

THEISM

What God Wants

Just as employees find it advantageous to know their employers' objectives in order that they may be better servants, so also those who know God's desires may better serve their Lord when they understand what he wants. However, no one fully knows all that God wants. No one "knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11). What can be known about what God's wants from humanity comes only from what God has revealed. Some significant and appropriate summary statements about what God wants from humanity are stated in Deuteronomy 10:12-13; 1 Samuel 15:22; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Isaiah 1:16-17; Micah 6:8; Matthew 22:37-40; Ephesians 4:31 – 5:4; Colossians 3:1-2, 16-17, James 1:27 and similar passages.

Generally speaking, God wants close fellowship with humanity. This may be deduced from the concepts of creation, redemption, God's revelation of himself, and human contact with God through prayer. Although sin separates people from God (Genesis 3:22-24; Isaiah 59:1-2), fellowship with God is now possible through Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10; 1 John 1:3, 6-7). More specifically, for human fellowship with God, scripture stipulates requirements towards God, towards others, and regarding oneself.

What Does God Want From Individuals Toward Himself? First, *God wants obedience to his commandments*. Obedience was the first thing required of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:16-17). God has always required people to keep his commandments (Leviticus 18:5, 26; 19:19; 20:8; 22:31; 26:3-13; 2 Kings 17:13). He blesses those who obey (Exodus 15:26; 20:6; Deuteronomy 28:1-14; 11:13-15; 1 Kings 3:14) and curses those who disobey (Deuteronomy 28:15-45; 1 Samuel 12:15; Jeremiah 12:17; Romans 2:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8). While God wants sacrifice and worship, obedience has priority (1 Samuel 15:22-23; Isaiah 1:10-20). Second, *God wants trust*. "Without faith it is impossible to please him, for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6). "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18, see also John 3:36). Third, *God wants love*. "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Deuteronomy 6:5; see also Deuteronomy 11:1, 13, 22; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20; Joshua 22:5; 23:11; Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). Loving God is closely associated with keeping his commandments. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Fourth, *God wants his people to live in Godly fear*. The fear of God is a sense of reverence and awe toward God that causes people not only to prostrate themselves before him but also to do his will, as did Isaiah (Isaiah 6). "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man's all" (Ecclesiastes 12:13; see also Deuteronomy 10:12; Ecclesiastes 5:7; 8:12; 1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 14:7). Fifth, *God wants people to have contrite and penitent hearts*. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart; these, O God, you will not despise" (Psalm 51:17). God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Christ "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13). God will revive the spirit of the humble and those of contrite hearts (Isaiah 57:15).

What Does God Want From Individuals Toward Others? First, *God wants people to love their neighbors as themselves* (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39-40). This means that "whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (Matthew 7:12). "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Romans 12:10). "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10; see also Galatians

5:14; James 2:8). Pure religion is to assist orphans and widows in their affliction (James 1:27). Second, *God wants people to act justly toward others*. “Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free *them* from the hand of the wicked” (Psalm 82:3-4; see also Isaiah 1:17; Micah 6:8). “Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate” (Amos 5:15). “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice (Proverbs 21:3). God loves justice (Isaiah 61:8). “Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother” (Zechariah 7:9). Third, *God wants people to be merciful and forgiving toward others*. “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6; see also Micah 7:18). The wisdom that is from above is “full of mercy” (James 3:17). Mercy is closely associated with compassion and forgiveness, as illustrated by the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35). God forgives only those who forgive others (Matthew 6:14-15; 11:25-26; Luke 6:37). Fourth, *God wants people to live in peace with each other*. Through Christ, God made peace between Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:11-22). “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another” (Romans 14:19). “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). “Remind them . . . to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable . . .” (Titus 3:1-2). Fifth, *God wants believers to teach the good news of salvation to others*. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you . . .” (Matthew 28:19-20; see also Mark 16:15-16). “And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42). “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2). “A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient” (2 Timothy 2:24).

What Does God Want From Individuals Regarding Themselves? First, *God wants people to live in humility*. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up” (James 4:10; see also 1 Peter 5:6). “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). “Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. (Romans 12:16). Second, *God wants people to live in holiness*. “As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16; See also Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7; 26; Ephesians 1:4). Living in holiness means being separated to God and from worldliness (1 John 2:15-17). Living in holiness means living by God’s moral standards such as are presented in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17; Deuteronomy 5:7-21) and in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mountain (Matthew 5-7). Holiness requires living with purity of mind and chaste behavior. Fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness are not fitting for saints (Ephesians 5:3). “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart” (Psalm 24:3-4). “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). “Keep yourself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22). “Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

What God wants from us is neither unreasonable nor impossible, but within human capability. Jesus said, “I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you.” “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:15, 17; see also James 1:21-25). A wise man hears the words of the Lord and does them (Matthew 7:24-27).