

Introduction

The term, “people pleaser,” has very negative connotations. When you search the internet, you will find numerous articles giving you ten or fifteen signs of being a people pleaser. When people pleasers are asked questions about an issue, they often answer a different question than what is being asked. This week in the Supreme Court confirmation hearings, Supreme Court nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson would not answer the question, “How do you define the term, woman?” People pleasing politicians do not want others to know their real beliefs, because they do not want to turn anyone off because they need the vote. People pleasers often will not tell someone that they have offended them. Personally, if I offend someone, I like them to tell me about it, rather than me trying to figure out if I have offended them as I observe their distancing and silence. People pleasers generally shy away from any confrontation. Often, they refuse to set boundaries around their time and personal life. So, the term people pleaser is not a positive one.

When I think of people pleasers, my mind jumps to politicians. When they are campaigning, they tell the people what they think they want to hear. This sometimes catches up with them when they go to a different area and are confronted about what they said in the last place they campaigned. For example, in April 2008, Barack Obama was at a fund-raiser in San Francisco and he said to his sophisticated liberal audience, “You go into these small towns in Pennsylvania and, like a lot of small towns in the Midwest, the jobs have been gone now for 25 years and nothing's replaced them...And it's not surprising then they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy toward people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.” Obama was trying to connect and please these liberal California voters and he said something he thought would help him at that moment. Unfortunately, when Obama went to Pennsylvania and the Midwest, the voters there reminded him of his hurtful comments.

In our text, God tells us not to just please ourselves, but to please our neighbors. Because people pleasing has a negative context in our culture today, I want to make some clarifications so that we have a good understanding of what it means to please one another from a Biblical perspective.

This is Part 3 of a mini-series in Romans called, Edification of the Body. In Romans 14, we looked at how we need to accept one another, and not judge their opinions. We saw in Part 2 that we are not to do anything to offend one another, but are to pursue peace and the building up of one another. In Part 3, we are looking at what it means to please one another. We will be covering the first five verses of Romans 15.

Edification of the Body – Part 3: Three Keys to Pleasing One Another

1. Bear the weaknesses of one another.
2. Please one another (for their good and edification)
3. Follow the example of Christ

(Rom 15:1-4) “Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves. {2} Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. {3} For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME." {4} For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

1. Bear the weaknesses of one another. (Rom 15:1)

The first way that we are to please our neighbor is by bearing the weaknesses of those without strength. The KJV says, “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak...” The word for strong is *dynatos* (Strong’s G1415), which means strong, mighty, or powerful. The Greek word that is translated as weaknesses in the NASB and infirmities in the KJV is *asthenema* (Strong’s G771), and this is the only occurrence in the Bible. The root word is *astheneo* (Strong’s G770), which is used thirty-six times. In eighteen of the occurrences, it is translated as weak and in the other half of the uses, it refers to sickness, disease, or infirmity. In this particular verse, I believe that there is a contrast between the strong and the weak, not the strong and the sick, so I believe the NASB has given the better rendering. Those who are strong should bear the weaknesses of those who are weak.

(Rom 15:1) “Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves.”

(Rom 15:1 KJV) “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”

In Romans 14, Paul made a distinction between the weak and the strong in faith. Those who were weak in faith ate only vegetables and those who were strong in faith understood that there were no other gods and all food has been declared clean. In order to promote unity and the building up of the body, we need to accept those who are weak in faith. We saw that we are to accept people and not judge their opinions, and we made a distinction about judging sin and judging opinions. God tells us to confront sin, but we are not to judge opinions. We need to give grace to one another. So, the strong and mature in faith are to bear the weaknesses of those who are weak. In the context of the overall passage, the mature are not just to accept the weak in faith, they are to bear their weaknesses. If we know that eating a certain food or drinking something will cause them to stumble, we should bear that weakness with them.

(Rom 14:1-2) “Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but not for the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions. {2} One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*.”

In Galatians 6:1-2, we are exhorted to bear one another’s sins. In that case, we are to help restore a brother who has fallen, and that restoration process may take a while. In that season of restoration, we are to bear with them. If someone is struggling with swearing, we are to bear with them. It may take a while to renew their mind and change some speaking patterns, so we bear with them in the process. We forgive them, support them, pray for them, encourage them, and bear with them. Our passage today is about bearing the weaknesses of weaker or less mature believers, and that may be opinions, lack of knowledge or understanding about Biblical principles, or sin. Whatever the weakness is, we, who are strong, are to bear their weaknesses.

