

To Glorify God (Magnification)

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[0 : 00] Value this time in your life, kids. It's a time of your life when you still have your choices and it goes by so fast. When you're a teenager, you think you can do anything and you do.

Your 20s are just a blur. In your 30s, you have a family, make a little money. Think to yourself, what happened to my 20s? In your 40s, you grow a little pot belly and another chin.

The music starts to get too loud and one of your girlfriends from high school becomes a grandmother. In your 50s, you have a minor surgery. You'll call it a procedure, but it's still surgery. In your 60s, you'll have a major surgery. The music is still too loud, but it doesn't matter because you can't hear it anyway. In your 70s, you and the wife will retire to Fort Lauderdale, start eating lunch at 10am, dinner at 2pm and breakfast the night before.

You'll spend most of your time wandering around shopping malls looking for the ultimate soft serve yogurt and muttering, how come the kids don't call? How come the kids don't call?

[1 : 07] In your 80s, you'll have a major stroke and end up babbling to some Jamaican nurse who your wife can't stand but whom you call mama. Any questions? That's Billy Crystal's speech to his child's school class in the 1991 Western comedy film City Slickers.

Billy Crystal, he plays a guy named Mitch. He hits 39 years of age and he has a midlife crisis.

Suddenly, he realises that his life isn't what he thought it would be.

It's not so great. The world in which he lives is a mess. And he starts asking the question, what's the point of it all? What's the point of life? What is the purpose of life?

And so he and a few mates go on a cowboy camping holiday to rediscover their masculinity and to find the purpose of life.

And he finds it by helping a cow give birth to a calf. It's a feel-good, occasionally funny, but empty movie in the end.

[2 : 21] But it does raise questions. The sort of questions that people are asking, the sort of questions that teenagers and children are asking, the sort of questions that retirees are asking, the sort of questions that we ask, what is it all for?

It's not about you. That's how Rick Warren begins his book, The Purpose Driven Life. It's not about you.

And he goes on to say, the purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, and even your wildest dreams and ambitions.

If you want to know why you were placed in this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose.

The atheist and philosopher Bertrand Russell said, if God doesn't exist, which he didn't believe God existed, then what is the purpose of life is a question that has no sense at all.

[3 : 47] And the Bible is clear on the purpose of life. It's not about me. It is, in fact, about him. Colossians 1.15, The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

For in him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. All things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning of the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

So you have a purpose. This church has a purpose because God has a purpose. And there are five very specific but interacting purposes that God has for your life and my life and our life together.

And we're going to look at each one of those things, as Deb indicated, over the next five weeks in this Our Vision series. And we begin with magnification. We exist for the glory of God.

[5 : 04] This is the only one of the five purposes that is not a means to an end. This is the end. Magnification is the goal of all things, the glory of God.

Now, magnification, or to magnify, is used in a limited way in our day. It normally refers to making something appear larger than it actually is, like through a lens of a microscope or something like that, or a telescope.

Or through a telescope, something that's small, making it look bigger. Or in another way, it's used in common language to increase or to exaggerate the importance of something or the effect of something.

For instance, wow, you know, you had your issues before you went to prison, but man, prison really magnified them. That kind of an idea. Now, the original use of the word magnify, which comes from the Latin word magnus, which means great, is to praise highly or to glorify.

Its supreme use, in its original context, was in reference to God. Because God is great. Because God is magnus, he is worthy of being magnified.

[6 : 40] And this is, in fact, what we see in Isaiah 6, which was just read out to us. So go to Isaiah 6. I'm going to linger there for a bit. Get your Bibles out. If you haven't got a Bible, stick your hand up.

We'll get one to you real quick. Isaiah 6. We see two things in the verses that were read out to us that make God worthy of being magnified.

God is great, firstly, and God is gracious, secondly. And we get seven glimpses of the greatness of God in the first four verses.

I'm going to travel across these real quick, even though I'd love to linger longer in them. But firstly, it says God is alive. Notice, In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sit on the throne.

King Uzziah was the longest serving monarch at the time. He was the greatest, most powerful man in the world at the time. And it says, King Uzziah is dead, but in the year that he died, God is alive.

[7 : 45] He continues to live. Psalm 90 verse 2 says, Before the mountains were born or brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

From infinite that direction to infinite that direction, no ending, no ending. You are God. You are alive. So this God was the living God when the universe was banged into existence as he spoke it into existence.

