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## Whose Needs?

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## Whose Needs?

Sometimes we offer assistance clearly and directly, as when we notice a person who cannot find his or her way to a destination, and we provide the proper directions. We take care of a need. We have at times asked a friend or colleague to help us, as when our hands were full and we could not pick up the one additional piece that we needed to carry away. But in contrast, we may have noted situations when we wondered who was meeting whose needs. Humorous examples can be found in parents who are ostensibly showing children a game, toy or device but are wholly engrossed in it themselves. Other examples are not so amusing, as when we sense that one person insists on helping another, but in reality satisfies his or her own need to be in control, without being of any real or welcomed assistance.

When we read, hear or recall instances of God referred to as "savior," we may have positive resonances with the idea, but we might also benefit from reflecting on whose needs are being met. Since our own sense of worth has to do with our ability to think and act on our own, we do not want to consider ourselves as entirely needy. Neither are we content to imagine that God needs to be a savior who would constantly intervene in our lives in ways that would violate our free will.

We can understand human behavior where people meet their own needs for seeing themselves as being kind or helpful when in fact they are pushy and rude in giving unwelcome advice where none is sought. But we do not value or encourage words or actions that are in any way controlling of anyone's capacity to make their own decisions. Since this in-built respect for proper autonomy is so strong in us, we might well believe that God is the source of such a deep desire, and would be forsaking a basic foundation of the act of creating us if he were to force changes in our behavior. Rather, God holds each of us in the highest regard, willing to do anything that will help us achieve the purpose of our existence, just as we ourselves want what is best for family and friends and even for society as a whole.

We do not always wait until we are asked before we tell friends that they are metaphorically walking blindly into a street with busy traffic. Neither does God stand aloof when we initiate a line of thinking that leads directly away from self-respect and respect for others. We and God have a need, a need to care, to love.

When we are guided by love, we might make mistakes, we might unintentionally cause some hurt feelings, but love is not at all the same as the desire to control, to maintain a position of power over others. God's love for us can reach us gently or powerfully, but always leaves us free to accept

or to reject the thoughts, inspirations, awareness, or even plain facts that are given to us.

Whose needs are met when love is at work? Everyone's.