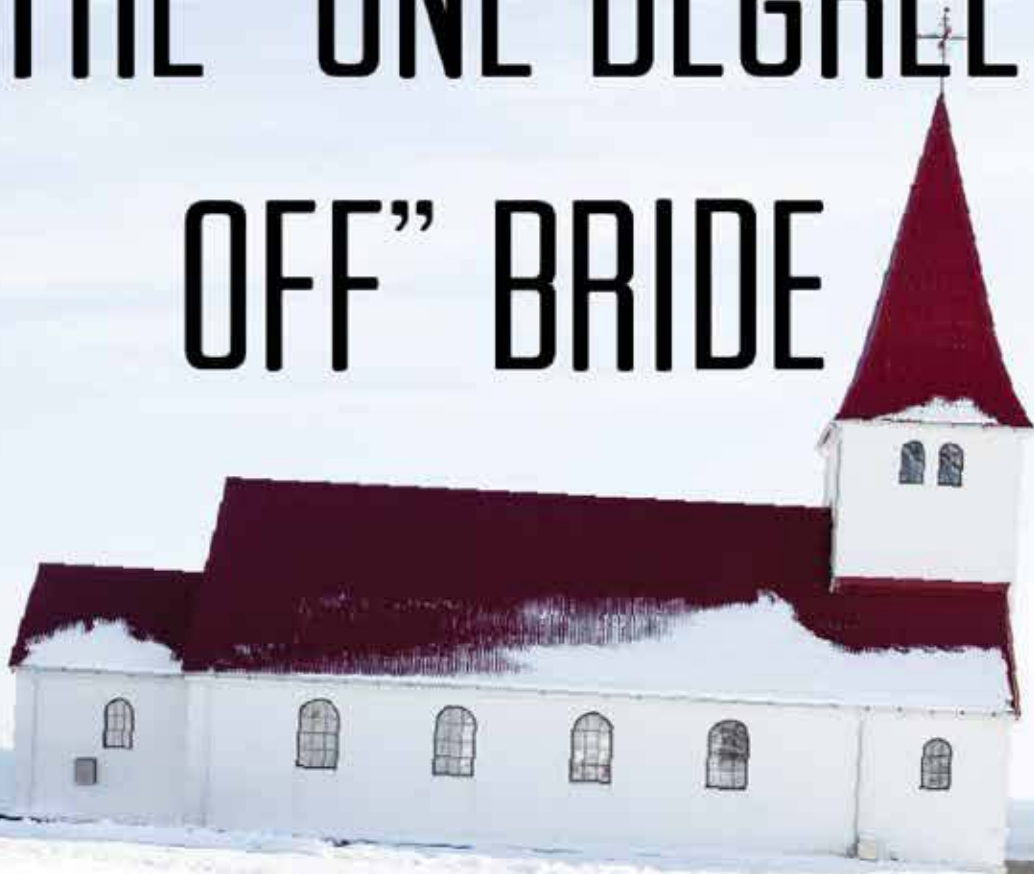




Maturing The Bride

SERIES: BOOK 2

THE “ONE DEGREE OFF” BRIDE



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CHAPTER ONE

Why Have We Missed This?

Victoria settled into her first class seat. She knew it was going to be a long flight. Even in the best weather, Atlanta to Tokyo was at least a 14 hour flight.

A flight attendant appeared and took her jacket. She also asked her if she wanted a drink.

“Water with lime for now,” Victoria answered.

Passengers were still boarding, but that was a minor inconvenience compared to the large space she had for sleeping. She got out her laptop and began to work while the plane was still on the ground.

“Here’s your water with lime,” the flight attendant said with a smile.

“Thanks,” Victoria replied while barely looking up.

Before she knew it, all of the passengers had boarded. And then something happened that she’d rarely experienced. The captain came out and greeted the first class passengers.

“Hello,, everyone, I’m Captain Scolaro. We’re anticipating a fairly smooth ride to Tokyo today. We’re expecting a 14 hour and three minute flight from wheels up to wheels down. If there’s anything we can do to make your flight more enjoyable, just let one of our expert Atlanta-based flight attendants know, and we’d be glad to help you out.”

As the captain turned to go back to the cockpit, he stopped and then returned to the first class passengers.

“By the way, in case your interested, this will be my first time doing this route. I’m so excited. I may be one or two degrees off, but I’m sure we’ll get you there on time.”

With that, he turned and retreated back to the front of the aircraft.

Victoria hadn’t been paying too much attention. She turned to one of her fellow

passengers with a quizzical look.

“What did he just say?”

Her fellow passenger responded with the same quizzical look, “He might be one degree off?”

Victoria gave a greater look of disbelief and then began to think about it.

One degree off, one degree off? As a civil engineer, her mathematical mind began to do some internal calculations.

She knew that one degree off at 100 yards, you’d be five feet off. And after a mile you’d be 92 feet off.

Let me think, I just saw the distance from Atlanta to Tokyo when I was determining how many miles would be credited to my Sky Miles account. Now, how many miles was that? She closed her eyes and tried to focus.

Then her eyes opened wide.

Atlanta is 6,854 miles way from Tokyo. At 92 feet off per mile, that would put us roughly, her mind was racing, 120 miles away from Tokyo.

Her mind envisioned Tokyo on the map. Tokyo is right on the edge of the island it sits on and is only 60 miles from the opposite side. We would have to land in the ocean.

Victoria grabbed her laptop, put it back in her briefcase and then rushed up front looking for the nearest flight attendant.

“Get me my coat and stop the plane,” she screamed. “I want to get off right now.”

Just One Degree Off

Being off by just one degree over a long period of time can make a big difference.

In you were in a rocket going to the moon—and you were off by just one degree, you’d miss the moon by 4,169 miles.

If you were one degree off going to the sun, you’d miss the mark by over 1.6 million miles (nearly twice the diameter of the sun).

If you were traveling to the nearest star, you’d be off course by over 441 billion miles (120 times the distance from the earth to Pluto, or 4,745 times the distance from Earth to the sun).*

Is The Church Off???

Sometimes I wonder if our modern-day Church’s theology is off by just one degree. If that were the case, it would make a HUGE difference in what we are taught to believe.

To understand this one degree of difference, let’s look at how some people in America

view Jesus and Christianity. I have a friend who did just this. He took a camcorder and asked people on the streets of Denver, Colorado what they thought about Jesus. Their responses were all positive. They loved Jesus and what he stood for.

But when he asked them what they thought about Christians—their answers were all negative. They were the exact opposite to those about Christ. To them, Christians were known for three things: being hypocritical, being judgmental, and being full of hate.

To the average person in the United States, there is a huge difference between how they view Christ and how they view Christians.

All this makes me wonder if the church has one degree off for 2,000 years and we've simply been missing something very key.

Cracks In The Foundation

I believe the Church has been one degree off—and there are reasons for it. And you find them in the very foundation of our faith.

In order to understand where we have veered off, we need to start at the very basics of Christianity. We need to look at the life of Christ and why he died on the cross. Paul gives us one reason for why Christ died in his letter to the Colossians.

In Colossians, Paul wrote these words;

*For him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself **all things**, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:16,17)*

Did you notice the words *all things*?

“What are all things on earth?” I ask my audience.

They usually start out by saying “everything.” But I ask them to be more specific. Eventually they say things like: plants, animals, mountains, rocks, oceans, marine life, clouds...the list is endless. And when they give that list, they are right.

But that is just on the earth. It also says “all things...in heaven.” What are all things in heaven? That would be planets, comets, asteroids, stars, galaxies, etc.

Paul is trying to tell us that Christ died for everything—not just us—everything: the plants, the animals, the mountains, the oceans, the fish, the clouds, the sun, the moon, comets, asteroids, the stars...everything.

But why would he do that?

In the creation story, we learn that God created all things perfectly. If they were perfect, Jesus wouldn't need to die for them. (See Genesis 1:4, 12, 25, 31.)

But something happened after the first seven days of creation that ruined everything. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. God issued four curses as a result of their sin.

First, snakes would have to crawl. Secondly, women would have pain in childbirth. Thirdly, men would have difficulty in their work. And there was a fourth curse found in the Bible.

*And to the man, he said, "Since you have listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, **the ground is cursed** because of you. All your life you will scratch to get a living from it. (Genesis 3:17)*

The verb "cursed" means to inflict harm or to do damage.

One of the ramifications of Adam and Eve's sin is that the ground was cursed. This was not how it was originally designed to be, but the curse affected all of creation.

Paul knew about this and wrote to the Romans about it:

*For the creation was **subjected to frustration**, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its **bondage to decay** and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been **groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time**. (Romans 8:20-22)*

Being cursed, God's creation is not in the original condition where they're supposed to be. They are now in a state of bondage and decay. And because our bodies were made from the dust of the ground (and that ground was cursed), our bodies are cursed. They age and eventually die.

Now, if you're 30 years of age and younger, you have no idea what I'm talking about. You think you're going to live forever and you have no idea what bondage to decay means.

However, those who have lived for more than 30 years know that our bodies are getting older. Our backs begin to hurt. Our feet start to feel pain. Our joints can begin to feel pain.

It is during those times that we realize that we are getting old. And we head toward the fulfillment of Genesis 3:19, "to dust we shall return."

However, when we get to heaven, we're going to have a new body that will never decay. Our new bodies will live forever because the curse will have been broken. No more pain. No more aches. No more decay. Hooray!

Since this is all true, we now have three reasons why Christ came to the earth. He came to die;

1. For people's our sins
2. For all things on earth
3. For all things in heaven

Let's ask ourselves these two questions;

- Is there any other reason why Christ came to earth and died?
- Which one of these is primary?

Paul says there is another reason why Christ came to the earth and he writes about it in Romans;

*Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. He also came **so that...** (Romans 15:8-9)*

Uh Oh. Stop right there. "So that" means a purpose statement. Paul is about to tell us why Christ came to the earth to die. *So that...*

*Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. He also came **so that the Gentiles ...** (Romans 15:8-9)*

Paul says it has something to do with the Gentiles. As you already know, a Gentile is a non-Jewish person.

Now, what the text does NOT say is just as important as what it does say. It does not say:

*Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. He also came **so that the Gentiles might not go to hell.** (Romans 15:8-9)*

Personally, I would have thought that this was a perfect place to say it. Christ came so we don't have to go to hell. Isn't that what is preached in most churches?

