

CHAPTER 10 - Pressing Past a "People-Pleaser" Attitude

We are to be **God-pleasers**, not **self-pleasers** or **people-pleasers**. If we are approval addicts, we are probably also people-pleasers. We usually discover in our experience that if we don't please people, they don't approve of us; therefore, if we have an **out-of-balance** need for approval, we have no choice but to be people-pleasers.

Wanting to be pleasing and be acceptable is a natural trait. We might even say it is godly. God wants us to be good to people and strive to accommodate them. Scripture teaches us to make it a practice to please our neighbor:

Let each one of us make it a practice to please (make happy) his neighbor for his good and for his true welfare, to edify him [to strengthen him and build him up spiritually]. For Christ did not please Himself [gave no thought to His own interests]. (Romans 15:2-3)

The apostle Paul said in **Galatians** that he did not seek popularity with man, yet in 1 Corinthians he stated that he tried to please people and accommodate himself to their opinions and desires in order that they might be saved:

Now am I trying to win the favor of men, or of God? Do I seek to please men? If I were still seeking popularity with men, I should not be a bond servant of Christ (the Messiah). (Galatians 1:10)

Just as I myself strive to please [to accommodate myself to the opinions, desires, and interests of others, adapting myself to] all men in everything I do, not aiming at or considering my own profit and advantage, but that of the many in order that they may be saved. (1 Corinthians 10:33)

When we consider these two verses of Scripture, they almost seem to contradict one another, yet they don't if we understand the heart behind them.

Paul wanted to please people. He wanted to maintain good relationships with people, especially for the purpose of leading them to accept Jesus as their Savior. He also wanted to please God and fulfill the call on his life. Paul knew how to maintain balance in this area. He tried to please people, as long as pleasing them did not

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cause him to displease the Lord. The Bible says in Acts 5:29, "We must obey God rather than men."

Pleasing people is good, but it is not good to become **people-pleasers**. I would define people-pleasers as those who try to please people even if they have to compromise their conscience to do so. People-pleasers are those who need

approval so desperately that they allow themselves to be controlled, manipulated, and used by others. They are not led by the Holy Spirit, as Scripture instructs us to be (See Romans 8:14).

People-pleasers are fear-based individuals. They fear rejection, judgment, what people think and say, and especially anger or disapproval.

CHECK YOUR MOTIVES

Our reason or motive for doing the things we do is very important. God wants us to have pure hearts. He wants us to do what we do because we believe He is leading us to do it or because it is the right thing to do. God wants us to be motivated by love. We should do what we do for the love of God and man. If we are motivated by fear, it does not please God.

We should regularly take some time and ask ourselves why we [are doing the things we do. It is not what we do that impresses ^ God; it is the "why" behind what we do that He is concerned with.

God instructs us in His Word not to do good deeds to be seen of men. We are not to do things to be recognized and honored. When we pray, we are not to do it to be seen of men or to try and impress God by heaping up phrases and repeating them over and over. God is not impressed with the length and eloquence of our prayers. He is searching for sincerity and fervency. Any work of ours that is impure will be burned up on Judgment Day. We lose our reward for any work that is done with impure motives (See Matthew 6:1-7 and 1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

If we do things for people, and our motives are impure, we are out of God's will. Not every work that appears to be good is good. A work is good only if it is done in the will of God. Two people can do

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the same "good deed," and yet God may not consider it good for both of them. One of the two may be in the will of God, and the other may be out of the will of God, depending on their motives for their actions.

I strive to do what I do with right motives. If I am asked to attend a function, and I really don't feel led by God to go, or if I know my schedule cannot accommodate it without it becoming stressful, I don't go! When people want to hear yes, and you tell them no, they never like it. But those who are truly your friends will give you the freedom to make your own decisions. They will respect the decisions you make. They will not pressure you or try to make you feel guilty for not pleasing them. Your true friends are not those who are merely using you for their own benefit or those who always become angry when you don't do what they want you to do.

