

Do All to the Glory of God

1 Corinthians 10:23-33

Soli deo Gloria

Do All to the Glory of God!

What is the chief end of man?

To glorify God and enjoy him forever.

What is the glory of God?

And what does it mean to do something to the glory of God?

What is the glory of God?

Not as simple as we might want.

Greek = doxa

It is where we get the word Doxology = a word of glory. Or, to give God glory, praise!

doxa: the manifestation of brightness, majesty, splendor, beauty, reputation.

There are levels of glory, depending upon the nature of the object.

1 Corinthians 15:40-43 ⁴⁰ There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

So, God's glory is in accordance with his being:

It is the visibility of his infinite worth and beauty, the radiance of his holiness.

The Gospel that brings righteousness through the working of the Holy Spirit has a greater glory than the Mosaic Covenant that only brought death.

2 Corinthians 3:7-12 ⁷ Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹ For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. ¹⁰ Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹ For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. ¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold,

As our character is made more and more like the character of Jesus Christ, we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another.

2 Corinthians 3:18 ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,¹ are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Glory is shining like you are supposed to shine.

Hebrew = Kabod = weightiness; significance; importance

ESV **Exodus 33:18** Moses said, "Please show me your glory."

ESV **Exodus 33:22** and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

When the subject of God comes up in conversation, the importance of his being is so great and valuable, that he deserves that we will immediately give our very best in the attention of him.

As a pastor, I may cut corners in other areas of life, but the study and contemplation of God is so very valuable that I will always give my best.

In my thoughts about God, He is bright and wonderful and beautiful to me.

In the ways that I can emulate God, I exert every effort to do so. Is God glorious to you? Or is there something in this world that is more glorious to you than God?

Psalms 106:20 ²⁰ They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass.

ESV **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

One way the gospel can be explained is to say that we have fallen short of the glory of God and God out of his glory has taken hold of us to share his glory with us.

Ephesians 3 ¹⁶ according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

ESV **2 Peter 1:3** His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to¹ his own glory and excellence,
²

2 Corinthians 4:17 ¹⁷ For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison

Glorification occurs when we see Jesus face to face. We, at this moment, in the twinkling of an eye, are made to shine perfectly like Christ. We are fully transformed into his image such that we shine like he shines.

In this sense, glorification is the completion of the ongoing work of sanctification in this life. Or you could say it the other way. Sanctification is really nothing more than the beginnings of glorification.

What does it actually mean to do all to the glory of God?

To do all to the glory of God, generally speaking, is to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is to experience the putting to death of sin in your life and the growth in Christlike attitudes. It to give to God in our lives the worth and value that is due to One who is so very important.

That is your purpose here in this life. You are called to do all to the glory of God.

You are called to live such that others will notice the importance and beauty of God.

It is to live your life “God-centered” not “me-centered”.

This is the general command. But Paul speaks this command in the context of a long discussion on eating meat sacrificed to idols. So, even though we can speak generally about living to the glory of God, Paul has in mind something very specific.

Read I Corinthians 10:23-11:1.

We must remember that this is the conclusion of a discussion that really began in chapter 8.

The theme that runs through the entirety of this section is the relationship between our rights/freedoms and our willingness to sacrifice our rights for the sake of love.

It is more important to be Christlike in our attitude and actions than it is to exercise our rights.

The Corinthians were very good students. They had learned the wonderful rights and freedoms that were theirs through faith in Jesus Christ.

But what they had not learned was God’s greater purpose, to bring them to think and feel and act in the same loving way that He exhibited.

There was a greater degree of brightness than simply exercising one’s freedoms.

One slogan that we are familiar with, Paul brings up again.

It is the slogan: All things are lawful for me!

23 "All things are lawful,"
but
not all things are helpful.
"All things are lawful,"
but
not all things build up.

This is a good slogan, but it’s application was expanded beyond its original intent.

