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## Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

December 27, 2015

What God Requires

*“This is what God requires, that you believe in Him Whom God sent.”*  
John 6:29 (Common English Bible)

A good question for a follower of Jesus Christ is, “What does God require?” What shall we do, as individuals and as a church, in order to be faithful to God’s claim upon us? As David H. C. Read, formerly a pastor at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City once observed, anyone who takes their religion seriously is inclined to take stock of this question at the start of a New Year. Our relationship with God is never static. We are either closer to God now than this time last year or further away.

Yet the question remains, “What does God require?” John’s Gospel states it more eloquently, “What must we do in order to accomplish what God requires?” (John 6:28) It is a question that should be written across the Chancel of our Sanctuary and the board room of the church. It is a necessary question. It is a question that separates the church and its members from all other worthy organizations. Many organizations help people and advance good causes. But the question for followers of Jesus must always be, “What does God require?”

Answers will vary depending upon whom we ask. Some lift up the priority of preaching while others will advance the teaching ministry of the church. Evangelism beats passionately in some hearts while others continually advocate for expanded missions in the community. Many voices in the church will answer in a rich variety of ways. The difficulty is that they are all good answers. How does the believer – or the church – prioritize which is most important?

What is helpful here in this lesson from John’s Gospel is that the question is asked of Jesus. Hasn’t it been suggested that if you want the best and final answer to anything go to the top of the organization? The disciples go to the top; they go to Jesus. They asked, “What must we do in order to accomplish what God requires?” At first glance it seems that Jesus isn’t very helpful. Jesus answers simply, “Believe.” Sounds like a commercial for Macy’s Department Store.

All our instincts and training revolt against such an answer. We want to *do* something. Rather, we are told to believe. But if we hang onto Jesus’ answer a little while it finally makes sense. If we do anything at all it is always because we first believed in what we are doing. No one works effectively unless there is some inward belief. Belief comes before doing. The answer comes from first looking within. “Believe,” answers Jesus. Believe with all of your heart that Jesus is the Son of God. As belief grows then what God requires of each individual will then become apparent. It will be unmistakable.

Doug Hood

*Reprinted from Dr. Hood’s Heart & Soul, Volume 1, page. 13.*