

WHAT GOD EXPECTS FROM THIS RELATIONSHIP

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Acts 17:24–25, 27–28

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth...Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things...That they should seek the Lord...For in him we live, and move, and have our being.

INTRODUCTION: DO WE NEED GOD, OR DO WE WANT GOD?

This text reveals the great imbalance in our relationship with God:

God does not need us—but we cannot exist without Him.

He gives us life. He gives us breath. And in Him, we live, move and have our being.

Yet the God who needs nothing from us still desires that we seek Him.

There is a profound difference between needing someone and wanting someone.

Imagine a father whose grown children call only when they are in trouble. One calls when the rent is due. Another calls when the car breaks down. Another calls when a crisis erupts. Because he loves them, the father always answers.

Then one evening, his phone rings. He answers and immediately asks, "What

do you need?"

The child says, "Nothing. I just wanted to hear your voice. I wanted you."

That call touches the father differently. For once, he is not merely being approached as a resource. He is being desired as a person.

I wonder how often God hears our prayers and already knows why we are calling.

"Lord, heal me."

"Lord, provide for me."

"Lord, protect me."

"Lord, open this door."

But how often do we enter His presence and say, "God, I am not here because I need something from Your hand. I am here because I want You"?

Here is the revelation: Our relationship with God is a two-way street.

That does not mean God needs us or that we relate to Him as equals.

God does not love us because He is lonely.

He does not pursue us because He is incomplete.

God does not need us—God wants us.

Yet while God wants us, we often want only what God can do for us.

John 6 exposes this condition. After Jesus fed five thousand people, the crowd searched until they found Him. It appeared that they wanted Jesus, but Jesus exposed their motive:

John 6:26

Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

They did not return because they wanted Jesus. They returned because they wanted more bread.

When the bread stopped and commitment was required, many walked away.

Jesus turned to the twelve and asked, "Will ye also go away?"

Peter answered:

John 6:68

Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

The crowd was saying, "Where is the next meal?"

Peter was saying, "Where would we go without You?"

The crowd wanted what was in His hand. Peter wanted the One to whom the hand belonged.

The crowd needed a miracle. Peter wanted the Messiah.

This is the question confronting us: If God stopped giving us what we were asking for, would we still want Him?

We spend most of our lives thinking about what we expect from God: provision, protection, forgiveness, guidance and faithfulness.

But notice—every expectation flows in our direction.

We call it a relationship, yet rarely consider God as the other Person in the relationship—what pleases Him, what He desires and what He expects from us.

Have you ever viewed your relationship with God as a mutual commitment—or only as a one-way benefit?

We know what we expect from God.

But what does God expect from us?

1. GOD EXPECTS EXCLUSIVE ALLEGIANCE

"You Cannot Add God to a Heart Full of Other Gods"

Exodus 20:3

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

God's first expectation is exclusivity.

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He declared:

Exodus 20:2

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Then He said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Deliverance established the relationship, and the relationship demanded allegiance.

The One who brought you out must not compete with what you left behind.

God does not ask to be first among many gods. He demands to be God alone. He will not become one priority on a list He created.

A god is anything we trust more than God, fear more than God, obey more than God, or believe we cannot live without.

Jesus said:

Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters...

Eventually, competing loyalties force us to reveal who truly possesses our hearts.

Anything we refuse to surrender to God is competing with God.

The first question is not, "Do you attend church?" The first question is, "Who has your allegiance?"

2. GOD EXPECTS WHOLEHEARTED AFFECTION

"God Does Not Merely Want a Place in Your Life—He Wants Your Heart"

Deuteronomy 6:5

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Jesus called this the greatest commandment:

Matthew 22:37

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

The recurring word is all.

All your heart.

All your soul.

All your mind.

All your strength.

God does not want weekend custody of our hearts. He does not want a Sunday relationship with a Monday-through-Saturday stranger.

We can attend His house without giving Him our hearts. We can sing about Him without longing for Him. We can work for Him without actually loving Him.

God said:

Isaiah 29:13

This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.

