

April 13, 2021

If you love me, keep my commandments. John 14:15

There is nothing quite as wonderful as fresh strawberries ladled over homemade shortcake in the spring. It's one of those special treats that help put the period at the end of a long, cold winter, and my husband loves them.

Strawberries, however, are labor-intensive. They need to be thoroughly washed and rinsed of pesticides and soil, the hulls need to be removed, and the berries cut into pieces. No matter! I can make short work of all that and my "secret weapon" is a biscuit cutter to chop up the berries in no time flat.

Imagine my surprise, then, when my husband took me aside one day to show me another way to cut the berries. With great care, he hulled to spare as much of the berry as possible, and then proceeded with a small knife to cut the fruit into tiny pieces. This took upwards of an hour, and I was incredulous. "My method is faster," I said, "and there is nothing wrong with how I do it."

But then, a strange thing happened. I stopped buying strawberries. I was so bothered that my husband considered my berry prepping to be inferior, that I opted to forego one of springtime's great pleasures. My husband, however, was perfectly capable of going to the store, so he would bring berries home. "Why did you buy strawberries?" I would demand, and he would laugh at my distress. "Don't worry," he always promised me. "I'll cut them, if you wash them." And he did. And it **still** bothered me!

Then, an even stranger thing happened. One day I was in the grocery store and strawberries were on sale. They were beautiful berries; red, vibrant and organic! I bought them, so excited to go home and prepare them for my husband. Sneaking into the house, I made quick work of getting the shortbread in the oven, and washing the fruit. Then I hulled each berry and began the process of cutting them. A cutting board and knife were not as fast as my biscuit cutter, but I was still much faster than my husband in getting the berries into the bowl. He found me as I was finishing up, and literally burst into song at the sight.

To see the joy in his eyes and hear his words of praise was worth setting aside my preference and doing it his way. I had pleased him! I had made him happy! It was one of the most beautiful moments of my marriage.

It occurred to me that this is how our relationship with Jesus can be. We struggle because we want to hold on to our pet desires. We want to do things our way. **We want God to make us happy. Have you ever considered the idea that we have it in our power to make God happy?** If we would only release our control to follow His guidance, and trust in His ways rather than our own, we could know the joy and happiness that comes from pleasing Him.

But this can never happen unless we are in a relationship with Jesus. God is not interested in obedient actions in the absence of a relationship. I accepted my husband's approach in order to make him happy **because** of our relationship. It was not hard. It was not difficult. Jesus is infinitely patient and kind, just as my husband was with me. The change in my heart and attitude took place over several years, but the result was the natural outcome of a continued and persistent relationship. Trying to make Jesus happy, without a relationship with him, is ridiculous--it won't work!

The key is to seek Him for a relationship, to persist in that relationship with Jesus. Out of that, will come the peace, the joy, the restoration and transformation He promises to all who choose Him.

All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. John 3:37