

“If Only ...”

It’s all about control. We know what we want to accomplish and do whatever it takes to reach our goal. Sometimes, a crisis or barrier blocks us from accomplishing our plans. That crisis may be beyond our ability to fix.

When we are in trouble, we go to Jesus, asking for help. We make promises that “if only” God would help us through the situation, then we will do something for Him. “Dear God, if only you ...” take this situation away, I will ..., and then you make a conditional promise. These statements reveal that we place our faith in God *only* if He does what we ask. Who’s in control, here?

I am currently reading a Tim Keller book ([Jesus The King](#)) that addresses “If Only” as an attempt to maintain control of our lives, rather than turn it over to God. We think we know what is best for us, but in reality, we are trying to dictate to God what we want to happen. In effect, we are trying to be our own savior. We only need God for the miracle, then we’ll be on our way and “get out of His hair.”

Keller writes, “Many of us first start going to God, going to church, because we have problems, and we’re asking God to give us a little boost over the hump so that we can get back to saving ourselves, back to pursuing our deepest wish. The problem is that we’re looking to something besides Jesus as savior.” Keller says, “when we first go to Jesus saying, ‘This is my deepest wish,’ his response is that we need to go a lot deeper than that.” Keller went on to say, “The Bible says that our real problem is that every one of us is building our identity on something besides Jesus.” We try to use Jesus for a quick fix so we can get back to our plan.



Keller uses the example of the paralytic man who was lowered through an opening in the roof for Jesus to heal. Instead of telling the man to rise up and be healed, Jesus first says, “Your sins are forgiven.” Keller suggests that the man has a bigger problem than the need to be healed. He writes, “the main problem in a person’s life is never his suffering; it’s his sin.” This is not implying his particular illness is because of sin -- we are *all* sinners. The paralytic man can’t do anything on his own about his suffering, but he can do something about his own sin. Sin isn’t just the bad things we do in life, “it is ignoring God in the world he has made; it’s rebelling against him by living without reference to him. It’s saying, ‘I will decide exactly how I live my life.’”

When we go to God asking for something to be removed, we think: if Jesus works a miracle, everything will be OK, forever. It won’t. There will be another crisis, and another, and another. We don’t need a little boost to get over the hump -- we need a Savior. When Jesus healed the paralyzed man, the nearby religious leaders were astounded and angered. They knew that only God could claim to heal sins. In the act of forgiving sins, Jesus was claiming to be God. The religious leaders considered Jesus’ forgiveness of sins to be in contempt and irreverent towards God, because He claimed to do something only God could do. After telling the man his sins were forgiven, then Jesus told the man to pick up his mat and walk. He proved He was God.

So, when we go to God with a request, God wants us to go deeper. He first wants to forgive us of our sins – including our desire to be our own savior. Jesus wants a committed relationship with us. Jesus is saying to us, “I’m not just a miracle worker; I’m the Savior.” Getting our deepest wish doesn’t heal us of our bigger problem. Our problem is deeper than whatever you are asking Jesus to correct. It’s not about getting through a situation and back to our former life. Jesus performs miracles because He *is* the Savior. And, His love for us is unconditional! We have to let Jesus be *our* Savior.

Question: Before you ask Jesus to do something for you, are you committed to Him as your Savior – now and forever?

Closing Prayer: Lord. We have many needs, but the biggest need is for a Savior. You are our Lord and Savior, now and forever more. Amen.