(Gal 6:1-2) “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. {2} Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”

In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he said that even though he was a free man, he made himself a slave to all so that he could win more to Christ. To the Jews he became as a Jew and to those under the Law, as under the Law, though not being under the Law so that he might win

those who are under the Law. In verse twenty-two, he said, “To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.” Paul’s motivation was to win people to Christ, so he became weak to win the weak. Paul was obviously a strong and mature man of God, and as a strong man, he bore the weaknesses of the weak.

(1 Cor 9:19-22) “For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. {20} To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; {21} to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. {22} To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.”

Later on, in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he stated, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of many, so that they may be saved.” Notice that in the matter of food, drink, and all things, he did not seek to please himself, but to please all men.

(1 Cor 10:31-33) “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. {32} Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; {33} just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved.”

This ties in with Romans 15:1, because Paul said that those who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. The idea here is that instead of just trying to please ourselves, we should seek to please others. I want to stop here for just a minute. One of the signs of a people please in the world’s eyes is they do not take care of their own personal needs. In our passage, God is not telling us not to take care of our own needs, He is telling us to not think solely of ourselves, but to also look out for the needs of others. Most of us do a good job looking out for ourselves; God wants us to also look out for the needs of others.

(Rom 15:1) “Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves.”

I also want to make another point about Paul. In 1 Corinthians, Paul said he sought to “please all men in all things.” Yet, in Paul’s letter to the Galatians he said, “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.” Why the difference? Was Paul a man-pleaser or a God-pleaser? The answer is both. Paul always tried to please God in all respects. He did not compromise his faith, beliefs, or convictions to try and gain favor with men. Pleasing God was his first and utmost priority. In trying to please God, he also tried to please men for the sake of the gospel. However, in trying to reach people for the gospel, he was willing to become as the weak in order to win the weak. He was willing to bear the weaknesses of the weak in order to win them to Christ. In our culture today, a people pleaser would be willing to compromise his values in order to please people, and Paul never compromised his faith or violated his conscience.

(Gal 1:10) “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

In 1 Corinthians 7:32-34, Paul wrote about living single versus living as a married person. He said that one who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided. Paul wanted people to be singularly focused on pleasing the Lord. Husbands, I encourage you to please your wives. I think you should do everything that you can to show her the love and kindness of God. I think you should bless and honor your wife. The only caution is that we must make pleasing God our top priority.

(1 Cor 7:32-34) “But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; {33} but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, {34} and *his interests* are divided....”

2. Please one another (for their good and edification) (Rom 15:2)

We are to bear one another’s weaknesses and not just please ourselves. Second, we are to please our neighbors. Paul qualifies pleasing our neighbor in two ways. First, we are to please our neighbor for his good. Second, we are to please our neighbor for his edification.

(Rom 15:2) “Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.”

In the world’s view of a people pleaser, the motive is often to please people because you want their acceptance or approval. It often comes out of a poor self-image. When God tells us to please our neighbor, it has nothing to do with self; it has everything to do with the other person. Our motive is to please people for their own good and for their own edification.

What is good? We live in a day where people confuse what is good and what is evil. The prophet, Isaiah, said, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil.” We cannot go by what the world calls good; we have to go by what God calls good. In Micah 6:8, the Lord tells us what He deems as good. “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” There are three examples of things that are good: justice, kindness, and walking humbly with God. When we think about pleasing our neighbor for their good, we should think in terms of justice, kindness, and walking humbly with God. Is this word or action going to encourage in their walk with God? Is this word or action going to demonstrate the kindness of God? Is this word or action going to promote justice?

(Is 5:20) “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!”

(Mic 6:8) “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

In pleasing one another for their good, we have to consider the outcome of the action. We have to ask ourselves, “What will be the outcome of this? Will this be good in their lives? Will this be good for the kingdom of God?” If the answer is yes to these questions and we have the ability to please our brother, we should by all means please them for our good. If the answer is no, then we should pass on pleasing the brother in that instance.

When I was on the PGA Tour, I had a friend who represented the same equipment manufacturer that I was with. This golfer was addicted to gambling, especially at the horse track. If I had taken him to the Kentucky Derby, it would have pleased him greatly, but it would not have been for his good. He lost tens of thousands of dollars at the horse track, so even though it was pleasing to him, it would not have been good for him.

