

“What Does God Want?”

Various Scriptures

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Transcriber’s Note: The first twenty minutes of this presentation were not recorded. John began the study by asking the group what God wants, getting various answers such as a relationship with us, obedience, loving justice and mercy and walking humbly with God, etc. John said that the bottom line is that God wants us. He then began to outline redemptive history beginning with creation, particularly the creation of man and woman (Genesis 1 and 2), and then the rebellion and the Fall (Genesis 3.) He then noted man’s second rebellion and the ensuing judgment of Noah’s flood (Genesis 6) and the restoration (Genesis 9.) He then talk about the rebellion of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11), along with the subsequent judgment of God upon the world and His disowning of the nations and His call to Abraham (Genesis 12.) He then talked about the nation of Israel and the giving of the law at Sinai. This is where the recording picks up.

John: Any Jews here today? No Jews here? Okay. This is an important part of the story because we are those people that God disowned here. But He wasn’t giving up on us, because the story continues. But the Lord’s portion is His people—Jacob, an allotted heritage.

God’s love persists, because what happens right after this event? We get this guy named Abram. Why is Abram important? Well, Genesis 12:1-9. Look at this.

“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your kindred and your father’s house, to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”

So from Genesis 11 God says, “I’m disowning all of you people. You don’t want to follow Me; you don’t want to be My people. That was the whole point of doing all of this: I wanted you to be with Me and Me to be with you. But you refused, you turned away. So I disown you.” And then in the next breath, “I’ve still got a plan because Abram, I’m calling you. And through you all of those disowned peoples are going to end up being blessed.”

This is an awfully persistent love of the almighty Creator God, if we want to think of it that way. I would have given up a long time ago on this whole thing. I have this project that I’m going to make, and if it doesn’t quite work or if it works against me I’ll start over; I’ll do something different. God says no.

Continuing here in verse 4 of chapter 12, *“So Abram went as the LORD told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son and all of their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran. And they set out to the land of Canaan. And when they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh.*

“And at that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land.’ And so he built there an altar to the LORD who had appeared to him. And from there he moved on to the hill country at the east of

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Bethel and pitched his tent on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the Lord.”

And in Genesis 15 verse 6 it says: *“And he believed the LORD, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”* Faith: Abram believed and had a relationship with the almighty Creator God who said, “I’m not giving up on a family. Abram, I want you to be part of My family.”

And what did Abraham do in response to that? He believed. What does God want? He wants a family who believes in Him. And the family that doesn’t isn’t, because that’s by definition what it is, right? It’s someone who believes in Him.

And this is interesting. So he believes in Him, and then what does God do? God gives the sign of circumcision.

I’m going to read this to you because nothing I say is original. It’s better to be effective than original. So I’m going to read you a short paragraph from this book. It’s something that I’ve also never thought of, and I thought it was incredibly insightful. I want you to think about this for a second. Yes, sir?

David Miller: What is the name of that book?

John: It’s called *What Does God Want? (Laughter)* I’m giving you the details.

David: Okay. What is the name of the author?

John: Michael Heiser. So Abraham believed. So it says, *“Afterward the covenant relationship that began with God’s call and Abraham’s faith was commemorated with the physical sign of circumcision. Abraham’s entire family followed his example. Bearing this sign marked the descendants of Abraham as the people of God, the people whom God wanted as His family.”*

Listen to this. *“Circumcision would be a sign to the women of Abraham’s lineage too, since they were to marry only within the expected tribe. They would be reminded of how their people had been supernaturally created from Abraham and Sarah when they decided to have their own children.”*

An interesting thought, because remember that Sarah was old! It would seem that the whole point of God picking Abraham to bless all the ones He has already created by this plan that He has not to give up on him. I thought that was interesting, though. If you’re supposed to stay within the covenant group, you would then find out that we’re going to have our own family, and that we’re in the group together here, right? There’s sort of an obvious physical thing there. But it’s a reminder not just to the men, but to the women, that it’s from the Lord that the family comes. I never thought of that one.

