

## Fear of Man (People pleasing and its effects on the home)

*When People are Big and God is Small* – Ed Welch

*People Pleasing* – Lou Priolo

*Courage: Fighting Fear with Fear* – Wayne and Josh Mack

General Scriptural foundations:

### James 3:13-18

*13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.*

*14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.*

*15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.*

*16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.*

*17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.*

*18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

### Proverbs 29:25

*The fear of man brings a snare,*

*But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.*

### Galatians 1:10

*For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.*

### Matthew 10:28-33

*28 “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

*29 Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.*

*30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

*31 So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.*

*32 “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.*

*33 But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.*

### Acts 5:27-29

*27 When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them,*

*28 saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”*

*29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.*

### 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6

*1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,*

*2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.*

*3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;*

*4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.*

*5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—*

*6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.*

<https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/essays/facing-giants-by-fixing-gaze/>

"We should be afraid when physically threatened. It is certainly not sinful for your adrenaline to be flowing when you are being fired upon. But fear of man is fear run amok. It might start with the very natural fear associated with being vulnerable and threatened. At times, however, this alarm is not regulated by faith. It becomes fear that is consumed with itself and for a time forgets God. It becomes a fear that, when activated, rules your life. In such a state, we trust for salvation in others." - Jim Fain – my grader for my ACBC cert exams

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According to Edward Welch, "We fall into fear of man when we desire the approval of others so much that we need them, (for ourselves), more than we love them, (for the glory of God.)."

As we consider the effects on our families of the fear of man, or "people-pleasing," we really need to consider our examples. You have probably heard, but maybe don't keep at the front of your mind, because I didn't when my kids were small, that the training our kids receive from us is more "caught" than "taught." You can tell them the Bible is the standard, but if you aren't living in a way that *shows* the Bible is your priority – reading, studying, meditating on it, helping your kids know how to apply it in the day-to-day, as well as the big, issues of their lives, your voice will fall on deaf ears. If they don't see you changing and striving to conform to the Word in all aspects of your own life, they aren't going to care about what you think they should do in conformity to the Word in their own lives.

*Pleasing People* – Lou Priolo

Pages 20, 21 – people pleaser inventory ...

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Derived from *Pleasing People* – Lou Priolo ...

Two sides to people pleasing – love of man's approval and fear of losing someone's approval (respect and favorable opinion), being rejected, or sometimes even fear of conflict.

Symptoms of approval addiction:

**1. He fears the displeasure of man more than the displeasure of God.** Prov 29:25

The love of man's approval is inextricably bound to the fear of man's disapproval. When a people pleaser interacts with others, his thoughts immediately and instinctively run in the direction of selfishness, anxiety, and fear.

A people pleaser is not a peacemaker, but rather a peace lover. A peacemaker is willing to endure the discomfort of a conflict in the hope of bringing about the peaceful resolution. A peace lover is so afraid of conflict that he will avoid it at almost all costs.

**2. He desires the praise of men above the praise of God.**

The people pleaser is a hypocrite. He is a Pharisee at heart. His service to man and to God is contaminated by impure desires. His religion is more *external* than it is *internal*. What he does is done outwardly, with his motive being a strong desire to draw attention to himself.

### **3. He studies what it takes to please man as much as (if not more than) what it takes to please God.**

The people pleaser is so intent on gaining approval that he spends much of his time studying the interests, aversions, words, inflections, and body language of people. He is often inordinately sensitive to the countenances of those he is trying to please. When passing people on the street or in the hall, he studies their faces, looking for clues that might reveal their level of approval ...

### **4. His speech is designed to entice and flatter others into thinking well of him.**

He may or may not do it consciously, but his words are designed to cover his flaws and foibles and to cajole others into seeing him in the best possible light. He is motivated by fear rather than by love.

#### 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6

*3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;  
4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak,  
not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.  
5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—  
God is witness—  
6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles  
of Christ we might have asserted our authority.*

A person who knows he is faithful and has therefore been approved by God can speak freely and boldly to others. He does not use flattering speech because he really doesn't care much about pleasing man. It is the person who seeks to please man who doesn't care much about pleasing God and so resorts to flattery or pretext.

