

What makes God smile?

The most fundamental question you can ask in life is, Why am I here? What is my purpose in life?

Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power. For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created."

You were made for the pleasure of God. If you want to know why you're here on this earth, if you want to know why you're alive, if you want to know why you take the next breath that you take it's because God made you to enjoy you.

Not for your benefit – for His benefit. You were made to bring pleasure to God. That's why you're here. **Until you understand that, you don't understand life.**

Psalms 149:4 For the LORD delights in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.

There's a word that God uses that describes when we bring pleasure to God. That word is one of the most misunderstood and misused words in the human vocabulary. In fact, I guarantee you, everyone in the auditorium, including me, has misused this word. **It is the word "worship"**. When we bring pleasure to God, we worship God.

If I were to ask you what you understand by worship, or what do you do when you worship, maybe some words like church, choir, music, mass, ritual, ceremony, pray, communion comes to mind.

Let me tell you first what worship is not, and then I'll tell you what it is.

Worship is not a ritual, worship is not a ceremony. Both ritual and ceremony can be used to worship but they are not worship in and of themselves. In fact, worship is not even music. We say things like: "At our church we do the worship first and then have the teaching." As if teaching is not worship and music is. Music is not worship. **And the style of worship particularly is not worship.**

So we speak about praise and worship and preaching and offering and announcements as if they're all separate things and some are more worshipful than others...

Some people say "I like the fast praise songs. But I really enjoy the worship songs better." In other words, if it's fast and loud, that's praise. But if it's slow and quiet and intimate with a guitar, that's worship. That may be in your mind but that's not what God says. Worship has nothing to do with the style or the volume or the speed of a song. God likes jazz. You might not but He does. He invented it. He also likes reggae and polka. He likes the blues, classical. You may not like it and say that's not worship. Yes, it is. It is to God.

Worship has nothing to do with the style of music that you particularly like. In fact, the style you like says more about you and your background and your personality than it does about God because God likes it all. God likes variety.

Somebody said there's no such things as Christian music, there are only Christian lyrics. Words. It's the words that make a song spiritual not the music. If I were to put on a CD and you listen to it and there were no words to it, you couldn't tell me if it were a Christian song or not. Tunes are not spiritual. All music is God's music. Why should the devil have all the good music? It's what the words are that make a song spiritual or make a song a tool of worship.

Let me give you a definition of worship. Worship is living a life pleasing to God.

So if you came and said, "I didn't get anything out of worship today," you came for the wrong reason in the first place. Worship isn't for you. We do it for God to bring Him pleasure. Everything we do in this service we try to bring God pleasure.

Romans 12:1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice -- the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?

God says worship is not what you do with your lips, it's what you do with your life. You can sing all the songs in the world and listen to all the sermons in the world and if you never offer your life you have not worshipped.

Ephesians 5:10 says Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.

How do I do that? What brings pleasure to God? What makes God smile? If my purpose is to bring pleasure to God, how do I do that? How do I make God smile on my life? Are there any examples in the Bible? Any models for us?

Fortunately there is one man that brought a smile to God's face, the man Noah...Gen 6 Read in Chap 6 of Genesis how God was pleased with His creation but it soon became a very unpleasant place in which to live. It became unpleasant, full of sin and shame because of the evil and wicked nature of man... and God found Noah and said He was pleased with Him. Same thing today... God is looking for men and women that please HIM.

Four ways you can make God smile:

1. We bring pleasure to God when we love Him above everything else.

When we love Him above everything else, when we love Him supremely, that brings God pleasure. This is very clear in the Bible.

Hosea 6:6 I want you to be merciful; I don't want your sacrifices. I want you to know God; that's more important than burnt offerings.

When we know God, we love God. In fact another version says; ***"I don't want your sacrifice. I want your love. I don't want your offerings. I want you to know Me."***

If you miss that you miss the point of life. That's what God wants from you. He made you to know Him, to be loved by Him and to love Him back. God wants a relationship with you. I know that's amazing but it is true. Out of all the universe and all the people God could have made He made you and He made you to be loved by Him and to love Him back. He wants a relationship with you.

This is the first reason why God chose Noah. Noah had a relationship with God when nobody else did.

Genesis 6:9 This is the history of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless man living on earth at the time. He consistently followed God's will and enjoyed a close relationship with him.

