

What Does God Want? (2)

By Bob Young

*To be respected and revered, according to his nature,
honoring who he is and recognizing who we are*

Last week, we began a new series: what does God want from his human creation? This is a series for churches, for church leaders. But this is also a series for Christians who want to share the gospel. And, this is a series for people who are seeking God and trying to understand his will and his way.

As we Christians attempt to make people aware of God and his plan for their life, what are the foundations? What are the most important details? What must we share? What must we say? Is what we are doing working? Are we evangelizing effectively? Is the church growing? Is mission work bringing souls to Christ and planting more and more churches? Is there a better way?

A quick review. In the first study, I suggested that the first desire of God for his human creation is that we recognize God for who he is, according to his nature. Understanding God's desire and purpose begins with accurately understanding God. Companion pieces include understanding reality, the nature of our world, and also who we are as human beings, God's creation. Of great concern are questions such as, how we communicate the reality of God's presence and involvement in our world, how we communicate his nature, and how we communicate his purposes for his creation.

This study deals with another essential question: our worship of God. What does God want from his creation? God desires to be respected, to be revered. For human beings with freedom of choice, God wants us to choose to worship God.

Respect and reverence God; worship God. God wants people to worship him—as he is, that is, according to his nature. I am simply affirming that God created a world that calls attention to his majesty, splendor grandeur. Inanimate creation declares the glory of God unceasingly. God created a world that he called good, a world that declared his honor. All creation worships God automatically, except for human creation. Human beings, made in God's image, have a choice, to honor and worship God, or to reject God.

God's desire is that his creation honor him and worship him. Further, the worship God desires will be based on and consistent with his nature, who he is. God does not want us to honor false gods, or false ideas about him. God wants us to worship him for who he is. That means that a correct understanding of worship begins with God, who God is. Worship is given by the creation to the Creator. The worshipful heart recognizes God and recognizes the nature of reality (not God) and of the created being. Think with me. If we are correctly reading Scripture, beginning with Old Testament examples of worship, we quickly see that acceptable worship is defined by God and his nature and not by human beings and our preferences.

At some level, worship and respect are possible even before a committed response to God (Romans 2; Acts 10). Worship is God-defined, not human-defined. Look at the religious landscape today. Many churches have distinguished themselves by emphasizing various aspects of worship. We worship in this way, and not in that way. We are for this and against that, or against that and for this. How many of our ideas about worship are based in human desires and preferences? How many are based in an understanding of God and a careful reading of and obedience to God will revealed in God's Word? The kind of worship that is acceptable to God is based on who he is, what he is like.

Worship reflects the human desire to find, have, declare glory. All of life is a search for glory. Where can we see, experience, find glory? What/whose glory are we seeking? What causes others to glorify us? An interesting word group in the original New Testament language suggests that glory, boasting, rejoicing, and

pride are closely connected. The translation chosen depends on the context. In the context of glory-seeking, I am describing the things that cause us boasting, pride, and rejoicing.

The glory-search reveals more than we have realized—our values, the meaning of life, our goals, our pleasures. Ultimately, glory is yet to be revealed in us, Rom 8. Worship declares our values, our hopes, the center of our lives. Worship declares our understandings of glory. If we can only have, experience, do certain things, then life will be fulfilled. But, the search for glory only leads us to bigger barns, more expensive luxuries, bigger houses, more experiences, new places, longer vacations, different foods... The list is endless.

God is not seeking ritual nor liturgy. Worship that little considers God will never suffice. He will not be pleased with heartless, thoughtless worship. Nor is he pleased with worship that does not reflect and result in a total sacrificial commitment to him as God, Lord, and King. Respect demands worship to God consistent with his nature. If we do not accurately understand and proclaim the nature of God so that people recognize and understand him as he is, we will have an empty message when it comes to respecting and worshiping God.