

# Making God Happy



## SABBATH—JANUARY 11

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Luke 15:11–32; Zephaniah 3:17; Ephesians 5:25–28; Isaiah 43:4; Romans 8:1; Mark 9:17–29.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “The Lord your God is with you, a Powerful One Who wins the battle. He will have much joy over you. With His love He will give you new life. He will have joy over you with loud singing” (Zephaniah 3:17, NLV).

**IMAGINE** in your mind this scene: On Father’s Day, a five-year-old child comes to his dad with a gift wrapped in a messy way. The boy is very excited as he gives the gift to his dad.

Imagine the father says, “Son, I don’t like your gift. You can’t give me anything that will please me. Anything you can give me, I can get for myself. Anything you give to me was bought with my money or made from materials that I paid for. So, keep your gift. I don’t need it or want it. But I love you anyway.”

Ouch!

What do you think about this father’s words? Maybe the words “mean,” “nasty,” or “cold” come to your mind. Is this the way God feels about us and our gifts? Can we really make God happy? Yes, the good news is that we can make God happy! We may be sinners who want to do evil. But God doesn’t look on us, or the gifts we bring Him, in the way that the father in the story looked on his five-year-old son. So, if we can make God happy, then how do we do that? We need Jesus’ help. We can’t please God on our own. But with Jesus’ help we can be pleasing to God, for sure.



**The boy is very excited as he gives the gift to his dad.**

**MORE VALUABLE THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE  
(Luke 15:11–32)**

As we saw in last week’s lesson, God loves everyone, including the worst sinner. God values people more than we can possibly imagine in our minds. But God hates sin. God loves us and knows what sin does to us.

**Read the picture story in Luke 15:11–32. What does this story about the lost son teach us about God’s mercy and love? What warning does this story give to church members who stay “at home” (in the church), as the older son does?**

Jesus tells a picture story about a younger son who asks his father to give him the gift of money that he will get when his father dies. When the young man asks for this gift before his father dies, he rejects his father and his family. The lost son then goes on to spend all his money until he is poor and hungry. The lost son feels jealous of the pigs because they have more to eat than he does. The son knows that the servants in his father’s house have more than enough food. So, the son decides to go back home in hopes of becoming a servant.

What happens next in the picture story is powerful. Some fathers would not accept this son when he came home. They may say, “You took the money I gave you and cut yourself off from my family. You no longer have a home here.” We would understand completely if a father said these words to a lost son who came back home after doing the awful things he did. In the eyes of some parents, the son went too far to be accepted back home as a son anymore.

But in the picture story, the father (who is a word picture for God) doesn’t say these words. Jesus says, “ ‘The son got up and went to his father. While he was yet a long way off, his father saw him. The father was full of [filled with] loving-pity for him. He ran and threw his arms around him and kissed him’ ” (Luke 15:20, NLV). In those days, the master of the house didn’t run out of his house to meet anyone. But the father’s heart was filled with so much love and mercy. So, he ran out to meet his son. More important, the father welcomed his son back into the family again. The father held a big party to celebrate His son’s coming home. This celebration shows the love and mercy God feels for each person who leaves Him and then comes back to Him. This story shows us an amazing and wonderful picture of God!



**“ ‘He ran and threw his arms around him and kissed him’ ”  
(Luke 15:20, NLV).**

**REJOICING WITH A HAPPY HEART (Zephaniah 3:17)**

Every person who ever lived is very valuable to God. That's why God rejoices when one person is saved.

**Read Zephaniah 3:17. How does this verse help us better understand the picture story of the lost son (Luke 15:11–32)?**

Zephaniah 3:17 shows us that God rejoices when His people are saved. In this single verse, Zephaniah uses almost every word for “joy” and “delight” in the Hebrew language. It's as if no one word by itself can show us God's full delight on the day when one person is saved.

Look at where God is, as this verse tells us. God is “with” His people. In the same way, when the father in the picture story saw his son far off, he ran to him. When God is among His people, His people can come back to Him.

Isaiah 62:4 uses the word picture of marriage to teach the same idea about God. In Isaiah 62:4, God's people will be named “The People God Loves” (ERV). This name means that God delights in His people. God will name the land “God's Bride” (ERV), which means “married.” Why does God name the land “God's Bride”? Because, the verse says, “the Lord loves you. And your land will belong to him as a bride belongs to her husband” (ICB). God will feel the most joy for the time when He gets to be with His people forever. Then He will rejoice over us as the father rejoiced over his lost son in Jesus' picture story in Luke 15:11–32.



**Why does God name the land “God's Bride”? Because, the verse says, “the Lord loves you. And your land will belong to him as a bride belongs to her husband” (ICB).**

**Read Ephesians 5:25–28. What do these verses say about the love God asks us to show in marriage?**

These verses tell husbands to love their wives. “Husbands, love your wives. You must love them as Christ [Jesus] loved the church” (Ephesians 5:25, NLV). And how did Jesus show His love for His church? “He gave His life for it” (verse 25, NLV). So, “husbands should love their wives in the same way. They should love their wives as they love their own bodies” (verse 28, ICB). These verses help us to understand the love that a husband should have for his wife. A husband's love should not be selfish. He must be willing to give up whatever is necessary to love and protect her. In the same way, these verses show us that Jesus loves His people, the church, as part of Himself.

