

The Joy of Fearing God

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[0 : 00] Open your Bibles to 1 Chronicles 16. 1 Chronicles 16.

And while you make your way there, I'd like to read a quote from New Testament theologian Simon Kistemaker, who died just a few years ago, I think.

This is what he said in his exposition of 1 Corinthians. Nothing in our conduct should obstruct God's glory from being reflected in us.

That is, in everything we do and say, no matter how insignificant, the world should be able to see that we are God's people.

Exalting God's glory ought to be our chief purpose in this earthly life. And I think that's very well said. The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks the question, right off the bat, what is the chief end of man?

[1 : 07] The answer, man's chief end, his primary purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

And that's what we want to consider today. We continue our study of godly fear, and the God-fearing person strives to live all of life to the glory of God.

As 1 Corinthians 10.31 says, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. From our loftiest plans to the seemingly trivial activities of life, God has called us to glorify Him in everything we do.

But what does that mean? What does it mean to glorify God? Well, there are two parts to this. To glorify God means, first of all, we respond appropriately to Him, to who He is, to what He has done.

And second, it means we become a reflection of Him to those around us. Let's look at 1 Chronicles 16. Starting at verse 8, we see David is singing a song of thanksgiving to God.

[2 : 23] But more than that, he's instructing Israel on how to respond to God. He says, in effect, when we consider all that God is, when we consider all that God has done, and all that God promises to do, this is how we respond.

This is how we should respond. In short, our response should be worship, adoration, reverence, fear.

Let me read this. O give thanks to the Lord. Call upon His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him.

Sing praises to Him. Tell of all His wondrous works. Glory in His name. Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord in His strength.

Seek His presence continually. Remember the wondrous works that He has done, His miracles, and the judgments He uttered. O offspring of Israel, His servant, children of Jacob, His chosen ones.

[3 : 27] He is the Lord our God. His judgments are in all the earth. Remember His covenant forever, the word that He commanded for a thousand generations, the covenant that He made with Abraham, His sworn promise to Isaac, which He confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, to you, I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.

When you were few in number, of little account, and sojourners in it, wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people, He allowed no one to oppress them.

He rebuked kings on their account, saying, Touch not my anointed ones. Do my prophets no harm. Sing to the Lord all the earth. Tell of His salvation from day to day.

Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous work among all peoples. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and He is to be feared above all gods.

For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before Him. Strength and joy are in His place.

[4 : 40] Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory. Do His name. Bring an offering and come before Him.

Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness. Tremble before Him all the earth. Yes, the world is established. It shall never be moved. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let them say among the nations, the Lord reigns.

Let the sea roar and all that fills it. Let the field exult and everything in it. Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for He comes to judge the earth.

O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever. Say also, save us, O God of our salvation, and gather and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to Your holy name and glory in Your praise.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Then all the people said, Amen, and did what? Praise the Lord.

[5 : 52] What is David telling the people to do? Verse 8, Give praise to the Lord. Proclaim His greatness. Proclaim His greatness. Verse 9, Sing to the Lord.

Tell the world what the Lord has done. Verse 10, Glory in His name and rejoice. Verse 11, Seek the Lord and trust in His power. Verse 12, Remember the Lord's mighty works.

Verses 28 and 29, Ascribe all glory and strength to Him because He deserves it. In other words, we should recognize and we should acknowledge that all glory and strength belong to Him and to Him alone.

Verse 29, Bring an offering to the Lord. In our case, we offer up a living sacrifice, according to Hebrews 12. And in verse 29, we worship the Lord.

Verse 30, We tremble before Him. We fear Him. Verse 34, We give thanks for His goodness and love. And verse 35, We voice our utter dependence on Him by crying to Him for salvation.

[7 : 05] So, we take everything good and everything praiseworthy about God. We acknowledge it.

And we give voice to it. We make it the focus of everything we do. In fact, we make it the very foundation of our existence. Because it is.

this is what we're here for. This is our chief end to glorify God. There is nothing more important we can possibly do.

Obviously, this is something we do very deliberately every time we meet together like this on a Sunday morning for the explicit purpose of worship. worship. We sing praises to God's name.

We pray to Him in humble submission and recognition of our dependence on Him as I talked about last week. We preach His word recognizing the authority that it carries over our lives while also acknowledging there are no better ways to glorify God than to learn the truth about Him and strive to keep His commandments because those commandments are His will for us.