It is our responsibility to stand up to people who try to control us. If we don't, we are just as guilty as they are. If people try to control us, they are acting against God's will, but if we do not confront them, we are also acting against God's will. We must not blame others if we are fearful and timid. It is offensive to God when we fear

people more than we fear Him. We should not fear God in a wrong way, but we should have a respectful fear of Him, knowing that He means what He says. Since God has told us in His Word that we are not to be **people-pleasers**, we should take that commandment seriously and not allow an out of balance people-pleasing attitude in our lives.

Live to please God, and you will never be an approval addict.

What you think of yourself is more important than what others think of you. You cannot feel good about yourself if you know **what** you are doing does not have God's approval on it. It is not good if you say yes and yet disrespect yourself because you cannot say no.

According to Romans 8:14, all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. Mature Christians are led by God's Spirit, not by other people. They have learned to trust their own heart. They follow peace, not people (See Hebrews 12:14 **Kjv**).

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GO WITH GOD

The Bible teaches us in John 12:42-43 that many of the leading men believed in Jesus but would not confess it for fear that if they did, they would be expelled from the synagogue. "They loved the approval and the praise and the glory that come from men [instead of and] more than the glory that comes from God" (**v. 43**).

In this example we see that some people were hindered from a relationship with Jesus because they were addicted to approval. Although they wanted a relationship with the Lord, they loved the approval of man more. That is sad, but it happens all the time.

I know a woman who had deep emotional problems. She attended a Bible study group where she received the infilling of the Holy Spirit. She was overwhelmed with joy. God had touched her, and she knew it. When she told her brothers and sisters, they told her she was **cra2y**. They told her she needed to be careful of "emotional experiences."

They told her that what she had experienced could have been from the devil and not from God at all. They frightened her, and because she was afraid of what people would think of her, she did not pursue her **newfound** relationship with the Lord. The woman was a Christian and attended church, so she simply kept quiet and continued following the prescribed guidelines of her particular religious denomination, which did not support such "experiences" with God. She also went back to being depressed and neurotic. God tried to help her, but she loved the approval of people more than His approval.

I am not advocating seeking spiritual experiences, but if God visits us, and we do experience Him, it is not to be denied. I would imagine that the apostle Paul had quite an experience on the Damascus road as Jesus spoke to him, and His power knocked Paul to the ground (See Acts 9:1-20). I have found that people have a ten-

dency to rule out anything they have not personally experienced. The Bible teaches us that there will be people who hold a form of religion but are strangers to the power of it (See 2 Timothy 3:5). I have found that the doctrines of man can steal the power of God.

Follow God, not people! The people mentioned in John 12 knew that Jesus was real. They believed in Him, but the love of approval

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would not permit them to have a true relationship with Him. I wonder how their lives turned out.

What did they miss because they said yes to people and no to God? I wonder how many of them were never mentioned in the Bible again. I wonder if they faded into oblivion and never fulfilled their destiny because they loved the approval of men more than the approval of God. How many of them spent their lives disrespecting themselves because they were **people-pleasers**?

Not everyone is going to like us. I recently read somewhere that statistically 2 percent of the population won't like us, and there is nothing we can do about it but accept it and go on about our business. If we live our lives worrying about what other people think, we will never take risks or stretch ourselves into new realms. We will give up our dreams.

Satan is a dream thief, and he works through people who are selfish enough to steal our dreams in order to have theirs. The people close to you may not understand or agree with how you want to live your life. If you care too much, one day you will wake up and realize you have never really lived at all, you have just been manipulated and used by people who didn't really care about you after all.

Everyone is entitled to his opinion, and the information and feedback we receive from others can be valuable. We must not automatically reject what others think, but we must not let it control us either. We must remember that what people say is just their opinion, not necessarily fact. What they think may be right for them and wrong for us. You are an individual, with individual rights. Don't let anyone steal from you what Jesus died to give you—which is the freedom to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit for you as an individual.

