

## Things God Likes

Before Christmas or a birthday many of us sit down to make a “wish list”. Sometimes we start early and amend it numerous times. We want to make sure we get what we want!

Suppose God made a “wish list”. What would he put on it? If God wanted a gift from us, what might he want? After all, worship is giving rather than getting. So when we worship God we give things to him. What would he want? What would he put on his list? Have you ever asked him what he likes, what makes him happy? Not just for a special occasion but for every time we come to him in worship.

As I thought about that my imagination went reeling and my fingers began exploring the pages of the Bible to find at least part of God’s “wish list”. Here’s what I found.

First on the list has to be love. A lawyer once asked Jesus, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?” When Jesus answered (in Matthew 22:37) he revealed what God likes best. Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

We all want to be loved. I like to be loved and I like being told I am loved. We do a lot of that in our home. At least a dozen times every day, I suppose, I tell Charleen that I love her. And she tells me that she loves me. I make a point of telling our children that I love them, and they say, “I love you, Dad!” Sometimes we write notes to each other. We’ve even learned to say it in sign language! And you know what? I never tire of hearing it. It’s never boring. I love to be told that I’m loved and I love to be loved.

Have you told God lately that you love him? Have you actually stopped and prayed out loud, “God I love you! Father, I love you! Jesus, I love you! Spirit, I love you!”? God loves to be loved!

Next on his list I think God would put praise. In Psalm 113 the Psalmist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, penned these words:

***Have you told God lately that you love him?***

*Praise the Lord.*

*Praise, O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord.*

*Let the name of the Lord be praised, both now and forevermore.*

*From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised.*

*The Lord is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.*

*Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?*

*He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people.*

*He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children.*

*Praise the Lord.*

We all like legitimate praise. I like being told a sermon is good. An artist enjoys being told that his painting is inspiring. An architect enjoys compliments on her building. A wife delights in hearing,

“You are the greatest. You are such a marvelous person. It’s not just what you do but who you are!”

Praising God is telling him how great

he is. Tell him he’s smart. Tell him he’s a great lover. Tell him he’s the greatest person in the universe. Tell him you think he’s wonderful just for being him, not only for what he does for you and what he gives to you. Tell him he’s doing a good job in you life, in your home, in your church. Tell him he created a fantastic world. Praise the Lord! God likes to be praised!

Third on God’s list has to be thanks. In Psalm 136:1 the Psalmist writes, “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever.”

*Thank you* is one of the most important phrases in the English language. How we like to hear that.

How easily we can become hurt if we do something for someone and we never hear a word of thanks.

When they were young we had a tradition in our family where each week I would take to breakfast a different one of our four children. In their earlier years they sometimes forgot to say “thank you” and I had to remind them. It takes a little something away when you have to ask to be thanked. But now they seldom forget.

Being thanked lets me know I’m important, I’m appreciated, I matter and what I did is significant. I like to be thanked. God likes to be thanked, too. Often we are reluctant to thank God but all too ready to ask God. We may be dissatisfied with what God has done in our lives. We complain that he doesn’t quite measure up to all of our expectations. But how he delights when our heart attitude causes us to say “thank you”!

Do you regularly thank God as part of your worship? It’s true that many of us thank God for our food and I wouldn’t discourage that at all. However, I think my mother may have had it right when she said that God must often say, “Are you eating again?” Thank God for life, for salvation, for health, for church, for home, for prayer, for the Bible, for friends, for fellowship, for America, for people, for heat, for light, for clothes, for everything.

God rebuked me about something awhile back. One day I was feeling rather sorry for myself. I thought my problems were pretty big and pretty heavy. Then I spent a few minutes reading from the book *Tracks of a Fellow Struggler* by John Claypool. In that little book he shares his broken heart over the acute leukemia of his 8-year-old daughter Laura Lue who lived 18 months 10 days from diagnosis to death. As I put down the book I switched from self-pity to worship, from complaining to thanksgiving, from my puny problems to God’s great goodness.

