

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Back to the Basics, Part 4**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-4

I'd like to have you open your Bible for a moment, if you will, to 2 Peter chapter 3. I want to just read a verse as a launching point for the study of the Word of God this morning. We're finishing up a little series on back to the basics. The last few weeks I've been trying to go over some of the things that are very basic to the life of our church, to our spiritual growth and development. Things we've discussed in years past, but need so often to be reminded about.

To set things in perspective we need to look at the last verse of Peter's second epistle, chapter 3 verse 18. And in conclusion to this great epistle, Peter says, "But grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." His final exhortation, his final instruction, his final injunction, is to grow, to grow, to be in the process of maturing in grace and knowledge.

Now this, of course, is what it's all about in Christian life. It's all about growing and maturing and progressing and moving more and more to be like Jesus Christ. And the reason for this is given in that same verse, as a final benediction in which Peter says, "To Him be glory, both now and forever. Amen." And in so saying, reminds us of the fact that spiritual growth is inseparably linked to the glory of God.

And what we've been learning in this little series on back to the basics is that we truly do grow when our lives are concentrated on glorifying God. That is the environment in which growth occurs. That is the soil in which growth takes place. And so, if we would grow spiritually, and certainly if you are a Christian, that is your desire. You do that by setting your life in the direction of glorifying God. Everything you do and say is to be to His glory.

That particular connection between spiritual growth and glorifying God, we examined in more detail in weeks past. I won't go over it again. But just to remind you that the two go together. Spiritual growth is related to a life geared to glorifying God. In fact, the two are indistinguishable.

Now, we've asked the question then, if spiritual growth is related to glorifying God and we want to get all about growing and move in that direction, what are the ways in which we glorify God? What are the means? How do we do that?

And so I've been giving you a list of things that are essential to glorifying God. For some of you, this is a refreshment on things you've already known. For others, it's brand new. In either case, these

are basics that we must apply in our lives.

First of all, we glorify God by confessing Jesus as Lord. In Philippians chapter 2, it says that we confess Jesus as Lord, verse 11, "to the Glory of God, the Father." In other words, a life that is growing spiritually, a life that glorifies God, must be a life, first of all, committed to the Lordship of Christ. Salvation is the starting point. First we come to acknowledge the sovereign deity of Christ, to submit ourselves to Him as Savior and Lord, and then begins the progress of growth. And then begins the capability for glorifying Him.

The second thing we discussed is that if we are to gear our whole life at the glory of God, we must aim at that purpose in everything. And for that, we noted 1 Corinthians 10:31, where it says, "Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." In other words, every single function of life, from the most mundane to the most complex, from the most material to the most immaterial, the most earthly to the most heavenly, and everything in between, is to be directed at glorifying God. Whether you eat or drink, which is very mundane and routine, or whatever you do, you do it all to the glory of God.

So the focal point of a Christian's life then, is not complex. It's not difficult. It is as simple as setting my life toward glorifying the Lord. That means that I prefer Him and His Kingdom above all else. That means that I will do His will no matter what the cost. That means that when He is reproached or dishonored, I feel the pain because I am so identified with His glory. That means that I am content to outdone by others who do exactly what I do better than I do it, as long He gets the glory. My life is aimed at glorifying Him.

The third principle by which we glorify the Lord is by confessing sin. We glorify the Lord by confessing sin. In Joshua 7:19, we remember the story of Achan who took some things out of Jericho which were not to be taken, buried them in the ground his tent, was confronted and exposed as a sinner, and one who was disobedient to God, who had by his disobedience, caused the defeat of Israel at another city called Ai. And he was instructed in this way, "Confess your sin and give glory to God. Why? Because God was about to chasten him severely, actually taking his life and the life of all of his family. And in order that God might not be impugned as unjust, unfair, ungracious, unmerciful, or unkind, Joshua instructed Achan to verbalize his guilt. So that when God acted in a holy way against his sin, there would be no one who could accuse God of an unjust act.

