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# Escaping the People Pleaser Trap

7th in a series of 9

## **Announcement:** marlin

1. We heard from the quiz teams late last night. TL #1 won 4 out of 7 matches and got into the semi finals of the fun bracket. TL #2 won 2 out of 5 and all their matches were very close. TL #3 won 5 out of 9 and also went into semi finals of the fun bracket. They had a great trip out, they are staying healthy and have really enjoyed getting to know their host families.

2. Bethany Kauffman took six individuals from TL and went to LBC's Children's Ministry Conference yesterday and they had a blast! They were challenged with new ideas for our children and were recharged with passion for ministry. Bethany and staff, thanks for investing in our kids.

3. We have an exciting spring and summer ahead, so pull out your planners and I have a bunch of dates for you. You can go to our website at [www.TimberlineChurchPa.com](http://www.TimberlineChurchPa.com) and right click on 'What's happening' for the March & April events, but the rest of this is for long term planning! This coming Sunday March 29 at 7 pm is our Good Friday Service.

Easter Sunday morning we will have our regular service times, regular PH, donuts, coffee, juice and milk from 10:00 – 10: 30 a.m. in both the café and the lounge

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April 21 - Celebrate the Arts, morning & afternoon

April 28, 5:00 – 8:30 p.m - Family Fun Night at BRR

May 19 at 7:00 p.m. – Children of the World Choir – at LV – big bucket offering!

June 17-21, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. - Kids Adventure Camp - (3 yrs – 8<sup>th</sup> gr.)

June 23 at 10:00 a.m. - Outdoor Service, No PH, with an afternoon Chicken Bar-B-Q

July 1-6 - Youth Mission Trip

July 7 – No Sunday morning Church Service

July 14 - Baptism – rain date July 21

Sept. 8 - Celebrate Adoption with an afternoon pig roast.

3. Ken - announcement

**Interview with Robby:** Invite Robby Gingrich up. Robby recently did a 40 day fast with a variety of things he gave up.

1. So tell us about your fast and how long you did do each leg of the fast?
2. What prompted you to do this?

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3. What was the most important learning that you took from this experience?

**Slide #1**

4. How did 'The Blessed Life' and 'The Total Money Makeover' impact your life and what changes did it bring about?

5. What was the incredible blessings that you received from you obedience?

6. On the weekend you got your tax return back... God spoke to you very specifically about one thing you needed to do with that return, what was it?

**Bucket offering:**

**Slide #2 Series:** It's amazing to think that we are actually beginning to wind down this series. If you are a first time guest at TL, welcome to week seven of 'You Drive Me Crazy'. This is a series where we tackle the tough components of relationships. These have been some of the most intense messages we have ever presented here at TL and yet responses have indicated that they have been incredibly helpful and we are grateful for Rick Warren for providing the background for these sermons.

I would like to say a special thanks to the Creative Ministry Team for the hard work they have done through the skits, visuals and illustrations that have helped bring color to these messages. They are Chris Hess, Sherry Donnell, Bill & Courtney Phippen, Liesl

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Nafziger, Shannon McDowell and Dawn Waltman.  
Let's give them a hand. Let's go to our notes.

On a scale from 1 to 10, how much do you care about what other people think of you? Do you fear rejection from others? Does the disapproval of others ever impact what you say or what you wear? Do you say 'yes' sometimes just because you are afraid to say 'no'? Are you just a collection of the 'expectations' of others? Do you do things you don't want to do, just to fit in? Are you a people pleaser? At the top of your notes circle a number that identifies where you are at in response to these questions.

If you can identify with these questions, you are not alone because the Addiction of the Approval of Others is widespread and can destroy your happiness.

### **Slide #3 Title: Escaping the People Pleaser Trap**

If we don't deal with the expectations of others in a healthy way, we will be miserable most of our lives and we will be controlled by other people. We will allow them to put us in their box and we will end up living the life... daddy wanted us to live, or the life... mom wanted us to live, or the life... our kids wanted us to live, or the life...

our spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend wanted to live. If we don't learn how to escape the people pleaser trap we will end up missing the gifts, plans and purposes that God has in mind for us!

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**Slide #4 Key Verse: Proverbs 29:25 TEV** It is a dangerous trap to be concerned with what others think of you, but if you trust the Lord, you are safe.

The NIV calls it a snare. The Msg calls it 'disabling', but no matter what anyone calls it... it's a trap!

