

# The Living Room: Worship

## 1 Corinthians 10:31

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This new teaching series looks at God's designs for a vibrant church. We began last week by looking at the foundation of a biblical church. Our foundation is the person and work of Jesus. The gospel is his gospel of salvation for sinners, by faith in his work on the cross, dying in our place for our sins. His incarnation. His death. His resurrection. His future return and reign. The gospel is a person and a story. It's who Jesus was in his nature and what he did. Glorious person. Glorious story. Glorious foundation.

Our series is a play on words in that the name of our church, Bethel, is Hebrew for "house of God." This house, this home, has many important rooms that make the house of God a home for God's people.

Today we walk into the living room of a biblical and vibrant church. The life or living of a vibrant church is *worship*. The metaphor works because of the name of the room, *living room*. Now in most homes, most of the living doesn't happen in the living room. Other than a formal dining room, it's probably the least used room in a house.

In this way, it is an accurate reflection of what too often happens for Christians and churches as it relates to worship. They compartmentalize it into a room of their lives. They go into it each weekend when they go to church, but the rest of their lives are lived in the other rooms.

What I want everyone to get today is that God's design for us is that all of life is worship. The entire home is a house of worship. What does that mean? What does that look like?

### A Summary Verse for Everything

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

The immediate context here is a chapter dealing with the conflict among the Corinthian Christians regarding certain disputed lifestyle choices. Some Christians thought it was okay to eat meat that had been previously used in worship of the goddess Aphrodite. Others whose consciences didn't allow them, thought it was wrong for everyone. So this debate raged and seriously divided the Corinthian church. Paul's answer is that those on both sides of the issue needed to love one another.

He then puts out a priority to which all other priorities and pursuits must submit. Whether you eat idol meat or not, do anything or not, *whatever you do*, the one goal that all Christians must have is do what we do to the glory of God.

What Paul provides here is a basic definition of worship. The word *glory* literally means to "weight." To glorify something is to give it weight. Back in the '80s people would say, "Wow, that's heavy" about something important. Or if something is a "weighty matter," it means it is an important one.

To give glory to something is to ascribe it weight. By the scale of the heart, it is weighty, valuable, ultimate. We all do this naturally and every heart here has something or someone it worships. Me? Yeah. How would you know what you worship? Easy. Assess honestly what you think about the most; what you talk about; what you long and hope for; what you rejoice in; what the last thing is that you would give up. Whatever that is, is your god.

God has so designed us that we must have identity in something we perceive to be of ultimate worth—even if it is the self.

1 Corinthians 10:31 says, *Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* We worship whatever we give glory to. Scripture says, whatever we do, we do to the glory of God.

Four hundred years ago a famous statement of Christian faith was written called the Westminster Catechism. It's a summary statement of the Christian faith. Where did they begin the whole thing? With a question: *What is the chief end of man?* This is old English to say, *What is man's main purpose and highest goal?* Ask that around town and you will get blank stares. It is another way to ask, *Why are we here?* Our culture's failure to know the answer to that explains much of the despair and emptiness around us.

But the answer to the question is what is so important. What is the chief end of man? *The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.*

I want to tell you how this statement played a role in the most important change in my whole Christian life. Many of you know my story. I grew up in a Christian home and was in a branch of Christianity that was strong on evangelism but light on discipleship. There was more of an emphasis on moral manipulation by rules than grace. Christianity was basically believing in Jesus as Savior, living like good Christians do, and waiting to die and go to heaven. As I grew older, the sanctification by rules thing seemed superficial and silly. What was living the Christian life all about?

When I was in my mid '20s, I read a book that gave me the answer I needed. *Desiring God* by John Piper is basically a synthesis of the writings of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Spurgeon, and many others. Namely, that the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever. What was so earth shattering for me was that not only was this man's chief end but also God's. 1 Corinthians 10:31 applies as much to God as to man. Whatever God does, he does for the glory of God.

At first, it was so paradigm blowing that I could hardly stand it. But then slowly I began to see in Scripture that God's goal is the same one he requires for man. God does what he does for the glory of the ultimate reality which is himself, and he must do all for his glory. Who else's glory is worthy? For him to magnify man or anything else would be to blaspheme and to sin, which he cannot do. Once I got over the shock, then I saw it everywhere in Scripture.

### **Old Testament samples of God's glory as ultimate**

- *Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!* (Psalm 115:1)
- *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* (Deuteronomy 6:5)
- *For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.* (Isaiah 48:11)

- *"Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. (Ezekiel 36:22)*

The outworking of God's saving works toward mankind found primarily in the covenantal relationship with Israel has the secondary purpose of man's salvation with the ultimate purpose of God's glory.

## **The New Testament on worship, glory, and God's purpose in everything**

### **The angels' declaration**

*Glory to God in the highest* Luke 2:14

### **God's glory in Jesus**

Only did what pleased the Father	John 5:19ff
Sent by the Father	John 5:23
Jesus' aim was to glorify God	John 17:4
The Father delighted in the Son	Matthew 3:17

### **God's glory in man's salvation**

Faith depends on God's promises	Romans 4:20
Salvation is to the praise of his glory	Ephesians 1:3-14
Faith in Jesus glorifies God	Romans 4:25

### **Everything for God's glory samples**

- *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4)*
- *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:36)*
- *"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (Revelation 5:13)*

Up to this point in my life, I thought God did what he did primarily for us and that man was central to God's purposes. A man-centered God and man-centered churches produce Christians living very me-centered lives. What a joy to realize that it is not about me primarily, but that it's about all about him! That God is God-centered and his loving actions toward me magnify the glory of his love and mercy and grace and forgiveness and justice.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

## **A Simple Guide to Living to the Glory of God**

Back to our Living Room and 1 Corinthians 10:31. *Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* Sounds good; most Christians amen it. But how do you do it?