- Rarely challenges or even questions the opinions of others
- Prematurely terminates conflicts (usually by yielding, withdrawing, or changing the subject)
- Shades the truth (lies) so as "not to offend others"
- Finds clever ways to subtly introduce his accomplishments into conversations
- Fishes for compliments
- Frequently puts himself down in the hope that others will disagree with his self-assessment
- Finds it difficult to say "no," even when he knows that "yes" will not be the best choice.

### **5. He is a respecter-of-persons.**

Because the people-pleaser esteems the power and influence of men more than the authority and rule of Christ, he respects certain persons above others. His penchant to show favoritism is the result of seeking glory of men above the glory of God.

James 2:1-4

**6. He is over-sensitive to correction, reproof, and other allusions of dissatisfaction or disapproval on the part of others.**

He sees any constructive criticism or suggestion for improvement as a threat to his reputation rather than as an opportunity to grow or as an indication of the reprobate's love for him.

**7. He outwardly renders eye-service to man rather than inwardly rendering sincere (from the heart) ministry to the Lord.**

**8. He selfishly uses the wisdom, abilities, and gifts that have been given to him for God's glory and the benefit of others for his own glory and personal benefit.**

|                            |                  |                   |                  |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Personal wealth            | Beauty           | Honor of vocation | Artistic Ability |
| Verbal ability             | Musical Ability  | Brains            | Family Heritage  |
| Bible knowledge            | Managerial skill | Location of home  | Home Appearance  |
| Children's Accomplishments |                  |                   |                  |

**9. He invests more of his personal resources in establishing his own honor than he does in establishing God's honor.**

**10. He is discontented with the condition and proportion that God has appointed for him.**

"condition" – state of being – health, IQ, social standing, general circumstances, etc.

"proportion" – relative magnitude, quantity, or degree of the condition(s)

The people-pleaser is discontented with his status in life. He longs for more, rather than being thankful for God's many blessings.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 applies to any heart idol:

*He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.*

Temporal things do not satisfy; they only tempt us to further discontentment.

Page 50 – end of chapter 2:

"... there is a time and a place to please all (sorts of) men. It is our motive that dictates the rightness or wrongness of such people-pleasing. The questions to ask yourself are these:

"Do I do it for selfish reasons to cause them to think better of me? Or do I do it out of love, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many?"

1 Corinthians 10:31-33

31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;

33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.

**What are the "Dangers of being a People Pleaser"**

– chapter 3

- Inordinate people-pleasing brings you into bondage by enslaving you to everyone whom you desire to please.**

Think about it. The people-pleaser has many masters as observers.

The people-pleaser is regularly tempted to make decisions based on what others will think of him rather than on what God will think of them.

## **2. The excessive love of praise takes from you the honor you so eagerly seek**

Those from whom the people-pleaser desires to receive honor or whom they would like to impress will eventually be repulsed by the pride that generates these desires.

Think of the proudest person you know. Is it difficult to respect that person? Pride is so obnoxious; we are often tempted to an angry response at the thought of the proud person.

## **3. Immoderate people-pleasing causes you to lose eternal rewards**

In Matthew 6, Jesus warned against practicing righteousness for the praise of men, as the present will be the only reward received. We forfeit the heavenly reward when we pursue the praise of men.

## **4. The inordinate desire for approval blinds you to your own sin**

Remember the Pharisees. Jesus condemned them because they pursued all kinds of external ways to show their righteousness, but completely lacked any real tenderness to what God would have them think, say, and do in a true spirit of humility with service to God and others.

### **How lust for man's approval blinds you to sin**

#### **1. Pride tempts you to exaggerate your virtues**

The proud person forgets ...

James 1:17

***Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.***

... and ...

John 15:5

***"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.***

#### **2. Pride tempts you to minimize your flaws**

Having an exaggerated view of one's virtues may cause a proud person to minimize the terribleness of their sin.

Remember, the most godly people are the ones who are most aware of their own sinfulness, weakness, lack of faith, and need of forgiveness and grace.

#### **3. Pride tempts you to distort and magnify the seriousness of your flaws**

On the flipside, pride can cause a person to overreact to the sins and imperfections in his life. This isn't driven by desire to please God, but perfectionism, which usually flows

from a conscience programmed by an inordinate desire to win the approval of others or the fear of rejection.