So if we look at Romans chapter 4, verses 1-12, it says: *“So what shall we say was gained by Abraham our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.’*

“Now to the one who works, the wages are not counted as a gift, but as his due. However the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,

Whose sin is covered;

Blessed is the man against whom the LORD will not count his sin.’

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“What? Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that the righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised, who are not merely circumcised but also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.”

That’s a whole lot there. But it’s back to God creating humans—us—because He wanted a relationship with Him through faith—trusting, right? He wanted a loyal family that loved Him and trusted Him. And the only way to do that is by faith that He is, and that He is who He says He is, and to take Him at His word and follow Him.

So the Lord created a people to get all of His people back. That’s good news for us, because we’re outside of this created people, right?—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob becomes Israel. Israel is God’s portion. “I have rejected the nations; Israel is Mine. That’s where I’m coming through: Abraham, faith.” So you have to have the faith of Abraham.

And then of course, what happens? What happens with these people that He has created? What do they do?

Ron Baling: They sin. They abandon Him again.

John: They abandon Him again! So the Lord has created this people, this nation of two names, to get all nations back. Jump with me here to Matthew 22 verses 37-40. There is a discussion going on between the Sadducees, the Pharisees. A lawyer is here and Jesus answers the question. *“He said to him, ‘Which is the greatest commandment?’*

“‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.’”

Who was He talking to?

Don Maurer: One of the Pharisees.

John: Right; by definition that would be one of them. What nation did he belong to?

Ron: Israel.

John: Israel; He’s speaking to an Israelite. When were the Israelites created?

Brave Man: With Abraham.

John: Abraham, right? When did the law come?

Brave Man: Moses.

John: Moses. Think about that for a second. Jesus was speaking to an Israelite because the law as given not so that they could become God’s people in His family, but because they were. And it was a way to show that they were. The law as given to show God’s people a way to be loyal to Him. They were already His people; they weren’t earning a place in His family.

Think about Moses in Exodus 7 and 10. *“Then the LORD said. ‘I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, when I heard their cry because of their taskmasters.’”*

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Verse 10 says: *“Come, I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”* And verse 22 of chapter 4 says, *“Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD: Israel is My firstborn son. And I say to you, ‘Let My son go so that he may serve me.’ If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’”*

Okay. So Israel is already God’s people, very much so. And God is very particular about what He thinks and who His people are, isn’t He? So what is the First Commandment? Does anyone know the first of the Ten commandments?

Don Bishop: Love God.

John: No, no. The First—

Don Maurer: *“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”*

John: Aha; yes! Right, because what did Israel then go and do? Did they show their loyalty? Or did they go whoring after other gods?

Brave Man: Other gods.

John: They went whoring after other gods. Boy, we are not good at this as humans, are we? Not at all. They kept going astray, right?

So we have Abraham who says, “You need faith.” God says, “And here is how you show your loyalty to Me: Don’t go after other gods.” Love God, love your neighbor, right?

But when Jesus was answering this question He wasn’t talking to other nations; He was talking to a Jew. Remember, we’re still outside.. God says, “I’ve got a people. I’m delivering salvation. It’s coming and it will come and bless the other nations. But right now, you—my people,—you show your loyalty to Me: don’t have any other gods. Don’t go following them.”

But what happens? They don’t do this. “Now we need a king, because we don’t want to follow God.” And so David is raised up. And to David is made a promise, just like to Abraham is made a promise.

And David is loyal. He’s not moral, but he’s loyal. And God promises to him that Someone will sit on His throne forever.

So boy, humanity is plunged into such a problem here. We know this because we have the problem ourselves. And so wouldn’t God just give up at some point? Wouldn’t God give up on you at some point? Wouldn’t God give up on me? I mean, I don’t get it right very often. I’m kind of like this picture here.

All of Israel’s history is basically “I want you. I still want you.” And they say, “No.”