When you confess you sin, you admit to the sin that God says is indeed your sin. You glorify God by acknowledging the fact that you're a sinner and agreeing with God's assessment. God is glorified when we acknowledge sin. When we fail to acknowledge that sin is our fault, we push it off and blame Him for our circumstances or our environment or our pressures or our temptations, to one extent or another, and we make Him in some way responsible for our problem. And if He acts against us in a just way, chastening us to refine us, we might even, and others might as well, accuse Him of

being unkind. To set any of that possibility aside, we give Him glory when we acknowledge our sin.

The fourth way in which we glorify God is by trusting Him. We remember the testimony of Abraham recorded in Romans chapter 4 verses 19 and 20 in which the text says, "Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God." It glorifies God when you believe in Him. When you trust Him. We as Christians like to say well My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus. And if you pin us to the wall, we'll say we believe that. We want to affirm to everybody that our God is trustworthy, that our God is an honorable God. You can give Him your life and it's in good hands. That He, which has begun a good work in you, will perform it until to the day of Jesus Christ. We, like Paul, can be confident of that very thing.

Our theology tells us God is trustworthy, our anxieties deny it. And sometimes we live as if you couldn't trust God at all. Thinking we have to control everything in our environment, worry about what isn't available to us, and therefore cast doubt on the trustworthiness of God. And when unbelieving people see us in that kind of state, they wonder whether our God is the kind of God you want to give your life to. But when you believe God, and when you trust God, and when you confidently live your life knowing that He is a God who keeps His promise, then you give Him glory.

We also saw that we glorify God by our fruitfulness. That is by righteousness produced within us. In John 15:8 Jesus said, "Herein is My Father glorified," this couldn't be more direct, "that you bear much fruit." A productive Christian is a glory to God, is an honor to God, is a testimony to God's power and God's might and God's goodness and grace. It dishonors God when we're unproductive. When we never lead anyone to Christ. When there's never manifest righteousness in our lives. When the love the Christ is not visible. It honors God when we bear fruit.

Now I want to add that list a sixth and very practical way in which we glorify God. And that is by praising Him, by praising Him. And I want to invite you to look with me at the fiftieth Psalm and verse 23; that's the last verse in the fiftieth Psalm. It's a wonderful statement that's made at the beginning of the verse. In verse 23 it says this, very simple but it should be underlined in your Bible as something you want to revert to often, "Whosoever offers praise glorifies Me." And you can stop at that point. That's the phrase I want you to see. "Whoso offers praise, glorifies Me."

You know if you're like I am there are always those things in your life where you feel you have failed to glorify God. There are those times when you worried and were anxious over things that were really in His care. And demonstrated a lack of trust. There were times when you committed sins or had sinful attitudes and you did not confess them. There were those times, of course, when you weren't as zealous for the holiness of God and the glory of God as you should have been. And you sought your own will instead of His. There are those times when you weren't as concerned with His honor and His name as you should have been. And so, you tend to look a little bit askance at your own commitment sometimes.

And I find that there's a very simple way in which I can get myself back on track and that's in this matter of praise. Because the text is explicit, "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me." And whenever I feel that for whatever reason in my life I'm not giving God the glory that I should, I can reach back and say but there's one simple way that I can change that right now, and that's by offering praise. I may not be in a position to do a good deed for someone. I may not have the opportunity to win someone to Jesus Christ. There may be certain constraints upon me but there's one thing I can do anywhere and anytime and in any circumstance, and that's offer praise. And that glorifies God. That lifts Him up and exalts Him and honors Him. It's a simple thing but it is the heart and soul of true worship.

Look at Psalm 86 for a moment. There are many Psalms that would speak to this issue but a couple of verses I might point out to you will suffice to make the point. In Psalm 86 verse 9, it says, "All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord. And shall glorify Thy name." Then verse 12, "I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart and I will glorify Thy name forever." Now here worship, praise, and glorifying God are all linked together. They are all linked together and they belong together. Worship is praising God. Praising God glorifies God. They belong together. And when we do that, we bring Him glory.

In Psalm 92 verses 1 and 2, it is a good thing. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High. To show forth Thy loving kindness in the morning and Thy faithfulness every night." It is a good. May I be so bold as to say it is the very best thing to glorify God through praise, through worship, through adoration. What you have already done this morning in singing songs, in praying with me as I prayed this morning to the Lord and lifted our hearts together, what you did in doing that and participating from the heart is true worship. And you have been glorifying God. And that is an incredible thing to think that a vile, wretched sinner such as I, such as you are, could ever glorify God. And yet, in His condescending mercy and grace, He has given us the capacity by transformation in the indwelling spirit, to be to the praise of His glory. To become, in Paul's words, an earthen vessel in which there is a treasure of glory ... a marvelous thing.

