

# Does God need us?

Bridal Misthology  
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## Typical Answer

Typically, the answer given to the question, “Does God need us?” is, “No, God does not need us; we need Him.” The premiere proof text used to support this assessment is Acts 17:24-25: “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He **needed anything**, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things.” Hence, the standard deduction is that God does not need anyone or anything. Theologically, the stress is that God is self-existent, self-sustaining, and self-fulfilling. As a Trinity, He is perfectly happy within Himself. He does not need us to complete His happiness. He did not create us because of any unmet need, for example, and He did not become dependent upon us after creating us.

## Balanced Answer

Of course, God does not need us in order to exist (Ps 50:9-12) or find fulfillment within Himself. But is self-fulfillment the only filling that God desires? The Bible tells us that God wants us. In fact, He even jealously desires us and wants to fill us. He loves us and wants to be loved by us. A moment’s worth of reflection would concede, then, that He needs us if He wants to complete such desires. His desire to express His love for us and be loved by us would be unfilled without His loving us and our loving Him in response. To fulfill His desire to love us and be loved by us, He would need to love and be loved in return.

God does not need us in order to love or be loved—only to love *us* and to be loved *by us*. Within the members of the Trinity, the need to love and be loved is already fully met—within the limitations of that self-contained sphere. Yet in order to fulfill His desire to love others outside of Himself and be loved outside of Himself, God would need to create others outside of Himself, naturally. The maximization of His love in this external, reciprocal expression required our creation. Some object by arguing that if God created us because He wanted to be loved by us, this would make His love selfish. To the contrary, God’s desire to be loved is not selfish. Rather, the nature of love is to make oneself vulnerable to the desire to be loved in return. God is vulnerable to His desire to be love because He is love. Love does not limit itself to those who reciprocate with love; nevertheless, it desires such reciprocity. To desire loving reciprocity is not selfish.

### Need for Laborers

As an expression of His desire for reciprocating love on our part, God wants us to be involved in His plans and has put plans into motion that require our involvement in order to complete those plans. God needs our involvement in order to bring the completion of those plans to pass. For example, a wonderful Christian song, *Lord of the Harvest*, inspired by the passage of Scripture concerning the woman at the well in Jn 4 expresses it this way:

See the fields, ripe and white as snow  
Up from the seeds of faith we planted long ago  
So many the hearts in season  
with every prayer they've grown  
You have made them ready  
but we must bring them home.

Lord of the harvest place your fire in me  
**Servant you need now**, servant I will be  
Give me the eyes of your Spirit,  
your heart of compassion to know  
Lord of the harvest, show me where to go.

Time like a free wind, so quickly slips away  
Too soon today's tomorrow, too soon yesterday  
So little time for the reaping and the laborers are few  
Lift your head to the fields of white  
the work that you must do.

So does God need us to serve Him in His fields if the harvest is going to be brought home in the manner affirmed by this song? Certainly! In this passage, Jesus is attempting to get His disciples to join Him in doing something that He and the woman are already doing: sowing and reaping: "Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together" (Jn 4:26). The woman, a brand new believer, was already successfully sowing seed via her testimony (Jn 4:39). Jesus shared the joy of harvesting with her. He needed her if He was going to reach the people successfully in her village in that time and place and in this manner.

### Needy is not Wimpy

Contrary to the objection of some, to acknowledge that Jesus decided to place Himself in a position where He needed this woman in this time and place to reach her community in this timely manner does not picture Him as a sissified, needy Jesus. Needing her (and them for that matter) at this

microcosmic level to make His joy complete on that occasion does not mean that He needed her (or them) to make His joy complete at the macrocosmic level. The Father and Son have placed a plan into motion in which it is certain that their love will be maximized. The full number of those who need to qualify for bridal rulership will be realized for the maximization of that loving union so that ultimately it will be realized.

### **Macrocosmic versus Microcosmic Levels**

At the individual, microcosmic level we cannot play emotional blackmail with God and threaten to not love Him (and thereby hurt Him) if He fails to respond in the manner we desire for Him to respond and then think that we will thwart the fullness of His joy as a result. To be sure, at the microscopic level we have the power to hurt God, but at the macrocosmic level His joy will be made full with or without us by those who decide to respond to Him in love at the microcosmic level. We can choose to be a part of that microcosmic fulfillment or not, but we cannot thwart the macrocosmic fulfillment that God will experience by those who do respond positively to Him at the microcosmic level. God is sovereign. At the macrocosmic level, He will accomplish His objective with or without our aid in our own particular microcosmic sphere. In love, He has made Himself vulnerable to being hurt by us. Yet if we chose to spend our life hurting God, we will find that it will hurt us far more.

