



God is spirit, and those who
worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:24

On Worship
with Pastor Steve

The Pleasure of Worship

A few years ago I was a General Manager at a local Chick-fil-A restaurant. While I was there a directive came down from the home office for our employees to respond with “my pleasure” anytime our customers thanked us for our service. As Chick-fil-A employees it was our mission to ensure that each customer had a pleasurable experience when they came into our restaurant to eat. The “my pleasure” response was one way to let them know that we labored for that purpose.

How much more should it be our pleasure to give God pleasure? Isn't that the very reason for our existence? Worship occurs when God receives pleasure from our existence. God's pleasure is complete when it is our pleasure to exist for him. You might conclude that our act of worship is “giving him pleasure.”

No one exemplified a lifestyle of worship more than Jesus Christ. The fact that the Father took pleasure in him (and received pleasure from him) was evident from the very outset of his ministry. As he came up from the water after being baptized by John the Baptist the Father said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* (Matthew 3:17) Matthew quotes God through the prophet Isaiah saying, *Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, my Beloved in whom my soul is well pleased! I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will declare justice to the Gentiles.* (Matthew 12:18; Isaiah 42:1)

The Greek word for pleased in these passages is eudokeo. Eudokeo means to think well of, i.e. approve (an act); specially, to approbate, (a person or thing). The word approbate means to sanction or authorize. So, God the Father thought well of his son. He not only approved of his actions he authorized them as well. The prophet Isaiah wrote speaking of Jesus, *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief. When you make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.* (Isaiah 53:10)

The pleasure of the Lord prospered in the hands of Jesus. Everything Jesus did was pleasing to the Father because Jesus did everything according to the Father's will. Paul wrote in Roman 15:3 that Jesus did not please himself. In other words he did nothing for the pleasure of his own flesh. He even took our sins upon himself on the cross to please the Father. Hebrews 12:2 states that Jesus endured the cross for the joy that was set before him. It was the pleasure of the Son to give pleasure to the Father.

With Jesus as our model, we must conclude that a lifestyle of worship is one that takes pleasure in giving the Father pleasure. What can mere man do to give the Father pleasure? The scriptures give us an idea.

The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his mercy.

Psalm
147:11

For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he will beautify the humble with salvation.

Psalm
149:4

I know also, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, who in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now with joy I have seen your people, are present here to offer willingly to you.

1 Chronicles
29:17

As we just read, the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him and who hope in his mercy. To fear the Lord is to reverence him. Proverbs 16:6 says that by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil. Proverbs 8:13 says that the fear of the Lord is to hate evil. We give the Father pleasure when we hate and depart from evil. The Father also takes pleasure when we patiently wait for his mercy. These are acts of worship.

God beautifies the humble with salvation. He gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5) and by grace we are saved (Ephesians 2:8). He takes pleasure in those who practice humility. The Amplified Bible renders Psalm 51:17 this way, *My sacrifice [the sacrifice acceptable] to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart [broken down with sorrow for sin and humbly and thoroughly penitent] such, O God, you will not despise.* Isaiah wrote, *For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* (Isaiah. 57:15) Our lifestyle of humility becomes an act of worship because God dwells with us. Only where God dwells is worship possible and it pleases him to dwell with the humble.

God also takes pleasure in uprightness. The Hebrew word for pleasure used in Psalm 147:11, Psalm 149:4 and 1 Chronicles 29:17 is ratsah. This word means to be pleased with; specifically, to satisfy a debt. We can never satisfy our debt to God by working our own uprightness. Our debt is only satisfied because God made him who knew no sin to become sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21). It is not by works of righteousness that we have done but according to his mercy he saved us (Titus 3:5). Proverbs 14:2 says the he who fears the Lord will walk in uprightness. Therefore, as we walk in uprightness and humility, in patient hope of his mercy he takes pleasure in us. This way of life is our sacrifice of worship to our Father.

This sacrifice of worship is not only a vertical one but has a horizontal aspect as well. The writer of Hebrews wrote, *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* (Hebrews 13:15-16) The word share in verse 16 (communicate in the KJ) is the Greek word koinonia which means partnership or fellowship. God is well pleased with our kind deeds to others and our fellowship with the saints. He takes pleasure in us when it is our pleasure to serve the brethren. Again, these are the acts of a true worshiper.

This must have been the life of Enoch. Look at what is written about him.

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Hebrews 11:5

The Greek word for pleased in this verse (as well as Hebrews 13:16) means to gratify entirely. God was so gratified with Enoch that he couldn't wait for him to die to be with him. What a testimony! What a life of worship! Enoch surely learned what King David would learn years later.

You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalms
16:11

They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your pleasures.

Psalms 36:8

It is God's desire that we experience the pleasure of his presence. He finds pleasure in filling us and visiting us with his presence. It is equally proper for us to get pleasure as we worship the Father. For example: I receive pleasure from spending time with and doing things for my wife. If those things didn't give me pleasure would that be edifying or insulting to her? I couldn't imagine saying to Renae (much less God), "I receive no pleasure from spending time with you or doing stuff for you. The only reason I spend time with you or do anything for you is because that is what a husband does; it is my duty." If I give Renae flowers because it is my duty she will loathe the gift. However, she will get mounds of pleasure from the gift knowing that I received pleasure from giving the gift.

Don't we want God to receive pleasure from our worship? That's sort of the point. Well, God gets pleasure from our worship when it is our pleasure to give it.

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