All Noah's life he loved God above everything else. After the flood the very first thing he did was build an altar. Why? Because he loved God more than anything or anyone else.

The Bible says that you were made in God's image. That makes you different from animals. That means God has given you a capacity He has not given animals. That is the capacity to know God and to love Him. Animals can't do that. They were not given that capacity. You, though, were made in God's image so you could commune, communicate, have a relationship with God. If you don't ever develop that in your life you have missed the purpose of being a human. You have wasted your life. Because to be a human means to be made in God's image which means I have the ability and capacity to get to know God on personal basis.

Your heavenly Father feels the same way. When you come to God and say, "God, I'm not coming to You because I'm in a crisis and I need You to bail me out. I'm not coming to You because I've got this big request or I want You to make me a millionaire or super successful. I'm just coming to You because You made me. And I want to get to know You and I want to love You." That thrills the heart of God. When you come running into His arms and you delight in the fact that God made you and loves you that brings God great pleasure. That makes God smile. When was the last time you did that?

2. We bring pleasure to God when we trust Him completely.

When you trust your heavenly Father that brings God pleasure. That's called faith. And the Bible says, "***Without faith it is impossible to please God.***" It's the way you please God – by trusting Him.

Psalm 147:11 Rather, the LORD's delight is in those who honour him, those who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Noah trusted God completely. He had incredible faith. "***By faith Noah built a ship in the middle of dry land. He was warned about something he couldn't see and he acted on something he was told and his act of faith drew a sharp line between the evil of the***

unbelieving world and the rightness of the believing world. As a result, Noah became intimate with God."

Imagine this scene: God comes to Noah one day and says, "I've looked at the whole world and this thing stinks! It's not at all what I intended it to be. There's not anybody in the entire world who thinks about Me. Everybody's off on their own trip, doing their own thing, having their own party. And they're not even thinking about pleasing Me, who created them. But Noah, when I look at you I start smiling. I am very pleased with your life. Because you are making an attempt to bring Me pleasure, to live for Me. So I'm going to save the whole world just because of you. I'm going to flood it and start over with you family. I want you to build a ship, boat, an ark."

There were three immediate problems with this.

- One, the Bible says that up to that time it had never rained on earth. That by the way was why people lived a lot longer in the Old Testament, the atmosphere was totally different. The Bible says that God brought a mist up from the ground, like condensation, dew, that you find in the morning and through condensation the earth was watered. That's why here in the EDEN district, even in a drought the trees are green...
- In the second place, Noah lived far from the nearest ocean. Even if he did get this ship built how was he going to get it to water? He couldn't think about God bringing the water to him.
- In the third place, how was God going to figure out which animals and how He was going to get them together and put them on board?

What does it mean to trust God completely? It means you trust God to know what's best: "God, You know better than I do what's best for my life. So I'm going to trust You." It means you trust God to come for you, you trust God to answer your prayers. You trust God to keep His promises. You trust God to figure out how to handle the impossible things in your life.

When God called us to come to George, He might as well have said something like build an Ark. Furthermore He said be intentional about building a Multi-Cultural church. Create a place for ALL People to be treated with respect and dignity. In the existing climate in SA and in the Southern Cape specifically that is not a walk in the park... Build an Ark. There isn't much money; there are all these other side issues that come with being new in town build an Ark... It scared me to death. But because God said it, we'll do it and will continue to push ahead with building the Ark...

I'm glad Noah trusted God. Imagine the criticism this guy went through. The Bible says it took him decades and decades to build this ark. He didn't just do it overnight. So he had to put up with ruthless criticism from his neighbours for many years. They're looking at him going. He is crazy. One of the Senior Ministers in George once said to me, many of the Christians here in George are recycled. I asked what do you mean... they spend some time

in my church and when they've had enough of me and can't get their way they move on to the next and so they go until after a few years they're back where they started. Very encouraging to me... new in town, new to the task of pastoring ... and you want to build a Multi-Cultural church. He's loony! The lights are on but nobody's home!

When we work for the Master, we have to be single-minded, ignoring everything in the world and trusting God completely.

Would you be willing to endure misunderstanding like that for decade after decade after decade with no proof of what was going to happen except that God had said it's going to happen?

