

A Theology for Everything **1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1**

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Before I begin this weekend's message, I want to let you know that due to next Sunday landing on Valentine's Day, we are going to take the weekend to talk about love and marriage and how to help your marriage thrive. To warm up the love engines, we also have included in the bulletin an insert with 50 practical ways to say "I love you" to your spouse. There will be much more on that next weekend.

Why are you here? Not here at church, but here generally. Why do you exist? What is your purpose? Behind the question is the assumption that there is a created purpose. The worldviews of evolution and secularism provide no purpose or meaning. We are momentary blips in an accidental world and our lives have absolutely no meaning. Few believe that because we instinctively know there is something we are supposed to do. The human search goes on all around us. If we just opened our eyes we would see that so much of what happens in the world is simply people searching for their purpose.

Think of the great cultural event occurring tonight, Super Bowl 44. The hype for a Super Bowl is incredible. It is the biggest sporting event in the American culture. To be the winning quarterback in a Super Bowl would be the highest achievement. Certainly this would be enough to satisfy the human heart, wouldn't it?

Tom Brady was interviewed on CBS's *60 Minutes* after winning his third Super Bowl a few years ago. Besides his football success, he has all the other things our world values: fame, money, dates with supermodels...and then he married one of them. He said, "Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what is.' I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think, '***, it's got to be more than this.' I mean this isn't, this can't be what it's all cracked up to be."

The interviewer asked, "What's the answer?"

"I wish I knew. I wish I knew," said Brady.

(http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/11/03/60minutes/main1008148_page3.shtml)

Like the rest of us, Tom Brady cannot escape his search to do what he was made for. We aren't made for Super Bowls or supermodels. Today's passage says as clearly as any words ever written why we exist: *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* (1 Corinthians 10:31)

This verse has an immediate context and a universal one. Paul takes the universal truth and applies it to the Corinthian issue. The Corinthian context is the rancor and lack of love among members of the church regarding areas of Christian liberty. All is to be done to God's glory including the freedom issues of eating and drinking. Paul clarifies what living for the glory of God in these contentious areas looks like:

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. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:32-11:1)

This is a summary of all that he has said and is a Christian manifesto for how we should live. I must not seek my own advantage. I must not be motivated by the advancement of myself. Rather, Paul says, my motivation is maximum kingdom impact (that many may be saved). One of my favorite commentators says it better than I can:

To "give offense," therefore, does not so much mean to "hurt someone's feelings" as to behave in such a way as to prevent someone else from hearing the gospel, or to alienate someone who is already a brother or sister. Hence 'freedom' does not mean that one does whatever one wishes with no regard for others; nor do the limits on freedom suggested here mean that another's conscience dictates conduct. To the contrary, everything is for God's glory and for the sake of the gospel, that is, for the good of all, which from Paul's point of view means that they might be saved (v. 33)... Eating and drinking are irrelevant; the one who insists on the right to eat and drink is thereby making it significant. On the other hand, because it is irrelevant, one can use such freedom to forbear when necessary for the sake of the gospel. (Gordon Fee, 1 Corinthians, p. 489.)

That is 1 Corinthians 10:31 in its immediate context; eating and drinking, stronger and weaker brother. All things to all men so that by all means some might be saved. It's the universal truth that I want to focus on. Listen carefully: *Whether you eat or drink, **or whatever you do**, do all to the glory of God.*

Why Should We Do "Whatever We Do" for God's Glory?

Let's begin this answer by making sure we know what God's glory is. There are two kinds of glory attributed to God.

Two kinds of God's glory

Visible Glory – The dazzling light of infinite worth

God is spirit. He's invisible in His essence. Yet, there is an effulgence of light that exudes from Him. It appears to us as "light" but it's not light like sunlight, it is spiritual light. This light is God's glory. It is a visual expression of His beauty, worth, and majesty.