Their language was close, but their hearts were distant.

David said:

Psalm 63:1

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee...

David was not simply thirsty for an answer. He was thirsty for God.

We want His hand, but do we seek His face?

We want His gifts, but do we treasure the Giver?

God does not merely want to be believed in; He wants to be desired.

3. GOD EXPECTS RESPONSIVE OBEDIENCE

"Love That Never Obeys Is Only Religious Sentiment"

Allegiance reveals whom we have chosen. Affection reveals whom we love. But obedience reveals whether that love governs our lives.

Jesus said:

John 14:15

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

We do not obey to earn salvation. We are saved by grace through faith. But obedience demonstrates that grace has gained influence over us.

Jesus asked:

Luke 6:46

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Many want Jesus as Savior but resist Him as Lord. We want Him to rescue

us from consequences while refusing to surrender the choices producing them.

We want His direction until it contradicts our desires.

We want His will until it interrupts our plans.

We want His Word until it challenges what we have already decided.

Whenever God's will and my preference collide, obedience reveals who occupies the throne.

God does not expect sinless perfection from developing believers. But God expects surrender—a heart that says, "When Your Word corrects me, I will change. When Your Spirit convicts me, I will respond."

1 John 2:3

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

A Bible we quote but refuse to obey has informed us without transforming us.

4. GOD EXPECTS TRANSFORMING FRUIT

"God Did Not Enter Your Life Merely to Comfort You—He Came to Change You"

John 15:8

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Fruit is the outward evidence of an inward connection.

Jesus said:

John 15:4

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself...no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

A branch does not produce fruit by visiting the vine once a week. It bears fruit by remaining connected.

God loves us as we are, but He loves us too deeply to leave us as we are.

If we have walked with God for years but remain governed by the same pride, bitterness, dishonesty, jealousy and unforgiveness, we must ask whether we have been abiding in God—or merely practicing religion around Him.

Galatians 5:22–23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance...

Fruit does not mean we become impressive. It means we become increasingly like Christ.

God is not only concerned that we arrive in heaven; He expects heaven to begin appearing in us.

The proof of relationship is not merely how loudly we speak about God. It is what God is quietly producing within us.

5. GOD EXPECTS A PUBLIC STATUS

“God Will Not Be Your Secret Relationship”

Matthew 10:32–33

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

There is something deeply insulting about wanting the benefits of a relationship while refusing to acknowledge the person publicly.

If someone enjoys your love in private but denies knowing you in public, that is not intimacy. It is embarrassment.

God is saying, "If we are in relationship, this relationship must have a public status."

This does not mean performing religion to gain attention. There is a difference between performing for people and refusing to identify with Christ before people.

One is hypocrisy.
The other is denial.

We acknowledge Him at church but conceal Him at work.
We call His name in crisis but avoid His name in conversation.
We want Him associated with our blessings but hesitate to associate ourselves with His standards.

Jesus said:

Luke 9:26

For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed...

The test is not whether we acknowledge Christ where He is celebrated. It is whether we acknowledge Him where He may be criticized.

Faith that must remain hidden to remain comfortable has made comfort its god.

God does not require every believer to stand behind a pulpit. But no one should be able to know us deeply without eventually discovering that we belong to Jesus.

If Christ was not ashamed to identify with us on the cross, we should not be ashamed to identify with Him in the world.

CONCLUSION: WHAT CAN GOD EXPECT FROM ME?

We know what we expect from God, but what can God expect from us? Can He expect exclusive allegiance, wholehearted affection, responsive obedience, transforming fruit and public acknowledgment? God expects to be chosen exclusively, loved completely, obeyed willingly, reflected visibly and acknowledged publicly. These things do not earn salvation; they are our response to salvation. The crowd wanted what was in Christ's hand, but Peter wanted Christ Himself. May our answer be: "Lord, I choose You. I love You. I will obey You. I will allow You to change me, and I will not be ashamed to acknowledge You." Because the greatest evidence of a healthy relationship with God is not that we continually want something from God—it is that, above everything else, we want God Himself.