



missio  
dei

*Glory Mystery Church*

Understanding Our Role In God's Mission

A Theolatte.com Blog Book

# Missio Dei

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# **"The simplification of anything is always sensational."**

- G. K. Chesterton

## **Introduction:**

I would like to propose that we often fail to fulfill God's mission because we do not properly understand it. We fall short of being moved by His mystery because we are not consumed by it. We make an abstraction of God's work and therefore only make vague and theoretical commitments to Him that result in few daily life changes.

God's mission is not vague, His mystery not elusive, nor His church an abstraction. His mission is simple enough. It is to glorify Himself through exalting Christ and establishing a people who are redeemed and called by His name. To the extent that we understand and apply our hearts to this mission we will know the favor of God. Our fulfillment hinges on our ability to comprehend and devote our lives to this, the *Missio Dei*.

## A Confession

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In preparing to start a new ministry venture I felt compelled to encourage everyone about the need for evangelism on the college campus. I had my stats and demographic profiles ready to go. However, I was confronted by something in my preparation, which forced me to change directions entirely. I realized that I was seeking to produce a certain effect without worrying about the cause.

Like desiring wine, without regard to the vineyard, I wanted to encourage a specific action from others without any thought of the motivation. I quickly realized that if I merely presented people with a Great Commission pep-talk that they would likely leave feeling mildly inspired, slightly guilty, and ultimately unchanged. A vision for evangelism apart from a heart's desire for God's glory and renown is fruitless.

So I changed directions, or so it seemed to me. Actually, I think my direction was changed for me. Instead of a Great Commission pep-talk, we began the campus church (a campus of Highview Baptist Church) with a study of the glory of God.

May a passion for His fame drive us to preach the gospel to the lost.

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*Another Disclaimer:* I am deeply indebted to John Piper's writings. The clarity with which he articulates the biblical theme of God's glory has profoundly transformed my view of God, the Bible, and life in general.

Chapter One

# Glory

**“A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word, 'darkness' on the walls of his cell.”**

- C.S. Lewis

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God's mission is *glory*.

God's mission is *glorious*.

The glorious reality of God's mission is that His mission is to *glorify himself*.

Some might see the statement “God's glory is God's mission” as self-centered. *This is, in fact, the right way to see it.* To better understand the self-glorification (or what could be called the self-centered) mission of God we have to look at the bigger picture. What else could serve as God's highest mission?

Could creation be the highest mission of God? Could humans be the highest mission of God? For God to place as His central mission anything less than His own glory would be compromise. In a similar way, for God to call us to anything less than His glory would be a lesser calling. It is this fact that should remind us of our greatest joy.

**A. Scripture clearly presents God's glory as God's highest purpose:**

Isaiah 43:6-7

I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth- everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Isaiah 48:9-11

For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.

John 17:1-5

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that

they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Revelation 4:8b-11

Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

**B. We are called into the mission of glorifying God.** In this truth we find the ultimate prize and joy — in glorifying our Creator. What some would consider narcissistic on the part of God is actually the means to our greatest joy. In seeking His glory we find our greatest fulfillment. As John Piper has stated so succinctly, "God is the most glorified in us when we are the most satisfied in Him." In our being consumed by the glory of God we are thrust into the very essence of our existence. Nothing could be more fulfilling than to live out the embedded purpose that has been bestowed upon us from our Creator.

**C. To be loved by God is to experience His mercy. To love God is to be involved in His mission.** Our apathy towards the mission stems from a lack of

a proper view of God. Think of the prophet Isaiah, who upon seeing the glory of God responded, "Here am I send me." Until we, better yet — until I get a vision for the absolute majesty of God, until I am consumed by a passion for His name — my involvement in His great mission will be limited at best. The greatest motivator for evangelism is not a love for the lost first and foremost — it is a love for the glory of God that will drive us to fulfill the Great Commission.