DUTY OR DESIRE

In the life of people-pleasers, the driving force is duty, not desire. They do many things out of a feeling of obligation. They have trouble saying no when asked to do something. If we do something good, but we do it with resentment, feeling used and **pressured**, we have no joy and no reward.

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Remember, unless we do what we do for right reasons, we lose our reward. We do have biblical duties. For example, Scripture tells us it is our duty to care for our families (See 1 Timothy 5:8). If we have elderly parents or grandparents, it is our duty to provide for them. It is a duty we must perform whether we feel like it or not.

You may have dependent elderly parents who never really took proper care of you. They may have even abused you. Is it really your duty to take care of them now? Yes, it is. If you cannot do it for them, do it for God, and do it with a good attitude. It is your duty.

We do have biblical duties, but on the other hand we should not allow the "shoulds" and "oughts" of life to control us. There is a big difference in doing our duty before God and being duty bound to people.

For example, don't go in debt every Christmas just because you feel you should buy gifts for relatives you don't even like. Are you buying gifts for people because you are afraid of what they may think if you don't? Or are you buying them because of your need to have them appreciate you? You may even buy gifts for people so they will give you one back. If so, your motives are wrong. It is not God's will that you go in debt to buy gifts. Be bold enough to tell the truth.

YOU HAVE LEGITIMATE NEEDS YOURSELF

People-pleasers quickly and regularly set aside their own legitimate needs. Denying them eventually builds into an explosive situation. Constantly trying to please others is draining, which is why many **people-pleasers** feel anxious, worried, unhappy, and tired much of the time. They resent the fact that other people don't do much for them, but they often deny the fact that they have legitimate needs.

People-pleasers may think if they ask for help, they may make others feel obligated. Although they do most of what they do out of a sense of obligation, they don't want others to feel that way toward them. They believe people would not want to do anything for them anyway. Most people-pleasers feel that way because they have a poor self-image. They don't value themselves, so they think nobody else values them either.

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It is likely most people-pleasers were raised in homes in which their needs and feelings were not valued, respected, or considered important. As children, they were expected to respond to or take care of other people's needs. The focus of most people-pleasers is primarily toward others and away from themselves. Sometimes they don't even know what they feel or think or even what they want for themselves. They have become so good at denying their own needs, they don't even ask themselves if they have any.

Someone I'll call Patty was raised in a dysfunctional home. Patty's father was an alcoholic and verbally abusive. As a result, she learned to totally disregard her needs and to spend her time taking care of others. She developed a martyr complex. She did things for people, but resented doing it. Patty felt taken advantage of, but would not accept anything for herself even when it was offered. She did not feel she was worth anything, so she would not receive anything.

Patty lived with tremendous stress, most of which she placed on herself because of the way she had been raised. She was diagnosed with severe arthritis, which was

causing her tremendous pain. Her emotional and physical pain joined together was more than she could handle. She became very depressed.

Patty began going to a counselor who asked her what she wanted out of life. She could not tell him because she had never even thought about what *she* wanted. She had to do a lot of soul searching and learn that having needs and desires was not wrong. She had been so accustomed to not getting anything she wanted in life that she simply did not bother wanting anything at all. She was afraid to desire anything because she felt she had no right to do so. She felt worthless and devalued.

It was very refreshing to watch Patty begin to learn that it was acceptable to have legitimate needs and to expect people to meet them. She began to have hopes and dreams for her life, and it gave her something to look forward to. She is well on the road to release from her people-pleasing addiction.

We all have needs, especially emotional needs. Denying them eventually builds into explosive situations. What do we need emotionally? We need love, encouragement, and companionship—

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someone to connect to and confide in. We need acceptance, approval, and enjoyment.

GOD WANTS YOU TO ENJOY YOURSELF

When I was growing up, I did not enjoy myself. I was never really allowed to act like a child. I can remember getting into trouble and being corrected for playing. Our house was not enjoyable. It was filled with fear.

