

GOD'S GLORY OR MY HAPPINESS

"Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in the slums because he cannot imagine what is meant by a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." - C.S. Lewis¹

Our purpose is the reason we exist. What are different ways you've heard people answer the question: "Why do we exist?" or "What is your ultimate purpose?"

Our purpose is to glorify God. What do the following verses tell us about the reason God created us and what God desires from everyone? What comes to your mind when you hear the word "glorify"? What does it mean to "glorify" something?

Isaiah 43:6-7 - "I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, ⁷ everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Isaiah 48:11 - "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."

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

Our purpose is to glorify God by enjoying him forever. We glorify most what we enjoy most. Because this is true, the Bible teaches that the best way to fulfill our purpose and glorify God is to enjoy Him more than anything else. Our desire to be happy and God's desire to be glorified are not at odds. God is most glorified in US when we are most satisfied in him! To enjoy or live for something else more than God not only goes against God's design, it goes against your desires.

What do these verse tell us about enjoying God?

Psalm 16:11 - You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 63:1 - O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

John 15:9-11 - "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

Application - What do you consider your life's purpose to be?

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, p.26

WHO IS GOD... REALLY?

AW Tozer said, "Whatever comes to your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you."² Everything begins and ends with God and, as we saw last week, God created us to glorify Him by enjoying Him. Therefore, it is very important that we take a closer look at Him. Although God cannot be completely defined, the Scriptures help us understand his character and nature.

God is ultimate and powerful over us. What do these verses tell us about God?

Nehemiah 9:6 - "You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you."

Isaiah 45:7 - I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.

Acts 17:24-25 - "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything."

How would somebody relate to God if he was only ultimate and powerful over us?

God is intimate and personal with us. What do these verses tell us about God?

Exodus 34:6 - The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness..."

Psalms 16:11 - You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalms 103:13 - As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.

Psalms 145:17 - The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.

How would somebody relate to God if he was only intimate and personal with us?

Every problem in life can ultimately be traced back to an inadequate or inappropriate view of who God is. Our temptation is to allow our experiences or circumstances to determine our view of God, rather than allow our view of God from the Bible to determine how we view our experiences and circumstances. By understanding a little bit more about who God is according to Scripture we are able to understand who we are and what is wrong in us and in the world around us.

Application - How do you tend to view God and why?

CAN WE TRUST GOD?

The God of yes. Genesis 2:15-17 says, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"

What did rules did God give Adam about food to eat in the garden? What did God say was the result of not trusting Him, and ultimately, disobeying Him?

How does this perspective help you understand the purpose of God's commands? Are they to keep you from life or protect you for it?

The people of no. We tend to think that God is only of God of rules and that Christianity is a religion of do's and don'ts. We see him as a God of no rather than yes, but in all reality we are the people of no. We said no to God. We can see this in Genesis 3:1-7, which says :

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

In what ways does the serpent cause the woman to question God and what did she do as a result? In what ways do we tend to question God's goodness to us as well?

We try to be our own gods. The serpent tempted them with the idea of getting to be their own gods, no longer trusting that God knew what was best and had their good at heart. According to these verses, what is the result of saying no to God?

Genesis 3:8 - And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Isaiah 59:2 - ...but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

Ephesians 2:1-3 - And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Everything God does for us and says to us is to provide us with life or to protect us for life, not to prevent us from life. But we have sinned by disobeying God. As a result we have died, spiritually speaking. In this life we experience this through a lack of purpose, security, and fulfillment and in the next life we will experience death under God's eternal punishment apart from Him... unless we trust God's solution for our sin.

Application - Do you tend to view God as a God of no or a God of yes?

THE THIRD WAY

Many people believe that religions are all like different paths to the top of the same mountain...it doesn't matter which one you're on, just that you're on one. Some people, on the other hand, are fed up with religion in general and believe that the best way to be happy is to do whatever makes you happy. The Bible teaches something totally different and unexpected. According to the Bible, neither religion nor irreligion ever satisfies. The Bible also offers a third way, called the Gospel.

How good is good enough? Religion can be defined as our attempt to reach God.

Matthew 5:48 - "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

James 2:10 - For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.

Isaiah 64:6 - We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

What do the following verses say about God's standard and how we measure up? Theoretically, how good would man have to be, if he is to reach God by his own works or efforts? Can anyone do this?

Temporary satisfaction. Irreligion can be defined as our attempt to find life apart from God. Jeremiah 2:13 says, "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Broken cisterns are anything in this world we look to for life, purpose and satisfaction apart from God.

How does this verse define sin? In what ways will sin ultimately disappoint us?

Compare and contrast a spring of living water and a cistern. What are the differences? What does this tell us about God?

Christ is our Savior and satisfaction. The Gospel is God's solution for our sin. According to these verses, how is Jesus the solution God provides for our problem of sin?

1 Peter 3:18 - For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit...

John 10:10 - "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

The Gospel says that Jesus Christ has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. He had to die for us because we are more sinful than we can ever dare to imagine, but He was glad to die for us because we are more loved than we could ever dare to hope. Nothing else in this world can save us from our sin and satisfy us forever!

Application - Which of these three options most describes your life?