**D. Satan, the archenemy of God, seeks to rob God of glory.** It's his highest goal. As God's nemesis, he seeks to pervert, distort, subvert and otherwise abolish the glory that God alone deserves. Satan's desire for his own glory, instead of God's, is what led to his fallen estate. He now responds with evil intent and sinister strategy to thwart the work of God at every point in human history.

The two most evident ways that you see Satan's plan unfold in Scripture are at creation and at the incarnation. At creation Satan was lurking and scheming until he was able to tempt Adam and Eve to the point of sin. As a result of their decision to disobey their Creator God, they fell under the curse of sin. The curse continues to this day. Every earthquake, every heartbreak, every disease and every disaster reminds us of the curse.

**God — Creation**

**Satan — Curse**

**E. God sent His son into the world for His own glory.** The Christ was conceived by the virgin Mary. While the angels praised God for this wondrous

event, Satan was again lurking. He was at work in the heart of King Herod who went on a rampage, resulting in a mass genocide. God protected His Son from Herod's terror, but Satan did not give up. At the peak of Jesus' earthly ministry it seemed that Satan got the upper hand. His evil plot led to the false trial, the beatings and then the crucifixion.

**God — Christ**

**Satan — Cross**

From an earthly perspective some might consider God's glory to be unseated and defeated. From a biblical perspective we see that the opposite is the case. God is reversing the curse. He has promised to make all things new. God has resurrected the Christ. Somehow, in some way that is to glorious for me to fully grasp, God is bringing MORE glory to Himself through the establishment of a new earth and through a resurrected Messiah.

***God is reversing the curse and redeeming a people.***

At each point of God's work Satan opposes His glory. At each step of our lives Satan will oppose us in our aim of bringing God glory. God has triumphed over the serpent and, in Christ, so will we.

**F. We must grow in our love for God's glory in order to grow in our passion for missions.**

*God's glory is His mission.* The more I become like Him the more passionate I will be about His glory. The more passionate I am about His glory, the more persistent I will be in doing the

work of evangelism. Until I place His glory as my highest aim I will lack the total fulfillment that comes from enjoying Him and I will be relegated to the fringe of His redemptive work on earth.

My prayer today is that God would give me a passion for His renown.

May His glory be my mission.

May the world know the glory of our God.

**“Question: What is the chief end of man? Answer: To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”**

*-Westminster Shorter Catechism  
(circa. 1640)*



Quote to Ponder:

**“Worship is our response to what we value most. Whatever is worth most to you is what you worship. How do you know what you worship? It’s easy. You simply follow the trail of your time, your affection, your energy, your money, and your allegiance. At the end of that trail you’ll find a throne; and whatever, or whomever, is on that throne is what’s of highest value to you. On that throne is what you worship.”**

*-Louie Giglio*

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Questions to Ponder:

What will we do if we follow the trail and find ourselves on the throne of our worship?

What radical steps are we willing to take to ensure that God’s glory is our highest goal?

**Chapter Two**

# **Mystery**

**“To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”**

*(Colossians 1:27)*

**“A yawn is a silent shout.”**

*- G.K. Chesterton*

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**G**od has created us to live for His glory and we can only be satisfied in Him. As the Apostle Paul said to the Romans, the sinful default of the human condition is to worship the creature instead of the Creator, resulting in improper desires, train-wrecked lives, and ultimately a trading of the glory of God for lesser things. In our fallenness we are tempted to jettison the only source of satisfaction our souls can ever know.

This theme is evident throughout the teachings of iconic church leaders. As Augustine said, “Our souls are restless until they find their rest in thee.” As Pascal taught, we have a God-sized hole in our hearts that can only be filled by God. As John Piper has said, “God is the most glorified in us when we are the most satisfied in Him.” As C.S. Lewis preached, we are like a boy content to eat mud pies in the slum because we have never had a holiday at the sea.