He was the living God when the Great Wall of China was built over a very long period of time. He

was the living God when in 1966, Time magazine put a title on its cover that said, God is dead.

He is alive. He was alive then. Is he alive today? And he will be living still 10 trillion ages from now.

There is not a single head of state in the entire world, not a single person sitting on the throne who will be ruling in 90 years.

And in a brief 120 years, this planet is going to be populated by more than 10 billion brand new people and all 7.7 billion of us today, alive today, will vanish off the face of the earth like King Uzziah.

[9 : 08] But not God. He never had a beginning and therefore he depends on nothing for his existence. He always has been and always will be alive.

Second glimpse we get here is that God is authoritative. Verse 2, I saw the Lord seated on a throne. That's his vision. He sees this God on a throne.

You see, no vision of heaven. Read the Bible. There's no vision of heaven where you ever catch a glimpse of God cooking a meal. He's never out cutting the grass or shining shoes or filling out forms or loading a truck.

He sits. He sits on his throne. The throne. The throne is his right to rule. You see, we do not give God authority over our lives.

He has authority over our lives whether we surrender to it or not. I think few things are more humbling. Few things give us that sense of the raw majesty of God as the truth of God is utterly authoritative.

[10 : 24] After him, there is no appeal. And that's the third glimpse. You see, we see this God is not just has authority, but he has all authority, has all power.

The throne of his authority is not one amongst many thrones. I saw the Lord seated on a throne high and exalted.

That God's throne is higher than every other throne, every other authority, every other power signifies that God's superior power to exercise his authority over all things.

There is no opposing authority that can nullify the decrees of God. What he promises, what he declares cannot be undone. What he purposes, he accomplishes.

As God says a little later in Isaiah 46.10, I make known the beginning from the end, from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.

[11 : 34] I say, my purpose will stand and I will do all that I please. To be gripped by the all-powerful sovereignty of God is either marvelous because he is for you or it is terrifying because he is against you.

Indifference to it, just indifference to it means that you have not seen it. You have not seen him for who he is. The sovereign authority of the living God is a refuge full of joy and power for those who are his.

His promise to you can never be nullified, never be overturned. Fourthly, we see that this God is magnificent. It says, I saw the Lord sitting on his throne high and exalted and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Now, royal weddings are a bit of a rage lately. Well, at least one anyway. You know, Harry and Megan, the other ones haven't been rated as highly. But, you may remember if you're as old as I am or maybe even seen the pictures of the wedding dress when Harry's mum was married, Diana, Princess of Wales, married to Charlie back in 1981.

And I remember as a young lad at that point being in a room watching this wedding, not sure why, but being told to stay up and I remember in the moment that she hopped out of the carriage and started walking up the stairs into St. Paul's Cathedral, the only thing I remember is this dress just kept going on and on and on and on and the women in the room gasping at this dress, the train of her robe was eight metres long.

[13 : 45] It sort of like filled the steps at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. So what would it mean if the train filled the aisle and covered the seats and the choir loft and the pulpit and it wasn't, it was just one piece of cloth just...

You see, that God's robe fills the entire temple is a splendour moment. God is incomparable in His splendour.

The fullness of God's splendour shows itself in millions and billions of ways. His magnificence spills over into excessive creative beauty.

It's what we see in the wonder of all of creation. Everything in the universe from the tiniest atom to the depths of the ocean where there is fish with headlights and big teeth and you go, why are they there?

No one knows. Except it's God saying, there you go. That is where you exist.

[14 : 56] The furthest reach of the... It just displays the magnificence of His character. And fifthly, we get a glimpse of this God is revered. Above Him were seraphs, each with six wings.

With two wings, they were covering their faces. With two, they covered their feet. With two, they were flying. Now, no one really knows from the rest of the Bible what these strange six-wing creatures with feet and eyes and intelligence are.

There's some kind of an angel. One thing is for sure, given the grandeur of this scene in the heavenly realms and the power of the angelic hosts, it is best for us not to picture the angelic hosts as chubby little babies with wings fluttering around the throne of God.

According to verse four, when one of them speaks, the foundations of the temple shake. Wind this sound system up as far as it goes, and I can't get this building to shake.

These are not chubby little babies with wings. There are no puny or silly little creatures in heaven, only magnificent ones. And the point is, not even they, not even these seraphs can look upon God, nor do they feel worthy even to leave their feet exposed in His presence.