Psalm 50:14 *"I want you to trust Me in your times of trouble so I can rescue you and you can give Me glory."* [LB]

You know why you don't trust God? Because you don't realize how big He is. What we tend to do is we tend to shrink God down to our size. There should be a movie: "Honey, I shrunk the God!" J. B. Phillips wrote a book called Your God is Too Small. How do I know your God is too small? Because when you have problems, you don't go to Him. You say, "I'll handle this, God. I can take care of this. Let me do it." As if you've got more energy, more strength, more brains, more wisdom, and more power than God does. If you want to really please God, you've got to let God be God.

It brings God so much pleasure when we take risks for Him, when we step out on a limb and we trust Him, when we attempt the impossible knowing that God will bail us out because He told us to do it in the first place. It brings God pleasure when we trust Him completely.

3. We bring pleasure to God when we obey Him wholeheartedly.

James 2:24 so you see, we are made right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.

James isn't talking about earning your way to heaven, earning your way into the family of God, being born again by your works. No.

Obedience brings pleasure to God, to our heavenly Father. Jesus says, *"If you love Me do what I say."* Don't just give me lip service "I love You, Lord, I love You, Lord." Give me your life. If you love Me keep My commandments. That's the proof of your love. And that brings God pleasure.

Again, Noah is an extremely great example of wholehearted obedience.

Hebrews 11:7 says *"Noah obeyed and built a boat when God told him to do it."*

Genesis 6:22 *"Noah did everything exactly as God commanded him."*

Circle "everything". What is included in the word "everything"? *Everything!* All. In other words, when God said I want you to do this, Noah didn't just build any boat. He built it to the exact specifications. And they're quite long. They're in the Bible there in Genesis. God says I want you to build it this wide and this deep and this high and here's how I want you to

put the door and all that kind of stuff. And Noah followed it to a T. He followed God, he obeyed God wholeheartedly.

What does it mean to obey God wholeheartedly?

- First it means without reservations. Holding nothing back. No questions. No, But God...! No, he just said, You said to do it. I'll do it. No reservations. No hesitation.
- No procrastination. He didn't delay. He didn't say, "I'll think about it. I'll do it later. I'll wait a while." Any parent knows that delayed obedience is really disobedience. If you say to one of the kids, "I want you to come down and help with the dishes" and they say, "I'll do it next week," that's called disobedience.

God has told you to do all kinds of things. You've said, "I'm thinking about doing it." There's a word for that – disobedience. Delayed obedience is disobedience. Wholehearted means I do it immediately I do it instantly and I do it completely. I don't pick and choose. It's not partial obedience where I say, "God, here are the things You told me to do in the Bible. I like 'those' so I'm going to do those. But this list over here, I don't like this list. This list is difficult. It's unpopular. It's expensive. I don't think I can afford it. I can't afford to tithe. I can't afford to... I can't do these things because I don't want to do those so I'll just do partial obedience. There's a word for that – disobedience. Wholehearted means I do what God asks me to do enthusiastically. I do it joyfully. I say, I want to do it! The Bible says in **Psalm 101:2 "Serve the Lord gladly."** With gladness. Joyfully.

I want to warn you about something. If today as result of this service you decide to live the rest of your life for the pleasure of God and I hope you will because that's why you were made. If you say as a result of this service, "From this day forward the number one thing in my life is the smile of God, to please the one who made me," if You make that commitment and that includes wholehearted obedience, it's not going to be easy. There will be times in your life where wholehearted obedience means doing something that is inconvenient, doing something that is unpopular, doing something that costs me, doing something that is not easy. In fact, it will often mean doing something the exact opposite of what you think is the thing to do in that situation. Because the Bible says our natural inclinations are the exact opposite of what God wants us to do.

4. We bring pleasure to God when we fulfil His purposes.

God smiles on our lives when we fulfil the purposes that He put us on earth to fulfil. In Genesis 9:1 after the flood is over and the ark has landed and they're getting out of the boat, here's what God says, "*Then God blessed Noah and his sons and said...*" I want you to go to church every day of your life and I want you to pray ten times a day and I want you to talk in spiritual terms and say *Jesus* and be really spiritual and let everybody know it. That's not what He said. "***Then God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.***"

Here's what I want you to do now. I want you to go make love with your spouse, raise families and do the things I created humans to do. Be human! This is what I made you to be. God has given you certain abilities, capacities, as a human being and God takes pleasure in watching you be a human and do human kind of stuff.