In John 4, I read you the words of our Lord when we began our worship that we are to worship in spirit and truth. The prior verse says that the Father seeks true worshippers. It is the goal of salvation to create worship. We were not saved for our own sake. We were saved that we might worship. We were saved, as 2 Corinthians 4:15 says so that one more voice could be added to the hallelujah chorus and that our praise might redound to the glory of God. And so we have been redeemed for the purpose of praise. Redeemed for the purpose of worship.

In 1 Chronicles, it's also repeated in the Psalms, but in the sixteenth chapter there's a great call to worship and praise, maybe the most significant one in all of Scripture in terms of concise and pointed terminology. But in 1 Chronicles chapter 16 beginning at verse 23 we read, "Sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Show forth from day to day His salvation. Declare His glory among the nations. His

marvelous works among all peoples. For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, He also is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols but the Lord made the Heavens. Glory and honor are in His presence. Strength and gladness are in His place. Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name. Bring an offering and come before Him. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." What a call, the call to worship, the call to praise. Which is the call to glorifying God.

Now when we say we want to glorify God and we say we want to do it through praise and worship, what are we really doing? What does praise really become in my life? Let me say it as simply as I can. I believe it involves three things, very simple things. Number one is a recitation of God's attributes. Praise is reciting God's attributes for great is the Lord. Glorious is the Lord. Almighty is the Lord. It is simply the recitation of His attributes.

The Old Testament, in terms of its purpose, has as its primary purpose, to reveal from Genesis to the very end, Malachi, the character of God. It is not simply that the Old Testament is given to us to chronologuethe failures of Israel. It does that. But it is that it is to reveal to us the character of God through the failures of Israel and through the disasters of the other nations and through all of the struggles and trials and vicissitudes and things that occur in human life, it is that the whole Old Testament is really setting before us God in all of His character: His love, His mercy, His grace, His justice, His anger, His wrath, and everything in between and beyond.

And as you study the Old Testament and as you read the Old Testament, which you should do all the time. And you're wondering to yourself what am I supposed to be getting out of this? Answer the question this way: you are supposed to be experiencing the revelation of God. And so, it's been my habit through the years to always ask myself, "What is this teaching me about the character of God?"

I have sitting on a little table beside my bed at home a book called, The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock. I've been reading that book for 20 years and I'm not through with it. I can't keep moving because he keeps talking about the attributes of God in such grandiose terms, with such profound concepts, that you can only take very small bites. But is an every-increasing impression in my mind to understand who God is that governs my behavior and my responses.

And so when you praise God, you simply are reciting back to God what you know to be true about Him. And that gives Him glory. To simply bow your head before the Lord or when you're driving down the road, as I often do, begin to recite the attributes of God. It is a marvelous thing. It's reminiscent of Habakkuk who had an insolvable problem. He could not understand what was going on among his people. And when he prayed to God to change it, God gave him an answer he didn't expect which only compounded the mystery of it. And so while he was sort of sinking in the quicksand of his own dilemma, he begins to praise God, in chapter 1, and he starts out by referring to God's eternal character. And what He's really saying in his own heart is "O God, You are eternal."

Which means You were here before my problem, You'll be here after my problem. I think You can handle my problem.

And then he talks about the fact that God is holy. O Holy One. Therefore God whatever is happening, if You're in it, it's good and it's right and it's not wrong. And then he uses terminology to refer to God's covenant-keeping character. And says, in effect, You'll keep Your promise. So You haven't changed Your nature. You're immutable. You won't change. And then he says You're too pure to look on evil.

