

**Living to the Glory of God**  
**Readings: 2 Chr 7:1-3; 2 Cor 3:4-18**  
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Perhaps it's the stage I'm at – mid-life one might call it? A good few years to go yet ... but what do I want to do with the rest of my life? Mid-life crisis perhaps? It's got me thinking about how we should understand the purpose of our lives.

What we are called to do is *to live to the glory of God*. To bring glory to God, to glorify God in all things.

I'm reminded of the **Westminster Shorter Catechism**:

**Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?**

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

OR perhaps better:

**Q. 1. What is the purpose, the chief goal of our lives?**

A. The purpose and chief goal of our lives is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

But what does it mean to give God glory? To glorify God in our lives?

Well, first of all what is "glory"? Perhaps its easiest to think of it in the OT.

Think of 2 Chr 7:1-2:

"When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. The priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD'S house."

Or think of Isa 6, where Isaiah sees the Lord "sitting on a throne, high and lofty" and he hears the seraphs saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" and the whole place shakes and Isaiah cries out: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

We get the impression of astonishing light, of great radiance, of the magnificent presence of God. Of course, the writers are trying to describe something that is indescribable – the presence of God. And they associate God's glory with light and fire, "sometimes of such overwhelming brilliance and unendurable intensity that it is shrouded in a cloud" (DPL, p348)<sup>1</sup>

So the glory of God is related to God's grandeur and power as creator and redeemer. We are to think of God as radiating light and love – and that can be called God's glory.

In creating humanity, God planned to share his glory with humanity – to have us share in God's glory, in God's light and life (see Heb 2:6-10 with its interpretation of Ps 8:4-6)

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. 24:17 Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.

But the crucial verse here is Rom 3:23: “since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”. This first of all is a reference to Adam and Eve. They had been created to be in relationship with God – in perfect communion with God. In that situation they were to receive God’s glory, to share his glory. They would receive God’s light and love, majesty and joy – and would reflect that back to God.

But of course we know what happened – the opposite of what God intended. In Rom 1:21-23 we are told that humanity “*neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks ... they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.*”

The original purpose of humanity was to be God-focussed – to live for God, to worship God, to receive God’s glory and life and to give God glory. But they refused... and of course we all follow in that path.

Sin meant we became turned in on ourselves, and gave glory – which became false glory – to *ourselves*. We exchanged God’s glory for creaturely images. We ended up thinking we were great – and we were gods. But actually we turned away from God and turned to what we thought was our own light – but it turned out to be our own darkness.

Think of the analogy of the sun and the moon.

God is like the sun – we are like the moon. Of course the moon does not have its own light, but rather shares the sun’s light and reflects that. When the moon is not looking at the Sun – it is dark!

We too are to receive God’s light, and reflect that back to God – to give God glory.

But rather than receiving God’s light – and worshipping God, giving God glory, we turned inwards and worshipped other things – but this resulted in darkness – a bit like an eclipse – where something – the earth comes between the sun and the moon. What comes between us and the light is our sin – so we cannot reflect God’s light, God’s glory.

Or

It’s a bit like flowers and the sun. When plants are Sun-focussed, when they grow towards the Sun – then they open themselves to the Sun, and they flourish. They experience the Sun’s full splendour. And in return they radiate beauty – glory - back in the direction of the Sun.

But put a plant in darkness and it withers and dies – it turns in on itself, it receives no light, and dies, and has no beauty to share.

That’s what happened to humanity – to us. Made to share God’s glory, we sought our own glory – and found ourselves cut off from, falling short of God’s glory. We were meant to live in the light - but sought darkness instead.

But the Gospel is that God sent Jesus. As the Son of God, fully God and fully human, he lived in perfect relationship with God, and so in his human life, he fully shared in God’s glory. John’s Gospel expresses this most fully:

John 1:14 “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his *glory*, the *glory* as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

John 2:11 “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his *glory*; and his disciples believed in him.”

Jesus shows us who God is but also humanity as it was meant to be – a human life fully living to the glory of God, His Father.

And of course in the cross, Jesus takes away the problem of our sins, and makes us new creatures. We can still sin – yes. But for the first time, through the power of the Spirit, we are able to live in right relationship with God, able to receive God’s glory, God’s light – and able to reflect that glory back to God. To give God glory.

For the first time we can become like the moon – receiving the light of the Sun and reflecting it back.

Out from an eclipse – able to be a bright moon.

As we are in fellowship with Jesus then, we can come to share his relationship to God, and to give glory to God.

So its no surprise that living for the glory of God comes up often in Scripture – that our purpose is to glorify God. There are a whole heap of passages:

Ps 86:9 “All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and *shall glorify your name.*”

Rom 11:36 “For from him and through him and to him are all things. *To him be the glory forever. Amen.*”

Rom 15:5-6 “May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice *glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

1 Cor 6:20 “For you were bought with a price; therefore *glorify God in your body.*”

1 Cor 10:31 “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, *do everything for the glory of God.*”

Eph 1:12 “so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, *might live for the praise of his glory.*”

Phil 1:11 “having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ *for the glory and praise of God.*”

1 Pet 4:11 Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, *so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.*

I find this really helpful. So what am I to do with my life? I am to live to God’s glory!