This is what Jesus unveiled at His Transfiguration. Moses saw this glory on the mountain. Paul was blinded by it on the Damascus Road. It is a brightness of such utter beauty and power that it is both terrifying and captivating. Christians, someday we will see it. This is not the glory that Paul is referring to in verse 31.

The glory of God's honor, worth, and supremacy

God is glorious in His inherent worth. He is the ultimate being. There is no measure to His greatness. The glory of God is a statement of value. Since He is infinitely valuable, there is no measure to His worth. Do all that is consistent with the majesty of His character. Here is how our church's doctrinal statement says it:

The triune God is perfect, beautiful, and glorious in all of His attributes. These attributes include, but are not limited to: holiness, sovereignty, power, justice, wisdom, truth, faithfulness, mercy, goodness, and love. God's infinite worth demands that mankind ascribe ultimate glory to Him; and His immeasurable value means that nothing should be honored or treasured more than God Himself. (Bethel Church Doctrinal Statement)

God's visible glory is the expression of His inherent glory/worth. One simple illustration would be a price tag. When you go shopping, you see something desirable. Its desirability flows from some value you perceive in it. It could be a snow blower that would help you clear your driveway or a home improvement item. You see it; it appears valuable to you. What's next? How much does it cost? That price tag is a statement of worth. Like a price tag, God's visible glory goes everywhere He goes as a visual statement of the inherent glory/worth. This is why we cannot add to His glory. We can spend it, display it, praise it, but we cannot add to it. He has it infinitely. So what does it mean to "do whatever we do to the glory of God"?

My ultimate purpose in all I do is to honor God

The reason that it is so important that I do all I do for God's glory is that everything God does is for His glory.

"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. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. 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. (Isaiah 48:9-11)

God's glory is God's motivation for what He does. He wants to display it and spread it and receive the praise due Him as the glorious one. This is why He created the universe. This is why He created us, for His glory.

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, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." (Isaiah 43:6-7)

I want us all to look carefully at this. This is not just a verse. It is for each of us a personal purpose statement. We were made to do everything to God's glory. That's our purpose. It also is why when we don't, something feels like it's missing. Like something's broken. Think about Tom Brady. *I have all that I could want except none of these things satisfy.* Why is that? Tom Brady needs a relationship with God to relate everything toward God. So do we. Tom is not doing what he was created to do. Are you?

[Steve displays pictures of a Lamborghini, a fork a toothbrush and a snow shovel.] Tell me what these things were made for. When is a Lamborghini fulfilling its purpose? [When it is driving 75 mph down the Autobahn.] When is a fork happy? [When it is feeding someone.] When does a toothbrush sense significance? [When it is cleaning teeth.] What season does a snow shovel love? [Winter.] Fulfill your purpose and find your meaning. 1 Corinthians 10:31 tells us our created purpose - *do all to the glory of God.*

The human expression of our created purpose is worship

This is where a prevailing definition of worship is true but extremely unhelpful. Ask the average churchgoer, what is worship? A typical response would be, *What we do on Sunday morning (or at a Saturday night service).* I hope that is true. Do you see how this is true but incredibly small-minded? God has said that His purpose for *all* that we are and *all* that we do is for His glory. To limit that to the corporate gathering for an hour or so a week is to miss the joy of living all the other moments of life for the purpose for which God created us.

Worship is much broader than what most Christians think. In fact, look at 1 Corinthians 10:31. What is not included in "do all for the glory of God"? Nothing. It is a theology of

everything. Everything is made to reflect God. Everything is about God. Everything is theological. Worship then is integrating God's glory into EVERY aspect of life. Relating everything to God. Enjoying everything for His sake. *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* (Romans 11:36)

Sin can also be understood in these terms. Sin is anything that doesn't fulfill God's intended purpose. It is anything that doesn't bring Him glory. It is anything that doesn't prove Him to be the most desirable being in the universe. Romans 3:23 says, *For all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.* We have fallen short of our designed purpose to bring Him glory. Think of the regrets of this past week. The unkind word. The anger. The lustful gaze. Whatever. All of these fall short of God's good purpose and we are the ones who experience the anguish of NOT glorifying God. Sin is its own punishment.

