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What Does God Want From Me?

Mark 12:30-31: (NASB) ³⁰and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. ³¹The second is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

If you ever want to go somewhere, it's usually a good idea to know where you are going and what the path is to get there. The destination of pleasing and serving God is no exception. The problem is there are so many interpretations as to what direction to go and what to take along with you that the average person asking the question, "What does God want from me?" will be overwhelmed by the variety of answers. So, what does God want from me? Stay with us and find out!

Jesus tells us what God wants from us: Mark 12:28-31: Love God with your heart, soul, mind and with all your strength; love your neighbor as yourself.

God wants your heart: (Source: Bible commentary from Jamieson, Faucett and Brown) The Heart: the heart is distinguished both from the "mind" and the "soul." The "heart," then, must here mean the sincerity of both the thoughts and the feelings; in other words, uprightness or true-heartedness, as opposed to a hypocritical or divided affection.

Proverbs 23:26: So what does God want us to have? Here is one approach to Christianity, although it is not our approach:

 **What kind of God wants you to be miserable, Oprah with Joel Osteen, Oprah's Next Chapter**

- *Oprah: Some of the Christians say you're teaching prosperity. I was reading one of your critics and was thinking, why would anybody criticize you for teaching prosperity, because what kind of God wants you to be poor and miserable?*
- *Osteen: That's the way I feel as well. I don't know who would say that you're not supposed to leave your children better than you were before. Plus, Oprah, prospering is not only material things; it's peace in your mind and health in your body and things like that. There is a belief that you are supposed to suffer more and be poor and show your humility - I don't see the Bible that way.*

But are there only two choices - poor and miserable or seeking great prosperity? **Your heart determines what is "treasure" to you:** Matthew 6:19-24: Do you have a bank account with money it? Does that violate Scripture? Is Jesus telling us to not save any money on earth or is he saying something else? We believe he is telling us that our focus should not be materialistic. Jesus did not say that anyone rich *cannot* enter the kingdom, but if our focus is too much on material stuff, our focus will not be on spiritual things. Our hearts direct our "reticular activator" (we talked about that last week - the part of our brain that helps bring things into focus) - the heart directs what we see. Our hearts focus our eyes. So if God wants our hearts, He wants our affection! If our focus is on things here on earth, our affection is divided. That is not what He wants from us, according to His words through Jesus. Wealth can serve you in serving God, but we cannot search for wealth. This idea of needing to pursue wealth is off base from where Jesus instructed. If our heart is on spiritual things, the other things are clearly tools to use in God's service rather than a means to an end.

God wants your soul: (Source: Bible commentary from Jamieson, Faucett and Brown) The Soul: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" with thy soul. This is designed to command our emotional nature: Thou shalt put feeling or warmth into thine affection.

So God wants our undivided affection with our hearts, but now He wants us to include emotion, warmth and feeling. Let's go back to the original Old Testament command from which Jesus quotes.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7: **How important is this command? See the CQ Rewind Bonus Material!**

Did you notice that the original command said *heart, soul and might*. Jesus added *mind*, so perhaps that was in an original translation of the Bible that was since lost.

How can we keep these things always in front of us unless they are driven by our emotions? Back in the Old Testament, they had the tangible miracles from Egypt in front of them. Following God did not require the same faith that we must have. How do we keep that same focus?

Part of your "soul" is that engagement into the undivided affection of the heart. It is the emotional drive behind our actions.

Now a comparison of outward acts of servitude vs. inward devotion: Micah 6:6-8: Should we light a candle? A thousand candles...? Notice the increasingly dramatic offerings...Surely everyone would see your devotion in this! So would this please God? Is this our focus? THAT is the true test of our devotion. These three things cannot be carried out like the sacrifices above. God does not want a repetitive offering. We are to *be devoted* and emotionally engaged in that devotion. Our sacrifice is to be *lived* and felt. Here is an example: Do we go to church just because we are "supposed" to? If so, then God does not have our soul, our undivided affection driven by emotion. He wants the very core of your being. Is this extreme? Yes, but that is what God wants from us.