As parents, we face choices all the time about pleasing our children. They may want some candy or other sweet food, but is it good for them. It is not just about pleasing them, but pleasing them for their good.

When Karen and I were discussing the move back to Georgia from New Mexico, I called my friend and prophet, Joe Warner. I told him that Karen would like to move back to Georgia to be closer to more of our children and grandchildren. Joe thought that pleasing and honoring Karen's desires was a good thing and that God would also be pleased. It was a confirming word to both of us. Karen and I want to please one another, but not at the expense of displeasing God. We want to please one another with something that is good for them. Moving closer to our children and grandchildren was a good thing, so this was pleasing Karen for her own good.

Last year, many of you participated in an offering to the Philippines. Arvin wanted a new motorcycle to help him with the outreach to the mountain tribes. We raised over \$5,000 and sent it to him. We pleased Arvin, and it was for his good, and the good of the kingdom. He is having a significant impact on the tribal chiefs. These tribal chiefs are learning about a relationship with Christ and how to humbly walk with Him. This was pleasing to Arvin, and it was good for him and the kingdom of God. We need to please one another for their good.

The second stipulation that Paul says is that it must be for their edification. Edification means to build up. The Greek word is *oikodome* (Strong's G3619), which is a compound word. *Oikos* means house and *dome* means roof. The Superdome is a stadium in New Orleans with a roof over it. It literally means to put a roof on a house, but the effective meaning is to build up. When we please our neighbor his edification, it must build him up.

In Ephesians 4:29, Paul tells us not to allow any rotten or corrupt communication come out of our mouths, but only words that are needed, give grace, and will edify. Our words are not only to be pleasing to our brother, but they must build him up. Our words should build up his faith. Our words should build up his knowledge and understanding. Our words should build up his confidence. If our words are not going to please and build up our brother, we should not say them.

(Eph 4:29) "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear."

A couple of months ago Karen asked the Board at the Connection Church if they would pay for an online course about the end times that she wanted to take. The Board agreed that the church would pay for the course, which greatly pleased Karen. Karen finished the class this week, and it was a tremendous blessing to her. She grew in her understanding, and said it would make sharing about the end times much easier. It gave her a better overall picture of what God is doing. So, paying for Karen to take the course pleased her, and it edified her.

We have to ask ourselves if what we are considering will be pleasing. Second, we must ask if this will be for their good. Third, we must consider if this will edify or build them up. If the answer is yes, we should do what we can to please our neighbor.

3. Follow the example of Christ (Rom 15:3-4)

We are to please our neighbor by bearing his burdens, and not just please ourselves. Second, we are to please our neighbor for their good and their edification. Third, we are to please our neighbor by following the example of Christ. Paul quotes from Psalm 69:9, “For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, ‘THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME.’” Christ is our ultimate example to follow. When Jesus came, He did not come to please Himself. He bore the reproaches of all of us. In Psalm 69, the Hebrew word for reproaches is *herpa* (Strong’s H2781). The root word is *harap* (Strong’s H2778), which means to pull off or expose. When our sins are exposed, there is shame and reproach. Jesus took our shame and reproach on Himself. He bore our weaknesses. He was the strong One, and we were the weak, and He bore our weaknesses and our reproaches.

(Rom 15:3) “For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, ‘THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME.’”

(Ps 69:9) “For zeal for Your house has consumed me, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.”

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He told His disciples that He had not come down from heaven to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him. Later, just before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” Jesus was not here to do His will, but the will of the Father. He was willing to go to the cross and bear our reproaches, not to please Himself, but to please the Father and to do good for us. Jesus is the example that we need to follow; He bore the weaknesses of the weak and did not seek His own will or to please Himself. We need to have the same unselfish, attitude.

(John 6:38) “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

(Matt 26:39) “And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.’”

I love the example that Paul uses and the next verse. He said, “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” Psalm 69:9 was written for our instruction. We need the things written in earlier times, the Old Testament. The Old Testament is needed for our instruction.

(Rom 15:4) “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

This week I was reminded of this twice. In a conversation that I had, a man told me that new believers don’t need to learn about the Old Testament; they just need to know about Jesus. While I agree that they need to know about Jesus, I also believe that the Old Testament speaks about Jesus. After Jesus’ resurrection two men were on the road to Emmaus and Jesus joined them and

their conversation. Then, He said to them, “‘Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.” The New Testament was not written, and Jesus used the Law and the prophets to explain Himself to them. We need the Old Testament; it helps us understand the New Testament.