But that's not what he says—which tells us something very important: Christianity is not primarily about avoiding hell. What you've just read is so important that I'm going to say it again. *Christianity is not primarily about avoiding hell.*

So what does it say?

*Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. He also came **so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy.** (Romans 15:8-9)*

Paul is saying that you and I were saved for a purpose. We were saved to glorify God!

So now we have got four reasons why Christ came:

1. To die for our sins
2. To die for all things on Earth
3. To die for all things in heaven

4. For the glory of God

We need to ask ourselves that same question. *Which one is primary?* Which reason among the four is primary?

CHAPTER TWO

Why Did Christ Primarily Die?

In order to figure out why the church has been one degree off for 2,000 years, we need to go back to the foundation of our faith. And in doing this, we will ask ourselves the question, “Why did Christ come to the earth to die?”

In other words, why did Christ *primarily* die?

Now most Christians usually believe that Christ died only for our sins. There’s no primary or secondary. He came just for us. He died for me. However, in the last chapter we see that Christ also died for *all things on earth and in heaven*, and *for the glory of the Father*. Hence it now gets “complicated.”

So, where do we find our answer?

Well, we should probably look at the life of Jesus since he’s the one who died. If there were both primary and secondary reasons, surely Jesus would have known them. Studying his life and his words in the Bible could help us discover the correct answer.

Our answer is found in John, chapter 12. Let’s learn the context first.

In John, chapter 12, Jesus is one day away from the cross. He is with his disciples in Jerusalem at the Passover festival. And in verse 27, he begins to expose his heart. In doing this, he is telling them that he really doesn’t want to die—but he must. It’s the reason why he came. We find this in verse 27:

“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. (John 12:27)

Now *the key* to understanding the primary reason as to why Christ came is found in the very first word of the next verse. What is the *very first word*?

Father.

Why is that word so important? It tells you that Christ switched his audience. He is no longer talking to his disciples. Rather, he is talking to his heavenly Father.

In order to understand why switching his audience was so important, we need to ask a simple question. Does a parent talk to a three-year-old child the same way they talk to their spouse? And of course, the answer is no. Parents talk to their three-year-old child with simple words and in simple concepts.

No parent would ever say to their three-year-old child, “Mommy has cancer and I could die, but I have to go to the hospital. Pray that I get better.”

But they would say, “Mommy has a boo-boo and has to go away for a few days. But you’re favorite aunt is coming to take care of you. Isn’t that exciting!!!”

But when they talk to their spouse, they talk from the heart about real issues.

Now, I don’t care if the disciples were in their 50’s (which they weren’t—most believe they were teenagers), what is a 50 year-old (or even a 100 year old) compared to an eternal God? We are like children.

What Jesus says to his disciples is like a parent talking to a three-year-old. He tell us something we want to hear like, “I came to seek and to save the lost.” But when he talks to his Father, he’s going to talk about issues of the heart.

Now remember, the context.

He is one day away from going to the cross. He is going to die one of the worst deaths any human can endure—death on a cross. It is not a quick death, but a slow agonizing death. As you hang there, your muscles get paralyzed. Over time, you begin to have difficulty breathing. And eventually, you die due to a lack of oxygen.

It is a slow process of suffocation.

Here is the key question: Do you think Jesus is going to talk to his heavenly Father about the primary reason as to why he is going to the cross or a secondary reason?

In nearly all of my audiences, they say, “Primary.” And I would agree. He’s about to die one of the worst deaths, so certainly he would talk to his heavenly Father about the *primary* reason.

What Jesus Does Not Say

Now in order to feel the full impact of this passage, we need to see what Jesus *did not say*, because it speaks volumes.

Jesus did *not* say, “*Father, save these kind, wonderful, worthy people from hell, they don’t deserve it.*”

In fact, he didn’t even talk about us to his Father.

Did you catch that? It's so important I'm going to repeat it. Jesus didn't even talk about us to his heavenly Father.

Woah! That tells us something very important: it wasn't primarily about us. Jesus didn't die primarily for our sins.

If you are to push this point further, it tells you that *Christianity isn't primarily about avoiding hell*. The main objective of the Christian walk is not to avoid hell—though you'd never know it by the way most churches end their services.

So what does he say?

The Primary Purpose

“Father, *glorify thy name*.”

The primary reason for coming to this earth and dying was for the glory of his Father. This is what he talked about with his Father in the last minutes of his life here on earth.

So as each whip tore the skin from his back, his focus was primarily on his Father's glory. As the crown of thorns was put on his head, he focused on the glory of his Father. When each nail was driven in, he experienced the pain for the glory of his Father.

In other words, he was asking God to restore his glory to the comets, asteroids, stars, galaxies, the universe, plants, trees, animals, fish, mountains and humanity—so that we could once again bring glory to God.

Christ died primarily to glorify his Father.

Average Christian

An average Christian would say that Christ did it all for us according to what he was taught at church on Sunday. How do we answer something like this?

The key word is “all.”

Did Jesus die for our sins? Absolutely yes. That is not incorrect, but it is incomplete.

Did he do it *all* for us? No. There were other reasons as to why Christ died.

This can change the way the average Christian looks at life.

Let's take work as an example. If it's all about you, you work hard to get a promotion with a salary raise. And that's great. But to what end? So you buy lots of things which means that work is a way to make yourself happy. The focus is on you.

However, a mature Christian would say that I'm going to do my work to the glory of God, whether I get the raise or not.

What about in the area of marriage? The average Christian thinks, “I'm lonely and I want someone to go through life together. Therefore I'm looking for a spouse.” And in many ways there's nothing wrong with this. It is quite biblical. It is not incorrect, but it

is incomplete.

But if you go further and say, “And the primary goal of my spouse is to fulfill me,” then you’re in dangerous waters in two specific areas.

First, God wants to primarily fulfill you emotionally. He wants to be your greatest source of joy.

And secondly, if you are primarily focused on the glory of God, your goal should be to reveal God’s glory to your spouse—not have them meet your needs.

Another example is in the area of parenting.

If Jesus died only for you, then it is primarily about you. And then parenting boils down to four words: “Do not embarrass me.” You are going to tell your children, “Don’t do anything stupid. Don’t get pregnant before marriage. Don’t kill anyone. Don’t steal anything. Don’t do anything that will embarrass me.”

But if Jesus died primarily for the glory of the Father, then parenting has a totally different take. You basically are saying, “Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.”

Glory of God in the Scriptures

No matter where you go in the Bible, it is all about the glory of God.

All the stories in the Bible portray the glory of God. From the creation story, to Abraham’s story, to Joseph’s story, to King Saul, David, and Solomon. Psalms and Proverbs are also about God’s glory.

It continues on in the New Testament. Jesus did everything for the glory of God—even dying. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote in ways that portrayed the glory of God as primary. Paul, James and Peter wrote also about the glory of God.

No matter where you go in the Bible, it is about the glory of God. It has one consistent theme all throughout the Word. Everything is about the glory of God. No wonder Paul wrote,

*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do it all for the glory of God.** (1 Corinthians 10:31)*

This message is meant to challenge you because I believe much of the church has been one degree off for a very long, long time, and we need to get it back on course. We need to say it’s all about the glory of God.

But let’s ask ourselves a question. What is so special about God’s glory? Why did Christ die primarily for the glory of his Father? This is what we’ll get to in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

What's So Great About God's Glory?

When Jesus Christ was about to go to the cross, he said to his father, “Oh, Father glorify thy name.” Christ died primarily for the glory of his father. But why would he do that?

I have struggled with that for years, but then found a very satisfying answer by looking at the four living creatures in Revelation, chapter 4:

Each of these living beings had six wings and their wings covered all over their eyes, inside and out. Day after day and night after night they keep on saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty—the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come.” (Revelation 4:8)

To help you to see what I saw in these four creatures, we need to ask ourselves two questions;

Free Will

The first one is this: Do you think they have free will? Or do you think they are being forced to worship God in a way that is mandatory for them?

Think about it. It's quite hard to have a conclusive answer about this because the Bible doesn't talk about this. But Jesus said we were to love him with all of our mind—so go ahead, let your mind think about this one.

If you're stuck (or you just didn't even try to think about it like most readers), you'll realize there are two possibilities to this first question. Either, “Yes, they do have a free will” or “No, they do not.” Let's think through those two options.

Let's suggest that these four living creatures do not have free will because they were created solely to worship God and they have no other choice. In other words, they have no way out but to worship God as long as they live.

During my sessions, I usually ask my audiences, “*How does it make God look?*”

In essence, one would say, “If they are forced to worship him, then God is a dictator and maybe he is a control freak.”

Another one would also say, “It kind of makes God look a little harsh or overpowering.”

Others say, “Maybe he has a poor self-image and just wants people to praise him.”

Though we’d never say it, they’d rather be off doing something else like golfing, or playing video games or watching a movie. Why? *Because God’s glory isn’t all that satisfying.*

If they do not have a free will, it makes God look terrible. Who would want to worship a God who is boring?

But let’s look at the other possibility. What if they do have free will? How does that make God’s glory look?

It takes them a while, but they finally get it. They say words like: amazing, desirable, glorious, and satisfying. And these thoughts are right on! They don’t want to be anywhere else because the glory of God is so satisfying.

Now there’s a very valuable lesson we can learn from this:

God’s glory satisfies our very souls. Because it is so wonderful, we never want to leave or stop worshiping God. And since God is infinite and eternal, our souls will always be satisfied!

But let’s ask a second question.

Living Creatures

Do you think these four living creatures have veins and blood in their wings like we have in our arms?

Again, love God with your mind. It says they are “four *living* creatures.” Somehow they are alive. Most of the people in my audience agree, that yes, their wings have veins and blood just like our arms have veins and blood.

Since this is the case, we need to study the text carefully and ask some key questions. It says, “They never stop saying...” Does the text seem to indicate that they take coffee breaks? No. Do they stop for breakfast, lunch or dinner? No.

What does that tell you?

God’s glory not only satisfies our souls, but our very bodies themselves. This is why Moses could be up on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights with no food or water and come down radiating the glory of God! (See Exodus 24:28-35.)

There is a neuroscientist by the name of Dr. Caroline Leaf. She studies the brain and

what makes it healthy and what hurts it. In her research, she has found that when you focus on healthy thoughts, your body is healthier. When you focus on negative thoughts, your body suffers.