#### **4. Pride tempts you to change things in your life according to man's priorities rather than the agenda of the Holy Spirit**

The proud person is concerned about things that don't matter to God. He puts more trust in his own reason than in what the Scripture says about what his priorities should be.

Proverbs 28:26

*He who trusts in his own heart is a fool,  
But he who walks wisely will be delivered.*

#### **5. Pride focuses your attention on changing the outer man more than the inner man**

Changes by the people-pleaser often have little to do with character and more to do with external issues – clothing, home, appearance, car, title, bank account, etc. All of these are given by God and he expectation is that we would steward them well for *His* glory, not our own.

When the people-pleaser pursues the form of “godliness,” it is not to please God, but to win friends and influence people.

#### **6. An excessive love of praise tempts you to believe man's opinion of yourself over God's opinion**

Seeking to please others instead of God is valuing the opinions of fallible man above the opinion of the infallible God. In other words, the standard itself is flawed and inferior. The best way to win approval from *good* men is striving, by God's grace, to have the character of Christ – Philippians 2.

Also, Mark 10:44, 45

*44 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.*

*45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

#### **More Dangers of being a People Pleaser**

– chapter 4

#### **7. The inordinate desire for approval makes you susceptible to flattery and renders you more vulnerable to deception and manipulation from others**

Flattery is a verbal snare. It is cunning and deceitful praise, intended to benefit the one who lays the snare. Flattery makes the good about you seem better than reality, and the bad about you seem less than reality.

Lou Priolo includes an extended section on flattery that is worth going through.

Informing kids to be aware of flattery is valuable. Children can learn to sway their peers (and others) with flattery early on and become experts by the time they are teenagers.

The wise person sees through the flatterer and will not respect or be manipulated by them. Having a reality view of oneself, by regular biblical examination, is the guard against flattery.

## **8. The inordinate desire for approval makes the people pleaser susceptible to many other sinful temptations**

- Saying “yes” when he ought to say “no”
  - o This is a sinful problem when commitments keep us from doing what God would have us do. When our time is filled with activity to please others, doing stuff that God doesn’t care about, we are unable to faithfully serve God and man in a manner that pleases God.
- To be a respecter of persons – show partiality, or personal favoritism
- To give in to peer pressure

### Romans 12:2

*And do not be **conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

“Can you imagine how impervious to influence our children would be if they feared God more than they fear the rejection of their peers? I am persuaded that the *single* best way for Christian parents to insulate their children against peer pressure is to teach them how to identify and dethrone the idol of man’s approval and to replace it with an intense desire for God’s approval.”

### **- To be indecisive**

Essentially, trying to please many masters with different priorities, rather than making decisions based upon the inerrant, infallible, unchanging, Word of God creates indecision. I often “rant” about the fact the unbelievers and certain political identifiers make decisions based upon the current winds, rather than on unchanging principles. We should always consider what the basis for decisions is – intentionally consider it.

### **- To choose the wrong kinds of friends for the wrong reasons**

### Proverbs 13:20

*He who walks with wise men will be wise,  
But the companion of fools will suffer harm.*

### I Corinthians 15:33

*Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.”*

### **- To be tempted to discontentment and greed**

### **- To be timid about sharing his faith**

Along with this, the people-pleaser will be fearful of speaking the truth in love, addressing matters of the heart and sin patterns, as we are called to do with one-another as believers

- **To be hypocritical**  
Doing that which isn't true for appearance-sake
- **To respond defensively when reproved by others**  
To speak before thinking

Proverbs 10:19

*When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable,  
But he who restrains his lips is wise.*

## 9. Immoderate people pleasing robs the approval seeker of his peace and joy

Example: Haman

The people-pleaser is also set-up to be anxious (or worrisome). Worry, fear, and lasting anxiety are sinful.

Philippians 4:6

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

Matthew 6:25-34

25 “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

26 Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?

27 And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?

28 And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin,

29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!

31 Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’

32 For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

34 **“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”**

<https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/articles/courage-fighting-fear-with-fear-a-book-review/>

... how the paradox works: you actually fight sinful fear (of man) with a righteous fear (of God). The fear of the Lord will ultimately extinguish the fear of man.

