



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH  
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NOVEMBER 2023

## *What Does God Want?* BY JOEL SUTTON

What does God want from you? What does he expect? Do you know?

That's a question that every person has to answer. Because if there is a God, you need to know what this God wants from you. That knowledge would be very important to how you live your life. It would change the way you drive. It would change the way you react to how other people drive. It would change the checks you write. It would change the websites you visit. It would change how you treat those around you.

So let me ask again: Do you know what God wants from you? You need to know.

You might be interested in Jesus' answer to that question. Jesus was once asked straight up: "Of all the commandments from God, which is the most important?"

Now understand, that is not such an easy question. It was a question the rabbis of Jesus' day debated often. I mean, there are many commandments from God in the Bible. If you open your Bible at the beginning, the first five books are called "the Law." They show us what pleases God. For example, you find the Ten Commandments, in which God says, "Don't steal, because that hurts people I love and destroys community. Don't commit murder, because that kills people I created." And so on.

The rabbis counted 613 commands in the Law. So how do you choose which one

is the most important? David tried. He reduced the 613 to 11 in Psalm 15. Isaiah tried. He reduced them to 6 in Isaiah 33. Micah tried. He shrunk that number down to 3 in Micah 6:8.

Then Jesus took it down to two in Mark 12:29-31, "The most important is: Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. And the second is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus took two commandments and joined them together to make one. Evidently, from God's perspective, it is impossible to love God completely without loving our neighbors in the same way we love ourselves. The two commandments go together like your right hand and your left hand.

You cannot just have a love for God and then ignore the needs of people. No. If we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, we prove it by showing that we love our neighbor. God asks for nothing else from you. Get this, and you've got it: Love God and love the people around you.

So how do you love those around you? By serving them. Jesus said in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus, loved us, by serving us.

This past September and October we invited all those in our church family to fill out our annual Five Extraordinary Norms Survey. Comparing this year's survey (2023) results with last years (2022), indicated some strengths and some growth areas.

We noticed some strengths. For example, more people indicated that they felt more confident in knowing God's story in the Bible and being able to share it with others. That is positive movement. We also saw a greater percentage currently participating in Christian community and developing deeper friendships with other Christ-followers. This too indicated growth over the past twelve months.

But the one extraordinary norm in which we need to continue to grow is in the recognizing and responding to the needs of others in a tangible way. In other words, loving our neighbors by serving them.

Over and over again, in the life of Jesus, Jesus loved people by serving them, by doing good deeds. His good deeds left people in awe, or in wonder. That is what good deeds do. Good deeds almost always create good will with others. Serving others get people's attention as few words can.

*(Continued on inside)*

### **Camp Nathaneal Father-Son Weekend, Oct. 6-8 near Hinkley, MN**



*If your information has changed recently (address/email/phone number) please contact the office so we can update it in our system.*

**OUR MISSION:  
TO HELP  
INDIVIDUALS  
BECOME  
CHRIST-CENTERED  
& CHRIST-SENT  
TOGETHER**

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### CES FOOD DRIVE

Grocery bags and item lists will be available in the foyer on October 29th.

Collection dates for items are November 5th and November 12th.



### SAM ROTMAN PIANO CONCERT

November 16th 7:00 p.m.

Join us for a special night of classical music & story-telling featuring the internationally acclaimed classical pianist Sam Rotman. Music lovers of all ages are invited to this free concert with the Juilliard-trained master of Beethoven.

### HARVEST OF PRAISE

November 22nd 7:00 p.m.

Your and your family are invited to our annual Thanksgiving worship gathering to give thanks for all God's blessings! Wednesday, November 22 at 7 p.m. There will be a pie social following our praise gathering—households of 2 or more bring a favorite pie to share. There will be no nursery or childcare provided; families are encouraged to worship together.

*(Continued from front)*

We say around here, "Our goal is not to be the best church in the neighborhood, but the best church for the neighborhood." And one of the best ways to do that is by loving and serving our neighbors.