[8 : 21] But we can and should go further. Again, the Apostle Paul writes, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10.31.

Do all to the glory of God. According to Paul, even the routine, mundane tasks of life, eating and drinking, things we do multiple times a day, day after day, probably without even stopping to think about it, can be done to the glory of God.

How so? Well, by reflecting God in what we do. In Matthew 5, Jesus said, you are the light of the world.

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

First of all, how do we become lights to the world? I don't have time this morning to explore the entire context of the sermon, but Jesus is talking about citizens of the kingdom, of the kingdom of God, of the kingdom of heaven.

[9 : 44] How does one become a citizen of the kingdom? Elsewhere, Jesus says, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

So to become a light of the world first requires a true conversion when a sinner is made alive together by the Spirit and that person humbles himself before the cross of Christ for salvation.

So, the first thing we should see is that this light that emanates from us is not a self-generating light. It is the light of Christ.

It's His light who is in us. To be a light of the world is to radiate Christ, to radiate His light.

It is to let Him shine through us, if you will. It is to avoid hindering that light or hiding that light. And what that means is we're conforming to His image.

[10 : 47] We are following His teachings, His examples, as His disciples. We are living as He taught us to live. We are acting as He taught us to act.

We are treating people as He taught us to treat people. And when we do, the light shines. And then what happens? Others may see our good works and give glory to whom?

Not us, but glory to God. Why God? Because they see us glorifying Him. They see Him through our good works, through that light that shines from us.

We are reflecting Him. We are reflecting His goodness, which leads others to do the same. As one Bible commentator has said, we do all things for God's glory when the excellence of God's attributes is made to shine forth by our actions so that men may see it.

God's attributes shine forth. Briefly, let's consider an example. How do we glorify God when we do something as mundane as eating?

[12 : 08] How do you glorify God in eating? I use that example because that's specifically what Paul talks about. Eating and drinking to the glory of God. Well, we begin by thanking God for that provision.

We thank Him for the food. Going back to our subject last week, we openly acknowledge that we could not have that food in front of us apart from His grace.

You didn't get that food on your own. God has provided it. We owe that meal to God and we should praise Him for it.

So, obviously, we can say that out loud. And we should say it out loud. We say it directly to Him in prayer. We chew each bite with thanksgiving in our hearts.

Never taking one morsel for granted because God could take that next morsel away. Furthermore, we don't complain, we don't lament that we're eating spam from a can while we know others are having prime rib for dinner.

[13 : 14] No, if God gives us spam, we eat it with glad acceptance. Sincerely. Glad acceptance. It's a gift from God. And if we're tempted to complain, we should ask ourselves, don't you fear God?

How dare you complain when He is providing this meal for you and it's just the right meal for you? If you will, turn over to Titus chapter 2.

Titus chapter 2. As you glance at it, it may seem like a strange place to go, but I want to highlight just a couple of phrases in this chapter. Titus chapter 2.

Here, Paul is encouraging older men in the church to be examples to younger men. And he's encouraging older women to be examples to younger women. When he speaks to women in verse 4, he says, Train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands.

That the word of God may not be reviled. We'll come back to that. Jump down to verse 9.

[14 : 36] Here, Paul is speaking to slaves, or to bond servants. He says, Bond servants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior.

I like how the NIV translates this verse so that in every way they will make the teaching about God, our Savior, attractive. That the word of God may not be reviled.

That in every way they will make the teaching about God, our Savior, attractive. Now here, Paul is talking about perfectly ordinary things.

Loving your family, being self-controlled, working at home, being kind, being humble. Yet, even in these simple, ordinary things, we have the potential to make God and His word either attractive or ugly.

In other words, people are watching us. Specifically, they are watching Christians who in a sense claim to represent God.

[15 : 52] And our speech and our behavior have the power to draw them closer to God or to repel them further. This is kind of a heavy responsibility when you think about it because He's not talking about what you do for just a couple of hours on Sunday.

That's easy. That's not when the world is watching us. Right now, the world's at home. They're not in this sanctuary. They see us every other day of the week.

That's when they watch us. That's when they see us. They see us at work. They see us at the store. They see us at sporting events. They see us on vacations. To some degree, they see us driving in our cars.

These are the moments when we have opportunities to make God attractive or not. Jerry Bridges writes, Why isn't the gospel more attractive to unbelievers today?

