

Newsletter Teaching for 8-29-07

Whose Glory Is It?

Whose glory? This question does not seem hard to answer. *Of course, all we do is for the glory of God*, we so quickly reply. As believers, we readily assent to the principle of Isaiah 48:11—that God will not give His glory to another.

But assenting to that truth is one thing. To live it out in our lives is quite another.

Our Holy God jealously guards His glory, so this is a question that we must consider. Page through a Christian magazines and look closely at the advertising. Or check out a few websites of churches or Christian ministries. At first glance, can you tell whose glory is really at stake? How often do we see billboards or advertisements with large, flashy pictures of speakers or “Christian celebrities”? When you read through the biographical sketch of a ministry leader, do you sense an inflated listing of accomplishments accompanied by claims of special anointing and blessing?

If every picture, biography or ministry claim were transformed into arrows, where would they point? Would you see the attention directed to the Lord Jesus Christ, or to that particular speaker or ministry?

Our tendency is to elevate Christian speakers and musicians to “rock star” status. We flock to hear them, snatch up their books or CDs, and stand in long lines for an autograph. But where does the arrow point?

Paul wrote to the church in Rome: *For everything comes from him; everything exists by his power and is intended for his glory. To him be glory evermore. Amen* (Romans 11:36). He again wrote to the church in Corinth: *Whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, you must do all for the glory of God* (1 Cor. 10:31). If everything comes from God and all we do is truly for His glory, then where should the arrow point?

Subtle Motivations

To honestly answer these questions requires that we allow the Spirit of God to examine the deepest motivations of our hearts. Jeremiah reminds us that *the human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I know! I, the LORD, search all hearts and examine secret motives...* (Jeremiah 17:9).

Deep down, do you have a longing for people to recognize you? To esteem you? Do you seek people’s approval? Do you desire that people seek you out for advice or a prayer of blessing? Please understand, as we ask these questions—we are asking them of ourselves and of our own ministry. These are hard questions!

Are you willing to suffer humiliation, be forgotten, or be wronged in order that Jesus Christ may be glorified? Are you eager that others might increase while you decrease? If your name was never mentioned in connection with success in ministry, would you be

disappointed to not be recognized? What if your fervent prayer on behalf of your church or community was never acknowledged or appreciated? Would you be thrilled just at the privilege and opportunity to enter into the Lord's presence to seek Him on behalf of others?

Attentive Listening

To truly walk in humility, we must listen attentively to the voice of the Spirit of God. We must be willing to let the Lord point out when we have stolen God's glory.

Of course, it's easy to see the fault in others. But how do you present yourself in your conversations with friends, co-workers, or acquaintances? Do you drop hints at your "greatness," hoping that they will think approvingly of your ministry efforts? Again, we recognize these are hard questions about our heart motivations.

Perhaps some of these questions are grating on you—or you are feeling a bit offended. Here is a saying that may really rankle you: *God offends the mind to reveal the heart.* Being offended at the questions may reveal hidden motivations in our own hearts.

Humble Confession

We all have a natural tendency to gravitate toward having the arrows point to ourselves. As much as we may hate to admit it, it is the way of the flesh. The secret is to humbly submit ourselves to the holy gaze of our loving God, confessing the secret longings of our hearts to steal His glory.

If you're willing to admit it, you're not alone. Together, we must ask the Lord to empower us to live out Paul's admonition in Philippians 1:11: *May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.*

Let's pray this together: *Father, give us the grace to live so that You and You alone will be glorified through our lives and ministries. Forgive us for the ways that we have directed people to ourselves instead of You. Work in us a measure of Your grace, that we might live our lives to bring "much glory and praise" to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.*