She and her fellow doctors tell us that 87-95% of all illnesses start in our brain.¹ Think on negative thoughts, it will affect your body. Think on positive thoughts, it too, will affect your body in a healthy way.

This is why God wants you focused on his glory. By focusing on him and his glory, you're going to be healthier and happier.

And this is why God's glory is so central. It not only satisfies our souls but our bodies as well! It is the only thing that can satisfy all of us permanently. Nothing else comes close.

But as humans, we can so easily miss this.

Two Evil Things

In the book of Jeremiah, the Lord had a case against his people and we read these words:

*For my people have done **two evil things**: They have abandoned me—the fountain of living waters and they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all! (Jeremiah 2:13)*

The first evil (sin) is that they have abandoned God. They don't believe God can satisfy them. As a result, they have to look for something else that they believe will satisfy them.

This is where the second sin comes in. They have dug for themselves cracked cisterns (wells) that cannot hold water at all. They put water in those wells and then when it leaks, they have to fill it up again.

This means that the Israelites were getting their joy in something else other than God—and that joy leaked.

Today, we dig our own leaking wells too! We find our joy in the latest phones or computers, or in our homes or in alcohol, drugs, sex, marriage, job promotions or movies or a myriad of other things.

But these all leak. The latest phone is great—for a year, but then we want another one. Drugs or sex last only hours. Marriage is great, but it can be tough as well. Movies are great, but when they're over, we want the next sequel. It all leaks.

This is why God chose his analogy so carefully. Note that God is comparing himself to a fountain of living waters and our other choices to cracked cisterns that cannot hold water. Let's look at the differences.

Note that you have to dig the well. Digging sounds like hard work—and it is. And then

1 <https://www.prweb.com/releases/2012/4/prweb9398089.htm#:~:text=According%20to%20best%2Dselling%20author,Leaf>.

once you dig those wells, you have to fill them up. (They don't fill up by themselves.) And once you fill them up, you will soon realize that they leak, therefore you have to fill them up again and again and again. All of this is hard work.

However, the fountain of water is bubbling up from the ground by itself. You don't have to do anything to make the water come up. It does it all by itself. There is no work required. And all you need to do to enjoy it is to get down on your knees and drink it in.

God is saying we have a choice: work hard and get temporary enjoyment or get down on our knees and drink in permanent joy.

God wants us to praise and worship him so that we can be as happy as he can make us. *We need to praise him for our sakes* because his glory is the only thing that's going to satisfy us forever.

In the Scriptures, God is constantly challenging and commanding us to praise him. And because the Scriptures are God-inspired, he is saying, "Praise Me."

Do you think he is like some older woman who dresses up and just needs a lot of praise? No, that's not our God. He points us to himself because he loves us. His glory is the only thing that completely satisfies our souls and bodies. And because he wants the best for us, he points us to himself.

However, most of us have missed it because we're *one degree off* as we are searching the scriptures. We are more concerned about what God can do for us—then for who he is.

Mark it down well in your mind. God wants you to worship him, first of all, because he is worthy, but secondly, because he has your best in mind and it just happens to be him. He wants you to be as happy as you can be. (Who wants to worship the God of someone who is unhappy all the time.) Therefore he commands you to "Praise He."

CHAPTER FOUR

Why it's Okay for God to Be a Jealous God.

All of this has sprung from our key passage in the twelfth chapter of John where Jesus declares:

"Father, glorify Your name." (John 12:28)

Though we haven't talked about it, God does respond to that request of Jesus. But the key question is, "Just what does His Father say?"

If I were God, I would have said something like, "Son, it's not about us. We've got to die to ourselves and live for others. Take the focus off of us and put in on others." That's what God tells us to do, so I would assume that this is also what God tells His own Son to do.

But God doesn't say that. In fact, he says the exact opposite in Verse 28;

"I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." (John 12:28)

God the Father is saying to Jesus, "You're right Son. It's about Me. In fact, it is so much about Me, I'll continually be pointing others to Me."

In simple terms, this means that God lives for God. Not only does he want us to glorify his name, but he himself will glorify his name as well. This is why he tells us that he is a jealous God.

For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, [a jealous God](#). (Deuteronomy 4:24)

Jealous God

Usually when we hear of jealousy, we have a negative reaction. Jealousy is bad. It causes people to do harmful things to others. But it doesn't always have to be this way.

If a man sees another man pursuing his wife he would (and should) be jealous and

drive the other man away. He would do this to protect his marriage. This type of jealousy is not sinful. Rather, it is entirely appropriate.

This is precisely the jealousy the apostle Paul described when he said;

For I feel a [divine jealousy](#) for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ([2 Corinthians 11:2](#))

There is a jealousy that is a healthy jealousy. And the one that is healthy is when that jealousy is pointing yourself and others to God. It is okay to be jealous for God and His Kingdom. This is what Paul is saying. Paul was wanting them to finish strong.

And this healthy jealousy can be applied to God as well. God, too, can be jealous for Himself because He knows that He is the only being worthy of praise and adoration. And the beauty of God is that He can be jealous for His own glory and not sin! We would sin if we were jealous for our own glory, but God does not.

To help you understand this, let me tell you a little story. When my wife and I lived in Arizona, we had a room (called the den) close by the kitchen where we watched T.V. In the mornings we would tell our four young children, “You can’t go down into the den with your cereal and watch T.V.” Yet I would go down with my cereal and watch T.V.

When they saw me do it they’d say, “But Dad, you do it! Why can’t we?”

My answer was simple. “Because, kids, I won’t spill my milk. You will.”

That’s just like God. God can live for God and not sin (not “spill His milk”). If we tried to live for ourselves, we would fail miserably.

Since God’s glory is the only thing that truly can satisfy us forever, He continually points us to His glory. And He does this out of love.

If He were to allow us to focus on anything but His glory, He would be allowing us to settle for tenth best, or 30th best, or 100th best—and that wouldn’t be a very loving thing for God to do.

But God is gently telling us in His word, “I love you so much I want the very best for you, and that just happens to be Me! Nothing can satisfy you like Me. Therefore I will continually point you to My glory.”

In other words, for God to love us, he has to be a jealous God. He has to point us to Himself. If He didn’t do that (if he allowed us to settle for 13th best—something that would only satisfy us temporarily), it would mean that he does not love us.

As a result, we see repeatedly in God’s word that He is a jealous God. We read these words in Deuteronomy:

For the Lord your God is a consuming fire; he is a jealous God. (Deuteronomy 4:24)

He says the same thing in Exodus:

*You must worship no other gods, for the Lord **whose very name is Jealous**, is a God who is jealous about his relationship with you. (Exodus 34:14)*

What Could God Live For?

If you're having a hard time grasping this concept, let's look at it another way. Let's ask the question, "If God doesn't live for God, what else (or who else) could God live for?"

When you look at creation around us, I want to suggest three options;

- Creation
- Angels
- Humans

Let's address each of them starting off with creation.

Could it be possible that God lives for his creation? There is some Scripture which seems to point us in that direction.

David wrote in Psalm 148:

*Praise Him **Sun and Moon**. Praise Him all you **shining stars**. Praise Him, you **highest heavens**, and you **waters above the heavens**. (Psalm 148:3-4)*

God is speaking to the sun and the moon—along with the stars and water. He is telling them to praise Him.

Maybe he's doing that because he loves them. And maybe it goes beyond love, maybe He lives for them!

In Ezekiel, it goes beyond the sun, moon, stars and water. We read these words,

*As for you son of man, thus says the Lord God, speak to **the birds** of every sword and the **beast of the field**, assemble and calm gathered from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. (Ezekiel 39:17)*

God is preparing a sacrificial feast for the birds and the beasts of the field. Why would He do that? Maybe because He loves them. And again, it may go beyond that, maybe He lives for them!

Look at Jonah;

And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left? And also much cattle? (Jonah 4:11)

Why does God throw in that last line about the cattle? Maybe because He loves the cattle! Maybe God actually does live for creation!

But then again, no.

Peter tells us that all of creation is going to be destroyed by fire.

By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of the ungodly. (2 Peter 3:7)

John confirms it in Revelation when he tells us that there's going to be a new heaven and a new earth.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth and the first heaven and the first earth passed away. The first heaven and the first earth passed away. (Revelation 21:1-4)

Since they are going to be destroyed, do you think that an eternal God would live for something so temporary? I want to challenge you, He wouldn't. That just doesn't pass the "common-sense test."

God would not live for creatures or creation. That wouldn't be wise for an eternal God to do.

So what was the second option for God to live for?

What about the angels? The angels are not temporary, they live forever. And note that He tells them to praise him.

David wrote

*Praise him **all his angels** praise him **all his hosts**. (Psalm 148:2)*

The four living creatures are already doing it.

And the four living creatures each of them with six wings are full of eyes all around within and day and night. They never cease to say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty Who was and is and is to come. (Revelation 4:8)

So maybe God lives for the angels!

But wait, there's a down side to the angels. Timothy tells us that Satan (an angel who started out good) fell due to pride.

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Fall into the condemnation of the devil. (1Timothy 3:6)

After rebelling, Satan then gets a third of the angels to follow him to also rebel against God. This is what we believe Revelation 12 to be saying,

*And another sign appeared in heaven. Behold a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns. And on his hands were seven diamonds, his tail swept down **a third of the stars of heaven** and cast them to the earth. (Revelation 12:3-4)*

Why would God live for the angels that rebel against him? Not a good choice and once again it doesn't pass the "common-sense test." So we cross off the second option as well.

So what's our third option: Humans!

God must live for humans because, after all, Jesus died for us.

But to pass the "common-sense test," let's ask ourselves, how are we portrayed in the Scriptures?

In the very beginning, His Word tells some terrible things about us in Genesis 6:5:

*The Lord saw that wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was **only evil continually**. (Genesis 6:5)*

But it doesn't stop there. There's more evidence in the Scriptures that we're not that great. Jeremiah says that our hearts are very deceitful,

*The heart is **deceitful above all things and desperately sick**, who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)*

Mark also agrees and he wrote;

From within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you. (Mark 7:21)

In Galatians, Paul also agreed and wrote;

Now the works of the flesh are evident sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, our flesh radiates all these evil things. (Galatians 5:19-21)

We need to ask an honest question. Are we worth living for? If we're honest, the answer is going to be "no." And if we shouldn't live for ourselves, then, why would God live for us? It, too, doesn't pass the "common-sense test."