**Traps:** If you are observant this morning you may have noticed that we have a variety of traps hanging around here and we want to talk about them.

**Slide #5 Catch and Release** – This is the most gentle of traps and is probably the only trap up here that is PETA approved. Here is how it works. I'm told that if a squirrel gets caught in one of these traps it will be spinning at about 3300 Revolutions per Minute. This trap doesn't kill or maim but rather, locks the animal in.

**Slide #6 Rat Trap** – This is a rat trap and it is a big trap.

**Slide #7** This is what it looks like in comparison to a mouse trap. It is not a catch and release, it is a catch and kill trap. You put the cheese here, set it and then the rat goes for the cheese moves the trigger...rat dies.

**Slide #8 Japanese Beetle** – Here is how it works. You put lure in the top cylinder and when the beetles fly to it they hit the tube and fall down the funnel into the bottom. They aren't smart enough to figure out how to crawl back out. This trap disorients the Beetles.

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**Slide #9 Minnow** – Here is how it works. You put it in the creek. They swim in one end and can't figure out how to get out. This trap confuses the minnows.

**Slide #10 Muskrat** – This is a flat spring trap and it is primarily a leg trap for muskrats. Here is how it works. You place in the path of where muskrats travel, the muskrat steps into it and... and he is caught. It generally doesn't kill him.

**Slide #11 Fox and Coon** – This trap is a little stronger and has double coil springs on it and is often used for fox or coon but again it's a leg trap. Place in path.... he steps in.... he's caught!

**Slide #12 Coyote** – This the strongest leg trap that I have this morning. Again it has double coil springs and I'm told this trap is strong enough to use for a coyote. Place in path.... he steps in.... he's caught!

**Slide #13 Conibear Trap** – It is known as a 'body grip trap' and it does just that, it grips bodies in a not so friendly fashion. This is a deadly trap and can be used on land or under water. Place in path.... he walks or swims through it.... he's dead! Although not very large, this trap has the strength to break your arm.

**Slide #14 Mole** – This is a mole trap and is deadly to the mole and painful to any person who doesn't respect it. Here is how it works. You place the stakes on either side of the mole tunnel, the mole comes a

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cruising down the tunnel and pushes the trigger... and the mole is impaled!

As you can see there are a multitude of traps designed to catch animals; some made to catch and release, some designed to just catch and some are created to kill, but they all have one primary purpose... to eliminate freedom and this is intent of the **People Pleaser Trap**... it steals our freedom and prohibits us from being what God has called us to be.

This morning is in two parts. Part One: We will be looking at what makes a **People Pleaser Trap** a trap?

Part Two: We will learn how to escape or avoid the **People Pleaser Trap**. But before go any further we need to understand that getting the approval of others is not wrong in and of itself but it is actually a legitimate need.

Jesus pleased his Father and his Father gave him his approval.

**Slide #15 Matthew 3:16-17** As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Parents, there is no better affirmation that you can give to your children then to tell them you love them and that you are well pleased with them. Tell them

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this today, before the sun sets. I believe that one of the greatest gifts my parents gave me... was their approval. They gave it to me freely and I didn't need to spend a lifetime trying to gain it.

If we have no desire to please others it could indicate that we are narcissistic, self centered and egotistical. Finding approval from others is a legitimate need and we need a certain amount of it, but when we become **obsessed** with pleasing others, and this is what we are going to talk about this morning, we might as well walk into the trap, trigger the door and say goodbye to our freedom.

So how can '**People Pleasing**' become a trap? Let's go to our notes.

**Slide #16 People Pleasing is a trap because:**  
**1. It causes us to miss God's purpose.**

We cannot be worried about being what everyone else wants us to be and be focused on what God created us to be at the same time.

**Slide #17 1 Thessalonians 2:4-5 NLT** For we speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts.

If we are preoccupied with trying to be what our parents or boyfriend or coworkers want us to be and if we are worried about meeting their expectations... we



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may very easily miss out on what God has in mind for us.

Here is one thing I learned; many people have a plan for our lives. Do you realize that! Friends, coworkers, family members and spouses often have a great plan for our lives... they pick out people for us to date and jobs we should pursue and churches we should go to and products we should buy... but the big question is... is that God's plan? Our life purpose is to please God... everything else needs to conform to that!

**Slide #18 People Pleasing is a trap because:  
2. It keeps us from growing in our faith.**

When we try to please everyone else, it stunts our ability to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Think about it; when God is big in our lives other people have less power. Their influence is significantly diminished when God is big!