 **Does fear keep you from your gifts? *Your Gift Part 2, Terri Savelle Foy***

- *There are so many reasons why we don't stir up the gift of God within us. One of the biggest ones, I believe, is fear - just being afraid, being insecure, timidity, whatever it is. In fact, when Timothy was instructed to "stir upon the gift of God" within him, he was also instructed to not have the spirit of fear or timidity, but instead the power of love and self-discipline. But I want you to think about that. What are the gifts and the talents that God has put on the inside of you but you haven't developed them? What is it that you know in your heart you are supposed to be doing but you have been too afraid to just step out and do it - to overcome that fear and just do it?*

Satan sometimes uses the tool of fear to hold us back. Fear is an emotion, and often our emotion derails our devotion. Can we think of an example? **This account is of a demon-possessed boy and his desperate father:** Mark 9:20-24: The father of the child had already asked the disciples to help to no avail. The father had both belief and unbelief and was agonizing in between. Jesus helped him and cast out the demon. God wants our heart - our undivided affection - but He *always* wants our soul - the very core of our emotions that drive us, our full being. God wants more from us than to just show up and nod in agreement. We are either "all in" or not. We are not to be focusing on the accumulation of "things" at the expense of our devotion to and affection for God.

God wants your mind: (Source: Bible commentary from Jamieson, Faucett and Brown) *The Mind: with thy mind* – This commands our intellectual nature: Thou shalt put intelligence into thine affection—in opposition to a blind devotion, or mere devotee-ism.

Now we are to put intelligence into our devotion!

 **Why are some poor, broke and depressed? Oprah with Joel Osteen, *Oprah's Next Chapter***

- *Osteen: Jesus died that we might live an abundant life and to be a blessing to others. I can't be a blessing to people if I'm poor and broke and depressed and don't feel good about myself!*
- *Oprah: If you are poor, broke, or depressed, is that because you don't pray enough...or because you're not in alignment with God?*
- *Osteen: I think it's a mixture of things. I don't think it's just not praying enough, because there are some great people that just haven't broken through in that area.*

Why is it that we assume that all poor people have to be depressed? Is it possible to not be depressed and not have a lot? Of course! We do not believe it is in the destiny of each and every dedicated Christian to have "stuff." We are to be content with what we have and to love the Lord our God with our hearts, mind, soul and strength. Just because you don't *have*, doesn't mean you can't *be*. The Lord is looking for what we *are*, not what we *have*. Proverbs 16:18-19: It is better at times to not have a lot and maintain humility than to divide the spoils with the proud. Matthew 5:3: Oftentimes with "stuff" comes pride and ego that gets puffed up. This is a danger. We are to be doing God's will and not our own. It is not good to just feel good after hearing a sermon, or even after listening to Christian Questions! We must have intelligence behind our devotion. Unless we feed our minds, the emotions will fade. Matthew 11:28-30: Remember, we are taking Jesus' yoke upon us. That implies work.

God wants us to *decide* to be content: Philippians 4:11-13: Did the Apostle Paul have a really great retirement account? No, but he had a dependency on Jesus. He *learned* to be content - he did not just accept his circumstances begrudgingly. *It was his decision to be content.*

God wants us to apply our minds to understanding: 2 Timothy 2:14-16: We want to put in the "sweat equity" that goes into the development of the study of God's word. Do we know *why* we believe what we believe? That's the key. It is not just feeling and emotion; we need to know why we believe what we do and that takes work. Our Bibles should be falling apart from use! **God wants our minds engaged in the work of the Gospel and prepared for the great spiritual challenges to come:** 2 Timothy 4:1-5: Don't follow those who are not leading you down the path of the true Gospel! Only you can know that - if you apply your intelligence and not just listen to your emotions. Is it good enough just to go to church on Sunday or think about the Bible once in awhile? The answer is no if you want to be a true follower of Christ and go beyond just having an appreciation for God.

God wants your strength: (Source: Bible commentary from Jamieson, Faucett and Brown) Strength: *with thy strength* – This commands our energies: Thou shalt put intensity into thine affection—"Do it with thy might." (#Ec 9:10).

How does God want us to apply our strength? 2 Timothy 1:6-8: We are to be zealous for the Lord! Our spiritual adrenaline should be flowing in His service!

