

Pleasing people worksheet: exploring your relational goals

“What a task have men-pleasers! They have as many masters as beholders!”

Richard Baxter from “Directions Against Inordinate Man-pleasing” published in *A Christian Directory*, 1673

People pleasing is a heart posture that seeks to make everyone happy, while keeping conflict at bay. It is focussed on other people and is very attentive to how they view us. It often looks like busy service; not “rocking the boat” or appeasing people - though sometimes also includes getting angry when others don’t pull their weight. Rather than love, it flows from pragmatism, fear or a need for approval. But it leads to exhaustion, anxiety and superficial relationships. It is life lived on the horizontal plane between us and the people around us, leaving God outside the frame.

God’s goals for our relationships are different to this. Jesus calls us to “seek first his kingdom” (Matthew 3:22). Christ invites the weary and burdened to come to him for rest (Matthew 11:28-30). God’s word calls for believers to “put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator” (Colossians 3:10). In Scripture we read that all who “contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Christ calls us through the small gate and on the narrow road to life (Matthew 7:14). Scripture is full of Christ’s purposes for his redeemed people – and that is about pleasing him not dancing to the expectations of others.

The following worksheet helps you analyse your people pleasing by doing an inventory of the people in your life you are seeking to make happy. It is designed to be done with a trusted friend or mentor. There will likely be many ways the Spirit is prompting you to love God and love your neighbour. However, this exercise aims to help you to notice the subtle ways you might be ruled by different goals in your relationships, before helping you realign these hopes to be more in line with Christ’s plans for you and the people you are trying to please.

STEP 1: In the table below list who you are trying to please (start by focusing on up to 3 or 4 people).

STEP 2: Note down the ways in which you have noticed yourself engaging in people-pleasing when you are with them.

STEP 3: What do you want most for this person? E.g. A hassle-free life / to save them / their approval.

STEP 4: How does what you want for them compare with Christ’s priority for this person?

Talk about what you have discovered with a friend and commit your findings to the Lord in prayer.

People I am trying to please	How I am trying to please them	What I want most for them	What Christ wants for them