But on the flip side; when we allow people to become big... God becomes diminished and we end up giving to other people what really belongs to God. If we are not careful we end up giving the authority and influence that belongs to God... to other people!

**Slide #19 Key Verse: Proverbs 29:25 Msg** The fear of human opinion disables; trusting in God protects you from that.

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The fear of human opinion disables! The word 'disables', means to make ineffective or to cripple. If we 'disable' something we take away its power. If I disable any of these traps, they have no power to harm. Human opinion disables our trust in God. A 'People Pleasing Mentality' cripples our ability to grow in faith.

God and people can't both be of equal size in our lives, so we must choose, who are we going to give our allegiance to? Whose approval are we going to really seek?

**Slide #20 People Pleasing is a trap because:  
3. It causes us to sin through peer pressure.**

When our kids get caught doing something that they shouldn't be doing, they often respond with that timeless comeback, 'everyone else is doing it!' And what do we say? What has every parent said since the Garden of Eden: 'If your friends jumped off a bridge, would you jump off a bridge too?' This question comes out of the 1936 Parenting 101 Handbook and it is guaranteed to make your teenagers roll their eyes. What a dumb question! Or is it?

God seems to be of the opinion that we have a strong propensity to do what others are doing.

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**Slide #21 Exodus 23:2** Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd...

Siding with the crowd, right or wrong, has been around since the OT & NT. Here are a few examples:

Twelve Israelite spies were sent out by Moses to go and spy out the Promised Land. After they came back two of the twelve spies were ready to trust God and go take the land. Ten of them were skeptical and these ten people convinced an entire nation to mistrust God. The nation of Israel gave in and jumped off the bridge with the ten spies.

Saul, when he became the newly appointed king over Israel was instructed by the prophet Samuel to eliminate all the idolaters and worshipers of false gods. Saul decided not to do it... because of the people. The people convinced him to disobey God and he gave into the pressure and cared more about pleasing the people than pleasing God. Saul jumped off the bridge along with the people.

Peter, one of Jesus' disciples and closest friends spent three years watching Jesus perform miracles and minister to people. He had seen Jesus walk on water and then he himself... walked on water. He promised to stick by Jesus unto the end and he almost made it. When Jesus was arrested he was the first to pull out his sword. But then Jesus didn't turn on his power and jump in the fight, but instead told him to put

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his sword back. Peter finally realized things were heading in the wrong directions and he gave way to fear and allowed peer pressure to overwhelm him. He denied he even knew Jesus in order to please a very small crowd of servants. He gave in and along with the servants jumped off the bridge.

The people pleasing trap can drive us to fear and cause us to sin; the Bible is full of these kinds of stories.

**Slide #22 People Pleasing is a trap because:  
4. It causes hypocrisy in our lives.**

When hypocrisy invades our lives we become like a chameleon.

When I was a kid we lived in Wilmington Delaware near Fairfax Shopping center along Concord Pike and they had a store called 'Hoys 5 & 10', where we would buy chameleons.

**Slide #23**

How many of you have ever seen a chameleon, not the Chameleon Club, but a chameleon. A chameleon is a small green lizard type animal that changes colors depending on its surroundings. If you put it on green it stays green, if you put it on brown, it turns brown!

I was talking to a guy the other day and he told me that by the time he graduated from college, he was a poster child for hypocrisy. He was a chameleon! When he was around Church people he talked about

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God and how much he loved Jesus. When he was with the boys he took on a whole new language and when he was with the girls he took on a whole new behavior. It's an exhausting lifestyle to be constantly trying to figure out who we are suppose to be and how we are suppose to act.

**Slide #24 Luke 16:15 TEV** You make yourselves look good in other people's eyes but God knows your heart.

God wants us to be congruent inside and out regardless of who we are around or what context we are in. He wants us to be congruent. Not full of duplicity. Not changing with the terrain. The fear of disapproval can cause us to compromise our values and say things that are socially acceptable and politically correct instead of what is true.

**Slide #25 People Pleasing is a trap because:  
5. It silences our witness.**

People pleasing silences our ability to share the simple truths of who Jesus is and how he has changed our lives. When we are focused on pleasing others, we just don't do this.