So we get some hope kind of near the end of what we call the Old Testament. Let’s look at Jeremiah for a minute: Jeremiah 31:31-34. *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.”* That kind of sounds like family stuff. “Now we’re leaving, by the way. We can’t stay here anymore.” They needed that, and then they wanted to go back! I do that; what about you?

“When I took them by the hand out of the land of Egypt, My covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days: declares the LORD. I will put My law within

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them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be My people.” Again, He wants a people.

“And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD!’ For they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest,’ declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.”

Look also at Ezekiel 36, the great promise in verses 22-28. *“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the LORD God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations.’”* “You were supposed to bless the nations, but you profaned the nations. I’m not doing this for Your sake; I’m doing it for Mine because I still want all of you.”

“And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know,”—all of them; that’s us—*“that I am the LORD,’ declares the LORD, when through you I vindicate My holiness before their eyes. ‘I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries, and bring you to your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness. From all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and be careful to obey My rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers. And you shall be My people, and I will be your God.’”*

I dare say that I would have given up on this whole human family thing. But God did not. He loves humanity that much.

So who can fulfill these promises? We have a promise that was made to Noah, a promise made to Abraham, a promise made to David. Who can be this Offspring of David that does these things? Let me read you one other paragraph in this book that I thought was much better than anything I could say.

“So how could God honor His promises to a people who had rejected Him and who were estranged from Him? They needed new hearts. They needed His presence to guide them. What was needed was a Descendant of Abraham and of David who could be the ultimate King and perfect Imager of God. That Descendant also needed to overturn the curse of death on the human race. But how could a mere human conquer death? He would have to be God as well.”

How was that all supposed to work? Well, no problem, because from the foundation of the world God had a plan to join His human family. Think about that! God’s plan was to be with us as us—Immanuel! *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.”*

Galatians 3:16-18 says: *“Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his Offspring. It does not say ‘and to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to One: ‘And to your Offspring,’ who is Christ.*

“This is what I mean: The law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God so as to make the promises void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by a promise. But God gave it to Abraham by a promise.”

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Then in verse 26: *“For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is no male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring and heirs according to the promise.”*

Jesus came to us so that He could bring us to Himself. John 1: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*

Skipping to verse 9: *“The true light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. For no one has ever seen God. The only God, who is at the Father’s side, He has made Him known.”

So Jesus makes a people for Himself. And He comes to His people in the flesh! And what do they do? What do they do?

Jim Britsch: They killed Him.

John: They reject Him. They kill Him. He was the ultimate Image of God, right? But 2 Corinthians 4 verse 4 says: *“In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

But He came to this people that He created, a people that were not a people. The nations rejected, a family created. They reject Him as well. He comes in the flesh so that He could come and change all of it and reclaim all of us, because He never gave up.

So this Jesus who has come to us, the ultimate image of God, revealing the Father to us, bringing salvation, who does He come to? Think of Him at the well, right? John 4: *“Sir, I see that You are a Prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but You say that Jerusalem is the place where we ought to worship.”*

“Jesus said to her, ‘Dear woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know. But we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. The hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him.” He wants a family. *“God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*

“The woman said to Him, ‘I know that the Messiah is coming, He who is called Christ. And When He comes, He will tell us all things.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He.’”

Jesus came to reclaim all of us. And when He put the powers of darkness to shame on the cross He disarmed the rulers of all the nations and opened the gates, that all the nations would be reclaimed. That’s good news for us, because He never gave up on you, and He never gave up on me. The whole story—from Adam and Eve to the nations

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sending Him out, and all these rebellions and our rebellious hearts, to creating a people so that He would have a lineage to come through to satisfy, fulfill and show the way by doing it Himself, taking us by the hand if you will—was so that He could have you as part of His family for eternity. “The new heavens and the new earth is where we’re getting this right, because I still want you.”