#### ***A. Discontentment & Boredom***

We are drinking water from broken

cisterns and our thirst will not be quenched (see Jeremiah 2:13). We are miserable because we are seeking our satisfaction in all the wrong places. **Our dissatisfied souls betray the reality that we have traded the glory of God for lesser things.**

I’m convinced that discontentment is a red flag to warn us that we are not focused on the glory of God. Another warning sign we should heed is boredom. While discontentment reveals that God is not our rightful priority, boredom reveals that we are neither amazed by — nor properly engaged in — God’s work on earth. **Our boredom betrays our apathy.**

“Webster defines boredom as: “the state of being weary and restless through lack of interest.” The reason there are boring sermons, and boring churches, and boring believers is that we have lost interest in the gospel. We’ve been inoculated to the gospel. Theologian and author G. K. Chesterton has said that a

yawn is a silent shout. **We hear the gospel and we yawn. In our boredom our souls are shouting.** They long for our lives to be consumed by the mystery of God.

**Maybe we could adapt Paul's words to summarize this problem, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is bored."**

Boredom is in some ways the opposite of anxiety. Anxiety is the sense that a job is too big for us, and is beyond our ability. Boredom is the sense that a job is not challenging enough. Our problem is not that we need another four or five step, highly marketed, glossy-packaged, evangelism training strategy. I contend that our lack of evangelistic zeal results not from anxiety but rather from boredom. We need to be captivated once again by the reality of God's ministry of reconciliation, which He has entrusted to believers.

*The world is bored because it does not understand the mystery of God. The church is bored because it is not consumed by the mystery of God.*

**God wake us from our slumber.**

May God break our hearts of stone and fill us with renewed sense of gratitude for

His salvation and wonder for His mystery.

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*Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and*

*circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.*

**(1 Peter 1:10-12)**

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We have become bored with the very thing that prophets and angels longed to look into and understand. We are like a spoiled child who is given a pony for his birthday only to throw a fit because it is the wrong color. This is a silly illustration of course, because the matter we are discussing is of the most serious nature. The Bible describes the spiritual warfare of the universe, the fall of mankind, the love of God, the sacrifice of Christ, the nature of salvation...and somehow we are content to merely go through the motions of obligatory worship and nominal outreach. Somewhere along the way our hearts have grown cold.

## **B. Living Hope & Transformed Lives**

We need to remind ourselves of the mystery. We must follow the admonition of the great German reformer Martin Luther preach the gospel to ourselves afresh every day. This mystery, as Peter reminds us, is the very

thing that separates us from those who do not believe.

In the mystery of the gospel we have a living hope:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*  
(1 Peter 1:3)

This living hope, we are told, is a result of the resurrection of Christ. **In this one verse we see the very narrow doctrine of Christianity magnified.** The truth of Christianity rests in the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. The living hope of believers is a result of the historical resurrection of Christ. This, by contrast, reveals that every other belief system is thereby dead.

The Christian doctrine of the exclusivity of the gospel is not optional. It is the only living hope available to humanity. Not only does belief in Jesus give life, it also brings transformation.

The picture of the believer who has received forgiveness through Christ is that of a life growing in holiness before God and in love for the church. The apostle Peter writes:

*Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*  
(1 Peter 1:22-23)

The glory of God is demonstrated in the church through a people who are

redeemed by Christ. It is within the community of the redeemed that we see God's glory demonstrated and His mystery illustrated.

**We cannot envision the glory of God apart from Christ and His church.**

The mystery has a name.

Christ has a church.



## **The Cross & the Curse**

*A Poetic Digression*

*From nothing You formed the earth,  
Though Satan tempted Adam  
to sin give birth.*

*Now fallen man must live under the curse,  
Until the set time You would reverse.*

*In the fullness, Your Son You did send,  
That sinful man might apprehend.*

*The work of Your plan established firm,  
The Deceiver's plots only to affirm.*

*Your might and power would not be lost,  
While You delighted to give Your Son  
a cross.*

*In this paradox we dimly see,  
The glory of Your matchless majesty.*

*How over the curse and by the cross,  
Our salvation You purchased at great  
cost.*

*Make our stone hearts feel again,  
The mystery of Your glorious plan.*



**Chapter Three**

# **Church**

**“I would never belong to a group that would accept someone like me as a member.”**

*-Groucho Marx*

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**I**t is now en vogue to dislike the church. The new spirituality is a churchless one. I'm afraid that younger evangelicals (I'm speaking broadly here) are often misled in their understanding of ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church). Success comes for so many Christian authors and artists who openly and adamantly demonstrate a disdain for what they call “organized religion.” In a way, I understand what they mean by this phrase. However, the problem is that they often lump any form of church into this broad category. Church is out. Cynical Christianity is in.