Finally, how do you become a person with a robust fear of the Lord? How do you overcome fear of man with the obedient, courageous, righteous fear of the Lord? The Macks define fear

of God as “a reflex, an attitudinal and emotional reaction to an accurate understanding and awareness of the glory and majesty of the God of the Bible that causes a person to trust God, love God, obey God, hope in God, and be consumed with God—wanting to honor, magnify, glorify, please, and serve him in every area of life. This fear of God will involve your intellect, your emotions, and your attitudes and actions” (page 223-224).

They show that the only way to know and experience this fear of God is through... learning his Word (Deuteronomy 4:10), praying and asking God for his help (Psalm 86:11), and learning to fill and quiet our minds with thoughts of this great God (Psalm 46:10) (pages 236-252).

<https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/articles/helping-counselees-understand-the-connection-of-fear-of-man-to-trusting-god/>

In Proverbs 29:25 fear of man is described as a “snare.” Paul tells us in Galatians 1:10 that we can’t please God and man and if we please man we are not a servant of Christ.

## Hope

With God there is no reason for doubt.

However, the world’s hope offers no guarantees.

A believer’s hope leaves no doubt because it is grounded in the character of God:

- God will never leave us or forsake us (Romans 8:38-39, Hebrews 13:5).
- God is our refuge and fortress (Psalm 91:1-2).
- God is close to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18).
- God is faithful in all things 1Corinthians 10:13).
- We will have trouble but God has overcome the world (John 16:33).

## Keys to Trusting God

The three keys to learning how to trust God are ...

- understanding His sovereignty,
- understanding His wisdom
- understanding His steadfast love

Having this understanding will lay the foundation for trusting God’s promises and not the snare of the world’s empty opinions.

God’s sovereignty is the supporting foundational piece to trusting God. Scripture informs us that God’s eyes have seen our unformed substance before the beginning of creation (Psalm 139:16). God makes both peace and calamity (Isaiah 45:7) and He made everything for His purpose, both good and evil (Proverbs 16:4). God created good work for us beforehand, and every one of our days are already ordained (Ephesians 2:10, Romans 8:28-29). God is in complete control of our circumstances and their outcomes (Isaiah 46:9-10).

God’s wisdom is the second key to trusting God. Scripture informs us that God’s understanding goes beyond all measure (Psalm 147:5). Every decision He makes is perfect, pure, impartial, gentle, reasonable, and full of mercy (James 3:17). God’s wisdom is beyond

our understanding, His judgments are unsearchable and no one can be His counselor (Romans 11:33-34).

God's steadfast love is the final key for trusting God. God's steadfast love is part of the nature of God's character (Exodus 34:6-7). His steadfast love endures forever (I Chronicles 16:34, Psalm 118,136), and even though the mountains may move, God's steadfast love for us will not be shaken (Isaiah 54:10).

### The Act of Trust

"trust is not a passive state of mind ... it's important it is to pursue God and His promises no matter what the circumstances." – Jerry Bridges

Scripture informs us that ...

- whoever trusts in the Lord is safe (Proverbs 29:25)
- we will be filled with joy and peace as we trust in Him and our joy will overflow (Romans 15:13)
- When we trust in the Lord with all our heart, He will show us the way (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- God encourages us to put our trust in Him by reminding us that He does not grow weary, and His understanding is unsearchable.
- He will renew our strength and we will not be weary (Isaiah 40:28, 31)
- His steadfast love surrounds those who trust Him (Psalm 32:10)

<https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/podcast-episodes/til-232-parenting-and-the-bullied-child/>

... fear of man can manifest itself in the bullied child. It's so easy to develop an overanxious concern about what others think, primarily because it erodes our trust in the Lord. We see in Scripture that the fear of man brings a snare, but by contrast, he who trusts the Lord will be exalted. It's a powerful temptation for them, and we want to help them move from fear of man to fear of God.

<https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/articles/is-god-enough/>

### We are Controlled by What We Love Most

If you love financial security and your finances dry up, you will find out quickly how important this idol is. Does love for God control you even when God's sovereign hand challenges your thinking in this area? Either God controls you and is satisfying or something/someone else does. We cannot serve two masters - Matthew 6:24...