Isn't one primary reason the fact that in the everyday affairs of life, we Christians are no different from the general mass of unbelievers? Sure, we don't get drunk or commit adultery, but we do buy and sell, work at our jobs, play at our various sports, or drive on the road in such a way as to glorify God and make his gospel attractive to those who see us?

[17 : 19] Now, those are some pretty convicting questions. Sadly, I'm not sure you can all together rule out drunkenness and adultery from what the world perceives, in any way, as typical Christian behavior.

In the book of Romans, Paul spends the first two and a half chapters explaining humanity's guilt and our condemnation before God.

Through the first chapter, he directs his comments at the Gentiles, and you can imagine any religious law-keeping Jew, you can imagine what they were thinking. They were thinking, of course, Gentiles are guilty.

They're pagans. They have no regard for God or his law, but what about the religious law-keeping Jews? And that's who Paul addresses in chapter 2.

And a strong argument could be made that the religious Jews are even more guilty than the pagan Gentiles. They had the law.

[18 : 25] They knew the commandments of God, and yet they still sinned against God. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 2.23 and 24.

You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law, for as it is written, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

He's citing Isaiah 52 there. When Israel and Judah continually disobeyed God in the Old Testament, God punished them by causing Gentile enemies to capture them and to enslave them.

And what do you suppose that did for the Gentiles' view of Israel's God? If they could so easily conquer God's people, they thought, how much is this God of Israel really worth?

He's proven to be nothing to us. And worse yet, these people don't even honor their God. They disobey their God.

[19 : 34] Now the church is in a similar position today. The world judges God and His gospel by us, by what they see us doing.

We are supposed to represent Him. We are supposed to reflect Him. We are supposed to shine His light. For better or worse, the world around us is making judgments about God based on what we say and do every day through all of those mundane activities.

So when that guy with the Jesus bumper sticker on the back of his car cuts someone off in traffic, what does that tell someone about God?

That guy might as well be blaspheming God as far as the person behind him is concerned. On the other hand, let me share with you a short story from Jerry Bridges.

I thought this was a very helpful illustration. He writes, Some months ago, my wife and I stopped at a bakery with what we thought was a two-for-the-price-of-one coupon.

[20 : 44] It was a small specialty bakery where a sales clerk waits on each customer. My wife selected two loaves of bread and handed the young lady our coupon. I'm sorry, the clerk said, but this coupon is good only at the new store we just opened.

The coupon didn't state this limitation, but that's what the bakery intended and they stuck to it, not good customer relations in my opinion, but that's beside the point of the story. My wife said, Well, just give me one loaf and she paid for it.

As the clerk entered the transaction in her cash register, she said to us, You people are so nice to me. What do you mean, I asked. People have been angry at me all day over this coupon deal, she replied, and you didn't get angry.

That's it. That's the whole story. Now, I agree with Bridges. That's pretty lousy customer service, and I'd be a little perturbed by it myself, but his wife responded in the most God-glorifying way she could have.

And you know, it was a remarkably simple gesture, but she didn't get angry. She didn't show her frustration, though she may have felt it. She didn't express it. Instead, she just let it go.

[22 : 04] And so the contrast between her response and every other customer that day did not go unnoticed by the clerk. She stood out, kind of like a light in darkness, and she was very thankful.

And I think we can all understand why that clerk would have been thankful. Ultimately, Jerry Bridges' wife reflected Christ at that moment. In 1 Peter 2, we're told, for this is a gracious thing.

When, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure?

But if when you do good and suffer for it, you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this, you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow his steps.

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

[23 : 17] Now, obviously, suffering persecution and not having your buy one, get one free coupon honored are two very different things.

But what are the chances we could graciously suffer real persecution for our faith if we fly off the handle every time we have a bad customer service experience? That really does say something about our character, doesn't it?

More to the point, if we can't be gracious in these kinds of seemingly trivial activities, interactions with people, what are people going to think about Christ, whom we claim to follow?

Bridges says, what should be my aim in such a situation? Should it be to glorify God or to vent my disappointment and displeasure at the bakery because of their promotional mistake?

I'm not dealing in trivialities here. Events like these make up most of our existence. Life is largely a mosaic of little things, routine events, everyday duties, and ordinary conversations.

[24 : 31] How we conduct ourselves in these circumstances determines largely whether we glorify God in our lives. Excellent point.

Most of our lives are lived in these small, ordinary moments. That's when we do or do not reflect the glory of God.