### **Infinite Versus Finite**

The ability of the finite to hurt the infinite is dwarfed by the ability of the infinite to hurt the finite. A microscopic splinter that is quickly removed and thrown into the fire has little to rejoice about in the millisecond of pain that it inflicts upon the one who casts it into the fire for its permanent destruction. The finite cannot hurt the infinite infinitely or eternally. But the infinite can hurt the finite eternally. God can be hurt but only to a finite degree and for a finite duration. We, on the other hand, can be hurt infinitely in the sense of eternally.

### **Tears of Bride and Groom**

The Bible is very clear and graphic in depicting God rendering such hurt on those who refuse to act in accordance with His desires. To perceive God as needy does not picture Him as wimpy. Even without us, God would be completely happy in His sphere of self-fulfilling sufficiency. As to the alternate dimension of interdependent fulfillment, He sovereignly has determined that His cosmic love will achieve maximum realization, even without the help of those who choose not to respond to His love at their own microcosmic level. God loves the whole world and has made their salvation possible (Jn 3:16). Yet it was not merely for the purpose of such cosmic love that Jesus died, but for the joy set before Him of having bridal companions (Heb 12:2; cp. Heb 3:14; 12:8). In order for the Lord's joy to be made full,

the full number of His bridal companions needs to be reached. He will wipe away the tears of His Bride (Rev 21:4). No doubt, she will wipe away the tears of her Groom. She will make His joy full. He will have no more tears either. Whatever grief is experienced by the Bride and her Groom will be a thing of the past.

### **Bride at the Well**

Jesus needed the woman at the well in order to make His joy complete of having a successful harvest in the manner in which He had chosen to circumscribe His ministry that day. Here was a woman having a terrible time finding a man who wanted to have and keep her for a wife. Yet she was being offered to become the Bride of Christ. The Lord wanted her, and He needed her cooperation if she was to become His Bride.

The friend of the bridegroom stands outside the door to listen for the voice of the bridegroom, confirming that he has found the bride to be a virgin so that the bridegroom will consummate the marriage. Otherwise, under the law, the groom would have grounds for having his betrothed put to death (Dt 22:13-21). By coming to Christ in saving faith, this woman was now betrothed to Christ as a “pure virgin” (1Cor 11:2). If subsequently she devoted herself to Christ, she would qualify for the consummation of ruling with Christ as His bridal queen. Otherwise, the right to consummate the union of co-regency with Christ would be forfeited (2Cor 11:3; 2Tim 2:12).

The OT episode of Rebecca at the well is widely recognized as a typological picture of the Bride of Christ. As a sign, Abraham’s servant asked God that the girl from whom he would ask water would not only provide water for himself but for his camels as well. As it turned out, the girl from whom he asked for the water was a beautiful virgin, who did indeed water the camels (Gen 24:1-61). The parallel between her and the woman at the well has not escaped the notice of the commentators, although the full significance of the logical relationship has not been explored. As it turns out in Jn 4, when Jesus asks this woman for a drink, she winds up watering the whole village with her testimony of living water! Logically, we may infer that she became betrothed to Christ just as Rebecca was typologically.

Does Christ need faithful believers? Yes, if He is to have a bridal queen! The Father desires to present the Son with faithful believers as His bridal companions. In order to fulfill this desire, He needs faithful believers who are willing to work in His fields that are “white for harvest” (Jn 4:35). As these new believers came to faith in Christ for eternal life, they could then proceed to clothe themselves morally in white garments and thus prepare themselves to become bridal companions: “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the

saints” (Rev 19:7-8; cp. 3:4-5). As believers, we need white garments of moral purity if we are to be clothed in white bridal garments and thus consummate our regal union with the Lord, thereby making not only our joy complete but His as well.

### **Not Selfish**

Certainly, the desire to have one’s own joy made by the love of another is not unbiblical or selfish (cp. Phil 2:2). Nor is the personal desire to receive a full reward because of the actions of others wrong (2Jn 1:8; MT). God’s desire to be rewarded with our love is not ungodly. To have His joy made full in this area necessitates our love.

### **Body of Christ**

As believers, we are members of Christ’s body. Paul affirms this truth in 1Cor 6:15, right after warning believers that those believers who live in an unrighteous manner will not “inherit the kingdom” (1Cor 6:9-10). Yes, positionally, they have been made pure virgins, so to speak (1Cor 6:11), but their consummation as the Bride, who would co-rule, would require that they be morally pure as well. Being a member of Christ’s body of believers only requires that one be a believer in Christ. However, to be a member of His bridal body, who co-rules with Him, requires that one be a morally pure believer.