I've divided the series into the three parts of glory, mystery, and church for a specific reason. I believe this to be a logical and essential order. All that God does, and has ever done, is for His own glory. We were created for His glory yet we are fallen from it due to sin. As Paul says in Romans, “All have sinned and fallen short of the **glory** of God.” Yet the mystery of the ages is that God loved

the world still and sent His Son to die as a substitute — as an atoning sacrifice. Yet God's redemptive work was not and is not exclusively personal. It has from the beginning been a community activity. He is glorifying Himself through redeeming a people who are called the Bride of Christ. A people who are called “The Church.”

In concluding this study I would like to look at three snapshots of the life of Peter. In these three encounters we see Peter growing in His understanding of God's redemptive work.

### **A. Learning the Church**

(Matthew 16-18)

*Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. "I also say to you that*



*you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*

Peter learned that the church would be founded and built upon the confession that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus, as the chief cornerstone of the church, promised that the church would prevail against the very forces of Hell. It is the community of faith, the body of Christ, which is central in God's redemptive work on earth. In this passage Peter was beginning to learn that God would build His Church, in His way, and in His time.

### **B. Loving the Church**

(John 21:15)

*So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You " He said to him, "Tend My lambs."*

This passage is filled with the number three. This is the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples following the resurrection. Peter had just denied Jesus three times. Jesus asked Peter three questions. Peter gave three answers. Jesus gave three commands. What can we learn from the "do you love me" inquiries of the Messiah?

We clearly see that there is a direct correlation between our love for Christ and our love for His Church. Each time that Peter affirmed his love for Jesus, he was told to care for the sheep. Herein Jesus revealed that Peter's love for Christ and his love for the Church were inseparable. It is the same for us. There is a direct connection between our love for the Church and our love for Jesus.

Another way of saying this is, "Show me how much you love the church and I will show you how much you love Christ."

The problem is clear: Christ is perfect — people are not. In this spirit, James wrote that whoever says they love God while harboring hatred for their brother is a liar. We cannot love a God we cannot see if we are unable to love our Christian brothers who we can see. The love for the Church is not an ambiguous reality either. The pattern of the New Testament is the spreading of the gospel and the establishing of "churches." The universal and invisible body of Christ is tangible in local churches.

A mentor of mine once told me, "You cannot love *the Church* if you don't love *a church*." You cannot truly love Christ a part from a desire to be in community with a group of believers. The Church is not an afterthought to God. It was His plan from the beginning.

### **C. Leading the Church**

(I Peter 5:1-3)

*Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

Peter displays the heart of a true pastor. As a seasoned leader of the church, he demonstrates a wisdom in his leadership

and a sincerity in his love for flock of God. In this passage we see the culmination of Glory, Mystery and Church. Peter reminds the elders that the Chief Shepherd will appear at the appointed time to receive His Church. He will also reward the faithful. The loving and faithful leadership of the church will receive the “crown of glory.”

In this eschatological (end times) vision we see the glory of God revealed through a redeemed people who worship the resurrected Christ. God’s mission is not vague, His mystery not elusive, nor His church an abstraction. The *Missio Dei* is the glory of God, revealed through the mystery of the gospel, demonstrated in the church. In this mission we find our mission. In this glory we find our glory. In the mystery we find our meaning.

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*For this reason also, highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the **glory** of God the Father.*  
(Philippians 2:9-11)

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***Solo Deo Gloria***

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