It's A No-Brainer

Let's be honest. If we had to choose one of these four options to live for (creation, angels, humans or God), which would we choose?

It would be a no-brainer for us. We'd choose to live for God. And if it's a no-brainer for us, why would God be any different? He wouldn't. *God lives for God as well.*

There is no one worthy for God to live for—except Himself. This is why He is a jealous God. And this is why He continually calls us to worship him as well.

And in not wanting us to give us 24th best, God will continually tell us to not worship other Gods:

*You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a **jealous God** who will not tolerate your affection for any other Gods. (Deuteronomy 5:9)*

One Degree Off Bride

He will not tolerate it because He loves us too much. By worshiping other gods, we are settling for something other than the best. So God is saying, “I love you too much to let settle for something that is not going to truly satisfy you like My glory will.”

In other words, God is telling us we should not bow down to anything temporary because it leaks and will not satisfy us completely.

If God let us be satisfied with the 100th best, or the 44th best, or the 23rd best or even the second best, He would not be a very loving God.

For God to be a loving God, He has to be a jealous God.

Always remember that God lives to glorify God. That is why He continually points us to Himself.

From him and through him and to him are all things to him. (Romans 11:36)

You were created to worship God—for His sake and your sake! But most Christians have missed it because we’ve been one degree off.

CHAPTER FIVE

It's Never Been about You (or Us)

We will forever be thanking John in eternity future for his gospel writing in helping us to see that Christ died primarily to the glory of the Father. We'll also be giving him thanks for the book of Revelation which helps us to see that the glory of God is what satisfies us forever.

Though we know this now, God has known it forever. Therefore, it should not surprise us that God does everything to protect His glory, seeking to make it shine as much as possible. And we are to represent Him, hence we are to live for the glory of God.

We see this all throughout the word of God. It started in the very beginning in Genesis:

So God created mankind in [his own image](#). In the image of God he created them male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27)

When God created us in His image, he wanted us to represent Him here on this earth. Our purpose is to represent God to others. Therefore, whatever you do, you are to do it in a way that makes God look good. This is our job description for life.

God's Worldwide Publicity Campaign

In the major events of the Bible, God continues to build his reputation among the nations. We see God doing this as the Israelites left Egypt.

During that time, God had zero reputation among the nations. This is why the Pharaoh asked, "Who is the Lord?" (Exodus 5:2). Pharaoh laughed at the idea that God (the God of slaves) had any kind of a reputation. The Pharaoh knew nothing of Him, nor did any Egyptian or people from any nation. So God set out to change that.

This prompted God to instruct Moses to tell the Pharaoh to let His people go. We read in Genesis:

After this presentation to Israel's leaders, Moses and Aaron went and spoke to Pharaoh

and said, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Let my people go so they may hold a festival in my honor in the wilderness.”

“Is that so?” retorted Pharaoh. “And who is the Lord? Why should I listen to him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go.” (Exodus 5:1-2)

Knowing He had zero reputation among the nations, God began a worldwide publicity campaign so that He could make His name known among the nations. And He did that starting with Pharaoh.

But I have spared you for a purpose-to show you my power and to spread my fame throughout the earth. (Exodus 9:16)

God did not only want the people of Israel to know His name, but He wanted the nations to know His name as well. Because He loves them just as much and He knows that it is only His glory that will satisfy them forever.

Therefore, He began his worldwide publicity campaign when He told Moses to tell and challenge Pharaoh to let His people go. But the Pharaoh was too stubborn, which prompted God to send the ten plagues. The Nile turned into blood and fish died, there were grasshoppers, the locusts, frogs, and hail among others.

So how did these plagues affect his worldwide reputation?

During these plagues, there were traders who entered Egypt. And imagine what they said!

“Yuck, what is that awful smell?”

“It’s dead fish,” would reply an Egyptian.

“Why are they dead?”

“The God of the Israelites is taking on the gods of the Egyptians.”

“Well, here’s my money. I’ve got to get out of here!”

And what would he then do? He would tell trader after trader after trader around the watering hole. And they would have it confirmed by later traders telling about later events from the ten plagues. And all of it would confirm the God of the Israelites was a powerful God.

This news about the plagues spread to the rest of the nations. In other words, the other nations began to know of this great God through Pharaoh and the ten plagues. God’s name had to be glorified because it is all about Him.

“For this very purpose, I caused you to be raised up, that I might show in you my power, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”(Romans 9:17)

Well, did the worldwide publicity campaign work? Absolutely.

In Daniel's time, a thousand or so years later, He still had a name and a reputation.

"O Lord our God, you brought [lasting honor to your name](#) by rescuing your people from Egypt in a great display of power. (Daniel 9:15)

In the Scriptures, God constantly protected His name by doing things for the sake of His name.

God's Response To Rejection

After God rescued the Israelites from the Egyptians, He made them go through the Red Sea and finally reach the Promised Land. Hundred of years later, they rejected God as their king. They wanted to be like all the other nations around them that had physically present kings.

"But when you were afraid of Nahash, the king of Ammon, you came to me and you said you wanted a king to reign over you, even though the Lord your God was already your king." (1Samuel 12:12)

How do you think that affected God's reputation? I want to suggest to you that it didn't make God's reputation look very good. Why worship the God of Israel when they are worshiping the other gods around them?

Samuel warned them that by rejecting God, they were sinning and they didn't want to do this.

The people all said to Samuel, "Pray to the Lord your God for your servants that we will not die but we have added to all our sins the evil of asking for a king." (1Samuel 12:19)

How does God respond? Does He wipe them out? (Remember, in whatever way He responds, He needs to respond in a way that will protect His reputation.)

The Lord will not abandon his people [because that would dishonor his great name](#). For it has pleased the Lord to make you his very own people. (1Samuel 12:22)

God said He was not going to abandon His people, not for their sake but for His great name's sake. He did that to protect His name and reputation because no one would want to follow a God who kills His own people.

Though it wasn't His first choice, God did give them a king. The first king was Saul. He wasn't too good. Then came David. He was a good king. The third was Solomon. He started out good and ended up bad.

And when Solomon was still in his "good phase," he built a temple to honor God. Note that in his dedication, he dedicated it not only to the Israelites, but to the nations as well. (He knew of God's love for all the nations.)

"Likewise when a foreigner comes from a far country for your name sake for they shall hear of your name sake and your mighty out a stretched arm when he comes and prays from this house here in heaven your dwelling place and do

*according to all for which the foreigner calls to you so that all the people of the earth may **know your name** and fear you. (1Kings 8:41-43)*

Solomon knew that other nations were already hearing about God's name because of the things He had done through Israel, starting with the ten plagues. Solomon knew that Israel represented God first and foremost.

The Scriptures talk about how *everything* is to revolve around God's name and reputation. Look at the multiple Scriptures that speak of doing things "for his name's sake."

In choosing right ways, it is to be our primary motivation:

*He leads me in paths of righteousness **for his name's sake**. (Psalm 23:3)*

When you are seeking God for wisdom on what to do, the primary motivation should be to make God look good—not to simply further your own kingdom or get out of trouble.

This is also why we ask forgiveness of sin. We usually think it is for our sake (so we won't go to hell), but that is not the primary motivation. It should be for His name's sake!

***For your name sake**, oh Lord, pardon my guilt for it is great. (Psalm 25:11)*

God forgives our sins for his name's sake. He protects his name from the very beginning because it makes God look so good and He wants everyone to see it because that's what satisfies us all completely and forever!

This is why he leads us and guides us.

*For you are my rock and my fortress and **for your name sake**, you lead me and guide me. (Psalm 31:3)*

God leads and guides us in whatever way He wants so that we can make Him famous. This could mean sending you overseas to preach the gospel. At other times, he could change your workplace or your residential home, or school among others all for the sake of His great name.

It's not about you and me being famous. It's all about God and his glory and pointing people to that glory.

This holds true for getting out of trouble. (The word "salvation" in the Old Testament didn't mean going to heaven. It usually meant getting out of some dire predicament.)

*Help us oh God of our salvation. **For the glory of your name** deliver us and turn from our sins for your name's sake. (Psalm 79:9)*

So we ask God to save us out of those circumstances, not for our sake, but for the sake of His great name!

God deals with us in a way that reflects Him—even when we are grossly disobedient. There was a time when Israel was like that (many, in fact.) But notice how God deals with

them:

*For I knew how stubborn you were, your neck muscles were ironed, your forehead was broad, therefore I told you these things long ago before they happened. I announced them to you so that you could not say my idols brought them about. My wooden image and my metal idol ordained them. You have heard these things, Look at them all. Will you did not admit them? **For my name's sake**, I deferred my anger. **For the sake of my praise**, I restrain it for you that I may not cut you off. (Isaiah 48:4-6)*

God didn't destroy Israel because He knew, if he did, it would have a bad impact on His own reputation. Think about it. Who would want to follow a God who destroys His own people? As a result, God says, "I'm not going to destroy you for My sake."

He says the same thing in Ezekiel.

*But they rebelled against me and were not listening to me. None of them passed the test of the detestable things their eyes feasted on nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said I will pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the midst of Egypt. But I acted **for the sake of my name** that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among who they live. In whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt. (Ezekiel 20:8-10)*

*There say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord God, "It is not for your sake or house of Israel that I am about to act but **for the sake of my holy name** which profaned among the nations to which you come. (Ezekiel 36:22)*

There are times when we are absolutely disobedient, but God says, "I'm not going to give you what you deserve for the sake of My reputation through you."

New Testament

This theme was rampant in the Old Testament, but we also see it in the New Testament as well.

We find it in the Lord's prayer when we are taught how to pray.

*Then pray like this; our father who art in heaven, **hallowed be your name**. (Matthew 6:9)*

The beginning of the Lord's Prayer is about God's name being hallowed and made famous. That is how we are supposed to pray. It should be the first and foremost thought on our hearts.

And it goes way beyond that. Jesus says, "As you live for me—to make me famous—people are going to hate you."

