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Does It Honor God?



QUESTION 1:

What's the greatest honor you or someone you know has received?

THE POINT

God's voice always leads us to glorify Him and accomplish His purposes.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

When we gaze at a piece of art, we don't marvel over the canvas. We don't get excited about a particular shade of blue in the painting. We marvel over the artist.

Take the sculpture David by Michelangelo. It's considered one of the finest sculptures in all the world. But no one walks into the La Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze in Florence, Italy, and marvels over how white the marble is. While it is an exceptional piece of white marble, everyone's amazement is drawn to what Michelangelo did with it. We marvel how a 26-year-old young man

painstakingly chiseled such incredible detail in marble. And at almost 17 feet tall, this was no weekend project. Michelangelo worked for two years on his sculpture.

We don't glory in the sculpture; we glory in the sculptor. It's not simply David; it's Michelangelo's David. We can't look at this sculpture and not think of Michelangelo. As God's creation, our lives are to point to the glory of our Creator. God calls us to live for His glory—and it's in His glory we find our greatest purpose.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

JOHN 17:1-3

¹Jesus spoke these things, looked up to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you,² since you gave him authority over all people, so that he may give eternal life to everyone you have given him.³ This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ.”

This passage comes at the end of Jesus’s upper room discourse that began in John 13. The Passover meal was over, and Judas had departed to betray Him. Jesus “looked up to heaven,” which was the traditional way to pray. People typically prayed with their eyes open, while looking heavenward. Jesus prayed to His “Father,” which was His preferred term for God when He prayed. In the model prayer, Jesus taught us to call upon God as a loving Father who is generous and pleased to answer us (Matt. 6:9-13; 7:7-11).

Jesus noted that “the hour has come.” He was keenly aware of divine timing. He didn’t ask God for anything too soon or too late, but exactly in God’s perfect time. Jesus prayed that God would glorify the Son. To some, this might appear to be self-centered. However, it’s an extremely God-centered request. The way the Father was going to glorify the Son was to have Him crucified. It would be on the

cross that Jesus would bring the greatest glory to His Father. By praying for His time on the cross to come, Jesus was accepting His Father’s will, even though it meant excruciating torture on a cross.

The word “glorify” can also mean “magnify” or “lift up.” Jesus was asking His Father to lift Him up on a cross so people could take a close look at Jesus and come away with a higher view of God the Father. Within that prayer is something we should pray as well: “God, let people take a close look at my life, particularly when I am suffering, so they be drawn to glorify You.”

QUESTION 2:

How does honoring God with our lives help lead others to Christ?

Jesus prayed that His Father would glorify Him on the cross so He could provide life to everyone His Father had given to Him. Jesus's prayer was unselfish. He prayed that by going to the cross, He would glorify His Father and bring eternal life to those who believe.

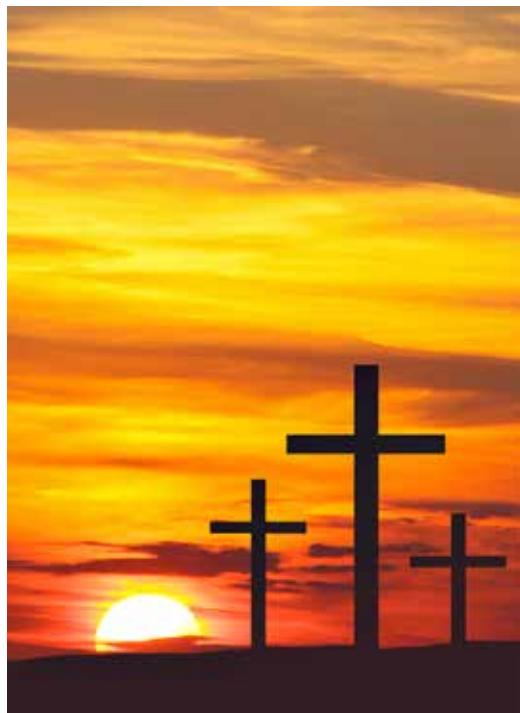
Jesus explained what eternal life is. It involves knowing "the only true God" and Jesus Christ, who the Father sent. God is not one of many. He alone is God. He is not a fake God, propagated by false prophets and deceivers. There is only one true God and only one God who can give eternal life. Eternal life doesn't merely describe the length of your life, when you live forever in with Christ in His glory; it describes the quality of your life, as you live

in relationship with God the Father and God the Son. Eternal life doesn't come from a casual or intellectual relationship, but from a bond that is intimate and loving. Eternal life begins the moment you become a Christian. The quality of our lives as Christians ought to be dramatically superior to the life lived by unbelievers. This isn't because Christians earn more money, live in nicer houses, or drive fancier cars. It's because, when we abide in Christ, His joy fills us to overflowing (John 15:11) and His peace guards our hearts and minds (Phil. 4:6). Eternal life means we live each day with a keen awareness of our close relationship with God.