As an adult Christian, I began to realize I felt guilty if I attempted to enjoy myself. I felt safe if I was working, but enjoyment was something I denied myself. I did not feel it was a legitimate need for me. I resented other people who were not working as long and hard as I was. My husband really enjoyed his life, and it made me angry. I felt that he could accomplish so much more in life if he would just be more serious.

I realize now that I was not angry because Dave enjoyed his life; I was angry because I did not enjoy mine. But I was the only one who could do anything about it. It was foolish of me to resent Dave and other people, because the enjoyment they had in life was also available to me for the taking.

I did not like myself. Deep down inside I believed I was no good, and I punished myself for being bad by refusing to enjoy anything. After all, bad people don't deserve to enjoy life!

The Holy Spirit worked with me a long time before I finally understood that God wanted me to enjoy my life. Jesus actually said, "I came that you might have and enjoy your life" (See John 10:10). We need enjoyment. Without it, life is unbalanced, and a door is opened for Satan to devour us (See 1 Peter 5:8). The joy of the Lord is

our strength (See [Nehemiah 8:10](#)). There is a time to work and a time to play, a time to cry and a time to laugh (See [Ecclesiastes 3:1-8](#)).

Make sure you are not denying your legitimate needs. It is good to help others; as Christians, it is our call. But, it is not wrong to do things for ourselves. Be sure you take time for yourself. Take time to do things you enjoy.

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Learn to receive: from God, from people who want to bless you, and from yourself. The only persons you should not receive from are the devil and people being used by him. If someone gives you a compliment, graciously accept it. If someone belittles you, reject it. If someone shows you love and kindness, receive it. If someone rejects you, do what Jesus told His disciples to do: shake it off and go on!

Be determined to enjoy your life. You only go around once, so be sure you enjoy the ride.

"I FEEL BAD WHEN I DON'T PLEASE PEOPLE"

Do you feel bad when you don't please people? Many years ago I began to realize that the reason I tried so hard to please people was to benefit me rather than them. If I could please them, then I felt good. I don't think I really cared all that much about how they felt, it was *me* I was concerned about. Did it ever occur to you that people-pleasing can very well be a manifestation of selfishness rather than sacrifice?

[People-pleasers](#) feel awful when their decisions do not please others. They assume responsibility for other people's emotional reactions. In my former life, if I thought someone was angry, unhappy, or disappointed, it made me uncomfortable. I could not feel comfortable again until I thought I had done whatever needed to be done to make that person happy again.

I did not realize that as long as I was following God's will for my life, other people's responses were not my responsibility. It may not always be possible to do what other people want, but a spiritually mature person learns to deal with disappointment and keep a good attitude. If you are doing what you believe God has told you to do, and others are not pleased with you, it is not your fault; it is theirs.

When I was growing up, my father was angry most of the time. I spent most of my time playing the peacemaker in the home. I constantly tried to keep him happy. I was afraid of his anger.

^ When I became an adult, I continued this practice, except I did it with everybody. Anytime I was with anyone who seemed unhappy, I always felt it was probably my fault; and even if it wasn't my fault, I

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felt I needed to fix it. I did whatever I thought would please people

just so they would stay happy, not realizing that their personal happiness was their responsibility, not mine.

If my husband corrected our children, and they became angry, Dave said it was their problem. He knew he needed to correct them, and how they responded was between them and God. But if I corrected them, and it made them angry, I tried to make them happy again as soon as I had corrected them. In the process, I negated any correction I tried to give. I comforted them before they could feel the effects of being corrected.

When I corrected one of our children or even later in life one of our employees, I spent excessive amounts of time explaining why I was doing what I was doing. I knew I needed to bring the correction, but I did not want anyone to be angry; therefore, I tried to talk people into liking the fact that I was correcting them. What could have taken five minutes or less would often require forty-five minutes or more because of all my efforts to make sure everyone was happy with the way I corrected them. My husband tried to tell me what I was doing, but I was so deceived in this area that I just could not see it until God Himself revealed it to me.