There's a story in the Gospel of John chapter 9 that illustrates this perfectly. Jesus rolls into town and heals a man who was born blind. You would think that this would create a time of celebration and declaring God's greatness. However, it just doesn't happen that way. Since Jesus healed on the Sabbath the religious

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leaders were all bent out of shape and so they called in the formerly blind man and tried to figure out what had happened.

When they didn't get the answers they wanted they called in his parents and instead of saying, 'he just healed my son! Isn't he amazing! He must be God with skin on.' They said, 'don't ask us, ask him, he is of age, let him speak for himself!' They had a fantastic opportunity for witness and they blew it, because they were afraid of the Jews! They were afraid they would get put out of the synagogue. Their witness was silenced.

**Slide #26 John 12:42-43** Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

Sometimes silence is golden, but in some cases, it's just cowardly. The desire to fit in traps us, it locks us in or smacks us over the head or disorients us... so that we will not speak!

How do we avoid or escape this 'approval addiction?' In other words, how do we break free from this **People Pleaser Prison?**

The answer is right here. It's all in the mind. We need to change the way we think, because this particular crazy maker is in our mind. When we allow the fear of disapproval or the fear of conflict or the fear of

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rejection to control our thinking... all kinds of crazy makers are going to run our lives! They are going to dominate us and we are going to miss out on all the good stuff!

**Slide #27 Romans 12:2** Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

In other words, the way we change our lives is to change our minds. The way to change our lives is to change the way we think.

**Slide #28 John 8:32** Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

So let's learn the truth this morning. Let's go to our notes and learn six truths that will set us free.

**Slide #29 Truths that will set us free:**

**1. Even God can't please everyone!**

Isn't this a great statement! Did you ever think of this before? When this past Super Bowl was playing, some were praying for the east coast to win and some were praying for the west coast to win. What is God suppose to do? Someone is going to be disappointed!

Some people pray for rain because they are farmers or they make a living on water damage. Other people

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pray for sunshine because they are going shopping or playing softball. Someone is going to be disappointed!

Tony and others like him that love to play in the snow and those of you that make a living by plowing snow are praying for one last snow storm. Some hate snow because it complicates their lives and make them late to work so they are praying that it will never snow again and if that is your prayer... move to Florida. But the point is... someone will be disappointed! Even God can't please all of us!

Only a fool would try to do what God can't do. Who do we think we are! The reality is... we are going to disappoint a lot of people in our lifetime and we need to accept it and move on!

**Slide #30 Luke 6:26** Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.

What does 'woe' mean? Woe means bad news. If everyone likes us it means we stand for nothing. It means we are a chameleon. We are a cop out, a wimp and we are wishy-washy. If everyone likes us, we have no convictions and no beliefs and we will be identified with the false prophets.

The only time in our lives that we can be guaranteed that people will speak well of us, is at our funeral! Did you ever notice that? I get amazed at how people change when they die, they become perfect!



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So just remember, even God can't please everyone!

**Slide #31 Truths that will set us free:**

**2. We don't need anyone's approval to be happy!**

We don't need it. Not only may we never get it, we don't need it. Happiness is a choice. We are as happy as we choose to be. What other people think of us has no relationship to our happiness unless we choose to let them manipulate us. We don't need other people's approval to be happy. Happiness is a choice.

I would image that there are some here today who have spent a lifetime trying to please an unpleasable person. It may be a parent or a boss or a sibling. Maybe they said things like, 'You're never going to amount to anything. You can't ever get it right or why can't you be like your sister?' And you keep trying, and trying and trying and the reality is... if you haven't gotten it by now... you're not going to get it!

But here's the good news. It's not about us, it doesn't say anything about us and it's not our fault! Is their problem! Remember the boundaries sermon several weeks ago. It is their plumbing that has sprung a leak, not our plumbing and we don't need to fix what is not ours!

The grades we didn't get or the friends we didn't make or the games we didn't win... its' not our problem! We

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did our best and since they were unpleasable and would not give us their approval... it's their problem and we need to go elsewhere for affirmation! And there is a great place to go!

### **Slide #32 Isaiah 51:12-13 NLT**

I, yes I, am the one who comforts you. So why are you afraid of mere humans, who wither like the grass and disappear? Yet you have forgotten the Lord, your Creator, the one who stretched out the sky like a canopy and laid the foundations of the earth.

God will comfort us. He is the one who will meet our emotional needs. People are like grass, they wither, they die, and they slide off the scene, so why should we look to others for true comfort? It's unfair to them and it's disappointing to us.