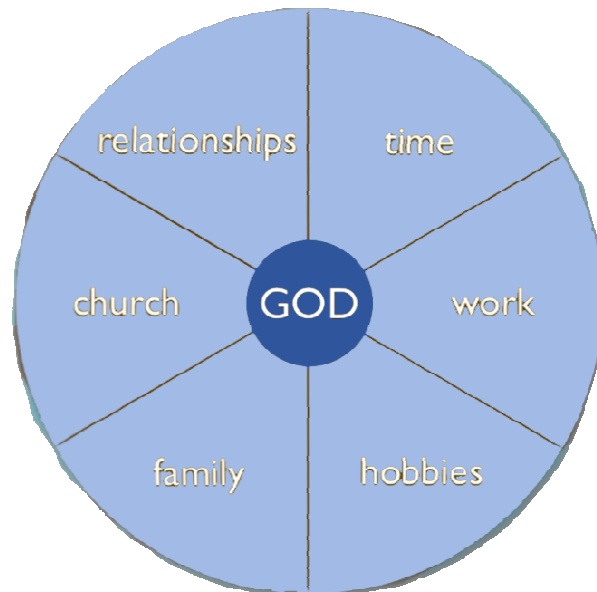
*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. (Romans 12:1 NIV 1984)*

That's it. My life is lived all for him when all my life is like a living sacrifice. I display his supreme worth when I am willing to sacrifice to God all the other categories of my life; to

submit them to him; to orient my priorities around the goal of making much of him in every category.

This God-centered, God-glorifying orientation is the restoration of what the Fall corrupted in us. It is how we will live into eternity. In this life, we will do this imperfectly because we still have indwelling sin, but the capacity to do it is ours by the Spirit of God. As Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee."

Here is why "do all to the glory of God" is so critical to true Christianity. Worship is the uniting center for all of life.



There is no other priority that can claim this. Experience is great and important but not the center. Serving Christ is high priority but not the center. Worship is the uniting principle of all of life. In a sense, everything is theology. It is all about God. How?

### **God's way**

God is honored when we do things the way he wants them to be done. This is called obedience. How do we know how he wants us to live? God's Word, the Bible. His Word is His will. It is never God's will for us to disobey him. If you are wondering how to bring some area of your life online with God's glory, prayerfully seek to live that category according to how God has said for it to be done. God's way.

### **God's goals**

We honor God when we make his priorities higher than our own. This is Paul's point. Jesus said, *Seek first the kingdom of God.* (Matthew 6:33) In Philippians 3:7 Paul said, *Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.* To live to God's glory is to ask, "How can I do my part to accomplish God's goals in the world, in my life, in my family, in my church?" A godly man or woman then pursues those goals and submits the lesser desires to fulfill that greatest one.

## His Pleasures

Would you agree that eating and drinking are pleasurable activities? With the exception of liver and beets, I would say yes. How do we enjoy God's good pleasures on earth to his glory? When we feel pleasure, we are feeling inside an expression of God's glory to us. God gave us senses that correlate perfectly with the pleasures this world has to offer. We taste and touch and hear and see and smell; they create happiness and wonder in us.

We bring glory to God when we take the excitement that pleasure creates in us and turn it into praise to God. This "praise" may be thanksgiving. *Thank you God for this good pleasure.* It may be something about God the pleasure communicates; Psalm 19 - *the heavens declare the glory of God.* Seeing the heavens is a theological experience that I can spiritually understand and praise him for. *God, you are big. Beautiful. Awesome. Wonderful. Amazingly brilliant to create.* Whatever.

Here's the key. When we experience pleasure like an atheist, we experience it for its own sake and don't bring God into the experience. Don't be an atheist with pleasure, be a theist. Be a Christian. Give God glory by enjoying the pleasure for God's sake. C.S. Lewis said, *"Praise is joy's appointed consummation."* Don't praise the artist or the poet or the lover; praise God for them! He is glorified when we do.

## His Person

Finally, we glorify God when we live for him, NOT for what he can do for us. The first commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our hearts. We love him for him. When someone feigns interest in us or is nice to us but we sense an ulterior motive, we don't like that. We feel used. We feel played.

I wonder how often God must feel that way. We want his blessings but not necessarily him. Our interest in God is primarily what God can do for us.

If God never did a thing for us, never sent Jesus, never provided salvation, never provided eternal life, never sent his Spirit, never gave us the Scriptures or church, never provided another sunset or friendship or strawberry pie—if God had never done anything for us, he would still be worthy of all our love and worship. He is God. Love him for him. Serve him purely for the glory and wonder of who he is. He delights in us when we do.

How do we turn our whole house into a living room of worship? His way. His goals. His pleasures. His person. This is how we live our lives to the glory of God. Whether we eat or drink, sing or pray, serve and love, or whatever we do, let's do it all to the glory of God.

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