This is very, very important. Because a lot of you think that the only time God is smiling on your life is when you're doing something religious. That only when you're doing something spiritual is God really pleased. For instance, right now the middle of Sunday morning, God is pleased because you're sitting in church listening to a message. But when you leave here and enjoy your Sunday lunch or watching sport, He's frowning. No. God smiles when you order nachos. God takes pleasure in watching you enjoy life. When was the last time you really enjoyed LIFE! Who do you think gave you your taste buds? He gave you the ability to enjoy. **In 2 Timothy it says "God has graciously given us all things for our enjoyment."**

It's like that Olympic runner Eric Little, they made that movie about him years ago, *Chariots of Fire*. He said "When I run I feel God's pleasure." If God's wired you to be a runner, God takes enjoyment in watching you be what He made you to be. Of course He takes pleasure in watching you run if you've got an ability to run because He gave you that ability.

Everything in life can be done as an act of worship, everything in life can be done to bring glory to God, and everything in life can be done for God's pleasure if you do it with the right attitude. If you say, God, today I want to live for Your pleasure. You can wash dishes for the glory of God. You can mow the lawn for the glory of God. You can close a deal for the glory of God. You can play golf for the glory of God. Everything you do in life can be done to bring God pleasure if you've got the right attitude saying God, You gave me this ability and I want to please You with it. You can please God in the bedroom and you can please God in the kitchen and you can please God at work and you can please God wherever you are. If you live for His pleasure.

Psalm 37:23 "The steps of the godly are directed by the Lord. He delights in every detail of their lives." Circle "every detail of their lives". God delights in every detail of your life. If you like to sell, God enjoys watching you sell. Who do you think gave you that interest, that ability, that desire? It's all for His pleasure in watching you be you. Every detail of your life. Whenever you use any talent or any ability that God gave you and you do it for God's glory that's an act of worship.

Let me give you two very practical ways that you can fulfil the pleasure of God, you can

Hebrews 13:16 "God takes particular pleasure in acts of worship, a different kind of sacrifice that takes place in the kitchen and the workplace and on the streets." [Mess]

I love that paraphrase. You can worship God a hundred times a day. It's not just something you do on Sunday in a church building. It's something you can do continually. This is the heart of worship.

John 3:19 *“This is the crisis we’re in. God streamed light into the world but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God.”* [Mess]

Yet the Bible says God is on the lookout. God is looking for Noah’s – 21st century Noah’s. God is looking for people who say, “I want to live my life for the pleasure of God. I want to live my life in the way my creator made me. I don’t care whether my parents or my wife or husband or kids do. I’m going to live for God. I want His smile on my life.”

Will you be that person? Will you be that person? God, I’m going to be a Noah. I’m going to live my life for the smile of God.

Let me tell you this. If you make that decision “God, I want to live for You.” God's not going to ask you to build an ark. But let me tell you what He will do. He’s going to ask you to love Him supremely and to trust Him completely even when it doesn’t make sense and to obey Him wholeheartedly even when it’s tough and difficult and to fulfil His purposes for your life.

You’re thinking, “Where am I going to get the power to do that? What if I fail? What if I start and then I backslide, I stumble, and I relapse. What if I make this commitment to God and then go back on it? Where am I going to get that power?”

God has even thought of that too. *“Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know personally and intimately the one who invited us to God.”* That’s Jesus Christ. That’s the greatest invitation you’re ever going to get. God says “Yes, I want you to please Me. And I will provide the power to please Me. That power comes through My Son, Jesus Christ, and having a relationship with Him.”

I invite you to be a 21st century Noah. I invite you to live your life for the pleasure of God. I’m going to and I invite you to join me.

Prayer:

Pray this prayer: “Dear God, I realize I owe everything to You. I would not even be born if it weren’t for You. You made me to love me. You deserve my love and worship. I want to be like Noah in my generation. I want to live for Your smile, not the opinions of other people. I want to live a lifestyle of worship that is pleasing to You. Jesus Christ, please. Give me the power to love You above everything else. To trust You completely and step out in faith when You ask me to do that. To obey You wholeheartedly even when I don’t understand it and it seems hard. And to fulfil your purposes. Today I want to come back to a heart of worship. I want to come back to Your arms of love.”