In chapter 6, Paul explained how this slogan should not be used to engage in sexual immorality. Now he shows how it should not be used to engage in activities that are not beneficial to themselves or others.

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.

Helpful (Profitable) – benefits oneself.

Paul does not explain what he means by “helpful” but it is safe to say that he is speaking of their spiritual benefit.

All things are lawful, but not everything works to benefit my soul.

It is healthy to ask periodically, “Does this activity encourage me to grow in faith and obedience to Christ?”

Is the worth and beauty of Jesus Christ increasing in my soul because of what I am doing?

It may not be an activity that is clearly wrong, but it might be something that is not really helpful to the overall growth of my Christian life. As Americans, we keep busy. But is our business conducive to godliness?

Paul continues: All things are lawful for me, but not all things build up.

Again, the building up refers to growing in Christlikeness. We not only think of what is helpful to our own spiritual growth, but we also must consider how to build others up in their spiritual growth.

οἰκοδομεῖν - to make or erect any kind of construction - 'to build, to construct.'

Whenever you work to build something, you have to have a plan. You have to know what it is that you are building. You cannot help in the building up of someone unless you first know what is the goal of the construction.

You must have some idea of what it is that God is doing, before you can understand how to build up.

My contention is that the plan of the construction project is glory – to be like Christ.

Our actions should work to bring ourselves and others into greater conformity to Jesus Christ. We should be working to help ourselves and others display the infinite worth and beauty of Jesus Christ.

We are not trying to make Jesus look better than he is. We are striving to display the glory that is already his.

What is beautiful about Jesus?

One thing that is beautiful about him is that he is zealous for the good of the Church.

He cares about helping others to know God and become like God.

If we want to display his glory, then we ought to care about the building up of the Church.

24 Let no one seek
 his own good,
 but
 the good of his neighbor.

Good is not in the Greek. It is implied.

Literally: seek his own, but another's (heteros)

Doing all to the glory of God is to think about others. It is to move beyond ourselves. It is to think about God's plan to build up others and to work with God in that plan in some small way.

As Christians who are wanting to become more like Christ, we do not have a choice, we must think how we can build up our brothers and sisters in the faith.

To not do this is to oppose the attitude of Jesus Christ.

I am not saying that we will all do this in the same way. We are not all to be pastors.

But we are, in a way suited to our personality, to build others up and think how we might encourage them to grow spiritually.

Now, Paul is going to work out "doing all to the glory of God" in the scenarios related to eating food sacrificed to idols.

Scenario #1 – Going to the Grocery Store.

25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market
 without raising any question
 on the ground of conscience.

26 For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."

When it comes to choosing what food to buy, do not concern yourself with whether or not it was at some previous time been used in sacrifices to false gods.

To be overly concerned with this would be to give too much importance to false gods and not enough importance to the God who is Creator and Sustainer of all life in this world.

It might feel like being so concerned with the "purity" of the meat brings glory to God, but it does not. Ultimately, it attributes too much importance to something other than God's greatness.

Paul quotes a psalm that was used in mealtime prayers.

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,¹ the world and those who dwell therein,

1 Timothy 4:4-5 ⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

The conclusion is that if God makes food clean, then we should eat it with thanksgiving. We glorify God by receiving the food from God's hand and acknowledging his provision in it.

Something evil may have been done with the meat only hours before. But the Christian can still enjoy the meat as coming from God's good hand.

Scenario #2 of how to do all to the glory of God – You are invited to dinner by an unbeliever in their home.

27 If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner
 and
 you are disposed to go,
 eat whatever is set before you
 without raising any question
 on the ground of conscience.

Paul does not mandate that the Christian must always accept an invitation to dinner with non-Christians.

But, if he is inclined to go, he must not be overly concerned about whether the food was used in false worship. Maybe it has, maybe it has not... don't be too concerned about it.

Just enjoy the dinner.

Jesus had modeled this attitude when he ate with tax collectors and sinners.

