

NOTE: This Sample Message is in PDF format. The messages on the Sermon Stick are in Microsoft Word format so that you can easily edit them.

Title: “For God’s Glory”
Series: Abundantly More

Introduction:

¹In Dallas Willard’s book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, he tells about an experience he had that helped to define the glory of God for him:

While I was teaching in South Africa some time ago, a young man ... took me out to see the beaches near his home in Port Elizabeth. I was totally unprepared for the experience. I had seen beaches, or so I thought. But when we came over the rise where the sea and land opened up to us, I stood in stunned silence and then slowly walked toward the waves. Words cannot capture the view that confronted me

I realized that God sees this all the time. He sees it, experiences it, knows it from every possible point of view, this and billions of other scenes like and unlike it, in this and billions of other worlds. Great tidal waves of joy must constantly wash through his being

We pay a lot of money to get a tank with a few tropical fish in it and never tire of looking at their beauty and marvelous forms and movements. But God has *seas full of them*, which he constantly enjoys We are enraptured by a well-done movie sequence or by a few bars from an opera or lines from a poem. We treasure our great experiences for a lifetime, and we may have very few of them. But he is simply one great inexhaustible and eternal experience of all that is good and true and beautiful and right

All of the good and beautiful things from which we occasionally drink tiny droplets of soul-exhilarating joy, God continuously experiences in all their breadth and depth and richness. **[end of illustration]**

¹ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (HarperOne, 1998), pp. 62-64

God is glorified through His creation – and that includes us! Our theme passage for this series says:

*Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. -- **Ephesians 3:20–21 (ESV)***

Let's consider some ways we can glorify God together as a church:

GOD IS GLORIFIED IN THE CHURCH WHEN...

1. WE FIGHT TOGETHER

We aren't talking about when we fight each other! But when we fight together, in unity, against a common enemy. For too many of us, spiritual warfare is something we read about in science fiction novels and not the reality of our everyday lives. But the Bible teaches us differently:

*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. -- **Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)***

This is a real struggle that every Christian must face, whether he or she realizes it or not. These “rulers,” “authorities,” and “cosmic powers,” are thought by most theologians to describe some type of demonic hierarchy and/or army that has been assembled to turn us away from God.

*For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. -- **2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (ESV)***

What are the weapons God has given us to fight the enemy with? Divine power to destroy strongholds. The ability to destroy the enemy's arguments and opinions. The desire and capability to live in obedience to Christ.

But how do we use these things? By working together to learn what they are, and how they are used. The good news is this – the devil has an army, but we have a

more powerful one. The bad news is, many of us don't really understand there is a war going on around us.

We need to work together as a church to make sure everyone has the Biblical knowledge needed to fight, to make sure that we teach apologetics, and prayer, and witnessing, so that we are spiritually equipped to take down the enemy.

This is serious business we're talking about here. It is not a joke and it is not a fantasy. It is the reality we live in, but with God's help and the support of our fellow Christians, it is a battle that we are sure to win.

2. WE BUILD EACH OTHER UP

God is glorified when we stop tearing each other down and start building each other up. There are too many in the church who view their job as the chief critic of others. They like to point out everyone's faults, while at the same time lifting themselves up on a pedestal. That behavior has to stop. God is not honored by it.

Let's consider a couple of passages from James that deal with the use of our tongue:

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. -- James 3:9–10 (ESV)

Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor? -- James 4:11–12 (ESV)

One more passage from Ephesians:

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. -- Ephesians 4:29 (ESV)

While it is Biblical to hold each other accountable, it is not Biblical to slander, gossip, and treat each other in a judgmental fashion. My job is to build you up, encourage you, and help you to be the best Kingdom person you can possibly be.

And guess what? That is your job too! In fact, it is every Christian's job to build up other Christians.

We have to ask ourselves these questions: are the things I am doing and saying to others building them up or tearing them down? Am I encouraging them, or do they hide when I walk into the room? Is my way of dealing with others one that is going to make them a stronger disciple of Jesus Christ, or a weaker one?

Paul wrote to the Romans:

When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours. – Romans 1:12 (NLT)

What a fantastic attitude! My goal in life is to bring you up, and to be brought up by others. If we could all make this a part of our life experience, the atmosphere of love, kindness, and acceptance would be overwhelming.

3. WE SERVE EACH OTHER

We bring glory to God when we show the type of servant spirit that Jesus showed when He walked the earth. One of our main purposes in life is to serve other people.

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” -- Mark 10:45 (ESV)

An anonymous author told about a realization he received concerning being a servant to others:

²One evening, while watering the garden, the sheer sacrifice of true service overwhelmed me. There amongst the tomatoes and parsley, I realized that most of my previous attempts at service were very much like the garden hose in my hand: I was in control, dictating how, when, and to whom I would serve. With my nifty sprayer, I could even stop the water altogether when I felt like it. The "flow" of Christ's love that I gave to others depended on my mood, the health of my career, and even how much sleep I got the night before. Mine was (and still often is) a self-righteous, self-gratifying service.

² Anonymous, *Embracing Obscurity* (B&H Publishing Group, 2012), p. 98

In contrast, I noticed a soaker hose in the planter across from me. It watered the ground completely indiscriminately. Dozens of holes let the water loose and had no shut-off switch. Life-giving water oozed out all over the place, like it or not! To serve like a soaker hose means to pour out Christ's love from every pore of our beings, not concerning ourselves with the timing, the effect it might have on our productivity, or the worthiness of the recipients. If God has "turned on the water" in our lives, filling us with his life-giving springs, why would we hold them back from anyone? For fear of running out? Doesn't he have an infinite supply of living water? **[end of illustration]**

Isn't that a great way of looking at things? We are called to serve to the uttermost – Jesus served all the way through His death on the Cross.

Paul wrote:

*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. -- **Philippians 2:1–4 (ESV)***

This goes completely against everything our culture tells us, doesn't it? The world says, "You're the best. Treat yourself. You deserve a break. You're the smartest, the fastest, the prettiest person who has ever lived."

But God says, "count others more significant than yourselves...look out for the interest of others."

And by doing that, God is glorified.

CONCLUSION:

When we think of God and the access He has to the heavens above, the sea, in fact, all the greatness of His universe, it's hard to see how we could bring Him glory. Yet he tells us that it is through the church and through Jesus Christ that He is glorified. The things that you and I say and do today have an impact on God. He is glorified through our thoughts and behaviors.

So when you leave here today, let me ask you to do something beneficial – make sure that the words that you use, and the actions you take are ones that bring God glory, rather than detract from it. He deserves nothing less than that from us.