

Reflect The Glory Of God

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[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to the book of 2 Corinthians. 2 Corinthians. And as we look forward to officially constituting as a church family, we are walking through our mission and vision for the church.

And so two weeks ago we sought to understand our mission as a church, which is we exist to magnify the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And the vision, the how, how do we plan to go about that great mission is threefold. So we saw last week from Psalm 34, 3, the first way we plan to magnify the glory of God is to enjoy Him together. Lord willing, next week we'll gather and we'll hear the third part, which is that we plan to evangelize the lost. And this morning from 2 Corinthians, we'll see that we plan to magnify the glory of God by equipping the saints, by equipping the saints to reflect God's glory together.

So if you would, your Bibles open to 2 Corinthians chapter 3. We're going to be just in verse 18 this morning. 2 Corinthians 3 verse 18. Bible's open if you just follow along with me as I read.

[1 : 23] And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Would you please pray with me? Father, we thank you for this word. We thank you for your power of transformation at work in those who believe.

We pray even now as we open up this word that you would do that in us. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Well, it has come to my attention that I have failed you in a very important area.

Of your discipleship. During the past week, we had a couple from the church over for dinner. I won't tell you who. And they mentioned that they were in their 23rd year of marriage.

To which I responded, was their Jordan year. And I thought that this was an obvious reference. But my reference was met with a confused look.

[2 : 34] And so I had to explain. I was, of course, referring to Michael Jordan. The undisputable greatest basketball player of all time. Who wore number 23 in his tenure with the Chicago Bulls.

And then later with the Washington Wizards. Although we don't need to talk as much about those years. You all, I'm sure, are at least somewhat familiar with the legend of Michael Jordan.

When I say that name, I know that you know at least who I'm talking about. 14-time All-Star. 5-time MVP. Defensive Player of the Year.

And, of course, 6 for 6 in the NBA Finals. 6 championship rings. But, in my opinion, one of Michael Jordan's greatest accomplishments is that he is listed at 6 feet 6 inches tall.

You may not know this. You can fact check me later. Nobody in his immediate family was taller than 6 feet tall. Michael Jordan's father, James Jordan, was 5 foot 9.

[3 : 39] Dolores, his mother, was only 5 foot 5. Even his brother, Larry, who Michael himself said could have been a better basketball player than him, only grew to be 5 foot 8.

But, Michael Jordan, 6 foot 6. He was determined to grow. So, legend has it that he would come home every day after school, hang up his arms from the monkey bars every day, just try to let gravity do its work to stretch him out and grow as much as he possibly could.

His mother, Dolores, would tell him to pour salt in his shoes every single night and say a prayer over them that he might grow. And so he did, every night, pour salt in his shoes.

And I can't say exactly what made it happen, but sure enough, inch by inch, Michael began to grow. By his sophomore year of high school, he had grown to 5 foot 11.

By the next summer, he had grown 4 more inches to 6 foot 3, and then ultimately growing 3 more inches to an NBA-worthy height of 6 foot 6 inches tall.

[4 : 50] This morning, we are considering again how we plan to magnify the glory of God together. And what Paul tells us here in 2 Corinthians is that we magnify his glory by growing up into him so that we might reflect his glory.

And this is the type of growth that we're aiming for together as a church. Of course, we want to grow numerically. We want more people gathering here to worship alongside us, but that's not our primary target.

Our primary target is growth in maturity. It is growth in Christ-likeness. It's growth that each of us individually and all of us corporately would grow to reflect the glory of God.

And this is, I believe, the charge that Paul gives to pastors in Ephesians chapter 4. This, I hope, is a familiar passage to you by now, but Paul says, He, Christ, gave the shepherds and teachers, that is the pastors, to equip the saints, that's you, for the work of ministry.

What's that? For building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

[6 : 21] That's the target. That's what we're aiming for. And so the question that I want to ask this morning is, how do we get there? How do we grow up together to reflect the glory of God?

So here in our passage, 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, this morning, Paul gives us three essential truths for spiritual growth. Three essential truths for spiritual growth.

If you're a note taker, this is our outline this morning. It'll help you to follow along three essential truths for spiritual growth. First, is that spiritual growth requires spiritual sight.

Spiritual growth requires spiritual sight. This is the prerequisite for spiritual growth. Look here to our verse again.

Paul says in verse 18, he says, We all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed.