And frankly, that's when it matters the most because that's when we're interacting with the world whom we are to be lights to. Last week, I spoke about depending on God.

And this is a significant area where we apply that lesson. We need Him to avoid that temptation, to essentially glorify ourselves rather than Him.

And let me show you what I mean. I've quoted from 1 Corinthians 10. Let me read a bit more of this, verses 31 through 33. Paul says, So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

[25 : 36] Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God 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.

We see two very important principles here and they're closely connected to one another. Again, our primary aim is to glorify God.

That's the first lesson. And second, we strive to do good for others. Strive to do good for others. Regarding this passage, Matthew Henry says, This is the fundamental principle of practical godliness.

The great end of all practical religion must direct us where particular and express rules are wanting. Nothing must be done against the glory of God and the good of our neighbors.

Charles Hodge wrote something similar. He said, The first great principle of Christian conduct is to promote the glory of God. The second is to avoid giving offense or causing men to sin.

[26 : 47] In other words, love to God and love to men should govern all our conduct. You notice how self is not in that equation. It can't be.

Why is this? Why love for God and love for men? Why are these two things so closely connected? According to Paul, we try to please everyone in everything we do not to be popular, not to be well-liked.

Paul says, not seeking my own advantage. No, our concern is God's concern. Our concern is His glory. Our concern is the salvation of souls.

Paul says, glorify God and give no offense so that others may be saved. Let people see the glory and the goodness of God in all that you do.

Then, if God is willing, they may be drawn to that good and great God and be saved. So we can safely disregard that somewhat legalist mindset that wants us to, you know, we want to read explicit commands of Scripture and just follow the rules to a T.

[28 : 06] Do X, Y, and Z. You see, we need some wisdom here. For example, I can't tell you that, say, drinking a beer is always immoral, but I can think of scenarios where it would be unwise and unloving to do that.

Can't you? Let's say you're out to eat with a friend who has struggled with alcohol addiction throughout his life. Would it be wise, in that case, to order a beer with your meal?

Probably not. That could easily be an offense to your friend. It might tempt him to sin. I don't have time to expound upon the issues Paul was addressing here in his first letter to the Corinthians, but let me read the fuller passage in chapter 10.

He says, all things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful, but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.

Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. For the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. 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.

[29 : 31] 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. I do not mean your conscience, but his.

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?

whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do to the glory of God. And so on.

In short, as long as we're not committing sin ourselves, Paul wants us to be more concerned about the conscience of others than our own. Now, it may not be a sin to order that beer with your meal, but will your friend be offended?

What will someone else think? Will it cause someone to stumble? Will it poorly reflect the glory of God in you?

[30 : 36] If so, abstain. And what are we generally tempted to argue at this point? Well, ethically, biblically, morally, I'm right.

There's nothing wrong with that beer. Why should I have to abstain? My friend has the problem, not me. Those are some of the arguments made evidently to Paul in 1 Corinthians as well as Romans.

Jesus taught, whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. In another place, in John 12, 24, he adds, truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. What better way to glorify God than to bear much spiritual fruit? But we can't bear spiritual fruit unless that grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies.

We can't bear fruit without dying to self. this is a fundamental principle of Christian discipleship. If you want to follow Christ, take up your cross.

[32 : 01] When we're tempted to get angry at the store clerk for not honoring our two-for-one coupon, who are we glorifying? Are we glorifying God?

No. If we make a big fuss about it, we're glorifying ourselves. When we order that beer without any regard for our alcoholic friend, who are we glorifying?

It isn't God. He must increase, but we must decrease. In a sense, we need to remove ourselves from these situations.

Never mind what we want. Never mind what we think is fair or right, even if it might be fair or right in some cases. Instead, we should ask ourselves, what will honor God?

What will make Him in His gospel most attractive? And to be clear, we're not talking about compromising the truth in any way. but what can we do to make God and His gospel more attractive?

[33 : 13] Now, to be candid, not that I really need to say this, but this is always easier said than done, pride is our default position. Naturally, we don't want to decrease, so God's glory may increase.

Plus, in many of these seemingly trivial moments, we think to ourselves, no one will really know I'm a Christian. Not as though I'm carrying my Bible around with me.

So, if I express my frustration with the store clerk or I cut someone off in traffic, no harm done, right? No one will know. This doesn't reflect on God. Well, first of all, you are still an image bearer of God, so keep that in mind.