Yet we serve our neighbors not necessarily to make them Christ followers, but because we are Christ followers. John Stott puts it this way:

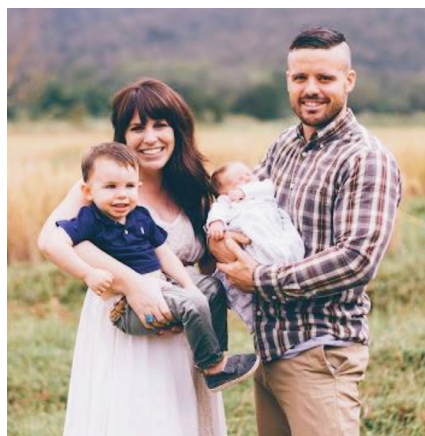
*"To sum up, we are sent into the world, like Jesus, to serve. For this is the natural expression of our love for our neighbors. We love. We go. We serve. And in this we have (or should have) no ulterior motive. True, the gospel lacks visibility if we merely preach it, and lacks credibility if we who preach it are interested only in souls and have no concern about the welfare of people's bodies, situations and communities. Yet the reason for*

*our acceptance of social responsibility is not primarily in order to give the gospel either a visibility or a credibility it would otherwise lack, but rather simple uncomplicated compassion. Love has no need to justify itself. It merely expresses itself in service where it sees need."*

Jesus lives in your neighborhood; he lives in the form of that person who needs to be touched by you, who needs to be served by you. Jesus said in Matthew 25:40, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me." Jesus Christ is in your neighborhood, and he's waiting for you to reach out and serve him. He's waiting for you to choose to be a servant, not to serve because you are forced to, but to serve because you love God with your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength.

## MINISTRY PARTNERS IN THAILAND

written by Matt and Audrey Pound



Becky was 12 years old and had been in one of our small, family-based orphan homes for 6 years. She sat across from me in my office, having requested a meeting. Knowing her to be a shy girl, I was impressed she had asked, and interested to hear what she had to say.

"I don't understand why I am here," Becky began.

Whatever I had been expecting, that was not quite it.

I tried to reply gently, "What do you mean Becky?"

"I am not an orphan, and everyone keeps saying I am. But I am not. I have a mom, I stay with her every summer break."

After listening, we promised we would do our best to help her return to her mother. We had crossed a frontier and one of our own children had led the way.

Audrey and I have been working at Faithful Heart Foundation in Chiang Mai Thailand for the past 9 years. We moved here because we sensed God calling us to work with vulnerable children. We wanted to help them have a better future and share with them the love of Jesus. We quickly discovered that good intentions were not enough; we needed to become continuous learners. Because every child, and every case was different. If we wanted to help children, we needed to learn more about families.

Seeing Becky's joy at being reunited with her mother is something I will not forget. Our social workers keep in touch with Becky and her family, and we hope one day she will become one of our college scholarship students.

Helping vulnerable children means carefully discerning which intervention is best for each child. We want to be a ministry that is driven by the best interest of our children.

We want to be adjusting our service, to best meet the needs of the people God has brought to us. We need a whole tool box to meet the diverse circumstances we encounter with vulnerable children, but the best place to start is with the family God has already given them.

If there is a healthy, loving caregiver willing to care for this child, how can we support them to make sure their needs are met, and the child is advancing in school?

If there is not a loving caregiver available, can we help this child find a loving, Christian foster family?

If we cannot find a foster family, do we have space in one of our children's homes, or can we reach out to another quality children's home that may be able to take them?

Our two children, Ezra and Sienna have shown me just how vital family is to the well-being of a child. Faithful Heart continues to expand our "toolbox" so we can better serve children and families in Thailand. We support 50 vulnerable families, reaching over 100 children each month in our Family Strengthening Project. We currently have 3 children's homes with 12 children in our full-time care. We have reunited several children like Becky with their biological families, and placed a few children in Christian foster care. In 2023 we gave out over 40 college scholarships to needy students. We are still learning, but we are grateful for this opportunity God has given us to serve these little ones in Jesus' name.

Thank you for partnering with us!

Love,

Matt, Audrey, Ezra, and Sienna Pound

For more info visit:

[faithfulheartfoundation.org](http://faithfulheartfoundation.org)



Children's Homes, Staff, & College Students



Foreign Volunteers

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