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Bargaining With God

Anna Bennett

“Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” Luke 18:24-25, NIV.

Bargaining With God

My husband is an entrepreneur who owns several businesses. As his supportive spouse I find my faith in God has constant opportunity for growth as I watch him navigate unending hurdles. My mind processes questions like: “God, we’ve sought to be faithful in following your guidance, but as they challenges have come up, aren’t you going to show your goodness by removing them? Have we not been faithful enough?”

As I reflect on these honest confessions, I recall how Jesus took every opportunity to dismantle the empty religion of the Life *Under* God perspective pervasive in his culture, as seen in his conversation with the rich young ruler in Luke 18. The belief at the time purported that those who lived righteous lives were most favored by God and possessed wealth, health, and status as a result. But Jesus directly opposed this belief by saying that wealth may instead be more of a barrier to experiencing a rich relationship with God.

Have you adopted a similar belief as the Jewish culture promoted two thousand years ago? Do you believe the more faithful you are to live righteously the more you will be blessed and conversely, the more you disobey God, the more you will be cursed? Is your relationship with God centered around how you might appease Him in order to gain something from Him. This actually goes back much further in the history of humanity:

“If you recall, in Eden the man and woman were not content ruling *with* God, but instead wanted to be like God and assume a position of control. The irony of a life *under* God is that we are seeking to exert control *over* God through strict adherence to rituals and absolute obedience to moral codes. It is Eden’s rebellion all over again. Through our obedience we put God in our debt and expect him to do our bidding in exchange for our worship and righteous behavior.”^[1]

There are some horrific examples of bargaining with God throughout scripture in order to attain something^[2] and then there are other examples that stem from great humility.^[3] Whether it is a pursuit of biblical morality or the adherence to pagan superstition the Life *Under* God approach always fails to draw us closer to God:

“...This is what’s contributing to the ‘de-churched’ phenomenon. Young people raised within Christian communities are being taught a Life *Under* God view of the faith. And when God inevitably refuses to submit to our attempts at control via morality and ritual, they become cynical and abandon the church and in many cases faith as well.”^[4]

As you make Jesus the main thing in your life this week, may you take a critical eye to the way you relate to God and ask for a greater hunger to experience life *with* him more honestly and fully.

Reflection

1. Can you recall a time when you tried to “bargain” with God? What was the nature of the agreement? How did it play out?
2. What motivates you to obey God’s commands? What are you hoping to achieve? What does this reveal about your deepest desires?

News and Resources

- Join us this week for Vespers at 6:30pm or 8:30pm in the University Church for a collaboration between the Office of Ministry and Missions and Latin American Club with guest speaker Elder Elden Ramirez.
- Find a meaningful sense of belonging by joining a student or faculty/staff LifeGroup today: [click here](#).
- If you are feeling anxious or have recently experienced loss or grief, call 423.236.2782 to talk to a counselor on campus! (This is a free service for Southern students.)
- **Talk** with Chaplain [Anna Bennett](#) or [Joseph Khabbaz](#) if you need someone to pray with or have a desire to grow spiritually.