### **Slide #33 Truths that will set us free:**

#### **3. What seems so important now is temporary.**

The reason we become a people pleaser is because we tend to put more emphasis on the here and now than in eternity. If we have short-term thinking instead of long-term thinking, we are going to get messed up. So many times, what we think is important now is only temporary.

Here is an illustration. Think back to first grade... what was important to us then? Can we climb the monkey bars without falling, will we ever learn to read, and does Bobby like me? Think about it... by high

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school we could care less about the monkey bars and we can read with no problem and we most likely think Bobby's a jerk.

But now in high school, we are concerned about who we are going to ask to the prom and if we will pass our driver's test and what we are going to do after high school. And by the time you are my age you will have forgotten the name of the person you took to the prom, you will be tired of driving and you will be in a job so long you will forget what it's like to be without one.

What is so important now, doesn't matter five, ten or fifteen years later. It just doesn't!

Maturity comes when we realize that every one we think is so important isn't and every thing we think is so important isn't. This is maturity. What seems so important to us now is often only temporary.

**Slide #34 1 John 2:17 TEV** The world and everything in it that people desire, is passing away; but those who do the will of God will live forever.

Notice the comparison between short-term thinking and long-term eternal perspective. Short-term thinking leads to people pleasing, because all the stuff I think is important, isn't and it passes away! And long-term thinking leads to freedom for eternity. If we stay focused on the short-term thinking we are going to become preoccupied with trying to please people.

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**Slide #35 Truths that will set us free:**

**4. We only need to please One person.**

The reality is... we only need to please one person and this is our Creator, our God and our Savior. He is the only one because he has a purpose for our lives! This simplifies things enormously. We only need to live for an audience of one. We only need One person's approval... God's approval! Jesus said it this way.

**Slide #36 John 5:30 NCV** I don't try to please myself, but I only please the One who sent me.

We may have never realized this, but People Pleasing is a form of idolatry. Anything that replaces God in our lives becomes an idol or a god. Success can be an idol. Money can be an idol. Sex can be an idol. A relationship can become an idol. If that relationship to our girlfriend, to our wife, to our boss, to our friend is more important than God...it is an idol... it is a god.

When we become a People Pleaser, we have allowed something else in our lives to take first place and this idol can become a god because their opinion matters to us more than God's opinion. And the reality is... we only need to please One person.

**Slide #37 Truths that will set us free:**

**5. One day we will give an account of our lives.**

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We need to remember this one. This is the People Pleaser Solution. One day we will give an account.

**Slide #38 Romans 14:12** Yes, each of us will have to give a personal account to God.

When we remember this, when we have this long-term thinking, it's going to change what we say, what we do, and who we try to impress. When we realize that we are going to give an account for every word we say and every action we take, it's going to give us the confidence to seek the approval of only One person, instead of being politically correct or socially acceptable.

**Slide #39 Truths that will set us free:**

**6. God shaped me to be me.**

God shaped me to be me, not someone else. God doesn't want me to be you. God doesn't want you to be me.

Someday when we die and stand before God he is not going to ask, why weren't you more like your brother, your dad or your mother? He is not going to say, were you popular? Did you make everyone happy? Did you make sure you didn't ruffle any feathers? Did you become what others wanted you to become?

No, he's going to say, did you become who I made you to be? Did you fulfill the purpose I created you for?

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**Slide #40 Romans 12:2 Ph** Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity!

'Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold'... this is referring to the People Pleaser trap. Don't let them do it!

'But let God remold your minds from within'...this is where it starts... in the mind. This is what happens when we learn the truths that will set us free.

'So that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity!'

God's purpose for our life is good. Other people's purpose for our life is not good. God didn't put us on earth to fulfill the purpose of someone else. God put us on earth to fulfill his plan for us. This plan of God for us is good. It meets all his demands and moves us toward the goal of true maturity.

These six truths will set us free. If we allow them to burn into our memory, they will guide us and they will keep us from being controlled by crazy makers who want to push us into their mold.

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Will you stand up and be who God made you to be and do what God has called you to do and say what God wants you to say?

There's only one person in the universe who knows you completely, who accepts you unconditionally, and who knows the purpose you were created for, Jesus Christ.

So if we don't know him, we need to get to know him today. And even if we do know him, we need to make sure that his opinion of us matters more than anyone else's opinion. This is the greatest anti-crazy maker move ever!

**Benediction: Jude 1:24-25**

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy-- to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!  
Amen