I told myself that I did not want people to be hurt, confused, or upset. In reality I did not want anyone to be angry with *me*. I did not want anyone to think badly of *me*. It was really all about *me*.

If you are not able to give people what they want, and they become unhappy, it is not your fault. Beware of developing a false sense of responsibility. You have enough legitimate responsibilities in life without taking on illegitimate ones.

If you tell your children no about something because you feel what they want would not be good for them, it is not your responsibility to make them enjoy hearing no. That is something they will hopefully grow into as they mature; but some people never like hearing no, no matter how old they are. We all need to hear no **peace** in a while; if we don't, we will never be happy with anything **other** than getting everything our own way.

I would venture to say that if you never tell your children no, then you are not showing proper love. *Be the parent!* You may want to be
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friends with your children, just as I did, but you cannot always be both parent and friend at the same time.

One time a woman who worked for me came to me and asked if she could talk to me as a friend. I said yes. She began telling me how unhappy she was with her wages as well as some other issues concerning her job. She could not understand why her conversation was upsetting to me. After all, she was just talking to me as a friend! I finally told her that although I wanted to be her friend, I could not be her boss and her friend at the same time in this particular situation. She might not have wanted to hear me saying no to her, but I knew I had to say it.

If you are in authority—and I would venture to say that everyone has authority over something even if it is only the cat or the dog—you must realize that you can rarely make decisions that please everyone all the time. If you are addicted to approval, you will make a poor authority figure.

LIVING WITHIN LIMITS

People-pleasers do not live within limits or margins. In their efforts to please people, they push themselves beyond reasonable boundaries. Let's face it—people often expect us to do things we either should not do or cannot do.

It is painful being a **people-pleaser**. Some **people-pleasers** rarely focus on themselves in a proper manner. When they do take a moment for themselves, they feel selfish, indulgent, and guilty, which is why they are often on the go, rushing to get things done, striving to keep everyone happy. Because they stay so busy doing for others, they usually work harder than most people. Because they accomplish so much and are so easy to get along with, they are often the first to be asked to do things. As a result, they are vulnerable to being taken advantage of because they have difficulty saying no. They usually don't even consider that saying no is an option for them. They just assume that they should do whatever anyone asks them to do, no matter how unreasonable it is. When they do venture out and say no to a request, they often change that no to a yes if people act angry or displeased.

People-pleasers will push beyond the bounds of reason, if they think it means everyone will be happy with them. Most people will take

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advantage of us if we let them. It is just human nature to do so. Don't depend on others to treat you fairly and honestly. You must take the responsibility not to let them take advantage of you.

Often we become bitter and resentful toward those who do take advantage of us, not realizing that we are just as guilty as they are, if not more so. It is my responsibility to manage my life under the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible for others to keep taking advantage of me unless I allow it. They may do it once or twice before I realize what is going on, but once I become aware of what is happening, I become responsible for stopping it.

I once had an employer who took advantage of me. He required me to work so many hours that it kept me from spending proper time with my family. I was worn out and never had time for myself. He never showed appreciation and no matter what I did he always expected something more. If I even mildly indicated that I might not be able to comply with one of his requests his anger would start to surface and I would cave in and agree to do what he had asked of me.

As the years went by I resented his control more and more. I felt he should be caring enough to realize that he was requiring too much of me. I wanted him to see that my life was out of balance and care enough about me to say, "Take some time off, you certainly deserve it."

As I was praying about the situation one day and moaning to God about how unfair it was. He said, "What your boss is doing is wrong, but you not confronting him is just as wrong." This was hard for me to hear. Like most people I wanted to blame someone else for my lack of courage. Had I not been a **people-pleaser** and had I not been afraid I would have saved myself about five years of being so stressed that it

eventually made me very sick. My boss wasn't my problem; I was my problem. As I said earlier, many people will take advantage of us if we allow it. I allowed him to take advantage.