And all he is doing is reciting to himself the character of God: You're bigger than my problem, You were here before, You'll be here after. You always do what is right, so this is right. You never break a promise so this somehow fits into the promise. And You are a mighty God, he says, which means that this isn't somebody usurping Your sovereignty. And by the time he gets done with all of this praise, the circumstance is the same but he feels terrific. Terrific. And in the last chapter he says if everything goes wrong. If everything goes wrong, he talks about the natural things of crops and animals, if everything goes wrong, yet will I rejoice in the God of my salvation. I can't always understand my circumstances but I certainly can learn to praise my God in the midst of them, for while my circumstances might be inexplicable and changing, my God is explicable and unchanging. And the one, who learns how to recite the attributes of God, learns how to put everything in perspective.

The second thing is not only to recite God's attributes--and note that the Psalmist does that; he does that all the time. If I had time we could go to Psalm 46, 66, 90, 96, a lot of other ones. And we find so often, David, and he's crouching somewhere behind a bush. And Absalom's after him, or somebody's after him. And he'd say, "O Lord, kill my enemies, I can't take it anymore." And he's fretting, "Lord don't let me die." And he goes, "And I'm a good guy," He says so many times, "I worship You and I honor You. And Lord what's going on?" And as he works his way through all of this ethos of his own dilemma, trying to get God to sympathize, eventually he'll start reciting God's attributes and by the end of the Psalm, he's praising God even though he's still crouched behind a bush. And nothing has happened to his enemies but his perspective is completely transformed. His perspective is totally transformed.

The second one, you not only are to recite God's attributes but we're to recite His mighty acts. Now this is a very practical thing. Another reason you want to study the Old Testament is you want to get a good workable history of how God operates in the past, so you can know how He'll operate in the present and the future. That's a marvelous concept. When you read the Old Testament, read it with a view to chronicling, in your mind, and cataloguing the mighty acts of God so that you understand the kind of God you worship. And Habakkuk, that same book where he recites the attributes of God, in chapter 1, to solve his dilemma, he recites the works of God in chapter 3. Read chapter 3 verses 3 to 16, he just goes through a whole history of everything God has done. And he feels good at the end of

that because he knows that God can do what God will do and His hand cannot be withstood.

Now if you learn to recite the works of God, you're going to find yourself in a whole different approach to life. I mean you say to your Lord sometime when you're praying or when you're just meditating in His presence, "O God you are the God who was uncreated and cannot die. I don't understand that God, but that's terrific. That's wonderful. You're beyond and above and surpassing any dilemma. And God, one day, You are the God who stepped out on the edge of nothing and threw everything into existence. You're the God who created the universe in an immediate act. And You're the God who when man fell, began to redeem him. You're the God of miracles."

And you can just go through the Old Testament and recite the mighty things that God has done. "God, You parted the Red Sea so You're people could go across and You drowned the Egyptian army. God, You gave Your prophets great power and boldness. And You took one prophet up to glory in a chariot of fire. God, You are the One who brought into the world Jesus Christ incarnate in the human body. You are the One who protected His life. You are the One who, incarnate in Jesus Christ, created food for the multitudes and healed the sick and raised the dead and raised Jesus from the dead. O God, You are the mighty God of redemptive history! Now God, I have this problem. I'm just wondering if You could handle it."

You see your perspective's going to be very different. If all you see is your problem, you got a problem. That's right. But if all you see is your God, your problem will shrink 'cause of whom your God is. You glorify God when you recite His attributes and when you recite His mighty works. And I would add a third, when you thank Him. When you thank Him, that's part of praise. Praising God is thanking God for what He has done.

We live in a society, I think, where thanks is sort of disappearing. We are so overindulged; we have so much of everything that, in a sense, we lose the ability to be thankful because we're drowning in stuff. I mean we should prosper better spiritually if we were deprived, I think. So that every little thing that came along would be the cause of great rejoicing. But sometimes, even people who are very deprived are also very unthankful.

In Luke 17, I want to illustrate this point in one of the very most poignant accounts in all the life of our Lord. Luke 17:11, "It came to pass," Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and went through the middle Samaria and Galilee. And in this particular moment in His life, He came to a village. And as He came to the village and entered in, there met Him 10 men that were lepers. As a result of their leprosy, of course, they were social outcasts. There was a common misery among them. And they came to Jesus and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus Master have mercy on us."

Their theology told them, no doubt, that their sickness and their illness was, to one degree or another, a result of sin. That was a common view in those days. And so they're reaching out for mercy, not

something they deserve. They, for some reason or other, have the word that Jesus can heal and so they approach Him and they identify Him as Master. And when He saw them, He said to them, "Go show yourselves unto the priests."

