

Clean Inside and Out

The righteous keep moving forward, and those with clean hands become stronger and stronger. Job 17:9

As a young boy, I wanted clean hands. So did at least one of my grandsons.

When he first attempted to eat with a fork and spoon, his awkwardness often took over. So, he resorted to using his hands to retrieve what he couldn't stab or scoop. Inevitably, this led to dirty hands. When he noticed the food clinging to his tiny fingers, a frown crept across his face, followed by an extended hand and a cry for help. Either my wife or I quickly came to the rescue. He wanted clean hands.

Job knew a great deal about clean hands, but his fair-weather friends didn't. Job was the unfortunate recipient of Satan's assaults with God's permission. Instead of consoling him, his friends bombarded him with accusations. Evidently, he had sinned. His wife tired of the entire situation and encouraged him to curse God, die, and get it over with. Job, however, maintained that he had a clean spiritual heart and hands. He was not concealing sin or ignoring God.

Thoughts produce feelings, which in turn carry the power to evoke actions. Allowing God to control our hearts (thoughts and emotions) is the only way to ensure our actions reflect our association with him. Simply cleaning up the outside won't change the inside.

Jesus repeatedly warned the religious leaders about only looking good on the outside. A whitewashed tomb still contained deteriorated bones. If we only clean up the outside—turn over a new leaf, without letting God transform our insides—our hands will continue to get dirty again. Much better is letting God renovate the inside first. Then the outside will remain clean because the inside is.

Think of some ways you can keep your inside clean.

Father, help my clean hand reflect my clean heart.

Pleasing God

And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

Children live to please; so do grandchildren.

My wife and I once kept two of our grandsons every day while our daughter worked. Both lived to please us and were quite excited when they did. When they were young, a simple thing such as putting away their toys brought a handclap of joy when they finished the job. They eagerly obeyed when we asked them to fold their hands for the blessing before dinner. They handed us asked-for items without fussing or arguing. And should we say, “Let’s go to Pop’s school,” they headed for the door. Regardless of what we asked, they obeyed. But we knew the time would come when they wouldn’t be as eager to please. The desire to disobey would sneak in, and their sinful nature would rear its ugly head. Sure enough, eventually, it did.

Acceptance—a basic human need—explains children’s eagerness to please. They satisfy this need by pleasing others and receiving their praise, approval, or thanks. Being accepted results in happiness and healthy living. Feeling unaccepted delivers the opposite.

Children aren’t the only ones born with an innate desire to please. I also have this inborn need for God’s acceptance. My instincts drive me to worship and attempt to please God. If I neglect or ignore this need, I’ll find myself going down paths of rebellion—just as children do when they reach the “terrible twos.” But I’ll gain God’s acceptance if I move toward this instinctive desire.

Faith in what Jesus did on the cross is the only way to please God. Faith that he has an eternal home awaiting us. Faith he’ll see us through every trial. Faith he can show us abundant living. Faith he’ll work all things for our good even when they aren’t good. And faith he’ll enable us to do what he’s given us gifts to do. Faith, plain and simple.

Faith in God drives us to obey him, and this is the only way we can please God.

Make sure you are living to please God, not someone else.

Father, enable me to please you by living a life of faith in your Word and promises.