 Forces trying to keep us down, Oprah with Joel Osteen, *Oprah's Next Chapter*

- *Osteen: I think that there are forces trying to hold us all down. A lot of people haven't been trained and they haven't been inspired that, hey, you know what? You're in the projects, but you don't have to stay there. God has a plan for your life. And you believe and you pray and you do everything you can. So I think a lot of it is we just accept it. This is the way it's always been. We're always broke, we're always defeated, but you know what? Somebody can rise out of it. You did. You look at that.*

Does God want us to apply our strength to improve our life? 1 Timothy 5:8: Yes, there is action necessary to take care of that which we are responsible. It is a reflection upon the Gospel. This has nothing to do with trying to get rich. **God wants us to apply our strength to self-denial and not self-improvement:** Luke 9:22-25: Here is described a clear road to self-sacrifice...and who wants to go there?!? *Picking up the cross* means dying. Self-improvement is good, but it should be in the context of self-improvement so that you can serve and be more Christ-like. **God wants our self-denial to be complete.**

Our focus in life is to take care of our family obligations. As a Christian we are not obligated to seek our fortune. If you find it, however, how are you using your fortune in self-denial and in serving Christ?

2 Corinthians 12:7-10: God wants us to apply our strength and energy to being able to give Him glory in our weakness. We want to put the important things in place to serve God. We should come to the Gospel to give what we have, and not for earthly prosperity.

(Source: Bible commentary from Jamieson, Faucett and Brown) Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," says the Law, "with all thy heart," or, with perfect sincerity; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul," or, with the utmost fervor; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind," or, in the fullest exercise of an enlightened reason; and "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength," or, with the whole energy of our being!

Now that we have the first Commandment down, it is on to the second:

God wants you to love your neighbor as yourself

 **Leviticus 19, love thy neighbor, Rabbi Jonathan Ginsberg**

- *One of the pivotal and central verses of the Hebrew Bible, the Torah, in the middle of the middle book, Leviticus, the holiness code, it says, love thy neighbor as thyself. What's so fascinating about that is although it is the first time it appears in literature that we know of, if you check almost any culture and you will find exactly the same sentiment.*

The statement, *love thy neighbor*, is even more powerful when we review the context in which it was said.

First, be just: Leviticus 19:15-18: (KJV) ¹⁵*Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.*

Second, be respectful: ¹⁶*Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.*

Third, be compassionate, not vengeful: ¹⁷*Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.* ¹⁸*Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people...*

Fourth, be loving: *...but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.*



All the same message, Rabbi Jonathan Ginsberg

- *(He quotes various cultures throughout history and their same resounding theme.)*

Did all of these cultures present this philosophy in such a specific context?

Zechariah 7:8-10: Justice was to be delivered with kindness and compassion. Imagine if the whole world would apply the principle of loving your neighbor as yourself? Jesus now takes this well-defined teaching from the Old Testament and dramatically magnifies it...**He addresses hateful attitudes - the treatment of others:** **Luke 6:27-33:** We are to pray even for those who mistreat us!!! **He addresses hateful actions:** ²⁹*Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Don't retaliate in like manner evil for evil.* **He teaches practical generosity:** ³⁰*Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.* **He sums up the lesson with profound simplicity:** ³¹*Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.* **He encourages us to step higher than all other cultures:** ³²*If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.* ³³*If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.*

Galatians 5:13-15: This is how we express what God wants from us - by loving our neighbor as ourselves. Did you notice that the concept is introduced in the Old Testament, expanded on by Jesus, and then reiterated by the Apostles? This is a core value.



Observation: So many ancient cultures adopt this philosophy - why is this second commandment (love thy neighbor) and not the first commandment (love the Lord thy God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength) that Jesus proclaimed the most important? Why did the first commandment get lost?

This next Scripture answers that question: **Romans 1:20-22:** We therefore must be sure we do not fall into the same trap. Our world fights against an Intelligent Creator with a grand design.

If we love God first and foremost:

- Our perspective will be long term and from above.
- We will see ourselves as created, and therefore we will be humbled.
- Loving our neighbor will be a full and Godly experience.

So, what does God want from us?

God wants your HEART - your undivided sincerity and affection **Psalms 23:4** **God wants your SOUL - your deepest emotional devotion** **Romans 12:1-2:** Do you want to be a caterpillar or a butterfly? We are to be transformed so that our deepest emotional devotion is in line with God's will. **God wants your MIND - your brightest intellect** **2 Corinthians 10:5:** Have you ever really considered *taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ?* We have to keep bringing our minds back to focus on serving God. **God wants your STRENGTH - the core energy of your life** **1 Timothy 6:12:** It takes strength to fight! Hold on to that which is important!

THEN, once you love God SO completely: God wants you to love your neighbor as yourself **Luke 6:31:** Simple! This is what God wants from us. He doesn't want us to just show up on a Sunday or just appreciate the things of God without devotion. God is above all, and because we love Him so completely, we can therefore love our neighbor as they deserve to be loved.

**What does God want from me?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!**