See how helpful this way of thinking is.

- This is not so much about what we do – it’s about who we are. It’s not about getting stuff done, although it can include that. It’s about who we are inside, about where we are looking, about attitudes and about hearts.
- It’s not so much what we do, as the atmosphere in which we live, about where our gaze is located.
- Anybody can give God the glory. The smallest child, the oldest person, all in between. And if I’m unwell, or having a bad day, living to God’s glory is just like a flower turning to the sun.

- I can live to God's glory, all the time, anywhere. At work, at home, digging the garden, enjoying a sunset! All the time, everywhere.
- It also guides how I live. When thinking about something, I can ask "Can I do that to the glory of God." If it reflects being totally turned in on myself, bringing self-glory and not God's glory, then I can't do it! So this becomes a really important guide to *how* I live, to what I do, to how I conduct myself.
- It means we should be in the attitude of worship – of being in the presence of God – always – and worshipping God in that way.

How do we "live to the glory of God"?

Graduation – the smile from the Chancellor – means the worried graduand smiles back! The Chancellor is like God - to think of God smiling at us! And us smiling back – that's a wonderful image of giving God glory – of smiling back at God!

And when the person is preoccupied with themselves, worrying about their shoes and tripping up, they do not smile – they have no glory. Its when they look up, lift their eyes off everything that worries them – then things are solved – and they smile!

Smiling back to God is to give him glory! The first step is to look to God and receive from God – the second to give God glory back!

Note this verse from our reading:

2 Cor 3:18 "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."

The context of 2 Cor 3 speaks of Moses; Moses had received the glory of God – Ex 34:29 tells us "that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God" after he received the new tablets of the 10 commandments. But it was a fading glory – and at times he veiled his face so that the people of Israel would not see the glory seeping away.

But now, we are "seeing the glory of the Lord". It is "all of us" – not just Moses! We all become like Moses in fact. "Now all Christians without distinction are privileged to witness that glory" (Harris, p313). But our faces are not veiled – we are seeing the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces! That we do not have veils means we can see the glory – and also enable us to participate in that glory – to receive and share in that glory!

What is "the glory of the Lord" here – and note that "we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another". Look at 2 Cor 4:4, 6

2 Cor 4:4 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 Cor 4:6 For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

"The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". The glory of the Lord in 2 Cor 3:18 then is Jesus. So "The glory of the Lord" is God's glory as it is revealed in his image, Christ." (Harris, p315). Jesus is the glory of God and the image of God. In seeing Christ we see God's glory.

So 2 Cor 3:18 “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord (= Jesus) as though reflected in a mirror (Jesus is the mirror of God),<sup>2</sup> are being transformed into the same image (of Jesus, the glorious image of God) from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”

We “are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another (or “with ever-increasing glory”); for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”

Jesus Christ, as the One who is fully human and fully God, shares fully in God’s glory. As those in fellowship with Jesus, we “are being transformed into his image” And whereas Moses glory faded, the glory of Jesus reflected in believers lives is to gradually increase! Until the day when we see Jesus face to face (1 Cor 13:12) and are “raised in glory” (1 Cor 15:43; see also Phil 3:21; Col 3:4)

This is the work of the Spirit in us! The Christian life is one of becoming more and more “glorious”, more and more like Jesus, the glory of God. Yes of course we at times fail. But this is the direction of transformation. As we see the glory of God in Jesus, we are being changed – and the result is that we can more and more reflect that glory!! As we receive God’s smile in Jesus, we can smile back.

So how do we live to the glory of God? We look to Jesus, who is the glory of God – he changes us so that we can reflect God’s glory in Jesus – and we can then live to God’s glory.

Note the second part of the Catechism:

**Q. 1. What is the purpose, the chief goal of our lives?**

A. The purpose and chief goal of our lives is to glorify God, and to enjoy God forever.

“To enjoy God forever.”

There is an overwhelming abundance to God’s life and love – and God wants to share that with us – so that we literally enjoy God! God’s life overflows to us in Jesus Christ and the Spirit – so that the abundance of God’s love and joy and fullness affects us – and we enjoy God! There is a plenitude, and abundance to who God is, to God’s life – but God shares that with us! So we *enjoy* God.

What do you *enjoy*?

Coffee! My family, time with Gill, food, work, teaching, gardening, travel ...

Do I enjoy God?

Note a couple of passage:

Ps 16:11 “You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Psa. 144:15 Happy are the people to whom such blessings fall; happy are the people whose God is the LORD.

Phil 4:4 “Rejoice *in* the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.”

In God’s gift to us, we are to find satisfaction – of all we need. In God alone is all we need – even for our enjoyment.

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<sup>2</sup> Thrall, p284: “believers see in Christ the reflection of the very nature of God”.

Augustine in his confessions: “For Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

Once we rest in God – there is joy – enjoyment.

This is the heart of Worship then – enjoying God! Not just emotion – but also a depth of knowing our needs are met, and that we are in tune with the Creator!

May we know that God in his grace is smiling on you! And our calling is to smile back to God! God’s glory shines on us, in the person of Jesus. He is our Sun! And we are to receive that light – and to give glory back to God.

And in that is to be our joy!

Eph 3:20-21:

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.