[7 : 29] So not we all, period. Everyone, everywhere. Not we all who regularly attend church and come and sit in the same place and sing the same songs.

Not we all who look the same and act the same and think the same and vote the same. What does he say? We all with unveiled face. The prerequisite for you to grow spiritually, to be transformed, to reflect the glory of God, is that you have had the veil removed from over your face so that you can see the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Look there to verse 13. Verse 13. To better understand what he's saying here, we need to understand the context of this passage. So Paul says here in verse 13, he says, Moses would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted because only through Christ is it taken away.

Yes, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. Paul is referring to the passage that was read here earlier this morning from Exodus chapter 34.

[9 : 05] And this was a passage that would have been familiar from the Old Testament to anyone who was familiar, had a working knowledge of the scriptures there in Corinth. Moses went up to the top of the mountain on Mount Sinai to meet with the Lord.

He received the words of the Old Covenant, the Ten Commandments on the tablet. And when he came out of the presence of the Lord, you remember what happened to his face? It shone.

It glowed. He had been in the presence of the glory of God. And his face radiated, so much so that he had to put a veil over his face so that the people could look at him and hear and receive and listen to the words of the covenant.

He had to veil it because it was too much for them to behold. But here in 2 Corinthians, Paul gives another reason why Moses wore that veil.

Look there again. So verse 13, he says, Moses put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

[10 : 19] In other words, that shining, radiant face of Moses, it didn't stay that way forever. It was going away.

It faded with time. It had momentary glory, but then it was normal again. Paul's primary point here is to say that this is the outcome of the old covenant.

It had a type of glory for a time. It had a type of purpose. It served its purpose, but it was fading. It was going away.

Its purpose was coming to an end. And so Paul says there in verse 11, if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory, namely the new covenant, the work of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But there's a problem. There's a problem. This new covenant is far greater, far more glorious, far better, but the problem here for the Jews was they can't see it.

[11 : 34] Verse 14, he says, their minds were hardened for to this day in Paul's day, hundreds and hundreds of years later, to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted.

They cannot see the glory of God in the gospel of Christ. They can't behold it. Their minds are hardened and their hearts are veiled. See, this veil, we need to see, is a metaphor for spiritual blindness.

This veil is a metaphor for spiritual blindness. But that's not just a problem for the Jews, is it? This should sober us, church, that the Jews who were so close to the presence of God, so familiar with His acts in history, so culturally and traditionally and very intimately rooted in Him and in His Word, were blind to the glory of God.

How can this be? We would be wise to note here this morning that spiritual sight is not an issue of familiarity.

Spiritual sight is not an issue of familiarity. Who is more familiar with the Word of God than the people of God? Yet a veil lay over their hearts to keep them from seeing.

[13 : 06] And you may know the Scriptures inside and out, frontwards and back, may have studied it time and time again, sat under a million sermons and yet are blind.

Do not mistake familiarity with the Scriptures, with faith in Christ. We would be wise to note that spiritual sight is not an issue of heritage or of physical lineage.

The Jews believed that because they were physical descendants of Abraham, they were in the line of Abraham, that they were right with God. They belonged to Him.

They were in the covenant. But Paul says that covenant has been fulfilled, swallowed up by a greater covenant, a new covenant, but they can't see it.

They were blind. Maybe it is that you have a believing mother, believing father, grandmother, grandfather, who raised you in the word, shared the gospel with you, brought you to church, loved you, was a man or woman of the faith.

[14 : 15] If that's you, then praise God, but take note, spiritual sight cannot be inherited by blood. Do not mistake physical lineage for spiritual life.

You must be born again of the Spirit. We would be wise to note that spiritual sight is not an issue of proximity to the truth.

Do you ever wonder what it was like for the Jews to be there at the foot of the mountain and to know that right up there at the top was the presence of the glory of God? And to know that if I so much as come near the foot of that mountain and touch it with the point of my finger, I would be just obliterated.

They were so near to the presence of God, but yet they were blind to His glory for all of their practices, all of their obedience, all of their religious culture.

Sadly, so many of them did not know the Lord, and so it is, I fear, with many self-professed Christians. Christians. It's good for us to go to church.

[15 : 33] It's good for us to be in a community of believers. It's good for us to surround ourselves with Christian influence, surround ourselves with the truth, to be around the faith, but do not mistake spiritual proximity to spiritual perception.

in order for us to grow in the Lord, we must behold the Lord, and in order for us to behold Him, the veil must come off.