Now, why did He say that? Well, because the Old Testament law prescribed that any time a leper believed himself to be cured he needed to go to the priest. And there was a very specific test the priest would give to determine whether or not in fact that leprosy had been cured before he could be free to enter into the social realm again. And so, when Jesus said, "Go show yourselves unto the priest," they knew exactly what He was saying. He was saying let the priest examine you so that you can enter into society, assuming you've been healed.

"It came to pass that as they went, they were cleansed." So when they began to move toward seeing the priest, they were cleansed of the leprosy, in verse 15, "and one of them." That's sad. That's one of the saddest phrases in the life of Christ. "And one of them. When he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice," what? "Glorified God." Now, how did he do that? How do you glorify God? Very simply, he fell down on his face at Jesus' feet and gave him ... what? Thanks. Thanks, glorifies God. Thanks, glorifies God. "And he was a," what? A Samaritan.

I'm so glad for that one but I can't help but feel bit of emptiness, and maybe understand in some small, minute way, what the Lord must have felt when the other nine never even came back to say thanks. It's inconceivable. And Jesus answering said, "Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God except this stranger." Just one came back to glorify Me. And again, how did he glorify God? By giving thanks. And He said to him, "Get up and go your way, your faith has made you whole." And that has nothing to do with physical healing; he already received that. That's salvation. I believe all ten were healed; only one was redeemed. Thanks. Thanks.

Do you have a thankful heart? Have you learned the meaning of Paul's writing to the Thessalonians where he says, "In everything give," what? "Thanks for this is the will of God concerning you." You want to glorify God with your life? Then learn to praise Him. Let it be that every time you open your mouth, praise comes out.

You know, I do not like to be around negative people. I really do not. They disturb me a great deal. In fact, I shared with some people recently, I read an article some years back that said if you have a negative person in your organization, fire him. And if can't fire him pay him to stay home. And if he won't stay home, rent him an office in another building. Just don't let him around your people. That's true. That is true. Deliver us from negative people. And Lord, please deliver us from negative Christians who haven't got enough sense to realize what they ought to be thankful for. God, give us people who praise. I don't want to be around people who aren't filled with praise.

It betrays a carnal spirit, frankly. And basically demonstrates that your major preoccupation is not the glory of God, but the comfort of self. And if it isn't all falling out the way you want it to fall out, you're miserable. Somewhere along the line, if your life is aimed at the glory of God, then you learn. You learn to be reciting His attributes and meditating and contemplating on who your God is. And on reciting the mighty deeds which have filled redemptive history, and He is the same even now, and then of offering Him endless thanks. And that glorifies God. That honors God.

I only can wish that the world could see a whole family of praising Christians who really did exalt their God. And made their God appear to be so glorious and so attractive and so much a joy to serve that the world would be drawn to Him.

Let me give you another way to glorify God: by prayer. Turn to John 14, by prayer. In John chapter 14, we have a most, most interesting portion of Scripture. Jesus has announced to the disciples that He'll be leaving. Now that is traumatic. You see, for nearly three years they had spent their time with Him. Everything they needed, He supplied. If they were hungry, He created food. If they needed some information, He gave them truth. When they couldn't catch fish, He told them where to put the net and they got more fish than they could handle. Now folks, you could get used to living like that. You could really enjoy that.

And it is in the midst of that kind of growing dependency and in a situation where you really have all your eggs in one basket, that Jesus says I'm leaving. And the trauma is severe because, basically, they have been cut off from all their past life. They've broken all the normal ties. Society rejects them. They've long ago left their normal means of making a living. They have become overtly and outwardly identified with Jesus Christ, under the great hope that He would set up His Kingdom on earth. And now He's leaving?

And they are filled with anxiety, which causes our Lord to say to them, in chapter 14 verse 1, "Stop letting your heart be troubled." You believe God, don't you? Then trust Me. Trust Me. I'm going to the Father's house to get your room ready and I'll come back and get you. And Thomas, of course, says well we don't know where you're going and I don't know if we can get there. How are we going to get there? And Philip says we don't even know who the Father is. We don't know who to look for. We don't know the way to go and we don't when we're there 'cause we don't know who we're looking for or what He's like.