### PLEASING GOD? (Isaiah 43:4)

Why does a mighty God feel so much delight for the people who live on our small planet? Why do we matter so much to an all-powerful God who doesn't need anything? To help us answer these questions, we can break them down into two new questions. First, what delights God? Second, how can people, who are sinners, delight Him? We shall answer the first of these two new questions today. Tomorrow, we shall look at the other question: Why do we matter to God?

**Read Isaiah 43:4; Psalm 149:4; and Proverbs 15:8, 9. What do these verses tell us about God and the delight He feels for His people?**

As we saw yesterday, God can be happy with people because He loves them. He cares about them and wants the best for them.

At the same time, God is not happy when His people do evil. Proverbs 15:8, 9 teaches that God is happy with the prayers of the ones who obey Him. But God is not happy with the offerings and the lives of people who break His law. These verses show us that God isn't happy with evil. The verses also show us that God delights in good and loving people. In these verses, we also see the connection between God's delight and His love. We see this same idea all through the Bible, too.

Psalm 146:8 says, "The Lord loves those who are right [forgiven and accepted with God] and good [holy]" (NLV). 2 Corinthians 9:7 adds, "God loves those [people] who are happy to give" (ERV). Notice what these verses **don't** say. The verses don't say that God loves **only** people who are good or holy, and no one else. The verses don't say that God loves **only** the people who are happy to give. God loves everyone. At the same time, these verses must mean that God loves holy people and people who are happy to give in some special way. What we saw in Proverbs 15:8, 9 gives us a hint: God loves these people and others who love Him because He is happy with them.

**God cares for us so very much. This Bible truth tells us that heaven and earth must be closely connected. What hope does this amazing thought give you? How can this thought fill you with hope when you are going through a very hard time?**



**Proverbs 15:8, 9 teaches that God is happy with the prayers of the ones who obey Him.**

## LIVING STONES (Romans 8:1)

We are sinners. So, how can a holy God accept us?

**Read Romans 8:1 and Romans 5:8. What do these verses teach us about God?**

---

God offers us His mercy before we accept it. Before we say or do anything, God gives us the choice to accept or reject His love. As Romans 5:8 puts it, “God shows his love for us in this way: Christ died to save us while we were bad people [sinners]” (WE; compare with Jeremiah 31:3). When we have faith in Jesus’ saving power, God will accept us and be happy with us.

**Read 1 Peter 2:4–6 and compare it with Hebrews 11:6. What do these verses tell us about how we may make God happy?**

---



**“I pray that God will work through [with] Jesus Christ to do the things in us that please him.”**

Without God’s help, sinners can’t make God happy. But God in His mercy and love made a way to save us. That way is through Jesus. When you “give sacrifices [offerings] to God from your heart” then “God will accept them because of Jesus Christ” and everything He did and does for us (1 Peter 2:5, WE). For sure, we can’t make God happy without faith (Hebrews 11:6). Paul tells us that the “God of peace will give you every good thing you need so that you can do what he wants. . . . I pray that God will work through [with] Jesus Christ to do the things in us that please him. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Hebrews 13:20, 21, ERV). When we answer God in faith, God accepts us because of Jesus. Jesus’ holy life is the only holy life that God accepts. Jesus’ work for us makes us worthy in God’s eyes. Jesus changes us to become holy and loving (1 Corinthians 15:51–57; 1 John 3:2). God’s holy work is not only **for** us, but He works **in** us, too.

**Jesus is working right now in heaven to save you. Why does this idea give you so much hope?**

---

**IMPORTANT ADVICE (Mark 9:17–29)**

God is happy with us when we accept His love. God is the only Person who is worthy of love. God is perfect and holy. He will accept us as holy and worthy of love when we believe in Jesus. Then we become God’s children who will live with Him in perfect love forever. This promise is ours when we have faith in Jesus’ work for us in heaven.

“But,” you may wonder, “can this promise include me? What if I feel I’m not good enough or don’t have enough faith?”

**Read the story in Mark 9:17–29. How does God answer the man in the story? How much faith is enough faith?**

Jesus’ followers couldn’t cause the demon to come out of the boy. Everyone in the story started to lose hope. But then Jesus came. He told the father, “‘Everything is possible for the one who believes’ ” (Mark 9:23, NIV). Then “the father cried out, ‘I do believe. Help me to believe more!’ ” (Mark 9:24, ERV).

Do you see that Jesus doesn’t say to the man, “Come back to Me when you have more faith”? The man’s cry, “ ‘Help me to believe more!’ ” was enough for Jesus.

Without faith, we can’t make God happy (Hebrews 11:6). At the same time, Jesus accepts the smallest faith. When we have faith in Jesus’ saving work for us, we can make God happy. Faith in Jesus helps us to answer God in ways that God accepts. Then God will be happy with us in the same way a human father is happy when his beloved child brings him a sweet gift that isn’t valuable.