*For it is not you who speak but it is the spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death and the father his child and the children will rise against their parents and have them put to death and **you will***

be hated by all by all for my name's sake. (Matthew 10:20-22)

We will be hated by the world as we live to make God famous because they will be under the influence of the evil one, who distracts them from the glory of the Father. They will indeed not like the God we worship.

Paul suffered because of this:

*For I will show Paul how much he will suffer **for the sake of my name**. (Acts 9:16)*

Just like Paul, we should be willing to suffer to make God look good because it's not about us. It is about pointing people to God's glory, and we also shall receive rewards.

Knowing the high cost of following Christ, Jesus does give us incentives. Look at how he motivates us:

*And everyone who has left houses, or sisters or brothers or fathers or mothers or children or land, **for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold** and will inherit eternal life. (Matthew 19:29)*

As we live for the sake of His name and encounter trials and difficulties, Jesus says, "Don't worry about it. Whatever you've lost, I'll pay you back 100 times in eternity future!" This should motivate us to live for the sake of His great name!

This idea of living for the great name of God doesn't stop only with us. We need to be informing those we are baptizing that it is for His sake they are to live.

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them **in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit**. (Matthew 28:19)*

Yes, it will cost them. Yes, there will be hardships. But it is for the sake of His great name and we will be rewarded in the end.

This also applies to prayer and changes our motivation in what we pray for. Usually we are praying for things "for us." But Jesus is basically saying, "Don't pray for things for you, pray for things that will make my name look good, not only here, but around the world. Pray prayers for My kingdom, not yours."

*Whatever you ask **in my name**, this I will do that the Father may be glorified in the son. (John 14:13)*

Salvation itself is gained by calling upon his name..

*And it comes to pass that anyone who **calls upon the name of the Lord** shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)*

In other words, if we call upon God's name, we are saved. This is what brings about justification—and again, it is in the name of God.

*And such were some of you. You were washed; you were justified **in the name of***

the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God. (1Corinthians 6:11)

Everything we do should be in his name. Paul writes this to the Colossians church:

*And whatever you do, **do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus** giving thanks to the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)*

Everything you do should be in the name of the Lord Jesus and should make God look good. We are here for his glory. Everything is about the kingdom of God.

It never has been, nor ever will it be only about you.

If you want the fullest joy, focus on God's name, live to make His name look good and famous. Glorify the name of the living God!

CHAPTER SIX

Defining God's Glory

In the beginning of this book, we confirmed that Christ primarily died to glorify the name of the Father. But why the glory? Because God's glory is the only thing that satisfies us forever. This is why God lives to glorify God.

But let's get practical. If everything is about the glory of God, how do we define God's glory?

In the following pages, we are going to seek to define the glory of God. But defining the glory of God is like dissecting a frog.

When you dissect a frog, you can see different systems: the circulatory system, the respiratory system, the digestive system, and the skeletal system. You can also see the organs that make up those systems: the lungs, the bladder, the stomach, the heart, etc.

But once you have learned all you can about the frog, the frog is dead.

We hope we are not going to be doing this with the glory of God. We are going to try to define it as best as we can, but we pray we have not "killed" it for you.

Defining God's Glory

The Hebrew language for the word "glory" uses the word *kavod*. It means "weight or heaviness in a figurative sense" to explain the 'glory of the Lord.' In other words, *kavod* refers to something that is grave, deeply serious, containing an incredible amount of wisdom inside.

*The heavens declare the glory of God. The sky proclaims the work of his hands.
(Psalm 19:1)*

The stars that you and I see declare (as if shouting) the "heaviness" of God. Back then, David hardly knew anything about the glory of God—yet he knew it was something amazing.

Today, we know so much more. And with the Hubble telescope, we are seeing images that David could only dream of. And each image is telling us about the “weight” of God—the incredible expansiveness of God’s power and being. The universe is indescribable—as is God.

We as humans were created for the same purpose.

*Everyone who was called by my name **whom I created for my glory**. (Isaiah 43:7)*

You and I as individuals are designed to reflect and to radiate the glory of God. Therefore, we were created for the glory of God. We are created for the Kavod, the greatness and heaviness of God. Our lives are to point to God in such a way that people say, “Whatever it is you’ve got, I want.”

We also see God’s glory in His provisions.

After the Israelites had left Egypt, they were in the desert on the way to the Promised Land. In the desert, there was little food. The people complained to Moses. God heard their complaining and asked to speak to them. Moses replied:

*Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.’” And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. And the Lord said to Moses, “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight **you shall eat meat**, and in the morning you shall be **filled with bread**. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’” (Exodus 16:9-12)*

What was the result of having seen the glory of God? God provided for them. Supernaturally food appeared to them. In the evening there was quail to eat. And in the morning, out of the dew, manna appeared. And the crazy thing is that this manna would only last 24 hours six days a week, but on the day before the sabbath, it would last for 48 hours, including a double portion.

All of this shows the glory (weight) of God.

The Lord’s glory (Kavod) also appeared in the tabernacle. When the people stopped to camp, the glory of the Lord would overtake the tabernacle, which was His very presence.

*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and **the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle**. (Exodus 40:34)*

You can also see the glory of God in nature. David says in Psalm 29 that when a deer is giving birth, we are seeing the glory of God.

The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth and strips the forest bare an in his temple cry, ‘Glory!’ (Psalm 29:9)

What chemical in the mother deer's body says, "It's now time to give birth?" How does a first time mother deer even know what is happening? There are not doctors attending it. There is no medication for the pain. It is all simply a reflection of the glory of God. You are seeing his wisdom, creativity, and how He makes life. All of this is incredibly amazing (heavy) and speaks of His glory.

And it is not simply the deer that reflect His glory. All of creation is full of the glory of God.

*And one told another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; **the whole earth is full of his glory.**" (Isaiah 6:3)*

The whole earth is full of his kavod. The more scientists discover, the more we realize how intricately woven together this whole creation is. It puts any God-fearing scientist in awe as they see the glory (heaviness) of God.

Thus when God went to put His glory on display in creation, He didn't do it in a small way. No, His glory is so amazing, He did it in a magnificent way!

He made 350,000 different types of beetles (all he had to do was make one, and that would have been amazing). He made 240,000 different types of flowers, 10,000 different types of trees, 25,000 different species of fish, and 10,000 different types of birds. All of this is a reflection of his glory!

New Testament Glory

Now let's go to the New Testament and look at the Greek meaning behind the word "glory." The Greek word is "Doxa." Doxa means glory. It's from the basis of another word, "Dokein." Dokio is a prolonged form of a primary verb "Doko" which means to think. God wants us to think about all that he is and all that he offers.

Satan tempted Jesus with the glory of all the kingdoms of the world.

*And the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him, Jesus, **all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.** (Matthew 4:8)*

Satan was basically saying, "Do you see all those kingdoms? Think about them, Jesus. Think about the beauty of those kingdoms. They can be yours. They and all their glory can be yours."

Jesus spoke of Solomon as having glory as well.

*"Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet **Solomon in all his glory** was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?" (Luke 12:27)*

Think about all that Solomon had. Solomon had clothing. Solomon had buildings. He built a temple. Now, think about the lilies in the field and about how absolutely beautiful

they are. All of this is the glory of God.

The glory of God is also seen in the power of God. In the context of raising Lazarus from the dead, we read these words;

*But when Jesus heard that Lazarus was going to die, he said that this illness does not lead to death. **For it is for the glory of God** that the son of God may be glorified through it. (John 11:4)*

When Jesus was told about Lazarus' death, he knew this was and still is for the glory of God. We think about how he raised Lazarus from the dead. This showed the power of God. The glory of God is the power of God.

Remember the story of ten lepers healed but only one came back?

*Was no one found to return and **praise** (doxa) to God except this foreigner? (Luke 17:18)*

Here, the Greek word doxa is translated as praise. Praise is thinking about someone and giving them your high opinion. This is what this foreigner was doing to Jesus. He was giving praise (glory—"doxa") to God.

The LONG Definition

From the above texts (along with other passages in Scripture), we've crafted a very detailed definition for the glory of God. But it is so detailed, as a result, it can become burdensome. In the hopes of "not killing the frog," let us share it with you.

God's glory is any revelation or expression of the excellence of His provision, presence, rule, creativity, character, and all wisdom. In other words, God's glory is anything that makes God look good therefore building His reputation and increasing his fame.

In light of this definition, the glory of God can be seen in every area of life.

When you see an incredible sunset or sunrise, you just saw the glory of God.

The wonder of a new baby coming from the womb of a woman—that is the glory of God

A thunder storm with lightning reflects the glory of God.

A delicate snow flake reveals his glory, especially when you realize that no two snowflakes are ever the same.

Any act of kindness reveals God's glory. It could be anything from sharing food with your needy neighbors or helping the elderly with their chores.

The love of parents for their children reveals His glory.

It is everywhere! We just need to look.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Freedom In Living For The Glory Of God

There is freedom in living for the glory of God. God wants you to have that freedom. I want you to have that freedom. And when you understand the Scriptures, it becomes so clear! So let's find out about this freedom that God wants for us.

Paul wrote in Galatians:

*For freedom, **Christ has set us free.** (Galatians 5:1^a)*

Paul knew that there was freedom in living for the glory of God. He had experienced it. He wanted the Galatians to know it as well—who weren't free, because of their strict adherence to the rules.

Jesus talks about this freedom as well:

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31,32)

Notice the link between truth and freedom. Once you know the truth, it sets you free! But you have to know the truth. You need a proper perspective on what's going on in order for you to understand this freedom.

To understand this truth, I want to introduce you to two fictitious men and look at their lives in light of the glory of God.



One man is named Moose. The other is Deshon.

Moose and Deshon went to college and came to know Christ in their freshman year at the university. They began to get discipled and began to grow fairly strong in their faith.

Four years later, they graduated from college and both needed a job. Knowing they couldn't live with their parents forever, they sent out their resumes and believed God for a job.

