

What Do We Want From God?

There are as many ways to interpret and understand God as there are human beings in our world. It varies from person to person as much as it varies in our own lives as we face each day's challenges. What we want or expect from God evolves as we age. Our perception of Him alters just a bit with every sermon that we hear, every Bible chapter that we read, and every ordeal that we experience.

Is God a celestial Santa Claus? Does He exist to grant us our wishes? Or is God more of a divine Father figure? Is He someone who accompanies us through our lives, guiding us at critical moments?

Despite our vacillating understanding of Him through our life, I believe our expectations of Him remain the same.

I tend to hear a common theme when I watch television ministers. It goes something like this: "I know what you are thinking. You believe that you are so sinful that God will never forgive you. That you are not worthy of Him. That you have committed some transgression that blocks you from His love and mercy." The minister continues his or her sermon and reveals that God is all-loving, that we can attain salvation by accepting His Son, that if we just reach out to Him our sins will be forgiven – not because of anything that we have achieved but by His mercy and grace.

When I hear these sentiments I do believe that a small part of the target audience suffers from the overbearing weight of sin on their conscience. And while this is considered the first step in changing their lives for the better I sense that it is an ephemeral sensation.

Most people who I have known in my life did not seem afflicted with overwhelming guilt. They believe the tragedies, mistakes, transgressions, and failures in their lives have their origins in other's actions or failures. In my opinion, most people today believe they are merely blameless victims of life's injustices.

So while some may come to God saddled with the crushing guilt of a lifetime of iniquity, I disagree with the preacher who believes we are consumed by our guilt. I do not believe that the primary motivation of most people in seeking God is absolution of their sins.

I base some of my understanding on another theme that is even more popular in sermons today. It instructs us how to get what we want from God.

The preacher tells us how to talk to God, how to pray, how to properly fast, and, most importantly, how to make requests of Him. We have only to ask of Him and it shall be given. It may take time, it may require patience, it may even necessitate some sacrifice but if we ask properly we will have our requests fulfilled.

Perhaps in a world with perfect people we would approach God with a proper sense of humility. But I believe that human nature makes us gravitate more to the popular second sermon. We may not admit that we envision God as a Heavenly Santa Claus but there is a sense that we certainly lean in that direction.

We all know people who “seem” to lead better, trouble-free, more prosperous lives than we do. Why has God granted them such abundance? Why should we be denied from having the possessions, the health, and the opportunities He has so generously given to others? Doesn't the New Testament guarantee us that our requests will be heard and answered? And if so, what is God waiting for? This is the thinking that permeates the minds of most believers.

What do we want from God? It is painful to acknowledge the dissatisfaction, immaturity, and selfishness that consume our human soul. But I believe the answer to that question can be stated in one simple sentence: We want to know what it will take to get what we want from Him.

This is neither the most pious nor mature aspiration but I do believe it is our most prevalent desire.

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