

Put yourself in my position. Pretend you are a pastor planning to teach an Equip Class on Missions. **Where would you begin?** Would you start with the history of the expansion of the church? Would you begin with the demographics of the modern unreached world and discuss modern missions' efforts? Let's consider this from a different angle. **How would you answer this all-important question: What is the ultimate goal of the church on earth?**

Many people would answer this question with "Missions." However, Missions, is not the *ultimate* goal of the church. John Piper articulates the primary purpose of the church incredibly well in his book "*Let the Nations Be Glad.*"<sup>1</sup> Piper writes,

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. *Missions exists because worship doesn't.* Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man... Missions is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions.

That is the primary lesson of this class. **The ultimate goal of the church is to worship God and increase the worship of God worldwide among the nations.** That may sound strange to some of you. Many of us might think first of the billions of lost people needing the good news. Indeed, God wants to reach the lost with the news of the Kingdom and rejoices when sinners repent and believe (cf. Luke 15). But the ultimate goal is not about reaching people for their salvation. The ultimate goal is to see idolatrous sinners transform into God-exalting worshipers—*God-exalting worship is the ultimate purpose of the church because it is God's ultimate purpose for missions.* The chief goal of God in missions is his glory. God's passion for his glory fuels his passion for missions. **We must adopt his purposes as our own and let his passion for his glory fuel our passion for missions.**

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<sup>1</sup> This manuscript depends heavily on John Piper's book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, and the Missions Core Seminar material of Capitol Hill Baptist Church.

## 1<sup>st</sup>. God's Passion for God's Glory.

God's goal in world missions is worldwide worship, and God calls the nations to worship him: "*Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!*" (Psalm 117:1). The ultimate fuel for our passion to see God glorified among the nations is *God's own passion to be glorified among the nations*. So, in his book, Piper introduces a new catechism question by mimicking the Westminster Catechism's opening question and answer (*What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever*). He creatively asks, "*What is the chief end of God? The chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.*" His image bearers share his purpose. So, our passion to glorify God originates from his own passion to glorify himself.

Turn to Isaiah 48:9-11. As I read, note six reasons why God acts:

*For my name's sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. <sup>10</sup> Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. <sup>11</sup> 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.*

What is God's ultimate concern? His glory. God acts for his own glory, always. Therefore, people who serve God pursue his glory in all they do, especially missions. Consider these texts:

Exodus 14:4 "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord."

2 Samuel 7:23 "And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods?"

Isaiah 43: 6-7, 25 "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, <sup>7</sup> everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made... I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins."

Ezekiel 36:22-23 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. <sup>23</sup> And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.”

John 7:18 “The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.”

John 12:27-28 “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”

John 17:24 “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

Ephesians 1: 13-14 “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

1 Peter 4:11 “Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Romans 11:36 “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

Why must we have God as the center and his worship as the goal of missions? If missions is only about saving sinners *for the sinner’s sake*—or if we make missions primarily about how much God wants fellowship *with us*—then the goal of missions becomes man-centered. However, missionaries carry *Jesus’ great name* (Acts 9:15; Rom. 15:20-21) to the nations. The goal of missions is that “*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Phil 2:10-11).

Doesn't this make God self-centered? And if he is self-centered, how can he truly love us?

## 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Glory of God's Love.

1 Corinthians 13:5: "*Love seeks not its own.*" This verse refers to seeking your own glory and personal gain over finding joy in doing good for others. However, unlike human beings, God acts for our greatest good and ultimate joy by seeking his own glory. God is transcendent, meaning he is distinct from, over, and above his creation. While we are made in his image, he did not make us divine nor does he share his divine glory with another. **Only God perfectly loves others by seeking his own glory.**

Of course, we are not God, so we cannot imitate God *in all his ways*. In fact, humankind falls short of the glory of God by sinfully seeking to imitate God. Satan promised us, "*You will be like God,*" and one sinful way we want to be like God is to exalt our own glory independent of God. However, this treason is the very definition of idolatry: "*They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen*" (Rom. 1:25). **We suppress the truth about God and discredit his worth when we exalt ourselves and, as a result, we hurt and harm one another.**

However, God himself is infinitely glorious, happy (*Blessed forever*), and righteous Being in the universe; there is nothing higher than him to glorify. Piper argues that Paul "*conceive[s] of God's righteousness as his unswerving faithfulness always to preserve and display the glory of his name.*"<sup>2</sup> Righteousness glorifies God and nothing less. He always acts in

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<sup>2</sup> John Piper, *The Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 100.

a way that is consistent with his own perfection. To remain truthful, He must exalt his own glory above all else. So, God is right to glorify himself in all that he does, and man is “unrighteous” (Rom 1:18) because he does “*not glorify God as God*” (v. 21). Failure to glorify God is the most wretched corruption, highest treason, and heinous evil in the universe. But the enjoyment of him is the best and kindest gift he can bestow on his creatures. *Enjoying God’s glory is God’s greatest gift of love and joy to man because there is nothing more worthy, supreme, weighty, valuable, or blissful in heaven or earth!* Augustine said,

Whoever, then, loves his neighbor aright, ought to urge upon him that he too should love God with his whole heart, and soul, and mind. For in this way, loving his neighbor as himself, a man turns the whole current of his love both for himself and his neighbor into the channel of the love of God, which suffers no stream to be drawn off from itself by whose diversion its own volume would be diminished.

God loves us with the most intense divine affection when he seeks his glory in our lives. The more passionate God is for his glory in our lives, the more vibrant joy we experience. That is why the Psalmist says, “*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore*” (16:11).

Psalm 67:3-4 “May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth.”

Psalm 70:4 “May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, ‘God is great!’”

Psalm 96:2-3 “Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.”

Psalm 97:1 “The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice.”

*Missions aims for the joy of all peoples in the glory of God.* We serve other’s joy by calling them to praise the glorious God. *Doesn’t this give you a greater vision for evangelism*

and missions? You have the most sharable message in the world! We glorify God by calling others to find the fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore in God! Missionaries work for the nations' ultimate happiness in God's glory.

### 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Glory of God's Grace.

God could have glorified himself in the judgment of all rebellious humankind: "*What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction...*" (Rom. 9:22). However, the gospel reveals God's unexpected choice to show mercy over judgment to his elect. Piper writes, "*The glory God seeks to magnify is supremely the glory of His Mercy.*"

God decided to glorify Himself through showing mercy to sinners: "...in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory" (Rom. 9:23). Paul also says in Romans 15:8-9, "*For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.*" Christ died for sinners so that God may be glorified for his mercy. Christ saved you so you may honor, exalt, and admire God for his mercy!

These verses encapsulate the ultimate fuel and goal for missions: We go so that people worldwide would come to worship and glorify God for His mercy! What a great God we serve! He is worthy of all our praise and the offering of our lives. Our primary motivation for spreading this gospel message to those who have not heard it is that they may glorify God.

Conclusion.

God exalting worship is the goal of missions. God increases the joy of his people through their praise for his mercy. God's ultimate passion and purpose in missions is worship. May his passion be ours.