We are going to look at their lives and see how they do in glorifying God or getting angry at God. (Let's be real, both can easily happen.) Our chart will look like this:

ANGRY	GLORIFYING GOD
	✓


	Moose (on the left) got a job and he was happy so he gave God the glory. On the other hand, Deshon (on the right) also got a job, giving God glory because he saw the provision of God in finding just the right job.									
<table><tr><th>ANGRY</th><th>GLORIFYING GOD</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>✓✓</td></tr></table>	ANGRY	GLORIFYING GOD		✓✓	<p>As time went on, they started thinking about marriage and were looking for young precious women to whom they could commit their lives.</p> <p>After another two years, Moose and Deshon got married and gave God tremendous glory for providing just the right person for each of them.</p>	<table><tr><th>ANGRY</th><th>GLORIFYING GOD</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>✓✓</td></tr></table>	ANGRY	GLORIFYING GOD		✓✓
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As time went on, they wanted to buy houses and so decided to trust God for one. They asked God for just the right place. Eventually, each got a perfect house. Each gave God the glory. (Check mark #3.)

Wanting the great American dream, both got dogs. And eventually, they both tried to start a family. Sure enough, their wives got pregnant.

Moose's wife's pregnancy was easy and she gave birth to a healthy child. Deshon's wife's pregnancy was difficult, but in the end, she too brought forth a healthy child into the world.

Both gave God tremendous glory. (Check mark #4)

	
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Unexpectedly, their fathers died, and life changed forever. Now both of their mothers needed someone to live with because they were not able to financially take care of themselves.

Therefore, Moose's mom moved in with them. He was happy to do it but it came at a big



price. He had been saving up to purchase a second home on the lake. These plans were now ruined. He had to put those savings into an addition to his house so that he could have his mother live with them.

Moose didn't have freedom at this point. In fact, Moose was angry with God. He asked himself questions like, "God why did you let my father die? Why is my mom so poor? Why didn't my dad take care of her better?"

Moose was angry with God because his goals for how he wanted to live his life were drying up and evaporating before his very eyes. In Moose's mind, there was no glory to give God—only anger.

As for Deshon, he, too, knew he had to take care of his mother. Without any disappointment, he took the majority of his savings and built an addition on for his mom. He said, "This is a tremendous opportunity to live out the verse that says children honor your father and mother. I'm glorifying God by taking care of my mum."

Deshon had freedom and gave God tremendous glory.

Life kept on going and things began to change at work. Moose got a promotion.

Moose was feeling more freedom at this point. He was giving God glory and thanked God for the promotion. And with the extra money, he began to dream again. As a result, he began to put money aside for that second house on the lake.



Deshon also got a promotion and his income increased as well. He gave God glory. But instead of saving it for himself, he said, "Praise God, now I have more money that I can give to the orphanage in Africa that needs my support."

And so he began to put more money into the mission. He was giving God glory.

Eventually, COVID-19 broke out. Moose got the vaccine and protected himself as much as he could. Unfortunately, he got the second strain of COVID. He struggled to breathe on the hospital bed. Once again, he was angry with God. He kept asking God, "God, why did you bring COVID? What's going to happen to my wife if I die? What's going to happen to my children if I die? Are they going to be taken care of? What are you doing?" He was desperate.

In that same second wave of COVID, Deshon also ended up in the hospital. But having given his life to God and His glory, he was once again praising God. He said, "Lord, I'm

going to be the best COVID patient they have ever seen.”

In the midst of COVID, Deshon gave God glory. Moose couldn't.

As the doctors and nurses came in to take care of him, Deshon struggled to say, “Hey, I have a lot of free time, I’m just sitting here, is there anything I can be praying for you?”

This made the nurses and doctors wonder why he was praying for them instead of praying for himself. This was because Deshon lived to give God glory and this brought him tremendous joy.

He knew that there might be a point in time when he would not be a part of the family on earth, but he chose to be content and trusted God during his COVID crisis.

Since both of them went to fantastic churches, church members were praying for them. And to everyone's joy, they both were healed.

Moose once again glorified God because he was healed. He got back to his job and made money. Things were going well.

Deshon was also healed. And he was saying, “Okay, God, I will give you glory as a healed patient. To you be the glory, thank you for healing me.”



But as life kept on moving forward, they began to find greater challenges with their kids. And they got the unexpected: each of their teenage daughters got pregnant accidentally.

Moose was very embarrassed and very mad. His daughter should have known better. And now people were going to be talking behind his back. This was a horrific scenario to be in. So he let her have it!

“How could you do this to me? How could you get pregnant? Here I am at church and people will hear about this. This is going to get terrible,” he said to his daughter.

Once again, he was getting angry with God because things are not working out the way he thought they would.

Moose told his daughter, “Listen, honey, maybe we should go to planned parenthood. You know maybe we should abort this child and if we do it quickly, you are not showing so nobody is going to know. We’ll keep it real secret and we won’t have to be embarrassed.”

The thought of taking a life of an unborn child made them feel guilty yet they needed to protect themselves and their reputation. Moose was still angry and he was putting the blame more on God than on his daughter. She had been going to church her whole life. She even went to the youth group. Why hadn’t the youth pastor taught them better morality? And wasn’t God supposed to be sovereign. Why would he let this happen?



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After a week of debate, Moose's daughter had an abortion. He felt guilty. She felt terrible. He felt dirty. She went into a depression. But his reputation was saved.

Overall, Moose was angry at God. There was no freedom in his heart.

Deshon's teenager daughter also got pregnant. And he too was feeling embarrassed, but his higher priority was to glorify God through it. So he helped her think through all the options. He talked about having a baby and being a mom, having a baby and having the grandparents raise the child or having a baby and putting it up for adoption.

He gave God glory and said, "Here is a tremendous opportunity to teach my daughter responsibility and how to value life. We are not going to abort because this child is precious in the eyes of God. God has a plan for this baby's life."

They gave the baby up for adoption. A young couple who couldn't have a child of their own adopted him and God was being glorified.

All through this process, Deshon had freedom. Moose did not.

Time went on and in their 50's, Moose and Deshon both got aggressive cancer.

Moose once again got angry with God. All of his plans and dreams for life were once again falling down all around him.

"Lord here I am at a perfect stage in life. The kids are about to get out of the house and we will become empty nesters and I have so many plans for our future. We are just about to put an offer on that second home on the lake. And I have so many things to do with my friends. I still have a bucket list of things I want to do with my wife. God, cancer is ruining everything."



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Moose quits meeting with God. He's no longer having quiet times. He no longer opens up his Bible and reads it. He's angry with God because he feels that God is not holding up His end of the bargain.

What was God's end of the bargain in Moose's eyes? God was supposed to give him a safe, easy, comfortable life and fulfill his dreams. And since God isn't keep his end of the bargain, Moose isn't going to keep his. Not only is he not meeting with God, He's made a decision in his mind that he is not going to be back to church even if he is healed.

Once again, Moose has no freedom. He isn't living for the glory of God. He is living for himself in a Christian context.

Deshon, too, gets cancer, but he realized that he could use it for God's glory. He once



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again said, “God, I am going to be the best patient they have ever seen.” Once again he amazes the nurses and the doctors asking them how he can be praying for them.

Deshon also realizes that he could possibly die. But he is okay. And he knows that God loves his wife and children more than he does. Therefore, he was trusting a sovereign God to take care of them.

Deshon has freedom and he once again lives in a way that glorifies God.

Well, the cancer goes on and they each fight it. But it is a long battle and the medical bills pile up.

And Moose continues to be angry with God. “Why did you allow this to happen? Why aren’t you faithful.” He can’t see God’s faithfulness in anything that God has done in his life. And the money he had saved to buy the lake house was now used to pay the bills.

As an imminent death grew closer, Moose was fearful. He didn't want to leave his wife. He didn't want to leave his family. He didn't want to leave this earth. He had no understanding of what heaven offered and feared it more than desired it.



Deshon also fought the cancer and his bills piled up as well. But he was relying on God's faithfulness. He knew the Scripture which said, "God will meet all your needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus." Deshon was at peace.

As death was imminent, Deshon actually got excited. He prayed, “I can’t wait to be in your presence, Jesus. This is exciting. For me to live is Christ, to die is gain. I’m going to gain so much being in your presence Lord Jesus!”

Both died. Both were buried.

Moose died angry.

Deshon died with great anticipation.

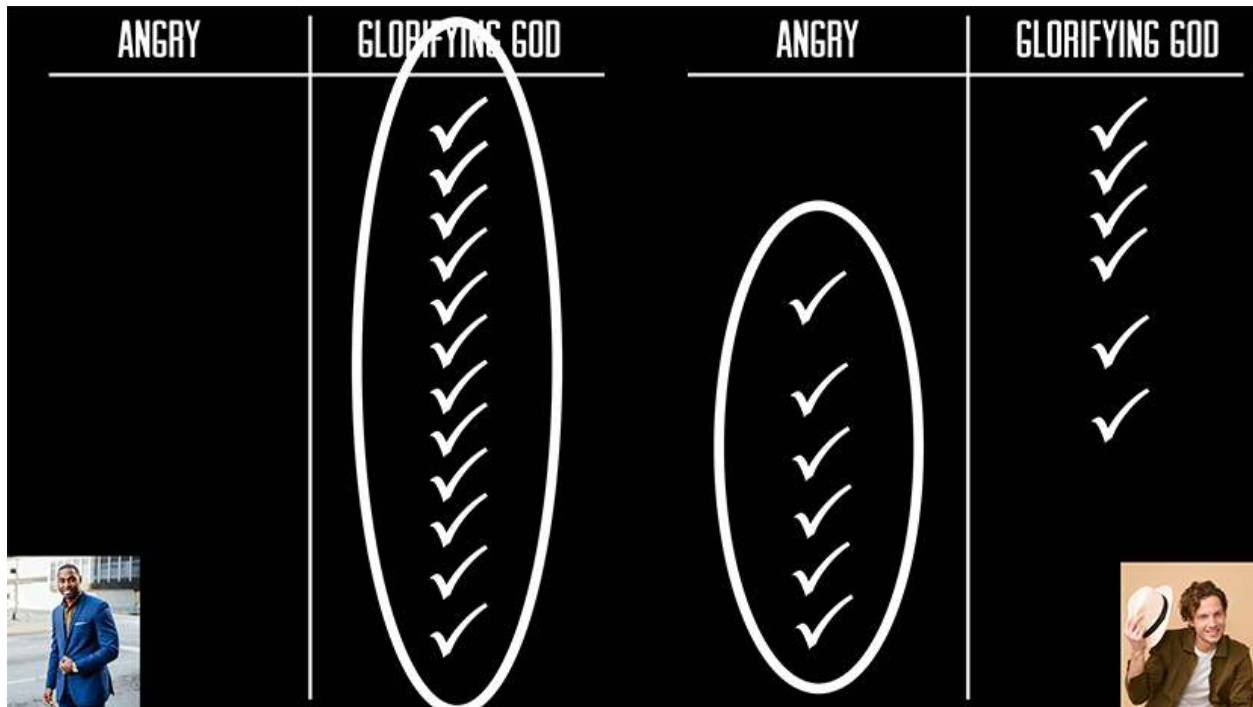
Hopefully you can see what made these lives different.