It is important to realize that God has given you authority first and foremost over your own life. If you don't accept and exercise that authority, you may spend your life blaming others for things you should be doing something about. You should make your own

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decisions according to what you believe God's will is for you. On Judgment Day God will not ask anyone else to give an account of your life; He will ask only you (See Matthew 12:36 and 1 Peter 4:5)!

What if Jesus asks you on Judgment Day why you never got around to fulfilling His call on your life? Are you going to tell Him people took advantage of you and you just couldn't do anything about it? Are you going to tell Him you were so busy pleasing people you just never got around to pleasing Him? If you do offer those types of excuses, do you really believe they will be acceptable?

ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES

Just as a person puts up a fence around his property to keep intruders out, so you must establish limits and margins—invisible lines you draw in your life to protect yourself from being used and abused. If you had a privacy fence around your yard, and on a sunny afternoon you looked out into your yard and saw your neighbors sunbathing while their children played without permission, what would you do? You certainly would not just say, "Oh my, I do wish those neighbors would leave me alone." You would probably be very forceful in letting them know that your yard is off limits to them for such activities without your permission.

You need to be just as forceful in letting people know you expect them to respect the limits and margins you have erected around your personal life.

If you don't want friends showing up at your house without calling ahead of time and getting your approval, don't just let them do it and then resent them for it. Enforce your guideline even if you end up losing your friends.

A friend I'll call Henry never seemed to have any money with him when he and James went out to eat or to a movie. Actually

Henry always managed to leave his wallet at home. James always ended up paying the bill with a promise from Henry to pay him back. James did not mind the first couple of times this occurred, but he soon realized that it happened too often to be an accident.

And even if it was just a bad habit. Henry needed to break it. James

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also soon realized that although Henry promised to pay the money back, he always forgot that, too.

Resentment became so strong in James's heart that he realized he needed to confront Henry. In a loving way James told Henry, "I really need you to pay your own way and stop forgetting your money." He said, "I cannot afford to pay for both of us, and not only that, I feel taken advantage of." Henry became very angry, telling James he was selfish and should know that eventually he would pay him back. James began to feel guilty, thinking perhaps he was a bad friend, so he apologized.

Henry paid his own way the next three or four times they went out, but soon fell back into the same old pattern. Not only did he forget his money regularly, but he also seemed to be more and more disrespectful in his attitude toward James. Obviously Henry was wrong in being dishonest and taking advantage of James. He was wrong in treating him disrespectfully. But James was just as guilty for letting him do it.

Eventually their friendship completely fell apart, and James had to receive counseling at church to get over the bitterness he felt toward Henry. Henry went on to do the same thing to anyone who let him. He never respected those who did allow him to take advantage of them. The few who stood up to him and made him respect their rights were the only ones he respected.

Always remember that if you let others take advantage of you, it is your fault, not theirs.

DELEGATE OR FALL APART

Although it is difficult for **people-pleasers** to do, it is wise to set proper limits and margins. It is a sign of strength, not weakness. Asking for help is a good thing to do also. God has placed certain people in each of our lives to help us. If we do not receive their help, we become frustrated and overworked, and they feel unfulfilled because they are not using their gifts. Remember that God has not called you to do everything for everybody in every situation. You cannot be all things to all people all the time. You have legitimate needs. It is not wrong to need help and ask for it. However, it is wrong to need help and be too proud to ask for it.

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In Exodus 18:12-27, we see that Moses was a man with many responsibilities. The people looked to him for everything, and he tried to meet all their needs. His father-in-law saw what Moses was doing and said to him, "What is this that you do for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?" (v. 14). Moses proceeded to tell his father-in-law how all the people came to him with their questions. They wanted him to sit as judge between them and their neighbors whenever a problem existed between them. The people wanted Moses to meet their needs, and he wanted to please them.