*"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."*

Or take another common illustration: worry about what others think. This is a mind controlled by fear, not God. Fear says, I want others to think well of me therefore I'm controlled by what others think (people pleasing/fear of man). Let's take that thought even farther. What if the Lord orchestrates or allows your reputation to be tarnished unjustly? Is Christ enough because you know God cares about your character (which is what you can control), not reputation?

See how this plays out? We may pray that we surrender all, but do we really surrender all? Our comfort, jobs, ministry, health, reputation? Do we really hold loosely to everything we have and say like Job, "Shall we accept good from God and not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10) "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21) "Though he slay me, I will hope in him." (Job 13:15)

The truth that God is enough is where I want to live 24/7.

To put it into practice is not a simple thing to do. When the day-to-day pressures come upon any of us, we can easily slip back into old thinking patterns. We must press forward through moments and times when life consumes and feelings seem impossible to ignore.

Feelings Don't Rule - Truth does.

<https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/conference-messages/parenting-angry-teens/>

The power of humility. Nothing melts the heart of an angry teenager like a truly humble parent. Humble is not being self-deprecating. It's not having much thought of yourself at all. It's being self-forgetful and not easily offended. It's being not embarrassed by your kids because you're not trying to put on a show for everybody else. You might be disappointed in them. You might be grieved by something, but you're not embarrassed. Fear of man is out the window when you're humble. You won't engage in a control battle when you're humble because you don't want that offense towards them either. The more you're like Christ as a parent, the more it'll force the issue to be between them and God. Ultimately, isn't that where all anger lands, at the foot of the cross?

<https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/podcast-episodes/til-132-mistakes-parents-make-when-they-spank-feat-stuart-scott/>

Sean Peron: You mentioned spanking out of anger, is that common, or what would you say are the most common mistakes that parents make in this regard?

Stuart Scott: Yeah, and there are several. Anger is one of them. Spanking out of anger is probably one of the more common ones, and that's more out of what you want as a parent and they're not willing to heed your instruction, so you get angry and spank. Some parents tend to use spanking for everything; they think there's just one tool in the discipline process. Some parents fail to get all the information. Heard the message last night from Dr. Lambert that there are parents that are slow to hear and swift to speak; they quickly get angry, and that can happen in parenting, you don't get all the information, so you're slow to hear and your swift to speak, rather than the other way around.

Also, they give in to the fear of man, "what will other people think," so that may curtail what they do. Even being afraid of what the child might think, that the child might not like them after they spank, so they don't do it. So, some parents, abandon it altogether and then some parents, they do whatever's easiest, they don't have a process, they discipline their children and they just do it with whatever comes to their mind and that doesn't fare well for a child, they can get pretty fearful of what parents are going to do.

Sean Peron: What corrections can we as biblical counselors offer parents who are making these mistakes?

Stuart Scott: First, know what the Scripture teaches about it, that is in family terms of discipline. There are several tools in the discipline process, just realize Scripture doesn't command just one way of sharing something, that's helpful. Then praying for wisdom, the Lord will grace you as a parent with wisdom, what to do, what's the best thing to do here for the child and the age of the child. Spanking really shouldn't be done after 11 or 12 years of age, they are now more of a young adult. Talk to other godly parents and get some counsel there, that's wisdom as well. Read about it, and probably one of the best things is have a controlled process where the child knows what's coming, how it's going to be administered and there's no surprises. Pray first with the child, ask questions, "what did I tell you to do? what did you do?" Explain what God says, and what you must do in grace and love. Explain the details as what I'm going to do, administer the rod in a few swats, follow-through, and love and acceptance. Maybe talk to them later about what they learned about that what they are going to change, and if possible, pray for an opening to talk something about the gospel of Christ and His grace and love.

This was the contextual answer when he was asked, "do you spank or hit your child?" The man said, "when I raise my child, I encourage a lot, I play a lot, I pray a lot, I teach a lot, and I use cause and effect a lot. So, when I do spank, I do it lovingly, slowly prayerfully and thoroughly, so I don't have to do it often,"