We should follow Paul’s advice to “always please the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:9, ERV; also read verse 10. Compare with Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; and Hebrews 11:5). We should ask God to help us care more about the needs of other people: “Love each other in a way that makes you feel close [in your hearts] like [the same as] brothers and sisters. And give each other more honor than you give yourself. As you serve the Lord, work hard and don’t be lazy. Be excited about serving him! Be happy because of the hope you have. Be patient when you have troubles. Pray all the time. Share with God’s people who need help. Look for people who need help and welcome them into your homes” (Romans 12:10–13, ERV).



**The man’s cry, “ ‘Help me to believe more!’ ” was enough for Jesus.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “ ‘Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled,’ ” pages 662–680, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“The Lord is sad when His people don’t think they are worth much. The Lord wants His chosen people to know that they are valuable because of the price He paid to save them. God wanted them. That’s why He sent His Son on an expensive journey to save them. God has a use for His people. God is happy when people ask Him to do big things so that His name will be honored. God’s people may expect God to do big things if they believe His promises.

“To pray in Jesus’ name means much. To pray in His name means that we accept His holy life and love. We also must show His spirit and do the things He did. The Savior’s promise contains the word ‘if.’ The word ‘if’ tells us that Jesus expects us to obey Him: ‘If you love me, you will do the things I command.’ [John 14:15, ICB]. Jesus saves people, but not in their sins. Jesus saves people from sin. When we love Jesus, we will obey Him. Our obedience shows Jesus that we love Him.

“All real obedience comes from the heart. Jesus obeyed God from the heart. If we give Jesus permission, He will help us to live the way He lived, thought, and worked. His thoughts will become our thoughts. His wishes will become our wishes. Then we will naturally do the things that please Him. Our biggest joy will come from serving Jesus. When we know God as we should know Him, we will obey God always. When we talk with God, we will know and understand Jesus better and who He is. Then we will hate sin.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 668, adapted.



**“If we give Jesus permission, He will help us to live the way He lived, thought, and worked.”**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What is the connection between giving and getting? How will giving and getting be different for us in heaven and on the new earth?
- ② Daniel was God’s special messenger. Angels said that Daniel was “chamudot.” In the Hebrew language, “chamudot” means “beloved” or “precious.” The angels said Daniel was “chamudot” three times (read Daniel 9:23; Daniel 10:11; Daniel 10:19). What do God’s words about Daniel tell us about God and how much He loves us? What hope does this amazing Bible truth give you?

## THE THANKFUL CHURCH LEADER

Jong-Moon Yoon is famous for being thankful. He is a leader at a local Seventh-day Adventist church in South Korea. The first words Jong-Moon says are always “thank you!” When someone asks Jong-Moon for help, he says, “Thank you!” When Jong-Moon suffers hard times, he says, “Thank you!”

Jong-Moon carefully follows the teachings of Paul, who wrote, “Whatever happens, always be thankful. This is how God wants you to live in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:18, ERV). People notice Jong-Moon’s thankful spirit.

Jong-Moon owns a café on a beach in Jeongdongjin. Jeongdongjin is one of the most popular places to watch sunrises in South Korea. Many people come to Jeongdongjin to watch the sunrise on New Year’s Day. One of Jong-Moon’s customers was Nanum. When she was a teenager, Nanum sometimes came to the café to enjoy the sunrise while she ate breakfast. Later, Nanum got married and had a daughter named Azsa. Nanum and her daughter often came to Jong-Moon’s café for breakfast. Nanum was always amazed at Jong-Moon’s thankful spirit. When Nanum ordered her food, Jong-Moon said, “Thank you!” When Nanum paid for breakfast, Jong-Moon said, “Thank you!” When Nanum thanked Jong-Moon for a meal, he said, “Thank you!”

During a visit, Nanum had a conversation with Jong-Moon. She learned that he went to church on Saturdays. Nanum never heard about people worshiping on Saturdays. Nanum asked Jong-Moon, “May I go to church with you next Saturday?”

The next Sabbath, Nanum and her five-year-old daughter went with Jong-Moon to his church. The church was a 30-minute drive from Jong-Moon’s café. Church members warmly welcomed Nanum and her daughter. They wanted to know how Nanum learned about the church. Nanum said she came because of the “thankful church leader.”

After church, Nanum told Jong-Moon that she wanted to come again. She said, “If you go to this church, I will follow you.”

Nanum never heard Jong-Moon say the name of Jesus at the café. But she saw that Jesus lived in Jong-Moon’s heart. We preach the Good News about Jesus with more than our words. We preach the Good News in the way we live our lives. Jong-Moon’s example helped a young mother and her daughter to start to go to church every Sabbath. Now, Nanum is praying that her husband will join them on Sabbath mornings.

Part of this quarter’s 13th Sabbath Offering will help Bible workers share the Good News about Jesus in South Korea. Thank you for planning to give a big offering on March 29.

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**When Nanum paid for breakfast, Jong-Moon said, “Thank you!”**



**Jong-Moon Yoon**