[16 : 29] One of my kids is in kids' church this morning with no shoes on. Totally fine. In the presence of God, you cover them up. You see, great and good as they are untainted by human sin, they revere their maker in great humility.

You see, when one of these seraphs an angel appears before a human being in the Bible, they normally begin dialogue with the human being with fear not.

Because that's exactly the human response when you're confronted with one of them. Fear and trembling, but angels themselves hide in holy fear and reverence in the presence of God.

so far greater than they is He. Six, God is holy.

Verse three, and they were calling to one another. And let me try to pick it up here. Holy, holy, holy, holy is the Lord almighty.

[17:49] The whole earth is full of His glory. Multiply that billions of times until the thresholds shake. You see, the possibility of language to carry the meaning of God eventually runs out and holy is as far as you can go.

The word holy carries us to the brink and from there the experience of God is beyond words. You see, the reason I say that is that every effort to define the holiness of God ultimately winds up by saying God is holy means God is holy.

Means God is God. You see, the word holy means to cut or to separate from. And a holy thing in our terms is cut off from or separated from common use.

That's what it means. You separate from common use, set it aside, it becomes a holy thing. Earthly things and persons are holy as they are distinct from the world and devoted to God.

But what happens if that definition is applied to God Himself? from what can you separate God to make Him holy? You see, the very Godness of God means that He is separate from all that is not God.

[19:22] That's because God exists in a different way to us. We, His creatures, exist in a dependent, derived, finite, fragile way, but our God exists in an eternal, self-sustaining, necessary way.

I use the word necessary there in the sense that God does not have it in Him. It's not part of His nature to go out of existence.

in the same way that we do not have it in our nature to not go out of existence. We cannot naturally live forever.

God cannot naturally die. We all necessarily age and die because it is our present nature to do that. And so we ask the question, well, what is this short time span that I'm on earth is all about? We cannot do anything else but eventually die.

[20:41] One of my girls said recently in the last couple of weeks, I don't want to grow up and I want to stay a child forever. Well, good luck with that, I thought. It didn't work for Michael Jackson or most Aussie blokes, as it turns out.

Only God, only God necessarily continues forever unchanged. The God of the Bible needs no support system. God is one of a kind and in that sense he is utterly holy.

God has life in himself. He draws his unending energy from himself. His being and his character not determined by anything outside of himself.

He is absolute. Everything else derives from him. He does not derive his being from anything else.

He is incomparable. His holiness determines all that he is and he's determined by no one else.

Nothing else. You can call it his majesty. You can call it his divinity. You can call it his greatness.

You can call it his value. You can call it his worth. You can call it his magnificence. In the end, we sail up to the very of human language and it runs out.

[22:06] There may be so much more to know of this God but that is beyond our ability to express it. And so Habakkuk 2.20 says get to the edge.

The Lord is in his holy temple, the whole earth. Be silent before him. Just ah. We learn a seventh and a final thing about God.

God is glorious. Verse 3. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory. glory. We get to the edge and we go ah. And we would not know anything about this God and his holiness and his magnificence if he did not graciously reveal it to us.

See, God's glory is in fact the revealing of his holiness. God is glorious means that God's holiness, his divine being, his character has gone public.

[23:26] It means that he sent it viral. He's displayed it. He's made it clear. Romans 1 says the whole earth, God has revealed himself in what he's made.

And unless he reveals himself, we would not see him for who he is. But when he does, there is only one response.

Leviticus 10 verse 3, God says, among those who approach me, I will show myself holy. In the sight of all people, I will be honoured.

Or another word that can be changed with honoured there is I will be magnified. When I reveal my magnus, the response is magnification.

When God reveals his glory to his creatures, the response of his creatures is to give glory, to give praise, to give adoration, to magnify God. To magnify God is to respond to his revealing of his magnificence.

[24 : 33] We cannot glorify God without engaging with his glory. You see, God wants to be praised for his praiseworthiness, magnified for his greatness and his goodness.

He wants to be appreciated for who he is. And so God reveals his glory to people and to angels in a free and a radically generous way.

Then there is a response of adoration on the part of people and the angels where they give glory to God out of gratitude for what they have seen of God and received from him.

God's glory showing requires glory giving and this is at the heart of true fulfillment of God's creatures.

It brings joy to people as it does to God. God's glory revealing prompts glory giving and that is the purpose of why you were made.