Moose lived for himself in a Christian context. And as a result, he thought that if he kept going to church (doing his part of the bargain), that God would bless him and fulfill his dreams. But when the blessings didn't come in the way he expected them to—and his dreams weren't being fulfilled, he got angry with God. In fact, he died with a broken fellowship with God.

Deshon had a different outlook on life. He didn't expect God to fulfill his dreams. He simply wanted to live in such a way that would give God glory. And anything that life threw at him, he was able to use for the glory of God. As a result, he constantly gave God



glory every day of his life. He constantly was free!



This was the truth of which Jesus spoke.

Men and women, hear this and hear it well. Whatever life throws upon you, you can turn it into God's glory. Don't treat the glory of God like that \$100 bill that was trampled on or stepped on or thrown into the trash can.

Once you throw it in the trash can, you will miss the glory of God around you.

When your primary goal is to glorify God with whatever life gives you, you will be free. It was for freedom that Christ set us free. Live in that freedom!

CHAPTER EIGHT

How The Church Is Setting People Up For Failure

In way of review (not that you need it but I'm going to give it anyhow!), there are two sides to the cross. The one side says Jesus suffered and died for me, he suffered and died for humanity. That's not incorrect but it is incomplete. The other side says that Jesus suffered and died for the Father's glory.

But too many times we focus only on the gospel that is focused on him dying for our sins. When we begin to say he (only) died for us, Christianity becomes all about what Christ did for me.

Because of this, we get a Christianity that comes out distorted—off just one degree over a long period of time. And this brings about disastrous results. And these disastrous results are ones that I see not only in churches in America, but also around the world.

As a result, many churches are telling a gospel that is setting their people on a course for failure.

To help you understand this, let's take one fictitious family's journey. Let's call them the Smiths. The Smiths lived in the outskirts of San Diego, California. They are in a group of Christians classified as '*Casual Christians*.'²

1. Twenty things characterize these casual Christians:
2. Most say that they are personally committed to Jesus Christ.
3. They support Christian symbols in the public eye.
4. They are sympathetic to environmental issues.

2 This title comes from George Barna's Research: <https://www.barna.com/research/casual-christians-and-the-future-of-america/>

5. They are very concerned about the poor.
6. They see themselves as good people.
7. They are very self-reliant.
8. They believe God has accepted them as they are.
9. They are pursuing a present and comfortable life.
10. Their top goal in life is to be married.
11. They believe that God's highest desire for them is to be happy.
12. On average, they tithe 1.5% of their income, roughly \$500 a year.
13. They pick and choose principles from the Bible to follow.
14. They do not believe in absolute moral truths.
15. They have zero tolerance.
16. They support gay rights and same-sex marriages.
17. Most of them do not believe Satan or the Holy Spirit exists.
18. Many are C.E.O Christians. (C.E.O means Christians who attend church on Christmas and Easter only.)
19. They have an arms-length relationship with God.
20. They push the boundaries of traditional Christian morality.
21. Most of what they believe is passed on to their children.

John and Debbie Smith have two children, Sarah and Kendall. They knew raising children was going to be tough.

They knew this because their neighbors were terrible parents. As adults, they were skeptical and didn't believe in God. They had two sons who had no values and thus ended up on drugs and got girls pregnant. And then they saw their neighbors divorce—all in a short period of time. They were terrible role models. They didn't want to be like them.

Hence they thought that it might be a good idea to think about going to church. So they began to look for a church.

Choosing A Church

But how were they going to determine what a good church was like and what a bad church was like? The world and all it had to offer was the biggest influence in helping them determine what church they should attend.

By this time in their lives they had heard many success stories from motivational

speakers in their podcasts. They also watched key TV personalities and gleaned quite a bit from them. Bottom line: happiness is what made life pleasurable!

“We’ll choose a church that makes us happy,” they said to themselves.

So they started a check list and they asked questions like,

- “Do they have a children’s ministry?
- Are the people friendly?
- Do we like the singing?
- Are the pews comfortable?
- Do we like the building? Is there ample parking?
- Do the service times fit our schedule?
- Do we have to get dressed up?
- And finally, does the message make us feel good?”

Sunday after Sunday, the Smiths got into their minivan and went to church.

- Week one, the church had terrible music so they scratched that one off their list.
- Week two, people weren’t very friendly.
- Week three, the youth were going overseas to Africa to help them in building a school and they didn’t want their kids to do anything like that, so they scratched that one off the list.
- Week four, they didn’t like the message.
- Week five, everything was just okay; it wasn’t really exciting, nothing that bad, or nothing really good.
- During week six Debbie noticed that the children’s Sunday school rooms were a little bit dirty. So another church was crossed off the list.
- In week seven, they came across a church with a sign that said, “We’re Making Room for You.” Something made them feel really good inside.

They decided to check out their website. It read, “At Family Life, we value people because that is what is important to God. Thus we focus on meeting the needs of people.” Once again, the Smiths felt really good inside.

On Sunday morning, the Smiths decided to go to that church.

“Hi, we are so glad you have come to our church. We hope you are really blessed and feel at home here,” said the usher.

“Thank you,” they replied.

“That felt nice,” John said as they went inside.

The sanctuary was beautiful. It was well designed and decorated.

And so as they are waiting there for the services to start, John saw the church’s purpose statement and showed his wife. They liked the purpose statement.

It stated, ‘We are serving people and families to become complete in Christ.’

When the choir started praising and worshiping God, they liked the songs because they spoke of God’s love for them. And it wasn’t just one of the songs, it was all three!

Eventually, time for offertory came, and they had a prayer and which went like this: “We give you these offerings as a token to You, knowing that You have promised to bless us back in Jesus’ name, Amen.”

The thought of God blessing them back as they gave money also made them feel good. They had always heard of tithing, and now it made more sense. Tithe so God can bless you more!

Soon after that, the sermon started. The pastor was funny and at the same time made three key points that they felt would help them out in life. And it was all in 25 minutes. And as he was concluding, he said, “Hey, in conclusion, you will never earn God’s blessings until you completely learn to trust Him. And His blessings are not just for the day-to-day needs you have, but God wants to bless you above and beyond your wildest dreams!”

“We want God’s fullest blessings,” they thought.

A totally cool dude came on and started reading the announcements.

“Hey, today at 2:00 pm, our senior citizens are going to enjoy the Botanical Garden. Make sure you’re there on time!

And at 3:00 pm, the youth are going to have fun at the Slater’s pool.

And don’t miss tonight’s message on how God is going to bless your children. You are going to love it. The service starts at 7pm.”

During the benediction, they were asked to hold their hands out and receive God’s blessings. As they held out their hands, they heard these words:

“And now may the God of hope who loves you indefinitely and who died to give you new life fill you with hope, peace, and joy that you might live life to its fullest. Amen.”

They Joined!

That was the bottom line. They liked everything about this beautiful place. People seemed friendly; there were multiple services to choose from, the singing was good, and the sanctuary was new. They had a great children’s ministry and the rooms were not only

clean, but they had cartoons painted on all the hallways enticing kids to come! On top of all that, they offered multiple seminars about life. Everything seemed to make them feel good.

So the Smith family joined this church and re-dedicated their lives to God. Their children learned that it would be cool to trust Jesus, so they too asked Jesus to fill their hearts.

As time went on, a marriage seminar was held. They were told that if they went to that seminar, their marriage would get a shot in the arm and their relationship would be enriched. So they went!

In that seminar, they learned of the seven key principles to enrich their communication and marriage. They tried to apply some of them and it did seem to help.

Later, a parenting seminar was also given at church. They learned in the parenting seminar how to train their children to respect others and have a good self-image. Other tips were given to help them with their strong-willed daughter. They were taught the importance of praying together as a family. It was a great idea—but it never really became a reality in their home.

In their minds, this church had it all. There were business seminars, youth retreats and live bands, yard sales, a father-daughter dance, mother's day out, and theme parks. There were small groups and large groups. It was more than they could ask for or imagine.

But every now and then there were messages on dying to self. But they found them a bit confusing. Yes, the Bible talked about dying to self, but in reality, they were doing all this for them to have a better marriage, to be better parents, and so that their business would be a success.

But far more times they heard that Jesus loved them and died for them. That made them feel good and it kept them going to the church despite the messages they really didn't understand.

The Teenagers

Years passed as they attended this church. Sarah and Kendall became teenagers. As teenagers, they struggled to find themselves in the midst of new hormones flowing through their bodies. They knew there were unspoken rules that had to be obeyed, but at the same time, they had been taught over and over "it was about them." They just needed to live for themselves in a Christian context.

But Sarah began to rebel because the Christian rules started getting old. If God really wanted her to feel good, she needed to have a boyfriend. She began seeking a boyfriend and before she knew it, she found herself pregnant.

Fighting broke out in the Smith home. They fought like cats and dogs all the time because the rules had been broken and they (as parents) were embarrassed. Their daughter got pregnant right under their nose.

They asked themselves: what are the people at church going to say? How does this reflect on their parenting? Are they failures as parents? Is abortion an option? What about adoption? Should they switch churches? There were a lot of unanswered questions.

Little did they know that each of the questions assumed that it was all about them. They never considered the glory of God in any of it.

Sarah finally saw through it all. She realized who her parents were first and foremost in their own minds. And she couldn't put up with the hypocrisy, the fighting and the rules. As a result, she moved in with her boyfriend.

Due to the pressure that was at home, Kendall, too, saw the hypocrisy. Where was all of this "love" they talked about in church. This fighting didn't reflect God's love at all. So he began to give up on the rules as well and began trying new experiences. He started with smoking, then went to marijuana, then went to hard core drugs.

Now John and Debbie Smith had a pregnant daughter and a son on drugs just like their former next-door neighbors.

