we've gotten pleasure from watching them *play*; and from watching them *sleep*; and just from watching them enjoy the things we made for them.



My joy came from *his* joy from what *I* made *for* him. So, I kind of know how God feels. We've moved twice; and *both* times we took them with us ... never even *considered* leaving 'em! Now, of course, there are times when we look back and wonder why we didn't at least *entertain* the notion; but seriously, it never even *occurred* to us to *possibly* leave them behind.



You are a child of God, and you can bring pleasure to God like nothing else and like no one else He has ever created. And He really, really wants *you* to live with Him! He created you for your *company*!



But only a small portion of His pleasure comes from watching you. A much greater joy comes from connecting, communicating, and interacting with you. Bringing joy to God is called "worship". This is why worship (*bringing God pleasure*), encompasses so much *more* than just sitting in church singing and praying and being quiet!

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. - 1
Corinthians 10:31 NIV

Q: But, how is it possible to, "**do it all for the glory of God**"?

A: By realizing that you are doing it *with* Him and *for* Him.



Every activity except sin can be worship. Work and rest and play all become worship when we have an awareness of His presence, an attitude of appreciation, and a desire to bring Him joy. And then, even stirring coffee with an ink pen is worship; as long as you don't lose your temper! Then it's just sin.

At the end of service, when I give the benediction, I will say, "*May the Lord make His face shine upon you*". That's an Old Testament prayer (*Numbers 6:25*) that the "New Living Translation" renders as: "May the Lord **smile** on you ..."

Do you know how to make the Lord smile? Surrender!



I'm not just talking about that moment of surrender when we make Him Lord, but the daily, moment-by-moment surrender that follows. The heart of worship is surrender. Not the type of surrender that implies defeat or loss to an enemy; but an act of submission that implies trust and obedience in a superior power.

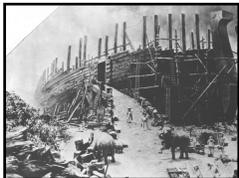
[Jesus said] If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross daily, and follow me. - *Luke 9:23 NLT*

He doesn't say to put aside our *hopes* and *dreams*; He warns us to surrender those "*selfish ambitions*"; the ones that dishonor Him. This type of surrender is hard work, because it requires intense warfare against my own self-centered, pen-stirring nature!

Do you ever feel *alone* in your desire to please God (maybe at your workplace, or school, or among your friends or family)? Well, you got nothin' on Noah. In his time, he was literally the last man left on the *planet* who surrendered himself to God.

The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. ... But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. - *Genesis 6:5,8 NIV*

He found favor with God, and He made His face to shine upon him. Turns out it's the simple, unselfish things that make God smile.



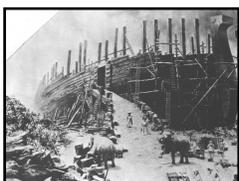
1. Noah loved God - he *really* loved Him!

Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. - *Genesis 6:9 NLT*

Noah knew the difference between religion and relationship.

I was raised in a formal church. And I used to think that God enjoyed the liturgy, and the candle-lighting, and the hymns, and the robes and reciting, and all the ceremony. I now realize that God only enjoys the service, the music, the ceremony of church, to the degree that it helps us to express our love and connect with Him on a relational basis.

We have to get past the check-list (prayed, read, went, and gave), and give God what every good Father desires from his children: heart-felt, reciprocated love.



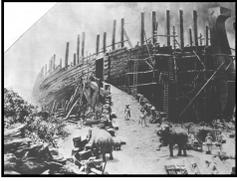
2. Noah trusted God

By faith, Noah built a ship in the middle of dry land. He was warned about something he couldn't see, and acted on what he was told. - *Hebrews 11:7a MNT*

God has asked us to build a reputation of faith in the middle of whatever "dry" and faithless environment we find ourselves in. Do you know when my trust is put to the greatest test? When I can get what I want by compromising my conscience. This is when the rubber meets the road regarding whether or not I will put my trust in the will of *God*, or the will of *Bruce*.

I may not like what's going on ... I may not understand what's going on ... but I must choose to stand firm and believe that He is in *control* of what's going on!

Noah trusted God most when it didn't make sense.



Noah obeyed God

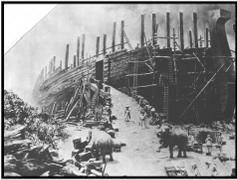
So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him. -
Genesis 6:22 NLT

And these were some very specific instructions he was given:

Make a boat from resinous wood and seal it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. Make it 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Construct an opening all the way around the boat, 18 inches below the roof. Then put three decks inside the boat - bottom, middle, and upper - and put a door in the side. - *Genesis 6:14-16 NLT*

God gave him a *blueprint!* And likewise, He's given us some very specific instructions in His Word, and a blue-print to follow in His Son. It's like He wrote down all the directions and then said, "Okay, now I want to show you what all of this information looks like, when it's actually lived out in a human body!"

Obedience isn't about gritting our teeth and following the *rules*; it's about gladly, willingly, following the *Ruler*.



3. Noah praised God - Noah appreciated Him "old school"

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and sacrificed on it the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. And the Lord was pleased ... - *Genesis 8:20-21a NLT*



There are two ways to please the Lord with appreciation: we can adore Him for *who* He is; and we can thank Him for *what* He's done. God smiles when we express our adoration *and* our gratitude.

And as we learn to surrender day-by-day our focus will change. From: "How much pleasure *I'm* getting out of life." To: "How much pleasure *God's* getting out of *my* life."

A big part of our created purpose is the joy and gladness and satisfaction that we bring to our Creator. Which is why the Apostle Paul said ...

So we make it our goal to please him ... - *2 Corinthians 5:9 NIV*

If we're going to live life "on purpose" we must understand that, *first*: I was planned for God's pleasure. What percentage of your life do you think brings God joy?

And *second*: The heart of worship is surrender. Which selfish ambitions are you still holding onto?

And *third*: I have the capacity to make God smile. What do you do the least: love, trust, obey, or appreciate?