Tell him! Thank him! God likes thanks!

Fourth on the list is an item that most of us probably wouldn’t include. It is fear. Psalm 96:9 tells us to “*Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.*” And Deuteronomy 6:1-2:

*These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.*

Clearly the Bible calls us to fear God, yet we are also told that we need not fear when God is near! We need not fear in the sense of fright or terror or unjust harm. Yet, we ought to fear God in the sense of awe, of grandeur, of respect, of seriousness. We must be extremely careful that we do not become so “chummy” with God that we fail to treat him as God. He is the mighty Creator and we are sinful creatures. There is no place for a cavalier or light attitude toward God or in his presence. Just as we ought to have a legitimate fear of the police or the president or of our parents, so we ought to fear God.

Some people blasphemously joke about God. We run into his presence in prayer and speak to him with less respect than we speak to our family pet. We fall asleep talking to him. We wear our most casual clothes to worship him. We break appointments we have made with him.

All of this is sin! God does not like getting less respect than we would give to total strangers on the street. We need to shape up our relationship to God. We need to step into his presence in awe, trembling and in fear. He is God! God deserves our fear!

To the list we have to add trust. Proverbs 3:5 tells us, “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*” A huge compliment accompanies trust. We trust a doctor to do the right thing when we are unconscious. We trust the Trust Department of a bank to care for our assets after we die. We trust a counselor to keep a secret that could devastate us. And when we trust God we are giving him our ultimate compliment. Our trust tells him that we have complete confidence in his ability to plan our lives and protect our futures.

Years ago I heard a speech by a high trapeze artist. He described what it is like the first time you swing from a high trapeze to be caught in the air by your partner on the other trapeze. He said there are two things you need to know. One is that you have to trust your partner. The other is that you have to let go before you catch on.

There are a million different areas to trust God. Some of them are high and scary, but in every case we must have complete trust that God will be there and will catch us and we will be safe in his arms. However, we must first be willing to let go!

God likes it when we trust him. If we want to worship God we must trust him enough to let go so that we can catch on to God.

Sixth on the list is giving, but it has to be cheerful giving. II Corinthians 9:7, *“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”* Our attitude is as important as our giving!

You may have heard about the fourth grade class who sent a get-well card to their teacher that read, *“Dear Miss Jones, Your fourth grade students wish you a quick recovery from your operation, by a vote of 13 to 12.”*

It takes a little of the joy out of a gift when a child says, “Dad told me if I didn’t buy you a gift he would ground me for six months.”

By contrast, imagine the gift giver just bubbling with excitement over the gift and the receiver. See her yearning for the moment to give, anxiously looking for the expression on the recipient’s face. That’s the kind of giving God loves.

One of the most tangible worship moments we have is when we put money into the offering plate. This is something we should look forward to. It should be one of the happiest moments of every week. As we put our money in the offering we ought to quietly whisper a prayer to God saying, “Thank you. I love you! And I am really glad I can give this to you.”

God looks with great care on our attitude when

we give. And be assured that one of the things God really loves is a cheerful giver.

Seventh and final on our list, for now, is obedience. In Old Testament days there was the temptation to placate or bribe God with some kind of a burnt offering. But Samuel instructed the people of Israel with one of the greatest principles of the Bible saying in I Samuel 15:22, *“Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”*

***If we want to worship God we must trust him enough to let go so that we can catch on to God.***

Do you want to make God happy? You don’t have to give him some big gift or make some huge sacrifice. Just obey him!

Let’s try it. Think of something you ought to do that God has asked of you.

It may be forgiving someone or being baptized or stopping a habit or making more time for prayer.

How about deciding right now that you will worship God with a special gift this week. You will do just what he has been asking of you. Not out of duty. Not because he told you to but because you want to do it as a gift to God.

God will love it! Because one of the things God likes is obedience!

Worship is giving, not getting. Give to God something he will really like:

- Love
- Praise
- Thanks
- Fear
- Trust
- Cheerful giving
- Obedience

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