Those of us who know the Lord know exactly what I'm talking about, don't you? You know exactly what I'm talking about. I've heard so many of your testimonies over the past few weeks and months, and for many of you there was this clear moment when, for lack of a better phrase, you just, you got it.

The lights just came on. Somebody shared the gospel with you, you read your Bible, you heard a message, maybe you were familiar with the truth for a long time, maybe you had gone to church for

your whole life, but something different happened inside of you, and you saw the worth of Christ. All of a sudden, you saw the goodness of God, you saw your need for salvation, you saw the sufficiency of Christ to save you from your sin.

[16:57] What happened was God took off the veil. He removed the veil to allow you to see the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As Paul says later, God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

He opened your eyes to see, and with your eyes now open, you began to grow. You know, the most important question you can ask yourself this morning is, do you see the glory of God in the gospel? do you see it? Can you see the worth of Christ? Not physically, with your physical eyes, of course not, but spiritually, truly, do you behold the glory of God and love Him and see Him as worthy of your time, worthy of your worship, worthy of your life, worthy of your devotion?

We have to start here. Can you see it? that's the beginning of spiritual growth, but what's the end of spiritual growth?

[18:22] What are we growing towards? What's the end goal here? This is the second essential truth for spiritual growth, and it's that second, spiritual growth restores the image of God.

Spiritual growth restores the image of God. Look there to verse 18 again. Paul says, we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another.

This tells us the goal, the end goal of spiritual growth, doesn't it? What is it? It's to be transformed into the same image, that is, the image of the Lord.

Every man, every woman, every boy, every girl, every child, from the moment of conception, bears the image of God.

This is how we were made. This is what we see in the account of our creation in Genesis chapter 1. God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness, meaning we were created to mirror or to reflect the glory of God.

[19:51] And so they were instructed, we were instructed to fill the earth and subdue it, to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth with little image bearers, which again is on the sanctity of human life Sunday is the primary reason that we denounce the horrors of abortion.

We were made to reflect and to show the world what God is like in His character, in His goodness, in His holiness, in His creativity, in His reign and His rule over all things.

We were made to be like God, which is what makes the devil's temptation to Adam and Eve that much more absurd. doesn't it? You remember what He said?

Eat this fruit and your eyes will be opened and you will be made like God. What happened? They ate and their eyes were veiled.

And the image of God, which they already had, though it remained, was now marred and broken and tarnished by sin.

[21:07] All of us come into the world with this messed up, sin-stained image. But here's the thing, when you are reborn from the Spirit, reborn by the grace of God, the veil has been removed, the Spirit gets to work in you, restoring the image of God.

God. I want to try to reframe how you think about spiritual growth. If I can try to do that in our time together this morning, I want you to listen here.

Because some of you, when you hear spiritual growth, your mind automatically goes towards self-improvement. Just being a better version of you.

It goes to growing step by step, being improved, being the better version of yourself. You hear that we want to equip you to do the work of ministry, and you hear that we want you just to be your most productive self.

If you go to any bookstore, just about any bookstore, go to the Christian section, which I strongly advise you not to do, and you look for a section on spiritual growth, you'll probably find a lot of this same sort of talk.

[22:19] That's not what we're aiming for here. That's not what this is. I hope that we see here, Paul is showing us there's something much, much bigger at play than merely bettering yourself, than merely self-improvement, than merely just working on your flaws and fixing your mistakes.

Spiritual growth is transformation into the image of God. spiritual growth is transformation into the image of God.

It is the work of God in you by His Spirit to restore the image of God that was dragged through the mud in the fall.

And this is the plan of God for all of us, we all with unveiled face, all of us who are in Christ. Romans 8, 29 says, for those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

This is the hope of all of us who are in Christ. 1 Corinthians 15, 49 says, just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, that's Adam, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

[23 : 52] That's our hope. See, doesn't that reset the standard, doesn't it? It resets the paradigm. We aren't just trying to be the best version of ourselves, we are aiming to reflect the glory of God.

What does He say? Be holy for what? Help me. For I am holy. What did Jesus say to His followers? You must be perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect.

That's a high standard Christian. But take heart because believer, the power for this transformation does not come from us.

It can't. We can't do it. Paul says this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. You know, there's a word for this, big theological word called sanctification.

