

on the corner “What does God require of me”

By Robert Docter, Editor-In-Chief

I'm no theologian...but here it goes.

It starts with a mature belief system concerning the existence and presence of God within my life. Belief demands faith. Faith exists without evidence, although much evidence exists relative to divine creation of earth itself and of humanity in general. The complexity of earth's placement in orbit, its relationship with the sun, its precise tilt, plus its ability to sustain human life speak of precision, not a random event.

Faith needs nurturance leading toward growth and strength. It grows as we grow in grace.

I struggle with the word “perfection” in relation to Wesley's interpretation of “sanctification” and several other verses in the New Testament. Does God require me to be perfect? It is often preached in a manner similar to one of the Pharisees and comes across to me as unattainable, narrow and rigid. For me, perfection exists somewhere outside the boundaries of human existence. The Old Testament Hebrew law assumed complete obedience and seemed to believe that humans could find perfection. The New Testament seems to me to differ from the Old Testament on matters pertaining to perfection. For example, 1 John 1:9 implies an ongoing process: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (NIV).

Or Philippians 1:4-6: In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

I believe the human condition, locked within our souls since Adam, dispels the possibility of attaining perfection. I do not have a tendency to perfectionism. Neither do I claim it. I am growing in my faith, and talking to God about my “humanness” on a daily basis. I believe that what God truly wants from me is contact. That's the way I demonstrate to him that I know he exists, that I express my love and obtain his never-ending grace.



I know the way I understand “sin” and “sinning,” and I am not conduct-neutral. I’m a striver seeking my best possible self. I try to relate positively to people around me. I stay in contact with God who is always the closest.

I see claiming myself as God as self-deification. God alone is perfect.

My policy says: “Keep on growing in the right direction.”

See 1 John 1:8: If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

So, God requires me to continue striving toward a sinless existence, but forgives me when I fail.

The prophet Micah spoke out on behalf of God at a very difficult time for the children of Abraham. He worked during the same period as Isaiah, 750-650 B.C.

Ahaz was king of Judah, the southern province. Even though he was in the line of David he had none of his qualities. The people wandered, without leading, through a minefield of pleasure; the Assyrians, who had already captured the northern province, Israel, were knocking at the door, and Ahaz was ready to deal.

Micah asked: With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (Micah 6:6-7).

And then he answered himself with this memorable and oft quoted verse:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (6:8).

Those three—justice, kindness and humility—are qualities of obedience to God, and add to my requirements. Justice speaks to me of moral rightness, a right connection in community, to be fair and truthful, to be honorable and conscientious, about how I treat those in need.

The critical ingredient in kindness for me is empathy—a strong sense of the interpersonal world, identifying with the needs of others, feeling with someone, intimate, heartfelt, affectionate.

Humility requires me to see my positive attributes, but avoid trumpeting them, to accept my own limitations, and recognize that, often, I am not the smartest guy in the room.

Finally, I must have a close relationship with God. They say that the devil is in the details. I try to handle this with the Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step program. I focus on step 10. It asks me to engage in a daily inventory whereby I look at my day and examine those elements of my relationships with God, my family and those around me. I undertake this daily in my prayers.

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