### **I Need You**

Contrary to many theologians, as members of Christ body, we are confident that Christ will not tell us, “I have no need of you” (1Cor 12:21). He does need us. Christ is the head of the body, the church. The head will not tell the rest of body, “I do not need you.” Nor will Christ tell the church, “I do not need you.” By logical inference, we likewise may deduce that Christ would not tell His Bride, “I do not need you.” She is part of His body. When a man and woman join in holy matrimony, they are considered one body (one flesh). Part of God’s plan is to picture the Lord joining Himself to us (wherein we become one spirit with the Lord). Moreover, when God created Eve, He did so saying, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” (Gen 2:18). Typologically, this pictures the making of the Bride of Christ. By this picture is God not suggesting that the highest good for the Son cannot be achieved apart from the Son having bridal companions?

God did not create us because He was lonely in terms of self-sufficiency. However, in terms of interdependence, God could not realize a reciprocal love with those outside of Himself that mirrors the love that He finds within Himself until He created those outside of Himself that could mirror that love. Doing so would even allow Him to increase the reciprocal love He experiences within Himself (Jn 10:17). God did not have to create us. He could have chosen to be content with the self-sufficiency of His own

internal love. Yet He chose to create us in order to expand His love to include other dimensions. And He created us in the manner in which He did in order to maximize that love. God could have chosen to stand alone apart from us, and He could have been happy within the loving sphere of His self-sufficiency. He had a choice, and in terms of the maximization of His love, He decided it was not good that He should be alone in the paradise of that self-sufficiency. Could it be that in the creation of Adam and Eve, to some extent at least, God is telling us His story in relation to creation? After all, Adam was created in God's image and is a type of Christ. God's desire to provide a wife for Adam, who was to be loved by Adam and Himself, was to picture the love of Christ and His Father for the Bride of Christ (made ready by the Spirit of Christ). But to maximize her love for Him, He allowed her to fall so that He might stoop to lift her.

### **God Needs Us**

God is not ashamed of picturing Himself as needing us in certain capacities: "And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads,' declares the Lord God" (Eze 22:30-31). Evidently, God needed a watchman to fulfill His desire of finding someone to stand in this microcosmic gap. Does the fact that God found His need for a watchman unfilled mean that we are to picture Him as a wimpy, needy God? Far from it! Having His need unfilled resulted in the fire of His wrath!

Ultimately, at the macroscopic level God will accompany His objectives, with or without the help of particular individuals at the microscopic level. Whatever pain God may allow Himself to be subjected to by us, in placing Himself in need of us, will be wiped away in the consummation of His joy with those of us who are willing to do His will. By His grace, let us place ourselves in a position where we can enjoy that consummation as our remuneration.

Isaiah "heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?'" The Lord apparently did not mind picturing Himself as needing a messenger to deliver His message in the manner in which He wanted to send it. Isaiah answered the call, "Here am I. Send me!" (Is 6:8) At the conclusion of the Bible we find: "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Rev 22:17). Like Isaiah, the Bride answers the call to give the call, to deliver the message. The bridal spirit still responds to the summons to share the gospel message with the response, "Here am I. Send me!"

### Free versus Costly

To present this call accurately, the duality of the message must be communicated clearly. To help picture this duality, consider the following diagrams. A number of passages of Scripture teach that eternal life is a free gift. In this passage regarding the woman at the well, in fact, eternal *life* (*zoe*) is pictured as a free gift using the metaphor of living water (Jn 4:10-14). Just one drink and you will never thirst for this water again. Yet, in this same passage, Jesus goes on to say, “Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together” (Jn 4:36). Experiencing eternal life at this level is associated with earning wages. Some mistakenly violate the law of non-contradiction by thinking of the gift as a wage. Others wrongly conclude that since eternal life is a gift, it can never be a wage. The proper conclusion is to perceive that two different dimensions of eternal life are in view.

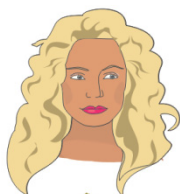
*Illustration 1. Graph of Two Different Aspects of Eternal Life*



- Spiritual life is a gift: Jn 3:15-16,36; 4:14 (cp. 4:10); 5:24; 6:40,47,54; 10:10a,28; Rom 5:18; 6:23; 1Tim 1:16; 1Jn 5:11,13.
- Spiritual life is a reward: Mt 19:16,29; 25:46; Mk 10:17,30; Lk 10:25; 18:18,30; Jn 10:10b, 12:25; Rom 2:7; 5:21; 6:22; Gal 6:8; 1Tim 6:12.