And after leaving them in their own thinking, destitute, they will have no resources. With that in mind, Jesus speaks to them in verse 13 and gives them what must be the most magnanimous statement He ever made to His disciples. "While I'm gone," He says, "whatever ask in My name, I'll do it." Now can you grasp that? I don't want you to think that there's any loss in power. I don't want you to think that there's any restriction on resources. I don't want you to think that you will go without anything. I

want you to know whatever you ask in My name that will I do. Verse 14, "If you ask anything in My name, I'll do it." So the communication is still there. The resources are there. The power is available. What are you so worried about?

Now, some people have just gone off the deep end with that "whatever". Whatever? Anything you ask? Anything? It's qualified. It's qualified by the phrase, "in My," what? "In My name." And some people are so simplistic as to think that that means at the end of your prayer if you say in "Jesus name, amen" that God has to do it. That is not a formula. That is not something by which you corner God and make Him do something that He otherwise would not do had you not used the formula.

"In My name," if you understand the Hebrew mindset, "In My name," means consistent with all that I am, for the name is synonymous with the person. It is at the name of Jesus that every knee should bow. Not just because of the letters in the word. But because of all that He is. And so here, when you ask in His name, you're really saying God I ask consistent with all that You are in Christ. So that our prayers are then, like this, Lord Jesus Christ, if it is consistent with Your name and Your person and Your will and Your purpose and Your sovereign design and Your eternal plan and if it is Your best for me and for this circumstance, glorify Yourself by doing it. But every prayer has to be qualified like that.

All this, name it and claim it business is an affront to God. We pray according to His name, consistent with who He is. In My name means on the basis of My merit for we have not merit to bring ourselves into the presence of God. In My name means in union with Christ and then for His purpose and will. And that's how we're to pray. We are to pray for His will, pray for His purpose, pray for His majesty to be revealed, pray for His plan to unfold. So as you pray, that becomes the qualifier. Lord, if this is what You desire. If this is consistent with Your name, consistent with Your will, consistent with Your plan, then do it.

Now listen to me, prayer then, is me aligning myself up with the plan of God. And being a part of that plan working out. And that's why, in verse 13, He gives the purpose for all of this in a hidatpurpose clause. "In order that," in other words, you ask anything in My name, I'll do it. "In order that you may get what you want." Is that what it says? You may get what you want. No. "In order that the Father may be," what? "Glorified in the Son."

You see, you know why you're to pray. You're to pray so God, in answer to your prayer, can put Himself on display for His own glory. The point of prayer is for you to ask the Lord, the Lord to respond, and when you see the Lord respond, you give Him praise for that response. Prayer is simply lining myself up with the unfolding of the purpose of God so that when it unfolds I can give Him glory and praise for that unfolding. Prayer is not me forcing God to do something. It is me getting in line with what God desires to do for His own glory, and then offering Him praise.

And when there are times when you may go to a prayer meeting and somebody will say something and you don't respond because you weren't really involved in the prayer process, so you can't enjoy the result. We've been praying since school started at the Master's College for the students. In order to come to the college, you have to give a testimony that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you're a Christian. You have to write it all out and there's a process. But we knew that even in spite of that, there would be some people who weren't saved. Maybe they didn't even realize it. And so we've been praying consistently that the Lord would work in the hearts of our people at the college. And in the last three days, six young people have come to Christ. Not by some outward, overt invitation but by the work of the spirit of God in their hearts for the Word of God. And I can just tell you, I talked to the people the other day and one of them said to me, "I'm about three feet off the ground and I can't come down for a landing." But there are other people who aren't three feet off the ground at all. Because they weren't involved in the prayer process when God did a mighty work in the lives of the people. They couldn't be a part of the thrill because they never were part of the prayer. You understand?

So praying is putting myself in the place where, when God glorifies Himself, I'm going to be a part of the exhilarating response that give Him glory. We look at prayer that way.