When John and Debbie began to see the changes in Kendall, they turned on him and then on each other. Before they knew it, they had major marriage problems. They were mad at each other. They were mad at the youth pastor for not doing his job. They were mad at God who was supposed to be sovereign, yet who didn't seem to be holding up His end of the deal.

What went wrong?

CHAPTER NINE

What Went Wrong In The Church?

Is this fictional story of John and Debbie too far-fetched? I want to say, “no.” I see it all the time. And I know of so many people who have been burned by the church. I know of too many people’s kids who have left the church once they’ve grown up. It is unfortunately very real.

So what went wrong? I want to challenge you Scripturally, that there were two major problems that set them up for failure.

Problem Number One

First, a crooked doctrine was being preached.

*Do your best to present yourselves to God as one approved worker who does not need to be shamed and who **correctly handles** the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)*

The words “correctly handles” can accurately be translated, “to make a straight cut.”

Pastors are supposed to correctly and accurately handle the divine message of God. They have to make a straight cut and deliver the word of God correctly to his people. This is what God approves. A worker does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

But there are some pastors who don’t correctly handle God’s word. This means that if it is not straight, it is a *crooked cut*. Paul had them in his day.

Let’s look at see what was happening in the book of Acts;

*Even from your number men will arise and **distort the truth in order to drive away disciples after them.** (Acts 20:30)*

The word “distort” is getting at the heart of being crooked. It can be defined as, “to turn

aside from the right path, to pervert, corrupt.”

What was their motivation for this crooked word of God? Luke tells right there in the text.

- To draw away disciples after them.
- To get more people.
- To have bigger churches.
- So that their numbers would go up.

Think of this from a pastor’s perspective. Where do most pastors get their self-worth and their income from? Those that attend their church. If no one wants to attend their church, they’re going to feel like failures. And if no one is attending, they’re out of a job because there’s no one to pay them a salary. That doesn’t look good for them or their family.

So what do you do? Preach a gospel that will get people to attend—and in large numbers! That way you can feel great about yourself and you have job security.

This fictional pastor of John and Debbie was more focused on quantity than quality. This pastor (we’ll call him John Doe) wanted the people to feel good about themselves and the church so they would keep coming back to his church.

As a result, he always preached messages about God’s blessings and never preached much about people blessing others or God. Without realizing it, the congregants were only taught to be only at the receiving side but not on the giving side.

Now please know that I realize that most pastors have mixed motivations—just like all of us. Many are seeking to serve God. But at the same time they are human and have a strong desire to feel good about themselves and provide well for their family.

And many times, the latter motivation (feeling good about themselves and providing well for their family) is greater than the former (seeking to serve God.) As a result, they choose to preach a crooked doctrine rather than preaching a straight doctrine. (And quite often, many pastors are simply blind to what is happening because they were brought up in a Christianity that was *one degree off* itself.)

The graph on the next page shows what John and Debby were experiencing on an average Sunday.



Problem Number Two

There is a second problem with pastors like John Doe. Not merely are they only preaching “nice” topics to make people feel safe and comfortable, but they are leaving key things out of the gospel.

A straight doctrine has topics that most people are uncomfortable about. It’s outside of their “safe zone.” This includes preaching on the topics like:

- The glory of God
- Hell
- Judgment
- Holiness
- Sin

And when people are outside of their “safe zone” then:

- They don’t feel good about themselves.
- They don’t come as much.
- Therefore, there are less people to tithe.
- Less tithing means less income.
- As a result, they won’t have job security.

- So, to keep their job secure, they preach what people want to hear

Did God know this was going to happen? Absolutely. In fact, he warned about it early on in the Bible in a book called Deuteronomy:

*See that you do all that I command you. Do not add to it **or take away from it.***
(Deuteronomy 13:32)

As they preach a crooked doctrine, they both add to and take away from the word of God. And without knowing it, the primary thing they are taking away is the glory of God. They focus on Jesus dying for them. As a result, it becomes a self-centered evangelical Christianity.

Now, very few churches would ever say they have left out the glory of God. They would say, “We ARE doing this for the glory of God.” Unfortunately, the glory of God has become secondary. And that becomes a deadly potion.

In John and Debbie’s church, emphasis was put on how they were doing in:

- Their Denomination
- Their Relation to other churches in the community
- Their Growth in numbers
- Their Programs
- Their Youth

In other words, they focused on the ABC’s of the church;

A - Attendance. How many people are attending?

B -Baptism. How many baptisms are you having?

C- Cash. How much cash do you have?

In reality, it was all about them. It was about their church being successful. It was about their numbers growing. Yes, the glory of God was mixed in there from time to time, but it was secondary, not primary.

This is the type of church that John and Debbie had gotten involved in.

Their greeting was people-centered. The worship songs were people centered. The sermon was people-centered. The announcements were people centered. The offering was people-centered. And the benediction was people-centered. (See the chart on the previous page.)

Week after week John and Debbie were on a steady diet of being told, “It’s all about you.” Week after week their kids were drinking from the same cup being told, “God wants you happy.” And this is what set John and Debbie up for failure from the very beginning.

Then when people like John and Debbie get burned by the church, one of three things happen.

Christians fall into sin and leave the church because they didn't find fulfillment in the church. (This is what happened to their daughter, Sarah.)

Christians live out a dry lifeless Christianity without passion for God or His glory, pursuing things more than God Himself. They know following Christ is right but they do it without passion.

They see the hypocrisy and they leave the church, but they keep a strong walk with Jesus.

Making It Different

So what could have been different? What did John and Debbie experience that could have changed? Let's go through how a Sunday morning experience could focus someone more on God's glory rather than themselves.

The Greeting

The old greeting was, "Hi, we are so glad you have come to our church. We hope you are really blessed and feel at home here."

What was non-verbally communicated? "We're so glad you've come to **our** church. (*Had you gone to the church down the road, we wouldn't be very happy.*) We hope you are really blessed (*it's about you being blessed*) and feel at home here (*we want you feeling at home so you'll keep coming back—we really want our church to grow.*)

What if there was a totally different greeting? What could have been said that would have been God-centered?

What if they had been greeted using these words? "Hi, we hope you really meet with God today, but if you don't, come back and talk to us. We have five other churches we can recommend which are really after seeking God."

This non-verbally communicates that the primary goal is God's kingdom. It encourages people to meet with God—and if they don't, they're happy to refer people to another church. This allows the new person to see that it really isn't about this one specific church, it's about people meeting with God.

Worship and Praise

Many worship songs today are people-centered. One well known song starts right off with the words, "Who am I, that the Lord of all the earth, would care to know my name, would care to feel my hurt..." Songs like this keep us focused on ourselves (in a Christian context). It speaks nothing about the glory of God or what we can do for Him or for others.

So what are God-centered songs? These are songs that focus more on who God is rather than what He has done for us. These songs focus more on the character of God.

If they had sung these songs, then people would know this is about God. (A perfect example of a modern Christian worship song that is God-centered is, “How Great Is Our God” by Chris Tomlin. Look up the lyrics and see how many times it references what God does for us. :)

The Offering

So you remember the offering? It too was people-centered. It said, ““We give you these offerings as a token to You, knowing that You have promised to bless us back in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

What if God didn’t promise to bless them back? Would they still tithe? Is it primarily about getting something back from God? Or is it simply about honoring God for who He is?

What if the offering said these words? “Lord we give you these offerings because you are worthy to be glorified through them. Amen.”

These words help those who hear them realize that it’s not about them. It is about God. We should not expect anything in return but rather give because He is worthy.

The Announcements

So how were the announcements people centered? Let’s take them one at a time.

Here was the first announcement, “Hey, today at 2:00 pm, our senior citizens are going to enjoy the Botanical Garden. Make sure you’re there on time!”

What seems to be non-verbally communicated is that it is about people enjoying the gardens. But those gardens continually reflect God’s glory. Yet, there is no correlation between the glory of God and the gardens.

What if they had said, “Today at 2:00pm, our senior citizens are going to the Botanical Gardens to see, touch and smell the glory of God through nature!”

This type of an announcement would put your focus on the glory of God.

Here’s the second announcement, “And at 3:00 pm, the youth are going to have fun at the Slater’s pool.”

This non-verbally communicates that it is about having fun. Nothing wrong with that, but is that primary? How could the glory of God been put in there to readdress their focus?

“At 3:00 pm, the youth are going to the Slater’s pool to experience God’s glory in the water.” A bit ambivalent, but still it points to enjoying God’s glory first and foremost.

Now the third announcement is very people-centered. “And don’t miss tonight’s message on how God is going to bless your children. You are going to love it. The service starts at 7pm.”

What is being non-verbally communicated here? It is all about your children being blessed. Make sure your children have the best of God. How could it have been God-centered?

“Don’t miss tonight’s parenting message on how to raise your children to focus on God’s glory in every area of their lives. You will be amazed at what the Bible has to say about children honoring God. The service starts at 7pm.”

The Benediction

Pastors usually give a benediction as a blessing to the congregation to help them go through the week with hope. But John Doe’s benediction was very people-centered.

“And now may the God of hope who loves you indefinitely and who died to give you new life fill you with hope, peace, and joy that you might live life to its fullest. Amen.”

What was the non-verbal communication? It’s about you having hope, peace and joy—and that you might live life to the fullest! It’s still all about you.

How could it have been God-centered? How about something like...

“This week, may you walk in His power as you seek to radiate the glory of God to everyone you come in contact with and may you make God famous in every word you say, choice you make and act you do. Amen.”

If these areas had been changed, John and Debbie would have had a steady diet of the glory of God. All they would have said and done would have revolved around God’s glory. They would have raised their children to honor God in all they did. And like Deshon, they would have had freedom in the midst of it all.



But they didn't because the church was one degree off. From the very beginning they assumed that Christ died primarily for them. As a result, they assumed that life was to revolve around them.

Epilogue

To my dear readers, I want you to be aware of how easy it is to slip into a people-centered theology. It's all around us. And it is in all the churches around the world. It is screaming silently from just about every pulpit around the world.

And this is due to a very simple reason. Most Christians think that Jesus died solely for them.

Though he did die for them, that was not his primary purpose for dying on the cross. His primary purpose was to restore the glory to His Father once again.

Once you see that difference, everything changes.

I am praying that God will give you the grace to see this in your churches. And I am praying that you will help others see this same revolutionary idea in their lives as well.