Our experience of eternal life can fluctuate drastically. Nevertheless, whatever our experience may be, we cannot forfeit our possession of eternal life which unconditionally guarantees us that we will enter heaven because we have trusted in Christ for the free gift of eternal life. At her moment of faith in Christ for eternal life, this woman at the well received eternal life as a free gift and was unconditionally assured by the Lord that she would never thirst for this gift of life again.

### Illustration 2. Two Different Aspects of Eternal Life



= Gift aspect of eternal life (zoe)



= Reward aspect of eternal life (zoe)

I am using this picture of the woman with her unrestrained hair in the top portion of the picture to depict the woman at the well when she first received eternal life as a free gift. However, the picture of her hair subdued by the crown depicts the regal realization that she can achieve by summitting her life to the Lordship of Christ in her daily performance. The Lord promises the crown of life (i.e., eternal life in the regal dimension) to those believers who love Him and prove it by being faithful till death (Jam 1:12; Rev 2:10). This costly reward dimension of eternal life is gained by serving Jesus. In Jn 12:25, Jesus alludes to a reward dimension of eternal life. Moreover, He enriches the illustration by combining it with another form of life: earthly life.

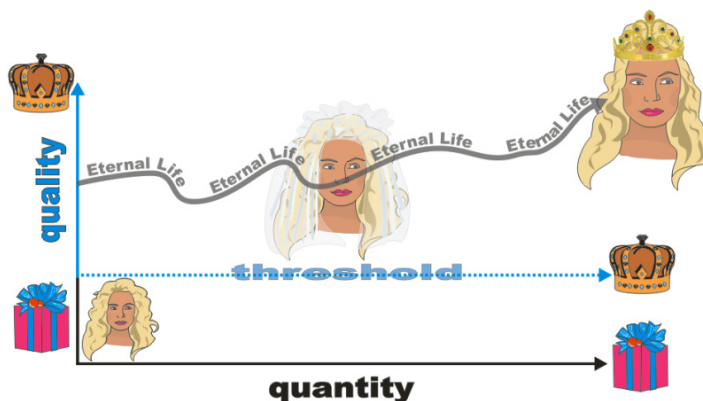
### Illustration 3. Eternal Life + Earthly Life = Mistic Life



In this verse, Jesus is saying, “He who loves his *life* [*psuche*] will lose it; and he who hates his *life* [*psuche*] in this world will keep it for eternal *life* [*zoe*]” (Jn 12:25; TM). In the Greek text, *psuche* refers to *earthly life*, while *zoe* refers to *life* which is *eternal (aionios)* and thus to *eternal life*. You can add one form of life to the other. Mathematically, we may express this truth as an equation:  $zoe + psuche = zoe-psuche$ . Living your earthly life is such a way that it is lost in service to Jesus will result in your earthly life being gained abundantly in conjunction with eternal life in the hereafter. By qualifying for bridal intimacy, she would qualify for heavenly co-regency.



*Illustration 4. Earthly Life + Eternal Life = Mistholic Life*



Unbeknown to her, the moment she believed in Christ for eternal life, she was betrothed to Christ spiritually as a pure virgin. Her present and past sexual failures with men did not change that fact. But by sharing Christ with her village, she was well on her way to qualifying for becoming a member of the Bride of Christ. If she progressed and persevered in that course of action, she will qualify for co-rulership with Christ.

### Conclusion

Not all believers will qualify for regal union with Christ. Still, they are assured of eternal life at the threshold level. Yet to be taken over the threshold as the Bride of Christ, so to speak, they must be faithful to Christ. We were created for this purpose. Why did God create us? To co-rule the universe with Him! He loves; He wants us; He desires us. Some superficially picture God as simply saying, “I love you, but I don’t need you.”

To the contrary, God loves us and needs us. God does not need us in order to survive, of course. Nor does He need us in order to be happy. But He does need us if He is to fulfill His desire to have us rule as coregents with His Son. Thinking that it would be selfish for God to create us for this purpose is as silly as thinking that it is selfish for a king to want to marry the woman he loves and share his throne with her as his queen. Conversely, thinking that it is selfish for us to want to rule with Christ is just as ludicrous.

There is nothing wrong with a woman who desires to be the queen of the king whom she loves and to whom she is betrothed. Indeed, something would be wrong with her if she did not have such a desire. She should not listen to the court fools who tell her that her motives are impure when she is trying to keep herself pure for the one whom she loves so that that she can experience regal matrimonial intimacy with him. Live for Christ so that you may rule with Christ!