

Introduction:

What does God want? Have you ever asked that question? In one sense, we could start from Genesis and read through Revelation and say God wants hundreds of things. We could spend years and years describing what God wants. However, I think there is a simpler way to answer this question. There is one thing God says that He wants over and over and over again. When we grasp it, everything else will fall into place.

Discussion:

- I. God wants What's first.
 - A. Over and over throughout the Bible we see that God wanted the first. It is as if God wanted to indelibly stamp on our minds how much He desires the first of what we have.
 1. In **Genesis 4:4**, Abel brought the firstborn of the flock. We begin to see the desire for the first in that story.
 2. In **Exodus 23:16**, God asked for the firstfruits of the Jews labor when they celebrated the Feast of Harvest. In **Exodus 23:19**, God asked for the best of the firstfruits when they came to the house of the Lord.
 3. In **Leviticus 2:14**, they were to give a grain offering of the first fruits.
 4. According to **Deuteronomy 26:1-10**, when the Israelites finally came into the promised land, they were to bring some of the first of all the fruit of the ground and bring it before the Lord.
 5. In **Numbers 15:20-21**, they were supposed to give a loaf from the first of their dough to the Lord.
 6. But it wasn't just about their fruit, they were supposed to give the firstborn to the Lord. According to **Exodus 13:2, 12-16**, they were to give the firstborn of man and beast to the Lord or redeem those that they weren't supposed to sacrifice.
 7. In **Numbers 3:11-13**, God took the Levites in place of the firstborn, but they had to number each. Then they had to redeem the number of the firstborn beyond the number of the Levites (**Numbers 3:39-51**).
 8. When God's people were restored from captivity they grasped this concept of giving God the first. In **Nehemiah 10:35-37**, the people agreed to bring the firstfruits of the ground and the firstborn of their flocks and herds to the Lord's house.
 9. In **Proverbs 3:9**, the wise are told to honor God with the firstfruits of their produce as a matter of course.
 10. No doubt God wants the first.
 - B. Are we surprised then when we come to **Matthew 6:33** and learn that Jesus says He wants us to seek God's kingdom and righteousness first. Under the new covenant, we do not redeem our firstborn. We do not sacrifice our firstfruits. However, we do give Him what comes first.
 - C. In one of our adult Bible classes, just recently we talked about how Jesus rebuked the would be disciples who wanted to put other things before following Him in **Luke 9:59-62**. They wanted to put family first and Jesus rebuked them. God wants our first.
 - D. God wants our first efforts. God wants our first thoughts. God wants our first words. God wants our first love. God wants our first actions. In every situation, God wants us to think of His will first. In every decision, God wants us to consider Him first. In every relationship, God wants us to put Him first. God wants the first. We need to give it to Him.
- II. God has made us the first.
 - A. However, we need to take this one step further. God not only wants us to give what is first. God has, in a sense, made us the first.
 - B. In **Exodus 4:22-23**, God called Israel His firstborn. Egypt's killing of God's firstborn was the reason He killed the firstborn of Egypt in the final plague. Then according to **Jeremiah 2:3**, Israel was the firstfruits of God.
 - C. But now we know that circumcision counts for nothing, and being a physical child of Abraham counts for nothing, but being the spiritual offspring of Abraham. See **Galatians 3:28-29**. We now are the Israel of God (**Galatians 6:16**). We have become the firstborn and firstfruits of God.

1. According to **II Thessalonians 2:13**, Christians are the firstfruits of God.
 2. According to **Hebrews 12:23**, the members of Christ's church are the firstborn.
- D. Think about what this means. When we understand that God wants what is first. He doesn't simply want our first effort. He doesn't simply want our firstfruits. He doesn't simply want our first works. He wants us.

III. You'll lose what you put before God.

- A. The problem for us is some things just seem more important than God. It's not that we don't want God. It's not that we don't want to be close to God. We just see something else as more important, perhaps our work, our family, our money. We want God in our lives, but we don't want to be too extreme about it. He needs to know His place. Sometimes, what we are putting first is not even a bad thing, but it is coming before God.
- B. Remember the story of Mary and Martha (**Luke 10:38-42**)? Mary listened at the feet of Jesus. She put Jesus first. Martha was cleaning house. But notice Jesus' words. "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." The implication is that what Martha had chosen would be taken away. When we give God what's first, that won't be taken away. Everything else will.
- C. In **Luke 9:24**, Jesus said, "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." When we are trying to hang on to the parts of our lives that we think are just so important that we have to put them before our relationship with God, we'll lose them. However, when we put God first, we'll save our lives.
- D. I know it seems to be a paradox. But, the only way to keep our families, our work, our health, our blessings is to put them all after God. I know we think some of these things should come first so they can be protected and preserved. But it is only by putting God first that these things can really be first in our lives. Putting God first won't mean neglecting all these things while we do "church work." It simply means putting everything in its proper perspective.
- E. We need to understand that anything we put before God will be lost either in this life or in the judgment.

IV. God gave His first.

- A. At first, we may think God is asking a bit much. How can He ask us to give what is first to Him and to His service? In fact, we may feel a little resentful about that. But, we need to realize God is not asking anything of us He wasn't first willing to do. God may ask us to give the first to Him, but He has already given His first to us. God may ask us to give ourselves to Him, but He has already given Himself to us.
- B. Jesus is God's firstborn and firstfruits.
 1. According to **Hebrews 1:6**, Jesus is the firstborn.
 2. According to **Romans 8:29**, Jesus is the firstborn of many brethren. We are the Father's adopted children, but Jesus is the firstborn.
 3. According to **I Corinthians 15:20**, Jesus is called the firstfruits from the dead.
- C. God is not asking us to give anything to Him He hasn't already given to us. He saw us in our sins and was willing to give His firstborn to serve and save us. How much more ought we be willing to give the first to God.
- D. God gave Himself totally to us in the form of His Son, Jesus who is the fullness of deity in bodily form (**Colossians 1:19**). We must give ourselves completely to Him. Our lives must be about Him. Our work about Him. Our efforts about Him. If we wish to win the victory in this life, we need to give what is first to Him. We need to give ourselves to Him.

Conclusion:

What have you given to God? He has given all for you. Are you ready to give your first and all to Him? If you are, start by turning your life over to Him in baptism. Be baptized into Christ and become part of the firstborn.