But let's ask the opposite question. What good has been done? God is not glorified. Our neighbors are not helped.

They're not edified. The gospel has not been made more attractive, and we are not fulfilling our God-given calling to bear the fruit of the Spirit, which is love and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and self-control.

[34 : 30] Self-control is a tough one. especially in moments of frustration. Yes, this is easier said than done, but again, this is an area where we must totally, completely depend upon God.

In John 15, Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

That's total dependence. That's complete dependence. We're just spinning our wheels. If we think we can glorify God and lead others to glorify God all on our own.

Listen to what Peter says in 1 Peter 4, verses 10 and 11. as each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.

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.

[35 : 42] to him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. We are stewards of God's grace. So if we speak, we should speak as one who is speaking God's word, not our own words, God's word.

If we serve, we serve by the strength that God gives us, not by our own strength. In short, we rely on God to glorify God.

Now I think I've mentioned this in the past, but years ago there was a video that circulated on social media. It's of an older man trying to step onto an escalator.

I don't know if it was his first time or not. The gentleman goes to step onto the escalator and he's holding on to the moving rails he puts one foot on and up it starts to go and he can't figure out how to get that second foot on and so he ends up completely backwards with his head down and he's trying to flip around and pull himself up.

Meanwhile, the escalator keeps going and eventually he gets himself turned around about halfway up and every time I've seen that I've always thought that is the most accurate illustration of sanctification I have ever seen.

[37 : 07] We're trying to move upward. We're trying to grow. We're trying to become better disciplined and more faithful. We're trying to become more fruitful but we fail.

We fall. We get annoyed at the store clerk. We disregard our friend and we order that beer at the restaurant. We complain at work.

We gossip about others and we're constantly catching ourselves saying I did it again. I did it again. Despite our best efforts we still somehow manage to cause others to revile the word of God.

We make them think that Christians are nothing but a bunch of hypocrites. We've all heard that before. And ultimately God is not glorified.

glorified. And yet we can look back over our lives and realize that despite ourselves somehow we have been moving upward.

[38 : 11] We look back and realize wait I'm halfway up the escalator. We have been growing. We have become a little more fruitful. How did that happen?

Well God is the escalator. He's moving his people in the right direction. again despite ourselves. We're fumbling around thinking we'll never make it.

And we find out God's been moving us up all along. So it stands to reason that we should stop trying to rely on ourselves. As we strive to glorify God in everything we do we must also depend on God for everything we do.

perhaps it goes without saying but depending on God implies trust in God. In another book by Jerry Bridges he says it often seems more difficult to trust God than to obey him.

The moral will of God given to us in the Bible is rational and reasonable. The circumstances in which we trust God often appear irrational and inexplicable.

[39 : 19] Commands are simple enough. Following them is another matter. What exactly does he mean? Well for example the Bible tells us to be patient. Right? That sounds easy enough but what happens when we actually have to show patience?

That's in a moment of frustration or stress. It can be very difficult and in those moments practice suddenly becomes very uncomfortable. Being patient is very difficult.

The thought of patience sounds rational and reasonable as Bridges says but when circumstances require us to be patient it's hard. It's hard to trust the wisdom of God.

It's hard to trust his promises and wait on the Lord and be patient. At the heart of glorifying God is trusting God.

Listen to what Paul says about Abraham in Romans 4. In hope he believed against hope that he should become the father of many nations. As he had been told so shall your offspring be.

[40 : 23] He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body which was as good as dead since he was about 100 years old or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

we depend on God for everything and by deliberately depending on him and consequently trusting him with everything with what we need with our futures everything we are ultimately glorifying him depending on him trusting in him we are glorifying him as far as I'm concerned one of the most God glorifying statements in all the Bible comes from Job he was suffering terribly and yet he could say though God slay me yet I will hope in him now he didn't curse the world he didn't curse God he may have had a few theological blind spots as we learn throughout the book but he was able to conduct himself in an oppressively God glorifying attractive way because number one he trusted

God's will for him and number two he was upheld by God's grace and he knew it Jerry Bridges says this by way of conclusion and I'll end here because we're out of time he says to fear God is by definition to aim for his glory if we're to be God fearing people then we must make it our aim to glorify him in all that we are and all that we do I say amen we're dismissed oh by the way we've got prayer guides if you didn't get one on your way in make sure you pick one up okay amen I I one that I

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