

What Does God Want From Me?

In his little book, *Jesus Rediscovered*, Malcolm Muggeridge confided that his earliest memory was of walking down the road wearing someone else's hat and wondering who he was. In a real sense, the whole of humanity is walking down that same road, tormented by the same question. The question is built in; the answer is not. To be whole we need to know who we are and what is expected of us, but only God knows that. Human beings, being creatures, cannot answer the question. American poet Theodore Roethke expresses in haunting words this profound human yearning:

"I close my eyes to see / I bleed my bones their marrow to bestow / Upon that God who knows what I would know."

Denying the existence of God not only solves nothing but reduces us to an utter meaninglessness.

Accepting by faith that God exists and wants us to seek Him, and that God has spoken to us in His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2), opens up all kinds of blessed possibilities. It is wisdom to listen reverently and learn our duty well. It is evident from the Bible's beginning that man, created in the image of God, was expected to honor his Creator with due reverence and worship Him in a divinely prescribed way. Cain could tell you about that (Genesis 4:3-5). Not everything goes. The foundation of worship had to be faith, and the proper expression of faith was obedience (Hebrews 11:4). The Old Testament prophets speak to our question often. When Israel sought to placate God with the multitude of their sacrifices, Micah told them straight out that God wanted more - "And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:6-8). To the hypocritical shallowness of their worship, Isaiah and Amos and Jeremiah say the same (Isa. 1:10-17; Amos 5:21-24; Jer. 7:21-23). Jesus echoes the prophets by His frequent quoting of Hosea: "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos. 6:6; Matt. 9:13; 12:7). What Jesus and the prophets were saying was not that the sacrificial offerings of the law (Leviticus) were unnecessary, but that God's desire was for far more than that.

What is the lesson here? Do not try to turn God away from getting what He wants from us by offering the part for the whole – even actions that God has clearly required – frequent attendance at church assemblies (Heb. 10:24,25), regular eating of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-29), communal prayers and spiritual singing (Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19,20) et. al. All these are to lead to a higher purpose – our transformation into the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29). What God wants is you and me, ... expressed in the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:28-29). In short, God wants all there is of us, given gladly and freely in the same measure that He has poured Himself out on us.~ Paul Earnhart



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