[25 : 46] The New Testament writers declare that the public display of God's nature, his character, his power, his purpose, his grace, his glory, his magnus is now open to view for all peoples in the person and the work of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is, Jesus is the pinnacle of God's glory revealing. And what is amazing is this little bit in John's gospel that you read it, it's surrounded by a difficult text, but when you read this verse, you flip straight through it without noticing it, but let me just read it to you.

John 12 verse 41, he's just quoted the prophet Isaiah, and he says, Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him.

See what John says there? You'd flip straight through that. See what he says? Jesus is who Isaiah saw here in his vision in Isaiah 6.

Jesus radiates, he reflects, he mirrors, he displays the character, the purpose, the power, and the grace and the mercy of God. The magnificence of what went public in Jesus was the plan and the work of grace whereby he saves sinners.

[27 : 32] And so that's why our purpose statement says that we exist as a church because we treasure Jesus. Treasuring Jesus for God's glory and the joy of all peoples.

Now on one level it probably shocks us to think that God's goal is his glory, his goal of all things is his glory. If my goal in life was my glory, which without the work of God in our life, that's exactly the reason why we exist, we pursue our own glory, we call that egotism.

Most of us in the North Shore are really good at hiding our egotism or work really well at hiding our egotism, but it's there, the heartbeat of our lives, my glory all the time.

For God to pursue his glory, it doesn't point to divine ego, but in fact to divine love. For us it's self-centered, for him it's divine love.

God doing everything for his glory is the foundation of his love for us. God's commitment to his glory means love and life and forgiveness and eternal fame for those who live for his glory.

[28 : 52] His commitment to his glory is the foundation for his love for us. Did you note Isaiah's response, having seen God's glory in verse 5, what does he immediately do?

Wow, you're God and I'm not. Woe to me, I cried, I am ruined, for I'm a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.

You see, this is Isaiah, one of God's people and as sincere as his worship has been, Isaiah has not been a man whose heart has been in love with God.

His profession of faith has been orthodox but empty with little heart awareness of the grandeur of God. God, and as this awareness forms in Isaiah's mind, he blorts out the obvious conclusion, woe to me.

He's tracking along, God reveals his glory and he goes, whoa. And the very first words that are spoken by the prophet Isaiah in this enormous book of Isaiah is those words there.

[30 : 14] And for the first time in his life, he actually worships God. For the first time, he sees that he is typical of his generation whose faith was unthinking and glib.

Their mouths were not filled with worship but with flippant repetitions and self-justifying excuses. And now Isaiah sees himself because he sees God.

And something new is entering his heart. Humility. See, the most telling indicator that God's grace is renewing us is not when we say all the right things about his grace, but when we stop putting ourselves above others and even above God.

It's when he starts breaking our hearts. Where was the last time you lamented?

I mean really lamented over your sin. Then something wonderful happens.

[31 : 41] A seraph circling the throne of God, peels off from his flight path and he dives straight for Isaiah. He's holding a burning coal that he took from the altar with tongs.

He's not using the tongs because it's hot. He took this coal with tongs because he's handling a holy thing.

this thing, this coal belongs in the place of sacrifice and atonement and forgiveness. And with it, the seraph touches Isaiah's dirty mouth.

And it doesn't hurt him. It doesn't burn him. It actually heals him. The seraph says, your guilt is taken away and your sin is atoned for.

What we must see in the context of the whole Bible is that this burning coal symbolizes the finished work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. Jesus went to the place of sacrifice.

[32 : 55] He's dying. Love is the only power that can awaken dead people to God and awaken as he does. He comes to us today.

through the Holy Spirit and says again, your guilt is taken away, your sin is atoned for. Welcome into the overwhelming delight of my presence. And when the magnitude of that grace touches Isaiah, he is awakened to live for God.

Who am I going to send? Pick me, pick me. I now want to live for your glory. You see, at least one major purpose in God revealing who he is, his magnus, is so that we, like Isaiah, might experience his compassion, his mercy, his grace, and his forgiveness.

For us to effectively magnify God, it has to be so much more than certain external behaviors.

This is the warning of Isaiah the prophet and the people of God in Isaiah. God, if we're not careful, we can be like them, we can settle into a pattern of dutiful behavior where we fulfill our obligations to God, where we say the right things, orthodox faith.

[34 : 32] See, relationship with God can so easily become about duty and obligation and loyalty and lips. When we are settled into that position, we may even fulfill our duty at great personal cost.

