

Live To Please Only Him

by Darrell B. Harrison

When I'm not performing on my "day job" during the week, I have the honor and privilege of teaching an adult Bible study class at my church on Sunday mornings.

As I type this, the class is entering week 22 of an expository (verse-by-verse) study of the book of Ephesians, which is all about the "new life" obtained and experienced by those who have received Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, and the characteristics and behaviors which are, and are not, evidence of a life totally committed to Him.

In **Ephesians 5:10**, the apostle Paul encourages believers to conduct themselves in such a way that they are constantly **"trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."** (NASB) Is that the pattern of your life today? Are your desires, goals and dreams centered around what pleases God, or, are they focused more on what brings you satisfaction, happiness and contentment?

You don't need me to tell you that the world today is saturated with messages and images, both overt and covert, that focus solely on the gratification of self. Whether it's making more money, being more popular or becoming more attractive, it appears that nothing is off limits to the ubiquitous assault of these enticements our mind. The epicurean tone of these messages notwithstanding, what's truly sad about them is the extent to which countless numbers of people—Christians included—actually buy into what the promulgators of these enticements are peddling.

What is it that drives us to pursue such temporal desires anyway? How is it that we're so easily drawn into believing that these and other superficial "solutions" are the answer to giving our lives meaning and purpose or making us want to be more significant than we really are? Why is it that significance and relevance matters to us anyway?

I would argue that the answers to those and

other similar questions are found first and foremost is the understanding and acceptance of the fact that the "three-headed monster" spoken about in God's word—the *lust of the flesh*, the *lust of the eyes*, and the *pride of life* (1 John 2:16)—has the potential to rear its ugly head within each one of us and in very real and tangible ways; and when it does, it's as if we become our own little solar system with "me" as the sun and God, and everyone else in our life, revolving around us and our own plans and agendas.

The truth of the matter is that the vast majority



of us fail to recognize that our existence is not our own and that, as much as we might try to convince ourselves (and others) into believing otherwise, we're really not the "shot-callers" and "collar-poppers" we think ourselves to be.

It is not within our own power to open our eyes each morning after a night's sleep. Nor is it in and of ourselves to keep our heart operative from one beat to the next, or our mind functioning, or our muscles performing so as to devise and carry out our stated goals and plans. These things which, sadly, we routinely take for granted, happen to us because—and

only because—God wills it and, as such, we are to live each day, each moment, to the praise, glory and honor of the One who graces us with the abilities, talents and gifts we each possess. It is for *His* pleasure, *not* our own, that our purpose in life should be modeled. Anything short of that is worship of self, which is idolatry as far as God is concerned.

In the book, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People Onto God's Agenda*, authors Henry and Tom Blackaby write, **"There is more to determining God's will than assuming that every "open door" is an invitation from God."** In other words, simply because you have the ability or the opportunity to do something you want to do, doesn't mean that particular thing is *God's* will for your life. Not every "open door" is an invitation from God. There is no place in God's word that says we must do our utmost to be more knowledgeable or to "fit in" with the world.

The problem we have, however, is that in those moments when the aforementioned three-headed monster appears—those moments of pride and haughty self-assessment—we have a difficult time accepting the fact that God would dare to say "no" to us. As foolish as it might seem, we forget who is God and who is not. We deceive ourselves into thinking we "deserve" something or that we have "earned" God's blessing and favor, and that somehow gives us the right to just live our own life.

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to live to please *only* Him. Period. That is why we exist. Any other purpose is to deprive God of His rightful place in our life. ■

Darrell B. Harrison is the founder of and lead writer for Atlanta-based **blackthen.com**, an online ministry dedicated to challenging today's African-American families to rely on the traditional Biblical principles of generations past to address the life issues of today.