(Luke 24:26-27) “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” {27} Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”

The second reminder this week was from a tweet from Andy Stanley. Andy is the pastor of North Point Community Church in Atlanta, which was recently named as the largest church in America, with weekly attendance of over 40,000 people. He said, “The Christian faith doesn’t rise and fall on the accuracy of 66 ancient documents. It rises and falls on the identity of a single individual: Jesus of Nazareth.”¹ This comes after a statement he made several years ago that Christians “Christians need to “unhitch” the Old Testament from their understanding of the faith.”² By this he means to instruct people to ignore the Old Testament and focus solely on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, especially in evangelism. One of his congregants explained to me that he was really speaking about evangelism. He said they need to focus on the New Testament. We saw in Luke how Jesus used the Old Testament exclusively. I believe that we should be free to use the Old and the New Testament. The entirety of the Scriptures is important. The Word of God is inspired by God, and inerrant, and is profitable for our instruction.

(2 Tim 3:16-17) “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; {17} so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

While I love this verse about how all of the Scriptures written in earlier times are for our instruction, the main point Paul was making is that we are to follow the example of Christ, who did not please Himself, but bore our reproaches. He pleased us for our good and our edification.

(Rom 15:4) “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

Conclusion and Applications

God wants His church, His body, to be a peaceful place where people are accepted, encouraged and built up, and where people live unselfishly, pleasing one another for their own good and edification. These are healthy characteristics for any church, and we should strive to practice these principles.

What about you this morning? What has the Lord been impressing on your heart and mind? Have you been pleasing yourself, or have you been seeking to please others for their good and their edification? Have you been seeking to please God above all other things? The Christian life is not one to be lived all by yourself. We are to be a community of believers who are connected to God and to one another. We are to be a church that pleases God and pleases one another. Are

¹ <https://www.christianpost.com/news/andy-stanleys-tweet-about-the-bible-is-seductive-and-harmful.html>, Taken from a sermon he preached on March 6 at Browns Bridge Church in Cumming, Georgia.

² <https://answersingenesis.org/christianity/andy-stanley-says-we-need-to-unhitch-the-old-testament-from-our-faith/>

you part of a body that seeks to edify and build up one another? The Connection Church is being planted in Rome, Georgia, and we are looking for a core group of people to create this kind of community. We are devoted to the apostles' teaching, prayer, breaking of bread, and fellowship. If you would like to be a part of this new work in Rome, we invite you to join the team.

Next week, in Part 4 of this mini-series on Edification of the Body, we will look at Unity. God wants the body unified and with one mind and one voice to glorify Him.

Father God, thank You for the thirty-nine books in the Old Testament that we can learn from. We thank You for the twenty-seven books in the New Testament. Thank You for inspiring all sixty-six books in the Bible, and making it profitable for us to learn from. Jesus, we thank You for giving us an example to follow, and in particular this morning, the example of bearing our reproaches. You did it not to please yourself, but to please the Father and to please us for our good and our edification. Help us to be a church where the strong bear the weaknesses of the weak. Help us be a church that pleases and honors You first and foremost. Help us to be an unselfish church that looks out for the interests of others, and seeks to please one another for their good and their edification. Help us to be a light to our community. As we go out this week, give us opportunities and open doors to please one another for their good. Help us to be alert so that we can recognize and make the most of those opportunities. Father, bless us and cause Your face to shine upon us in all that we do this week. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Q & A

- What is something that you have done to please your neighbor for their good?
- How do we practically bear the weaknesses of the weak? Can you give an example of when you did this for someone?
- What are the keys to bearing the weaknesses of others? (love, patience, faith, etc.)
- Which members of the body have a greater responsibility in bearing the weaknesses of others?
- Paul mentioned that the Scriptures give us perseverance and encouragement. What encouragement has God given you this week in the Scriptures?

Introduction (Rom 15:1-4)

- 1. Bear the weaknesses of one another.** (Rom 15:1, 14:1-2, Gal 6:1-2, 1 Cor 9:19-22, 10:31-33, Gal 1:10, 1 Cor 7:32-34)

- 2. Please one another (for their good and edification)** (Rom 15:2, Is 5:20, Mic 6:8, Eph 4:29)

- 3. Follow the example of Christ** (Rom 15:3-4, Ps 69:9, John 6:38, Matt 26:39, Luke 24:26-27, 2 Tim 3:16-17)

Conclusion and Applications