

How Do I Give My Life To God?

Audio Transcript, Audio By: Pastor John.

Some of the very best questions we get in the inbox are really short and pointed questions, like this one from Elizabeth from Tempe, Arizona. "Pastor John, what does it mean to 'give your life to God'? I hear it all the time. What are some biblical categories that you would use to explain this phrase?"

I can't say for sure what others mean when they say that they have given their lives to God, or want to give their lives to God, but I can tell you what I mean by it, and then show you from Scripture why I believe this is a biblical way of talking, and what the Bible intends for this kind of language to mean and the experience to be like. That's what I'm going to do.

If I say to God in prayer, "O Lord, I give myself to You," what I mean is this: I am saying a very earnest, heartfelt "Yes!" to God's purchase of me by the death of his Son so that I belong to him. He purchased me so that I belong to him, not only by virtue of his paying a price for me, but also by virtue of my willing surrender to him. That's what I'm doing when I say, "I give myself to you." I'm saying, "I'm no longer my owner, my master, my shepherd. You are my Owner, Master, Shepherd, Father, my treasure, my wisdom, my hope, my source of fullest and lasting pleasure. I renounce finding all of that in me. I look for it now in you, because I am utterly yours."

"Christ purchased you not only by virtue of his paying a price, but also by your willing surrender to him."

The key thing here is, Did God give his Son to purchase me for himself? If he did, then the words "I give myself to God" mean, "I gladly agree with that. I am happy, happy, happy about that." That's what we mean. "I want this to be true for me. I want to accept and live in the reality of that purchase. I want to renounce all claims upon my own life. I want to surrender completely to his protection and provision and leading and satisfying and that final embrace I desperately will need when I die. That's what I want." That's what I mean when I say, "I give myself to him." Now, here's the biblical foundation for that way of thinking.

The Divine Purchase:

There's the great event of divine purchase. First Corinthians 6:19: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." Now that's a fact. God did that. God has purchased a people for himself. They are not their own. They belong to God. That is, they exist to glorify and enjoy

God forever. Their sins are forgiven. Their guilt is taken away. Their rebellion is overcome. What they say is "I'm happy about that. I agree with that. I give myself freely and joyfully to the one who has purchased me." You're just bringing yourself into alignment with what God has already achieved for his people when you say, "I'm yours." He said, "You bet you're mine: I bought you."

"Giving yourself to God means longing for him to completely possess, rule, satisfy, and use you for his purposes."

One way of expressing it is found in Romans where Paul says, for example in chapter 12 verse 1, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual [service of] worship." "I give myself to God" means, "I do this: I do Romans 12:1. I receive the mercies, I present my body as a living sacrifice. I mean it as an act of worship. I long for God to completely possess me, rule me, satisfy me, use me for his purposes."

The Human Response:

Then, if you go back to Romans 6:13, he says it this way: "Do not present your members" — your arms and legs and tongue and so on — "to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness." When we read that and want to obey it, we say, "I present to you, O God, myself, my memory, my arms, my legs, my hands, my eyes, my tongue, so that you may possess them as your own, and accomplish your good and holy purposes through the use of myself, my body, my soul as instruments of righteousness. I give myself to you."

There's a beautiful story in 2 Corinthians about how the Macedonians did this. It says they were "begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints — and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us" (2 Corinthians 8:4–5). Paul was simply blown away by the beauty of this obedience of these young Christians. They gave themselves to the Lord. Then, in the confidence that they belonged to God, they gave themselves to Paul and to his purposes of mercy for the poor down in Jerusalem.

Then we have the great example of Jesus. "Calling out with a loud voice," Jesus said on the cross, "'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!' And having said this he breathed his last" (Luke 23:46). "Into your hands I commit my spirit" is another way of saying, "I give myself to you. I'm dying. If I am to live again, it will be because you possess me, hold me, keep me, preserve me. I give myself to you for that care."

"You just bring yourself into alignment with what God has already achieved for his own when you say, 'I'm yours.'"

It's no surprise, then, when the early Christians described their own suffering and their own death that way. First Peter 4:19: "Let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good." Entrusting your soul to a faithful Creator means, "I give myself to you. I give myself to you. God, you're faithful. You're powerful. You're my Creator. I belong to you. You made me. Take care of me now. I'm dying."

I think the key for Elizabeth when she asked about this, the key for all of us, is that we settle it in our minds and in our hearts whether we believe we have been purchased by God through Christ or not — Do we believe that? — and that we are, therefore, not our own, that we are utterly dependent on God for our life, our choices, our provision, our protection, our satisfaction, our meaning, our hope of eternal joy. If in fact God has purchased us for this, then the words "I give myself to you, O God" mean, "Yes, yes, yes. Yes to your purchase of me. I am thrilled to be utterly yours, bought with the price of your Son in this way. I renounce, therefore, all self-reliance, all self-exaltation. I give myself utterly to you for your use forever."

Interview with John Piper, Founder & Teacher, desiringGod.org

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-do-i-give-my-life-to-god>