It may appear that our sacrifices are good. We may feel proud of ourselves because of our "good" works, and yet they are not good at all. Moses' father-in-law told him the thing he was doing was not good. He told Moses that he would wear out

both himself and the people. How could the people get worn out from doing nothing? Because doing nothing can actually be more tiring than doing something.

If God has called and equipped you to do something, and someone else is doing it for you all the time, you will feel frustrated. If God has called someone else to help you and you won't allow them to help, he or she will feel unfulfilled and frustrated, too. God has created us to be interdependent on one another. We need each other! Moses' father-in-law suggested that Moses delegate some of his authority to others. He said Moses should let them make the less important decisions and Moses should deal only with the hard cases. Moses did what his father-in-law suggested, and it enabled him to endure the strain of his task. And the others had the benefit of a sense of accomplishment for the decisions they made on their own.

Many people either complain all the time about what they are expected to do or they end up falling apart emotionally and physically because they won't let anyone help them do anything. They don't think anyone is as qualified for the job as they are. It is easy to think you are more important than you actually are. Learn to delegate. Let as many people help you as possible. If you do, you will last a lot longer and enjoy yourself a lot more.

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I FEEL I SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO MORE

Comparing ourselves with other people often causes us to put a lot of unnecessary pressure on ourselves. If we observe in our comparison that they can do more things than we can, or that their endurance is greater than ours, we often feel we should be able to do more. Because we feel guilty, we may push ourselves beyond our reasonable limits and end up sick and unhappy.

We are all different, and we all have different limits. Know yourself, and don't feel bad if you cannot do what someone else can do. Even our God-given temperaments help determine what our limits in life will be in various areas.

I know someone—I'll call her Pat—who was married and had three children. She was a full-time mother and **homemaker**, but unless she had help cleaning her home once a week she struggled to get everything done and remain peaceful.

Pat had a friend named Mary who was also married and had five children. Mary worked outside the home two days a week and did all her own housework, cooking,

and laundry with no outside help. Actually it seemed Mary was more peaceful and less temperamental than Pat, even though she had more to do.

Pat felt very bad about herself because she just could not seem to get everything done without help. In her thoughts and conversations, she constantly compared herself to Mary. She felt she should be more like her.

Mary's temperament was easygoing, the "cast your care" type. Her attitude was, "If the work doesn't get done today, it will get done tomorrow." Pat, on the other hand, was very melancholy, a borderline perfectionist who wasn't comfortable unless everything was in order.

We really cannot control what temperament we are born with;

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that is God's choice. We can work with the Holy Spirit to achieve balance, but basically we are what we are. I will always be a **type-A**, strong-willed, leadership-type person. In fact, most of the time I am type A+. Dave will always be more easygoing than I am, but that does not mean I have to strive to be like him. I may learn some things from his example, but I still have to be the basic person God created me to be.

Pat put herself under so much pressure that she became difficult to get along with. She carried a burden of guilt most of the time, and it started affecting her mood and her health. She finally got help through a book she read that helped her understand we are all different, and that is perfectly acceptable.

Some people do things faster than others, but the slower person may do them more neatly. Each of us must do what we are comfortable with. It was not wrong for Pat to need a housekeeper once a week and Mary not need one. I am sure that in some other area, Mary had some needs that Pat did not have.

Just be yourself, and don't pressure yourself to perform exactly the way others do.

Pat felt she should be able to do more because she saw Mary do more, but the fact was that she could not do more and maintain her composure.

That was not a weakness in her; it was just the way she was put together by God. She did not need to be able to do what Mary did in order to approve of herself. She felt Mary was judging her, when in reality she was judging herself and Mary hadn't thought anything about it.

Concern about what people may be thinking of us often controls us. We are excessively concerned about what people are saying about us. We assume people are thinking certain critical things when the truth is they were not thinking about us at all!
When we seek favor and acceptance from our critics, we lose confidence or stray from the path of healthy choices.

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Stand up to your critics or you will end up being controlled. The apostle Paul had plenty of critics, but he did not let their opinions control him; neither did Jesus.