While it is important to ask whether or not you might be tempted to engage in some sinful activity, it is not necessary to act like rubbing shoulders with unbelievers will somehow contaminate you.

Christians have the right to eat with non-Christians!

This displays the goodness of God's love for the lost.

God's love for people who do not yet know him as Savior and Lord also reflects his beauty and worth.

When we love people in this way we also are acting to the glory of God.

Scenario # 3 – The Scruples of another

28 But
 if someone says to you,
 "This has been offered in sacrifice,"
 then do not eat it,
 for the sake of the one who informed you,
 and
 for the sake of conscience-
29 I do not mean your conscience,
 but
 his.

This scenario is more difficult to understand.

Who exactly is the "someone"?

- Is it the host?
- Is it another guest who is also present?

What was his motivation for bringing up the fact that the food has previously been used in false worship?

- Some argue that the host could simply be showing courtesy to his guests. I am not convinced. Why would he have invited them and then just before dinner announce that the meal had been used in idol worship?
- It is more likely that some other guest who was present had done some investigating and felt it was his duty to make known the truth. He was fearful that a fellow Christian might be somehow “corrupted.”

This other Christian is unconvinced that eating meat previously offered to idols is fine. (at least in their heart)

This other guest does not even have to be a believer. He simply does not understand that Jesus is Lord of All and idols are nothing. So, to see a Christian eating would be to him a stumbling block.

- “A pagan might say this to a Christian to warn him, knowing that idols are an abomination to him.” Grosheide

The fact is, we just do not know.

But what we do know is that someone else present is very concerned about this?

Paul, I believe would argue that they are wrong in their concern. They should not be concerned. But they are.

Paul’s counsel is that as someone seeking to display the glory of God, they should care about the conscience of this other person, and refrain from eating.

My heart does not really resonate with Paul’s thinking here. I simply want to look at this other guest and say, “Come on, man, what is your problem? Just get over it.” But Paul is clear that this sort of attitude is not displaying the glory of God.

God would care about the person who is fearful. He would not disdain them. He may at some later time try to inform this other person as to the truth of the greatness of God. But he would not in the moment care nothing for their conscience.

This speaks volumes about the beauty and worth of our God. God is not a God who sits above the earth with some indifferent and uncaring demeanor towards the hearts of men. He is patient and kind with us. He works to lead us into the truth. But he meets us right where we are. And if we want to do all to the glory of God, we will have the same sort of attitude.

But, Paul knows that by teaching this he may be taken to mean that we must always be ruled by the conscience of others. If we always had to make sure that everyone around us was OK with every choice that we made, we would be in a terrible place. So, Paul balances what he has just said.

For why should my liberty be determined
by someone else's conscience?

If I partake with thankfulness,

why am I denounced
because of that for which I give thanks?

It almost seems that Paul contradicts what he has just said.

“On the face of it Paul seems to be contradicting himself.” Barnett

What Paul is saying is that you should NOT refrain from eating the meat because the other person’s conscience somehow makes it wrong for you to eat. It does not. It is simply because you are trying to act in a loving way toward this other person. Not because their conscience determines your behavior.

The Christian is free to eat the meat. That is a matter of principle. His freedom is not determined by the conscience of another. But, because of the principle of love, he abstains from eating the meat. Not because the conscience of the weaker brother is correct!

It seems to be that only if the weak brother is present do you have to consider his conscience.

If I am not with this other person, then it is not really a problem.

But, if they are present, then I need to consider their conscience as well.

We live in a global economy. The clothes that you wear are usually not made down the street, but on the other side of the planet. The cars that you drive have parts from countries. The food that you eat has been grown across the ocean. The fact is that you do not know who made them, what their worldview was, did they love God or worship false gods. You just do not know. Do you need to know?

Does it matter that the same company who makes your child’s diapers also encourages abortions? When you put on the diaper does it mean that you are killing another baby? I don’t think so.