If you haven’t thought about the Lord in this way recently, let me encourage you from Luke 15, the prodigal. Jesus said, *“There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them.*

“Not many days later the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country. And there he squandered his property in reckless living. So when he had spent everything a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. And so he went and he hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who sent him into the fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

“But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise. I will go to my father and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’” And he arose and came to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off,” because his father hadn’t given up and was looking for him, “his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quickly! Bring the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate! For my son who was dead is alive again; he was lost and is found.’” And they began to celebrate, because that father wanted his family to be all together, and he never gave up on him.

Colossians 1:9; it’s a prayer. Can we pray this together? I pray this for you. *“And so from the day we heard it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, that you may be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might, for all endurance with patience and joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness.”*

As one of the rejected peoples God said, “I’m bringing light to the world, to come and find you.” *“And has transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. For He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created—in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible—whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things”—you—“were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be pre-eminent. For in Him all the*

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fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether in heaven or on earth, making peace by the blood of His cross.”

That was His plan from the beginning, from before the foundation of the world, to come after you and me, and never to give up, *“making peace by the blood of His cross,”* that brings us who were far off from the kingdom of God into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father has given to us!” To answer the question “What does God want?”, He wants you; He wants me. And He did all of this, never giving up, even to the point of coming in the flesh, and dying to defeat sin and death, and to reclaim us from those that said, “Oh, we didn’t belong to God anymore; He rejected us.”

He said, “No, I came back. Through My created people I made a promise to be a blessing, that the Seed would come and reconcile all things to Himself.” If you haven’t thought about just how much this whole story from beginning to end, and all the parts, is so that God would say this to you, let me remind you with these last words from 1 John 3. *“Look at this! See what kind of love the Father has given to us”—to you!—“that we should be called children of God. And so we are. The reason that the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.”*

Now what do you do with that today? You can look at everyone that you see today. And regardless of what shape they are, what color they are, what features they have, if they’re a human being they’ve been made in the image of God. And God did all this so that you could tell them that He wants them to be part of His family, because He loves them just like He loves you. And if they’re not His children yet, if they’re not part of His family yet, that’s good news for you to share! Because if He didn’t ever give up on you, he hasn’t given up on them yet either. And I’m really glad He didn’t give up on me. He wants to spend eternity loving you, hanging out with you.

And do you know what? He knew all about you on the front end. He knew Israel would reject Him, right? We can get into all these details and I’ll stop here. But He knew this. “Abraham, I’m going to make you a promise.” Did Abraham just wait around for that promise to happen in faithfulness? No, we get the whole Hagar thing, right? *(Laughter)*

Look! Does God want perfection? Absolutely He does. Does He demand perfection? Absolutely He does. Should you live a guilt-laden life of imperfection? No! Because He didn’t give up on you, that’s why He sent Jesus! And He will perfect us.

Should we want to be loyal? Yes. Should we want to tell others? Yes. Should we even get to it, because there’s always more? But 1 Corinthians 13 isn’t just something you say to your wife. You should do that too, but that’s how we’re supposed to love everybody, right? Be patient and kind, and tell someone that God has been patient and kind with you, because He wants you.

Let’s close in prayer. Lord Jesus, we thank You that You, before the foundation of the earth, wanted us. Lord, we’re all here as brothers because You’ve called us to be Your children, and so we’re brothers. And we look to You, our perfect older Brother. We pray that You would increase our love for You—our devotion to You, our loyalty to You—that

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we might not go whoring after other gods, because You are the true and Most High God. And our loyalty and allegiance is to You. Help us in our stumbling as we seek to follow You, as we seek to trust You, and seek to show You to other people so that they might be part of Your—and because of You our—family as well, that we might have fellowship with You and one another through Your Holy Spirit who gives us life, and by Whom alone we can give You glory. For we do confess that in us dwells no good thing. But we thank You that You have come to us and put Your life in us, so that it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us, in perfect harmony and perfection and unity with the Father—our Father, almighty God, Creator of all things. We give you praise in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)