

NEEDS AND WANTS

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We have some trouble distinguishing between our needs and our wants.

Simply put, a NEED is something without which you could not survive. On the other hand, a WANT is something you may desire or prefer, but you could get along fine without it if you had to.

False Needs

Sometimes, however, a desire may become so strong (and we become fixated upon it) that we may convince ourselves that our want is a *real need*.

For instance: real hunger vs desire to eat. Few of us have ever known real hunger, unless you have fasted for an extended period of time. I have fasted numerous times. The first 3-5 days are the hardest, in terms of cravings. But by day 7 hunger usually disappears. I could sit with my family at meals without any difficulty. In fact, twice I have fasted for 40 days. The first time, I took only water for 28 days, and felt fine (just limited energy). Yes, food is necessary for life, but not nearly as much as we have thought.

One day, beside Jacob's Well, Jesus spent the entire lunch hour talking with a Samaritan woman about her life and her need for God. When His disciples returned from shopping for food, they urged Him to eat something.

John 4:32 But Jesus replied, "I have a kind of food you know nothing about."

33 "Did someone bring him food while we were gone?" the disciples asked each other.

34 Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work."

(By the way, if you'd like to learn more about Christian "Fasting, Prayer, and Meditation," join me for a FOCUS Seminar on the topic in October.)

Few of us have known real hunger. All of us, however, have experienced the *desire* to eat, masquerading as hunger—a second or third helping, a large dessert, a snack before dinner, chocolate in the middle of the night. You know the drill.

Father Knows Your Real Needs

You do have *real needs*. And God already knows them and cares about meeting them. Here's what Jesus had to say about getting your life needs met:

Luke 12:29 “And don’t be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don’t worry about such things. ³⁰ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs.

Matthew 6:7 “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸ Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

By this, Jesus wasn’t suggesting that you need not ask God for anything. To be clear, He said:

Matthew 7:7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ “Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ “Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

The good news is, God already knows our needs. He not only *knows*, but is *eager* to meet your needs.

Unlike us, however, God is not confused by our wants.

When God Grants Our Wants

God promises to meet our needs; He makes no such pledge regarding our wants.

That’s not to say that God NEVER grants our desires; sometimes He does so as a blessing; sometimes, as a curse.

If we persist in desiring what is contrary to God’s plan for us, we may be surprised to discover that He will grant it, even though it is not good for us!

Psalms 106:14 *In the wilderness their desires ran wild, testing God’s patience in that dry wasteland. ¹⁵ So he gave them what they asked for, but he sent a plague along with it.*

There is a corresponding, yet broader, text in the New Testament:

Romans 1:21 *Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn’t worship Him as God or even give Him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. ²² Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. ²³ And instead of*

worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴ So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. ²⁵ They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. ²⁶ That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires.

²⁸ Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, He abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done.

That's the down side. But there's an up side, too.

Jesus taught us to pray: *Give us this day our daily bread* (Matthew 6:11). ("our daily necessity") What we need each day, in order to see God's Kingdom come and His will be done, is on God's heart, too, and on His to-do list.

Psalm 37:3 Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

⁴ *Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.*

God did not promise to give us whatever we want, but if we delight ourselves in Him and what *He wants* first, then our heart's desires will be in line with His heart's desires. This is confirmed by the Apostle John:

^{1 John 5:14} *And we are confident that He hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases Him.*

Such praying bears fruit.

God's Needs

Now, it may surprise you to learn that God also has both needs and wants.

A key difference is that what God needs is not required for His sustenance or continuation. God's needs refer to what He has planned for us—His plan for humanity—the kingdom plan that includes us, by our participation and cooperation.

But God didn't make us because He needs us—as if, without us, He would fail from loneliness or incompetence. God is not incomplete; He is self-sufficient.

Psalm 115:3 Our God is in heaven! He does whatever He pleases!

Psalm 135:6 He does whatever He pleases in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the ocean depths.

It may sound callous or insensitive, but God doesn't need me, and He doesn't need you.

He may be looking for SOMEONE to fill a role, but it could be you, OR it could be someone else.

You are unique. No one is just like you. And no one else is capable of all that you are capable of. But don't imagine that you're indispensable. The plan of God can move forward without me, or without you. He doesn't need you.

When it comes to getting the job done, *"nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few"* (1 Samuel 14:6).

God doesn't *need* you.

But He does *want* you!

If you refuse to answer His call, He can find someone else. They won't have the exact same qualifications for the job as you, but He's God and He can make up the difference. He doesn't need you.

But He does *want* you!

No individual has been predestined to do the will of God; it's a choice.
And no individual has been predestined to fail; it's a choice.

If Judas had resisted the devil, his frustration with Jesus, and the thirty pieces of silver, he could have been one of the apostles. Jesus chose him for His team. There would have been another to step into his place as the son of perdition, the traitor, for there were plenty of men who hated Jesus and wanted Him out of the way.

Whomever God wants, He hardens, but not until they have already hardened their own heart against Him. If they persist in resisting, God will turn them over to their own desire; He will harden their hardness of heart.

God's Wants

Make no mistake about it, God doesn't need you, but He does want you.

He wants no one to perish; He wants everyone to come to the knowledge of the truth (as it is in Jesus) and be saved.

He wants you to share His life.

He wants you to be free from every bondage.

He wants you to serve with joy.

He wants you to experience His love.

He wants you to love Him in return.

He wants you to fulfill His plan for you (the reason He made you).

He wants you to grow in grace.

He wants your trust.

He wants to answer your prayers.

He wants you to pray according to His will.

He wants you to experience His presence.

He wants your fervent praise.

Like the song (*Control*) says,
*God, You don't need me,
but somehow You want me
Oh, how You love me, somehow that frees me
To take my hands off of my life
and the way it should go*

*God, You don't need me,
but somehow You want me
Oh, how You love me, somehow that frees me
To open my hands up and give You control
I give You control*

Think about it, have you ever distrusted someone because you felt like they didn't really *want* you, they just *needed* you?

If you develop your skills, you will be needed by others. In fact, even if you are unskilled, but you make yourself useful, you will be needed. Call it "job security." But in the long run, being needed isn't enough. Being needed is a shabby substitute for being wanted.

I did some consulting work for an administrator in the church, crafting a formal document for church leadership. He was very pleased with my work, and said to me, "I really like your mind."

I am certain that he meant it as a compliment, but to this day, I remember it as a slight. He didn't like *me*, he just liked my skills with words. (That's a working relationship, and there's nothing wrong with that, but it's no substitute for a friendship.)

Trusting God

Perhaps you have trouble trusting God, because you think He just *needs* you, like a tool.

Or, maybe, you have trouble trusting God, because you only *need* Him; you don't really like Him.

In either case, I think, you haven't really recognized His love for you. You still don't realize that God absolutely, over-the-top loves you, far more than you love yourself.

Most people spend most of their lives trying to convince others that they are worthy to be loved, even when they have trouble loving themselves.

Meanwhile, God has gone out of His way to show you and to tell you that He loves you, even when you're not loveable.

Romans 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

As the poet said, "I asked Jesus, 'How much do You love me?' And He stretched out his hands, and died."

If God so loved you when you were sold out to sin and disinterested in Him, *how much more* must He love you now, even if you stumble because of sin.

It's not what you've done that impresses God, nor what you could do for Him; it is what He knows that you and He can be and do together that thrills Him. "*Christ in you is the hope of glory*" (Colossians 1:27).

He *wants* you. Somehow He wants you. He really wants you for who you really are.

And that should free you to take your hands off of your life and the way it should go. That should free you to open your hands up and give Him control. Give Him control.

Have Your way, God!