

GROWTH EXPECTED

“How to give God what He wants the most.”

“We all grow old but we don’t all grow up!”

DISCUSSION STARTER

As Harvest moves into our second decade we are becoming more purposeful about why we exist. That is part of the maturing process, to know why you’re here and to go hard after that. **How did you discover what you wanted to do as an adult?**

READ: Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

I heard a couple who were nearing retirement say that they were trying to figure out what they wanted to be when they grew up. While they were joking about that, many are still trying to figure out why they are alive. **If God has a plan for your life, and you don’t know the plan for your life, what is the problem?**

Vern began the series on *Growth Expected* with the question of:

What do you want from God? We are going to assume that you have settled the issue of God’s existence, so the next question is this: **What do you want from God now? Do you want a God that you visit once a week at Church, or do you want more than that? What else do you want from God?**

The next question is this:

What does God want from you?

Assuming that God exists and that He has a plan for you, what do you think that God wants from you?

George Barna took a survey of Christians in America and asked them what they thought God wanted from them. Here are the results:

- 80% of Christians in America think that God wants them to “keep the rules” especially the 10 commandments is what God wants most. Rules!
- Next: faithful church attendance, Bible reading, and tithing. So their view of God’s plan for them is that He is a cosmic score-keeper.

READ Romans 12:1 (NIV) *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*

BACKGROUND: The book of Romans has already dealt with the issue of how a person is reconciled with God. The issue of our sins being forgiven by Christ's death in my place is covered. In Romans 12 Paul answers the question of "What now?" Since you are forgiven and have a relationship with God, what does God want for you and from you now?

According to Romans 12:1, what does God ask for you to do?

Offer your bodies as living sacrifices.

Let's ask some questions of this phrase to clarify its meaning....

- 1) **What is the reason for this request?** *In view of God's mercy* (God's offering of His Son to die for you and me, taking our guilt on Himself)
- 2) **Because of Christ's offering, what are we asked to do?** *Offer your body.*
- 3) **How is a living sacrifice different from killing the sacrifice?** *Rather than taking a life, you give a life....yours!*
- 4) **What are the characteristics of your sacrifice?**

Holy ("set-apart to one purpose of life)

Pleasing (to God – He wants my life dedicated to His purpose). *A person who is pursuing God's plan for them (detailed in Romans 12) will be set apart to one purpose and will be pleasing to God (God's friend).*

This sacrifice is summed up in the word: Surrender! These words (*sacrifice* and *surrender*) sound like we are giving up something better (for our benefit) for something less. But here is how Vern defined the term:

Surrender, total commitment, to God is not about self-denial, and being noble and virtuous and ultra-spiritual, it's about logic and common sense (wise). Because it is not so much about what you lose but about what you gain.

We surrender when the reward of promised gain is worth more than the risk of perceived loss.

We surrender because we believe God has our best interest at heart; He is eager to be **friends with us.**

Paul implies that this action of surrender is an attitude of the Christ follower, but is a decision we must make as Christ followers. It does not happen automatically when you become a follower of Jesus.

Everyone has surrendered themselves to serving someone or something. **What areas have you surrendered your life to in the past besides pursuing God's plan for your life?**

Vern gave two reasons why we began our series with surrender, rather than ending it there:

- Because surrender is the channel through which God's biggest and best blessings flow.
- Because surrender is the *key* that unlocks spiritual growth?

Have you signed over your blank check as your symbol of surrendering your life to God's direction of your life? What makes this a difficult decision for you?

Blank Check of My Life 0001

Date _____

Pay to the order of Jesus Christ

Amount _____ \$

Memo _____ Signature _____

Living Life as though Jesus were living through you

GROWTH EXPECTED

Close your time together praying for each other as you go into your new week living your life as though Jesus were living through you.

“The whole outlook of mankind might be changed if we could all believe that we dwell under a friendly sky and that the God of heaven, though exalted in power and majesty, is eager to be friends with us.”

– A. W. Tozer