How are we Restored to our Created Purpose?

Salvation restores a sinner to his created purpose – the glory of God

- *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* (2 Corinthians 4:6)
- *...so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.* (Ephesians 1:12-14)

Jesus died to save us from God's eternal wrath toward us but He also died to restore us to our created purpose which is to bring God glory in all we do.

Friend, might this not explain the search you are on? I was reminded this week of the human search for its Creator. A man who has been visiting our church for a few weeks set up a meeting and sat down in my office with moist eyes. "Why are we here? I need God in my life, what do I have to do?" I have rarely seen such openness to the gospel. He professed Christ as Savior within minutes of arriving. He knew his need.

You may be like him today. All of us are like Tom Brady, sensing instinctively and spiritually that something's gone terribly wrong. Something is missing. That something is a person, God, and a relationship with Him through faith in His Son Jesus and what He did by dying on the cross. Search no more. Turn from all that spiritually corrupts and believe in what Jesus did for you. Still the question remains:

How Do I Do Something to the Glory of God?

His way

God is honored when we do things the way He wants them to be done. How do we know how He wants us to live? God's Word. The Bible. His Word is His will. It is never God's will for us to disobey Him. If you are wondering how to bring some area of your life online with God's glory, make sure that you are fulfilling what He has said about it.

His goals

We honor God when we make His priorities higher than our own. This is Paul's point in verse 33. He doesn't seek his own advantage but whatever would be advantageous to God's goals, namely, "that they may be saved." He oriented his personal preferences around what's best for the kingdom of God. Jesus said, *Seek first the kingdom of God* (Matthew 6:33). In Philippians 3:7 Paul said, *whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ*. To live to God's glory is to ask, *What is required of me to accomplish God's goals in the world, in my life, in my family, in my church?* A godly man or woman then sacrifices so that God's goals are accomplished.

This is what sends missionaries around the world. This is what finds ministries. This is why God's people give so much time and effort. We want what God wants and everything is submitted to His goals. He is honored when we do.

His pleasures

Would you agree that eating and drinking are pleasurable activities? With the exception of liver and beets, I would say yes. How do we enjoy God's good pleasures on earth to His glory? All holy pleasures are actually expressions of God's glory to us. God gave us senses that correlate perfectly with the pleasures this world has to offer. We taste and touch and hear and see and smell. Our senses create happiness and wonder in us.

We bring glory to God when we take the excitement the pleasure creates and turn it into praise to God. This praise may be thanksgiving, Thank you God for this good pleasure. It may be something about God the pleasure communicates; Psalm 19 - the heavens declare the glory of God. Seeing the heavens is a theological experience that I can spiritually understand and praise Him for. God, you are big. Beautiful. Awesome. Wonderful. Amazingly brilliant to create. Whatever.

Here's the key. When we experience pleasure like an atheist, we experience it for its own sake and don't bring God into the experience. Don't be an atheist with pleasure, be a theist. Give God glory by enjoying the pleasure for God's sake. C.S. Lewis said, "Praise is joy's appointed consummation." We instinctively want to praise in the experience of pleasure. Don't praise the artist or the poet or the lover; praise God for them! He is glorified when we do.

His person

Finally, we glorify God when we live for Him NOT for what He can do for us. The first commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our hearts. We love Him for Him. When someone feigns interest in us or is nice to us but we sense an ulterior motive, we don't like that. We feel used. We feel played. How often God must feel that way. We want the blessings but not the Blessor. Our interest in God is primarily what God can do for us.

If God never did a thing for us, He would still be worthy of all our love and all our lives. Love Him for Him. Serve Him purely for the glory and wonder of who He is. He delights in us when we do.

His way. His goals. His pleasures. His person. *Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.*

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