Sanctification. Our statement of faith concerning sanctification says, we believe that sanctification is the process by which according to the will of God and through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are made partakers of His holiness.

[25 : 09] It is a progressive transformation into the image of Christ that has begun in regeneration and is carried on in the hearts of believers by the work of the Holy Spirit and the continual use of spiritual disciplines including especially reading and hearing the word of God, the communion of the saints, self-examination and self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

Now, did you hear the same key words that I heard when I read that? Did you hear those same key words? Sanctification is a process.

It is a progressive transformation into the word, into the image of Christ. It is begun in regeneration and is carried on. You hear that language, don't you?

In other words, it does not happen all at once. I'll tell you what, one of the most frustrating things about the Christian life, some of the most discouraging at times moments of this spiritual transformation is that it is not instantaneous.

It's a process. We are, as Paul says, being transformed from one degree of glory to another.

[26 : 31] I remember growing up we had heating and air conditioning, I promise, but you might not ever know it. My parents were so tight with the thermostat.

We weren't poor, I promise you, but they would say that they were just being frugal, and I just knew that I was cold. Clark Howard made some recommendation about the ideal thermostat reading, and it became law in my house.

If I had an opportunity just to sneak over to the thermostat and adjust the temperature, even by just a couple of degrees, I would take it. Maybe an hour would go by, and I'd sneak back again if the plan was working, and bump it up another degree, maybe another two degrees, and eventually, without them noticing from one degree of temperature to another, the temperature in the room would change.

It had to be degree by degree, otherwise, if there's just a sudden fluctuation of temperature, the whole plan would go out the window, and we'd be right back where we started. See, if you are in Christ, if you have had that veil removed from over your heart, then you can be certain, this is what Paul tells us, that the Lord is at work in you.

You may not notice a sudden swing in temperature, but as you look back over your life, you should notice the work of God, that from one degree to another, from one degree of glory to another, you have grown more and more and more to reflect the image of the glory of God.

[28 : 23] God. Some of you, though, I know, are in the middle of a season of just noticeable growth. Maybe you've come to faith recently over the past several months, several years, and you just feel like you're growing leaps and bounds, and you see his work everywhere, you have passion for the Lord, you desire to grow, you want to know him more.

I just want to encourage you to hold on to that as long as you can. Press as deep into that as you possibly can, but know this also, that our journey to glory is not a sprint, it is a marathon.

There will be seasons of noticeable growth, tremendous growth, seasons of hunger for the Lord, seasons of noticing his hand in everything, and there will be seasons where it feels like you're

running through the mud.

You barely notice his work at all. Take heart, believer. Through it all, the Lord is at work from one degree of glory to another in all who belong to him.

He who began a good work in you, I'm sure of it, Paul says, will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. You are being transformed from one degree of glory to another.

[29 : 56] But how does that transformation happen? Practically, how does this transformation take place? This is the third and final essential truth for spiritual growth.

It answers the question for us, how do we get there? Third, spiritual growth comes from regarding and relishing the gospel.

Spiritual growth comes from regarding and relishing the gospel. You get a twofer here. You get a bonus. Regarding and relishing.

You might have heard John Piper call this seeing and savoring. It's the same thing. You get the point here. You will grow into the image of God. You will grow to reflect his glory as you regard and relish, as you see and you savor, as you look to and you love the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Look there one more time to verse 18. He says, we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

[31 : 21] For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. So how are we being transformed? It's by beholding. Beholding the glory of the Lord.

See there's a principle here that we need to know. The English poet William Blake I think said this first. He got this right. He said, you become what you behold. You become what you behold.

This is true of our idols, church. Psalm 115 says, those who make them become like them. So do all who trust them.

So when you behold your idols, you give them your attention, you give them your heart's desire, your heart's devotion, whether that's money or approval or comfort.

sex or pleasure or entertainment, you will become whatever it is that you behold. If you fill your mind with political talk radio week in and week out, guess what is going to come out of your heart eventually, out of your mind?

[32 : 24] It'll be anger, discontent, anxiety, frustration about the world around you. See we become what we behold.

when I grew up watching as many Chicago Bulls games as I possibly could, putting Michael Jordan's posters up on my wall and then went out in my driveway with my tongue out. I know I looked exactly like Michael Jordan.

Can't tell me otherwise. Maybe not. Church, if you're hearing this and you wonder why your growth spiritually has stagnated, why it feels like you're not growing at all, you may need to take a step back and ask yourself, what are you beholding?