But does this mean that when someone points out to you a companies connection with some evil that you should simply ignore them? I don’t think so. I am not sure how to handle each situation. But I think that we should have some concern for their conscience. Not that we should make our conscience serve their conscience. But we should have some sensitivity to them and their concern.

I have enjoyed the Super Bowl for many years. I cannot watch the half-time show any more. But I continue to enjoy the game of football. And if my beloved Cleveland Browns ever make it there, I will want to watch the game. But I have been told and I believe it to be true that the spike in prostitution surrounding the Super-bowl is higher than at any other single event. This is terrible. I know people for whom this connection prevents them from ever wanting to watch another Super bowl. While I may not agree that watching the Super Bowl is sinful, I do believe that I should care about the evil of prostitution. And I should also care about the conscience of others.

If we are going to do all to the glory of God, we must somehow be able to do both. We must be able to receive with thanksgiving the gifts of this world. He truly is Lord over all. It is good to

appreciate the skills on display in a Super Bowl. And at the same time, truly care about the conscience of others.

Working out the details of how to do this, I will leave to you, and the Holy Spirit.

31 So,
whether you eat or drink,
or
whatever you do,
do all to the glory of God.

It is easy to take this verse out of context. But if you take it in context, you understand that God's glory is the display of who he is, in all of his beautiful facets.

We cannot emphasize some qualities of God while ignoring others. To do all to the glory of God implies a genuine attempt to reflect in our behavior the wholeness of God's beauty and worth.

I am not sure that any of us do it that well, at least not consistently.

But it is the purpose for our salvation. God is constructing us to be sharers in his glory.

The patience and persistence and compassion and holiness that God displays in working on us, we must somehow seek to emulate in our relationships with others.

That is what it means to do all to the glory of God.

32 Give no offense
to Jews
or
to Greeks
or
to the church of God,
33 just as I try to please everyone
in everything I do,
not seeking
my own advantage,
but
that of many,
that they may be saved.

11:1 Be imitators of me,
as I am of Christ.

Paul sets himself up as a model to be followed. Paul is not teaching that he is a perfect model of Jesus Christ. But, what is declaring is that it is his determined purpose to be like Jesus Christ. He is trying in all of his actions to reflect the worth and beauty of Jesus Christ.

He wants the Corinthians to emulate him in this. He knows that the nuances of how to make daily choices can be complex. We are always taking into consideration multiple factors.

So, rather than lay down rigid rules on how to do this, he wants the Corinthians to simply imitate him.

Paul encourages this, but most of the time we do this anyway. We are constantly watching others to know how to live. Paul just wants us to choose someone to imitate who is striving to do all to the glory of God.

Do you have someone that you purposely seek to imitate?

Are they committed to a lifelong striving to do all to the glory of God?

Look for someone who when you are around them the worth and beauty of God are on display. Seek to be someone for whom self is not the center of life.

Be committed to building others up to reflect Christ.

We live in a world that often points out the failures of the Church. The black marks of the church are not difficult to find to be sure. But looking at the Churches failures blinds us to the mission of Christ in bringing people to himself.

God is doing something in the Church. He is doing something in you. You are his construction project. He is making you into a vessel of his glory.

Rob Smith

The plan of God was never to simply display his glory and leave it at that, nor was it to glorify himself at the expense of his creatures. Rather, God's eternal commitment to glorify himself has always been with a view to sharing his glory with those "vessels of mercy" whom he "prepared beforehand for glory" (Rom 9:23). Put another way, God's eternal purpose to create and redeem a people for "the praise of his glory" cannot be rightly understood apart from our participation in that glory (Eph 1:12, 14; Rom 5:2, 8:30). This is both theologically mind-blowing and spiritually stunning. What it means is that Christ's glorification was not only for himself, but also for others. What a beautiful statement!

However imperfectly we share in God's glory now, we are destined to share in his glory perfectly for all eternity.

Anyone who has this hope in Christ Jesus, will make it his determined purpose today "to do all to the glory of God."

Amen.