

What is God's Glory (part 1)

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One book that has been very meaningful in my own discipleship is Rick Warren's 'Purpose Driven Life.' In particular, chapter 7 - 'The Reason for Everything' – grabbed my attention. I was amazed at how many times the *glory of God* appears in the Old and New Testaments, and decided to do a word study on my own.



What is *God's glory*? According to Warren it is '[God's] nature, the weight of His importance, the radiance of His splendor, the demonstration of His power.'

We see God's glory all around us in the things God made, in nature. Psalm 19:1 says, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.' Creation reveals the Creator's glory: sunsets, stars, storms, seasons, creatures of all kinds. I remember attending a camp not far from the Arctic Circle and seeing thousands of stars in the black night sky. It stopped me in my tracks. Wow, God!

The Bible also says that wild animals bring God glory: 'The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland' - Isaiah 43:20. Animals glorify God just by doing what they were created to do.

And people were created to bring God glory. In Isaiah 43:7 God refers to His people as 'everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.' We are amazing creations! Every person on this planet has a different fingerprint, even identical twins. Just think about the way a newborn develops from a single, fertilized, microscopic egg. And how does a baby know to turn head-down just before its birth?

We are so very complex, down to the cellular level, the smallest microscopic forms of life. My daughter was struggling with 9th grade Biology, and I decided to help her study. We spent forever on cells: fission, fusion, DNA, cell reproduction, the genetic code, etc. And the Smithsonian says we have 37.2 *trillion* cells in our body. I came away from those study sessions in deep awe. Wow, God!

Through creation we see the power of God. He enjoys variety. He loves beauty. He is organized, wise; and imaginative. Everything God made brings Him glory:

Where else do we see the glory of God?

We see God's glory displayed throughout the Old Testament. Moses asked to see God's glory. (Exodus 33: 12-23) God replied, 'No one has seen My full glory and lived,' then He thought of a solution: 'When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.'

Moses continued to meet with God in a way other men did not, and whenever he returned to his people, his face shone with God's glory. (Ex 34:35; 2 Cor 3:12-18)

God's glory filled the tabernacle, the first tent of meeting of His people (Ex 40:33-38): 'And so, Moses finished the work [of building] then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.' God's glory also appeared over the tabernacle as a cloud by day and fire by night, to lead the Israelites. And later, when King Solomon built the temple at Jerusalem, the glory of God moved into this new dwelling place (1 Kings 7:51; 8:10-13).

But God's glory was best displayed in Jesus Christ. John 1:14 says, 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.' Jesus became a man to embody the glory of God. He is the light of the world. We are no longer in the dark about what God is like (Heb 1:3; 2 Cor 4:6b). God's glory in Christ was revealed most visibly at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17: 1-8).

Today, God's glory shines through His people, His Church. God's glory is to be revealed through us:

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us (2 Corinthians 4:6-7)."

As we gaze on Christ and His Word, we manifest His glory (Col 1:27, 2 Cor 3:8). The more we lose ourselves in Christ, the more we are transformed in His glory (2 Cor 3:18; 2 Peter 1:3). We are the 'vehicles' that transmit the glory of God, not our own glory but a reflection of His. 1 Corinthians 10:31 urges us, 'So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.'

What does it mean for Christians to bring glory to God? One thing it does *not* mean is that we somehow add to God's glory. 'God's inherent glory is what He possesses, because He is God.' Rick Warren says, 'We cannot add to His glory, just as we can't make the sun shine brighter.'

To bring God glory is first of all to recognize His glory (1 Chron 16:24). I helped with a vacation Bible school where the children looked at God's creation. Every time we learned an amazing fact of nature, we were encouraged to say, 'Wow, God!' This is how we acknowledged God's power and creativity. The Bible is full of statements commanding us to recognize God's glory: to honor it (Psalms 29:1); to declare it among the nations (Psalms 96:3); to praise it (Psalms 66:2); to reflect it (Psalms 96:7); and to live for it (2 Cor 3:18).

And why should we bring God glory? God deserves all glory from us because He created and sustains all things: 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being (Rev 4:11).'

In all creation, only man is given an intentional choice about whether or not he will glorify God. In the next blog we'll be looking at some practical ways that we can make the glory of God our 'reason for everything.'