What is it that you're giving most of your heart's attention to? If it's not the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ, turn your eyes upon Jesus.

What does the old hymn say? Look full in his wonderful face. The things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

[33 : 40] We become what we behold. It's true of our idols, but church, what a promise we have here from Paul in 2nd Corinthians that this is also true of God.

When we behold him, we become like him. John says, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

See, there's a connection here between sight and sanctification. salvation. But right now, we can't see him perfectly as we one day will.

So where do we look? We look to the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's glory is displayed for us to see and to savor, to regard and to relish in the sending of his son to live and to die and to rise, to rescue sinners like me and you from the depths of our sin, and then to transform us that we might reflect the image of the glory of God.

Do you need to have the veil removed from over your heart? Look to Christ. Only through Christ is it taken away, but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

[35 : 20] Do you want to grow into the image of God? I hope you do. Look to Christ, who is himself the very image of God. Do you want to look more like God in the way that you think, in the way that

you act, in the way that you speak, in just the way that you are?

Look to Christ. Behold the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And Christ promises you from one degree to another, you will be changed.

So, very practically for us here as we close, God and I just want to end this morning by sharing with you some of the opportunities that we have here as we've thought and prayed for how we might equip you to reflect the glory of God.

It doesn't have to be limited to this, of course, but this is frameworks for how we aim to equip you. I want you to think of these as just opportunities for us as a church to behold him together.

This is not everything. I just want to draw your attention to a few ways here as we close. One, Sunday evening prayer. Sunday evening prayer.

[36 : 37] We plan this year to gather Sunday evenings on the first and the third Sunday of every month for a time of worship and corporate prayer.

We had our first one last Sunday evening and I just want to encourage you make this a priority. Make this time a priority. If you feel a need to grow in your love for the Lord, to grow in your devotion to him through prayer, I got good news for you.

We're going to do it twice a month right here Sunday evening, so come. Another opportunity is Sunday school. I like to call these grow classes. You know why?

Bet you can't figure it out. Because that's our goal for that time together. It's that we might be growing to reflect the image of the glory of God.

I'll just say this, if you want to know if that is worth your time, if you haven't been going, just talk to anybody that's been going there. Ask them if it's worth their time. Ask them if they've grown at all over the past few months in their time there in those grow classes.

[37 : 43] The children are learning so much in their time during that hour as well in that grow class time. One of the best ways that you can grow to delight in the glory of God is to serve.

Miss Regina, Miss Becky, Amanda, serve back there faithfully. I'll just say this, you don't understand anything until you can explain it to a child. Okay?

And you don't know patience until you can spend time explaining the gospel week in and week out to children. And what an opportunity that is to shape and to mold this next generation to delight in the glory of God.

God. So I invite you to serve. The men and the women are now gathering weekly. Men on Wednesdays, women on Thursdays. They're gathering in community that we pray.

They're studying resources that we pray will help them, enable them to grow in delighting in the Lord. If you are a man or if you are a woman in this room, which is everybody here, you're invited.

[38 : 45] You're invited to come. Take part in these opportunities. And if those times don't work for you, let us know what works better so we can start another group where you can grow.

Church, here's the point. If you hear this and you just hear a list of events on a calendar to keep you busy, you have missed it. And these are not just things to do because we had nothing else to do and we want to just put something on the calendar.

This is, we want to equip you. to magnify the glory of God by growing up into him and reflecting his glory together.

So church, let's look to Christ. Let's behold the man upon the cross. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Would you behold our God? regard and relish the glory of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ and I promise you this year will grow.

[39 : 57] Will grow. Would you pray with me? Lord, what we are aiming to do is impossible apart from you.

I can't do it. Treg can't do it. Nobody, nobody can produce this growth only through the Lord who is the spirit.

And so we pray as we devote ourselves to these means of grace for our sanctification, as we devote ourselves to your word, as we devote ourselves to prayer, as we devote ourselves to fellowship, Lord, would we be given eyes to see your glory in the gospel?

If there are any here, Lord, who remain hardened in their sin and their minds are blind to your glory, I pray now that you would remove the veil from their heart.

And for the rest of us, Lord, would you just give us the grace to notice from one degree of glory to another how you are at work in growing us to reflect your image. We pray this all in the name of

Christ.
[41 : 11] Amen.