

GIVING GOD WHAT GOD WANTS

The young, inexperienced, newlywed husband was troubled. He was approaching his first anniversary and had no idea what gift he should get his bride. It seemed everyone had an idea but none of them seemed to fit his new wife. So instead of listening to older, wiser friends, he made his own decision.

As day began to break on his anniversary, our young hubby slipped quietly out of bed and down to the car where he had hidden his gift. Without a sound he carried the large box up the stairs of their small apartment and set it down right beside his slumbering wife. He gently kissed her on the cheek and whispered "Happy Anniversary" in her ear. She awoke slowly but her face quickly brightened as she saw the brightly wrapped box and her beaming husband sitting on the side of the bed.

"Go ahead, open it," he prompted.

She tore into the wrapping paper like a child beneath the Christmas tree. As the paper fell away, so did her countenance. She mustered courage and held back the disappointment.

"How sweet! How did you know I needed a vacuum cleaner?"

Our example may be laughable but most of us have done something equally as silly; we gave someone a gift without asking what they really wanted, rather than what we wanted to give them. We were the focus of the gift, not the recipient.

Our loving God wants worship (John 4:23). He commanded it of man in Eden (Genesis 4:3ff) and has always regulated it. Man was never left without guidance and has always known what God wanted. But, like our fictional husband above, man has not always listened to the voice of the Creator.

Cain did not heed the desires of God in his offering (Genesis 4:7). The children of Israel ignored God and built an Egyptian-like idol for their worship (Exodus 32). Despite

precise instructions to the contrary, Nadab and Abihu offered "strange fire" to God as part of worship and were struck dead for their disobedience (Leviticus 10:1-2). In the New Testament, Jesus himself told the woman at the well that she and the Samaritans did not know what they were worshipping even though they were people with good motives and had their own well developed system of worship. Jesus' apostle, Paul rebuked the people of Corinth because their worship had descended into a common meal or even a drunken party (1 Corinthians 11:17ff). The common factor in each of these occasions was a desire to do what man (the giver of worship) wants instead of what God (the receiver of worship) has said he desires.

When God told Noah to build the ark, Noah built it according to a pattern given by God (Genesis 6:15ff). When God directed the construction of the Tabernacle he told Moses "*According to all I am going to show you, as a pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it*" (Exodus 25:9). Inasmuch as the Old Testament serves as an instructor for us today (Romans 15:4) we should make careful note of the precise and unyielding way our God tells us what he wants in our worship and our spiritual life.

Jesus, the author of our faith (Hebrews 12:2) has also been clear in detailing what he desires in our worship. Beginning with Acts, the Holy Spirit reveals his will for us in all matters. There is no question that cannot be resolved by turning to Scripture.

Some may choose to disregard the pattern of worship given, but in doing so; they stand together with the young, foolish husband of our story and offer God what they want him to have – not what he desires.

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