I remember there was a fellow in our church named Frank Ball, years ago. He and his wife moved to Detroit. And it was early in the ministry here--we were still meeting over in the family center. This building was not built. And one day I was walking along in the front and Frank walked up to me. And I hadn't really met him except to say hello. And he had a little spiral notebook in his hand and he said, "John do you have anything I could pray for you about?" He said, "I always keep a little list here and I'd like to write some things down and pray for you." I said, "Sure." So I shared a few things and he wrote them down. And he a date beside them and then he had a big line in the middle of the page. And on the other half of the page, he had the answer and a place to put the date.

So I thought that was a little, you know, sort of, over prescribed in my own thinking. I mean that seemed a pretty technical approach. But anyway, he wrote these three things down. He came back about a month or six weeks later, one time, and stopped me and said, "Say, could I speak with you a minute?" I said, "Sure." I walked over and he flipped back a couple pages, said, "You know, I've got these three requests here, I'd like to write the answer in if I could. What happened?" Well, and I explained it was and he wrote it all down. "Thank you very much." And I walked away and thought I've never seen anybody do that.

I went to his house one time to visit him and I saw a little bookshelf. And I think I counted 13 spiral notebooks. The one he was working on must have been number 14. And they were all filled with requests and answers. Now this is a guy, you want to ask a guy if he's ever seen the Lord work? You could have gone to him and said, "Now, Frank. Do you really see God at work?" "Yeah, what do

you want? You want four healings over here. Ten people converted over here. A new car over here for a needy missionary. What do you want, I got whole volumes of them," right? In other words, what he did by getting involved in the process was put himself in a place to glorify God when God acted. See. Prayer then is not so much that I may get my needs met, as that God may be on display and I may give Him glory.

Well, we could say a lot more about that. But let's look at one more. And there are many others. I have more points than I do time. How about this? We glorify God by our unity. By our unity, I'll just briefly mention this. Oh, what a great truth. We glorify God by our unity. Look at Romans 15 we glorify God by our unity. And in Romans 14, Paul is talking about how believers need to get together and not be a stumbling block to each other. Not retard spiritual growth in each other. Not misuse their liberty. We need to be sure that we don't condemn each other by what we do. Verse 7 says, "None of us lives to himself or dies to himself." In other words, we have responsibility for how others perceive us and how we deal with others. And so he's going through all of chapter 14 on being careful not to grieve one another. It comes into 15 and he says instead of offending one another or grieving one another, in verse 1, we are ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not even be concerned with pleasing ourselves. But, verse 2, please others to build them up.

So we get this concern about others instead of ourselves. And then Christ is the example, "to please not Himself but bore the reproach of God," as he quotes Psalm 69:9, there. And there's a sort of a benediction in verse 5 he says, "Now the God of patience and comfort, grant you to be the like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus. That you may with one mind and one mouth," what? "Glorify God." "Even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, wherefore receive you," that is embrace, "take into your heart, one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."

God is glorified when we receive each other in love. When we embrace each other in the fellowship. When there is unity. The unity of love in which Philippians 2 says, "Each man looks not on his own things, but the things of others." Each man thinks not more highly of himself than he ought to think. Each man is concerned and preoccupied to build the other up and not to please himself, as he said earlier in the fifteenth chapter. Where each man is involved and each woman in self-sacrificing love is demonstrated in our Lord's washing of the feet in John 13.

"We are to," in the words of Paul to the Ephesian church in chapter 4, "endeavor to keep the bond of the spirit which is a bond of peace." We are to strive to maintain the bond of perfectness or perfection, Paul calls it in Colossians. One of the things that glorifies God is the unity of the church: all with one mind, all with one mouth, all loving each other the same. Speaking the same thing. Thinking the same thing. Doing the same thing. 1 Corinthians 1:10 talks about it. The unity of the church is a vital thing.

And I really believe, beloved, through the years of ministry in this church that perhaps one of its greatest testimonies in the community and the world has been its unity. We do believe the same things and love the same things and speak the same things and try to live out the same things. And it is that corporate testimony that is so impactful. So many churches are fragmented, disconnected, disoriented. And when the world looks at them, their perception is very skewed as to the reality of the common eternal life. And God is not glorified. For God is the author of peace, Paul said to the Corinthians, not of confusion. And it's a wonderful thing.

You know, through the years I just thank God for the unity of this church. God has given us a body of people who submit to the Word of God. Who submit to the Spirit of God. And the spirit of the Word produces a unity. And it's marvelous to see. And I bless God for that.