Do the best you can, be the best "you" that you can be, and do not feel you should be able to do more just because someone else does more. And remember a strong confidence in God and your own ability to hear from God and being led by the Spirit are the antidote. God has not given and never will give someone else the job of running your life.

DISHONESTY IS A SYMPTOM OF PEOPLE-PLEASING

Let our lives lovingly express truth [in all things, speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly]. (Ephesians 4:15)

People-pleasing behavior can be quite dishonest. The Bible says we are to be truthful in all things; we are to speak the truth, love ; the truth, and walk in the truth. But approval addicts often tell lies because they fear people won't accept the truth. They say yes with their mouth while their heart is screaming no. They may not want to do something, but they act as if they do for fear of displeasing someone. If they ever do say no, they usually make an excuse for why they cannot do what is being asked of them. They won't tell the truth, which may be simply that they just plain don't want to do what they are being asked to do. They may not feel it is the right thing for them to do.

Sometimes we don't feel peaceful about a certain thing, and we don't have any idea why. The Scriptures teach us to follow after peace; it is one of the ways God leads us. We should be able to say to people, "I don't have peace about making that commitment right now," and they should graciously receive that answer, but it rarely happens.

I was talking with a fellow minister recently. The man is quite humorous and very bold. He related how another minister had called him with a request for him to appear on his television show. My friend told the man that he could not do so because he had a prior commitment. The man responded that his prior commitment could not possibly be as important as coming on his television show

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and suggested that he break the previous commitment, to which my friend responded, "I don't want to."

His truthful response ended the conversation immediately. If we would just be bold enough to speak the truth, we could save ourselves a lot of time and trouble.

We don't want to be rude, but neither do we want to be liars. Most **people-pleasers** are not honest about their desires, feelings, and thoughts. They tell people what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. A healthy relationship demands

honesty. Some people may not want to hear truth, but that does not relieve us of the responsibility to speak the truth.

AN EXAMPLE FROM THE LIFE OF KING SAUL

Saul was anointed to be king of Israel. He had an opportunity to enjoy a great and glorious future, but he had some weaknesses in his character that proved to be his undoing (See 1 Samuel 9-31).

Saul was a **people-pleaser**. He loved the approval of people so much that he disobeyed God's instructions in order to get it. God instructed Saul to wait until the prophet Samuel arrived to offer up the evening sacrifice.

When Samuel didn't arrive at the time Saul and the people expected he would, the people became restless and impatient. Although Saul knew in his heart that he was being disobedient, he went ahead and offered the sacrifice that he had been forbidden to offer. Later when Samuel arrived, he asked Saul why he had done so. Saul's reply was, "Because I saw that the people were scattering from me" (1 Samuel 13:11). In response, Samuel told Saul, "You have done foolishly! . . . Now your kingdom shall not continue" (w. 13-14). Saul was so addicted to approval that he lost his kingdom because of it.

God brought David into Saul's life to minister to him. Saul recognized the anointing and favor of God on David's life. When the people showed approval of David, Saul became jealous—so jealous, in fact, that he repeatedly tried to kill David. His need for approval was so great he was even willing to murder to prevent someone else from having more approval than he did. Thank God few people let their need for approval go this far.

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We may not try to murder people, but we often "murder" God's plan for our life in order to get or keep the approval of others. Saul tried to do both. He tried to murder David, but instead he "murdered" God's plan for himself and his kingdom. As a result, Saul ended up being killed himself after having already lost the opportunity to remain king.

There are multitudes of stories just as sad as this one. Don't let your story be one of them. Don't make the mistake Saul made. Be obedient to God. Do your best to be all He wants you to be, and do all He wants you to do. Even if people are not cheering, heaven is!

Now that we have taken a look at the characteristic of people-pleasing, let's look at how we can overcome the pain of rejection.

I trust that you are starting to see and feel the difference from being addicted to approval or recognizing who you are in Christ and letting him be the only approval you ever need.