We may even give more and sacrifice more, just like the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. And Jesus called them hypocrites.

He cursed them. He quoted Isaiah to them in Matthew 15. He says, these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

They worship me in vain. They magnify me in vain. Just like Isaiah before this encounter, lips that said the right things but a heart that wasn't in it.

What's missing for the Pharisees, the tax collectors? What's missing for Isaiah?

[35 : 37] The affections. genuine magnification is seeing God's glory and being moved in all of our life, mind and affections, lips and heart.

You see, genuine worship is based on the mind's perception of historical and biblical truth, the revelation of God's glory as he has spoken it. glory giving requires solid intellectual biblical truth. It is not the frenzied emotion, emotional product of manipulation or gimmickry. But friends, that's not our problem here at St.

Paul's. We're not in danger of emotionalism. We're not in danger of frenzied gimmickry. Far from it, in fact.

Our problem is more the understanding that there is no genuine worship where feelings for God are not quickened. That's our problem. The understanding that there is no genuine worship, no genuine magnification of God where feelings for God are not quickened.

[36 : 59] There is not true worship where the heart is far from God. The heart's approach to God happens in the quickening of our feelings for God.

Where feelings are dead, so is worship, so is magnification. You see, God wants us to love him according to Deuteronomy 6.5. He wants us to delight ourselves in him in Psalm 37.4.

He wants us to worship him with gladness according to Psalm 100. In fact, he condemns dutiful obedience where there is no gladness and no joy in him in Deuteronomy 28.4.

Now, Nat and I are marking 20 years of marriage at the end of January next year. Thank you. If I buy her flowers, that's not a big if, that's more likely when I buy her flowers, I must put that in my diary.

She, so imagine this, I buy her flowers and she is overjoyed and she thanks me. You know, first time in 20 years.

[38 : 17] No, it's not. No, it's not. Imagine if my response to her at that point is, well, don't mention it, it's actually my duty.

You know, 20 years and so on, it's what I'm required to do. I mean, I read it online, 20 years, you must get flowers. You know, I must do this, I must sacrifice my money and I must sacrifice my time to go to the floristry.

How do you think she would respond to that? It would insult her honor and the relationship. she is honored when I sacrifice and I give because it is my delight to do so.

And frankly, she can tell the difference. So here's the thing. If we are doing everything for the glory of God out of sense of duty, if it is a great sacrifice for us, if you struggle to gather for magnification, then it's quite possible that is revealing where your treasure truly is.

If it's a great sacrifice to do anything for the glory of God, it shows what we value more than God. When he is our greatest treasure, then choosing him over lesser things, that's not a sacrifice at all.

[39 : 57] And so friends, if you find yourself in that place at the moment where it's duty, you have not felt your affections for God rise at all as you've engaged with him in his word or in corporate worship at all, then don't be content with that.

we must do what Isaiah does here, we must gaze on his magnificence, gaze at, delight in his power, his perfection, his beauty, and his mercy, that's when our worship and our service of him will glorify him.

God is dishonored when all of our worship and our service of him is a duty. And if you find yourself right here in this moment thinking of intellectual biblical arguments to try and undo what I've just said, be wary, be cautious right now.

God desires that we see him, that we gaze on him regularly in his word, that we savor his greatness and his mercy and his forgiveness and his acceptance and serve him with all of our lives, with joy and with gladness and our lips and our hearts.

Our church's purpose statement deliberately connects God's glory and our joy together as one. we exist to treasure Jesus for God's glory and the joy of all peoples.

[41 : 47] You and I were made for the express purpose of magnifying God at all times, in all places, in every circumstance. And it is a delight to be able to do that Sunday by Sunday.

As Rachel said at the beginning, enjoying Jesus together, that's a delight. and can I say, this is a glimpse of what we're doing here this Sunday is a glimpse of what we were created and we were redeemed for.

This is what we will delight to do for all of eternity with the angels around the throne. More like the Habakkuk 2.

as we gaze at his throne. The arrogance of people who say, I can't wait to get to heaven so that I can give God the questions that I want him to answer.

No. You will see him and you will fall and your list of questions will be crumpled up and thrown away.

[42 : 57] They will become insignificant in his presence. how we engage with this Sunday by Sunday is a reflection of whether we are living out God's purpose for our lives the rest of the week.

Our purpose and our pleasure is found when we find it in his glory. We exist to magnify this God 24 hours a day and find our deepest pleasure in him.