

A New Year's Quest: To Want What God Wants

A Distorted View of God

We generally don't picture God as excitingly alive and pulsating with vibrant desires. If you were painting a picture of God would you choose lackluster tones – lifeless grays, sterile whites, and muted proper browns? Or would you pick dancing yellows, startling greens, rich purples, and the splendor of scarlet? Probably the former. A lot of people wrongly think that God is bland.

Our distorted view of God causes us to doubt the goodness of what God wants. Our reaction to the words “What God wants is good for you.” resembles our reaction to the words “Turnips are good for you.” We might agree in an abstract sort of way that wanting what God wants is a great theological concept ,that doesn't seem very appealing. Who wants a life that sounds boring? Not me. That's not what I want. Not at all. I want a sense of aliveness, satisfaction, richness, joy, and verve.

A Distorted View of Obedience

We yield to God's will so sparingly and with such caution because we think doing what God wants will make our lives, to say the least, dull. Holiness sounds so sterile. Obedience sounds more like a chore than a choice that we'll find truly appealing.

But what if obeying God's will is exactly what we need? What if doing what God wants connects us with the rich sense of aliveness for which we long? Paul sees it that way. Look at his words:

Romans 12:2b ...the will of God ... is good and well-pleasing and complete. [my translation].

Read Paul's words carefully. He's telling us that God's will – what God wants – is *good*, not blandly good, but deeply, satisfyingly good. He's assuring us that we'll find what God wants to be *most pleasurable*. He's letting us know that God desires us to have *complete*, fulfilling experiences that feed our souls. Why that's exactly what I want!

Our Unexpected Resemblance to God

We all share with God a longing for good things, for pleasures that deeply satisfy, for complete experiences. What *we* want – in our heart of hearts – is exactly what *God* wants. When we say “Thy will be done,” we're agreeing with *His* path to fulfillment.

It shouldn't surprise us that our deepest desires match God's deepest desires because God has built into us desires that match His own. He, and we, both love rich pleasure. Our hunger for delight and fulfillment comes directly from Him.

The best New Year's Quest is to want what God wants
and to depend on Him to make it happen.

Fulfilling Our Desires Poorly

Recognizing that God and we want us to experience what is good and well-pleasing and complete is one thing. Deciding how to make that happen is something else. You and I repeatedly make at least two errors in our quest for life.

- First, we think *we* can figure out on our own exactly what will best fulfill the desires God has built into us.
We're not very good at it. We make a lot of bad choices. Our substitute "satisfactions," whether substances or behaviors (think of them as addictions), always eventually disappoint.
- Second, we think *we* have the power within ourselves to achieve what will fully satisfy us.
We don't. God alone has the power to gift us with fulfillment that won't fade away or fall short.

Fulfilling Our Desires Well

Yielding to what God wants brings us fulfillment that outlasts and exceeds the fleeting fulfillment we arrange for ourselves.

So I've given up making New Year's resolutions. Instead, I'm embarking on a quest – I'm praying this New Year's prayer:

Lord, open my heart to trust the goodness and availability of what you want. Increase my willingness to say to you with joyful abandon, "Thy will be done."

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