JOHN 17:4-5

**⁴ “I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do.
⁵ Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed.”**

Jesus declared He had glorified His Father. He did so by "completing the work you gave me to do." Jesus's assignment wasn't easy. He spoke to large crowds, He healed countless people, He trained His disciples, and He traveled everywhere by foot. He faced constant criticism and opposition. Nevertheless, the climax of His work was when He died on a cross. Had He quit before going to the cross, His previous efforts would



have been for nothing. For His work to glorify His Father, He had to complete it.

God is not glorified merely by our starting a work or by working hard for a while. He is glorified when we complete the work He gives us to do. The apostle Paul urged the Galatians, “Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don’t give up” (Gal. 6:9). At times, our obedience to God’s will can be costly. We may face opposition. We may endure loss. In such cases, we may be tempted to quit in discouragement. It can be tempting to leave a challenging assignment for one that is less demanding. If we leave before we’ve finished the work God had for us, we’ve only partly obeyed, and partial obedience is disobedience.

I was with my father when a man approached him and told how, many years before, God had called him to be a pastor. However, during his first pastorate, some church members had treated him terribly. He had resigned as pastor and vowed never to be a pastor again. Eventually, he had taken the course, *Experiencing God*, and God had reminded him that He had never rescinded His call on the man’s life. In tears, the man told my father, “I’m a pastor again!” He was now determined to complete what God had begun in his life.

Jesus prayed that, as a result of the completion of the work the Father had given Him, He would be glorified with the same glory He enjoyed before the world began. Jesus didn’t consider His exalted position as something to be grasped. Instead, He emptied Himself and became a man, dying on a cross (Phil. 2:5-11). As Jesus completed His work on earth, He looked forward to returning to the Father and sharing in His glory once more. When we finish the work God gave us, God receives glory, and we enjoy fellowship with our Lord.

QUESTION 3:

What are some obstacles that keep us from prioritizing God’s work?



JOHN 17:6-9

⁶ “I have revealed your name to the people you gave me from the world. They were yours, you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, ⁸ because I have given them the words you gave me. They have received them and have known for certain that I came from you. They have believed that you sent me. ⁹ “I pray for them. I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they are yours.”

In verse 6, Jesus began praying for His disciples. He had revealed God's name to them. That is, He had taught them what God's character was like. He had done this through both His teaching and example. Jesus had prayed all night before selecting His disciples (Luke 6:12-13), and now He was praying for them again. Because Jesus knew His Father had given Him these men, He had been diligent in teaching them about God's character and leading them into their own personal relationship with God.

QUESTION 4:

Who are some people God has used to disciple you?

Jesus recognized that His disciples had come from the world. That's why they often acted like the world. When James and John asked Jesus for positions of honor, they were acting the way the world does, coveting what the world treasures (Mark 10:35-37). In the process of discipling these men, Jesus gave the disciples the words God had given, and

now He declared that "they have kept your word." The disciples knew that everything Jesus had given them had come from the Father. How wonderful it is when people can tell that your words and beliefs come from God! The disciples had realized this because what Jesus said was always affirmed in Scripture, and those words were backed with God's power.

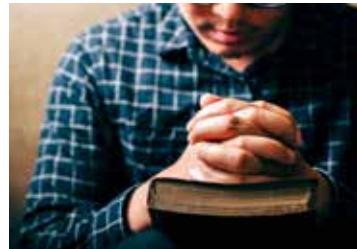
Jesus prayed for those His Father had given to Him. He knew they would be scattered by fear into the night. He foresaw that Peter would deny knowing Him. Satan would do everything he could to destroy the church before it was successfully launched. There is tremendous comfort for believers in knowing that Christ continues to intercede for us even today. We can also honor God as we intercede for others and disciple them as Jesus discipled His followers.

QUESTION 5:

How can our group help one another better disciple others?

GLORIFYING GOD

Choose the image below that best reflects how you take joy in glorifying God. Then tell why you chose the image you did and write a prayer of praise giving glory to God.



My Prayer:

“*He must increase, but I must decrease.*”

JOHN THE BAPTIST

LIVE IT OUT

God's voice always leads us to glorify Him and accomplish His purposes. How will this truth impact your life? Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **List.** Make a list of things you know God has told you to do. Mark a large F beside each one you have finished. Mark a U beside those yet unfinished. Then pray and ask God for direction in completing those things.
- ▶ **Intercede.** Pray for others. Pray for them by name, asking God to work in their lives in a way that brings glory to God.
- ▶ **Disciple.** You can honor God as you disciple and lead others to a deeper walk with Christ. Ask God to lead you to the individual you can disciple. Let God use you for His glory in the life of another.

Just like Michelangelo's David, each of us are masterpieces being worked on by none other than the God of heaven. Let's make sure we are submitting to God's good work and bringing glory to Him.