



People-Pleasing/Fear of Man

People-pleasing is desiring to please others more than God. Fear of man is regarding another person's response (or potential response) more than following God's will.

Someone who struggles with people-pleasing is overly focused on making others happy. Though Philippians 2 tells Christians to love, sacrificially serve, and consider others as "more significant" than ourselves, a people-pleaser's motives are often rooted in things other than God's love. Desires for affirmation and acceptance are common motivators. People-pleasers will conceal their personal beliefs or desires or join in sin just to make others happy.

Fear of man is a form of people-pleasing in which a person's actions are not determined by God's will, but by how another might respond. Someone struggling with fear of man may act one way to gain a positive response from one person and act another way to avoid a negative response from someone else. Root causes may include unhealed trauma, cultural pressures, underlying fears (like fears of rejection, failure, conflict, etc.), and a weak sense of self.

Being more concerned about another's happiness and response to you than you are with God's will can lead to sin, anger, exhaustion, and weak relationships. God wants you to love and care about others, but not at the expense of your health, your relationship with him, or his purpose for your life. He made you uniquely for a distinct purpose. Knowing God and living in his will is what will provide the significance and happiness you were created to experience.

Biblical Insights

People-pleasing is rooted in idolatry. Holding someone or something in higher regard than God and his will for your life will not bring peace.

- "For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ." (Galatians 1:10)
- "...Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4)

People-Pleasing Assessment

Honestly answer the following questions to discover if you struggle with people-pleasing:

- 1 Do you feel the need to please others?
- 2 Do you avoid bringing up things that bother you or with which you disagree because you don't want to get into a conflict?
- 3 Do you worry about hurting other people's feelings?
- 4 Would you rather be dishonest with certain individuals than face rejection from them?
- 5 Is how you think someone will respond to you the most influential factor in deciding your next course of action?
- 6 Is how you feel about yourself strongly affected by the praise and appreciation that you receive from others?
- 7 Do you feel guilty when you say no?
- 8 Do you agree with others without really considering what you believe?
- 9 Do you try to anticipate what will make others happy and give it to them?
- 10 Do you apologize often—even for things for which you are not responsible?

Human praise, adoration, and accolades are tests of faith. How you respond to them can either weaken or strengthen your relationship with God, and reveal who or what you are living for.

- "The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, and each is tested by the praise accorded him." (Proverbs 27:21 NASB)
- "But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts." (1 Thessalonians 2:4)

People-pleasing and fear of man pulls us away from God toward sin.

- “Therefore God gave them up to vile impurity in the lusts of their hearts, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for falsehood, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” (Romans 1:24-25)
- “Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light...and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:7-10)
- “Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.” (Proverbs 25:26)

God always has your best interest in mind; others often don't. You can trust God's will even if it doesn't yield the results you want. God is in control of outcomes. He knows what is best for you.

- “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)
- “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The Lord is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.” (Psalm 118:6-7)
- “...If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:31-32)

Using your personality and gifts to glorify God (rather than yourself or anyone else) is what brings eternal significance and pleasure to life. God gifted you to reflect his glory.

- “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- “Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. His soul shall abide in well-being, and his offspring shall inherit the land.” (Psalm 25:12-13)

Next Steps

- People-pleasing and fear of man are often symptoms of deeper idolatry or fear struggles. Ask God to reveal what is ruling your heart and mind. (Psalm 139:23-24)
- Pray. Ask God to show you that he is in control, he is good, and he cares about you. (Proverbs 3:5-6; Romans 8:31-39)
- Spend time reading the Bible (God's Word) to know God and his will for your life. The book of Proverbs has great wisdom and direction for life and fellowship with God.
- Memorize some verses in this issue sheet that can help when you are concerned about what others think or how they will respond to you.
- Find a Bible-teaching church and begin to establish relationships with healthy Christians who can help you find healing, freedom, and security through a relationship with Jesus.
- Find a safe place that is Christ-centered, like a re:generation group, to address your struggle with people-pleasing and identify the underlying issues. (Galatians 6:2)

God loves you. If you haven't experienced freedom in Christ, visit regenerationrecovery.org/freedom.

Additional Resources:

- Find testimonies, articles, and helpful resources at regenerationrecovery.org/struggles/people-pleasing.