I know so many churches that don't have that. It is a treasure that we hold on to. It's a fragile treasure. And every time there is a little bit of discord somewhere, it sticks up like a red flag around here because everyone's so positive and so pursuing in the area of peace. And we do all we can to make sure that we maintain that loving, peaceful unity that exalts Christ. And I'm thankful to the Lord for that.

I'm thankful to the Lord that when we have 200 visitors coming here for the radio Bible conference, we can say to you, "Well, take them to your home for the day. Take them out to dinner." Or when we pastors coming to the shepherds conference, we can say, "We want to put them in your homes." And we don't have to be afraid that when they go with you, you're going to tell them you hate everything about Grace Church. Or you're mad at half of the congregation. I mean listen it's a high-risk operation to turn these people loose on you. Except for the fact that we know where your heart is. And we know you believe and you trust God and you're with us and you're in one and one spirit. It isn't that you're under the illusion that we're all perfect, it's just that you're committed to the fact that we need to be united in the effort to be like Christ. That's so refreshing. And I quite believe that the people who come here learn more from their communication with you than you do listening to us on the staff talk to them. Because they want to find out from you whether what we're telling them is really true. And that, I think, is the vital ministry that what we say to be the life of the church is confirmed to be the life of the church and the personal contact they have with the people who are the church. I bless God for the unity of the church. And we glorify God by that.

You want to glorify God? Then pursue peace. You want to glorify God? Then pursue unity. Do you want to bring him dishonor? Then start a fight or a quarrel or be self-protective or critical. I mean these are simple things but they are the basis of our lives as Christians.

Let me close by saying this, and there are many more ways we could glorify God. If time permitted, we would touch on them. We may in the future. It's not a complex thing to live the Christian life. Can I make it as practical as possible?

Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. We go back to that. And realize this: that you can look at the Christian and say boy this is a tough thing. Or you can look at it and say it's very simple. Life is a matter of decisions; you understand that? Life is a matter of decisions. That's just all it is. You make decisions. The first decision comes in the morning: it is the decision about whether or not you will get out of bed. For some of you, that is a major decision.

And then you begin the simple process. You go to the closet and what do you say? What may I wear today that would honor Jesus Christ? You say, well that's a little mundane. Right. But that's where you start to train a disciplined spiritual life. Or, do you say what can I put on that'll knock them out at the office? I mean it's simple things like that, that begin to change a person's perspective.

And then you go to breakfast and make--now you say, don't tell me that breakfast is a spiritual issue. Well, I don't know that whether you have Wheaties or Fruit Loops is particularly spiritual. But I do know that whether you eat or drink, and that would include breakfast, you'd better do it ... what? To the glory of God. What I'm trying to say to you, and I few months ago I did message on self-discipline and how you begin to train yourself for a major spiritual disciplines by the little things in your life that you learn to get a hold of. And you start on the simple things of life, does it glorify God. Does it glorify God?

And after breakfast, you get out into the traffic and you have several opportunities to glorify God. And you will make some choices. It will never happen on the big scale, folks. It will never happen on the broad picture. It will never happen in the big spiritual dimension until you have brought the little things of your life to conform to the glory of God. You start with the little ones and it builds from there.

Well, let's bow in prayer. Our Father, we know that as we think about You so often, Your glory, Your majesty, and the wonder of Your person is so vast and incomprehensible that we are dwarfed, even in our thoughts, before You. And You seem to us unreachable and inconceivable and unperceivable at times, Your vastness way beyond us. And then wonder of wonders, at other times, such as in this hour together, it seems so simple and so straightforward to live to Your glory. Thank You, O God, for taking these useless, worthless, earthen vessels, and planting in them this treasure of the gospel by which we can be to Your glory that transforms us into lights in which You can shine. And Lord, help us in the little things to do whatever we do for Your glory. Help us to confess our sin. To trust You. Help us to bear fruit. Help us to praise You and to pray for the sake of Your glory. And to pursue peace and unity that You might be glorified. That Lord, our lives might be, as is designed for us, to the praise of Your glory. Thank You, Lord, for the enabling power as well as the instruction through Your spirit.

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