



R E M E D I A L  
*Christianity*

Correcting Deficiencies in Popular Christianity

#7 — The Purpose of Our Relationship With God

*With Study Questions*

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# The Purpose of Our Relationship With God

## *The Nature of the Relationship Between Man and God*

### **Review**

It never hurts to review. Up to date, in our *Remedial Christianity* series, we've discussed: 1) the need to have a starting place for knowledge; 2) that for Christians, the Bible is the starting place of all knowledge, ethics, and truth; 3) the over-arching message of the Bible – that God brings glory to Himself through the redemptive work of the cross; 4) why we should believe the Bible – that the Bible is self-authenticating; 5) the main topic of the Bible, God – that He is knowable and why we should believe in Him; and, 6) the means by which the relationship between man and God is to get under way. We will now discuss the purpose of our relationship with God.

### **Preview**

What I would like to discuss in this portion of the Remedial Christianity series is: What is the primary purpose of mankind – what is our reason for living? (The answer being to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.) Secondly, what happens when secondary reasons for living become primary? And finally, what does it mean to glorify God?

## **What is the Primary Purpose?**

### **Why Do Christians?**

Why do Christians go to church? The question seems simple enough. Millions of professing Christians wake up every Sunday morning, get dressed, load up the kids, and go to church. There are a variety of answers people give for participating in this discipline – many are noble. People wish to grow spiritually. They desire fellowship with God and other believers. They want to learn more about God. They want to clean up a wanton or disheveled life. They want to know the peace of God. Maybe they just want to make new friends. As a remedial Christian I remember boldly proclaiming the folly of too much prayer and liturgy. "I can pray at home, I come to church to learn!" Learning isn't bad. None of these things are bad, but none of them should be the main purpose for attending church.

Let's push the question a little deeper. Why do (or should) Christians (or people in general) do anything? What is the main purpose for a Christian to go to work, raise a family, go on vacation, do volunteer or charity work, join the military, vote, wake up in the morning? There may be all sorts of secondary reasons for doing things. I may wake up in the morning because one of my children needs breakfast. But why should I provide breakfast. One may answer because it is the responsible thing to do. But why should I do the responsible thing? Is it merely to stay out of jail? Although incarceration may be a legitimate motivation to do the right thing, for Christians it is not, generally, at the top of the motivational list. There must be a greater purpose.

Why do Christians go to church? Why do Christians do anything? There is a preponderance of Scriptural testimony regarding why Christians (or people in general) are to do anything. Secondary reasons aside, the primary reason man is to do anything relates to his relationship with God. It has been the uniform testimony of the great theologians of history (through their interpretation of Scripture) that man's primary purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. I have listed below just a few of the many passages in the Bible which give clear testimony to this truth.

## **Glorifying God**

**If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:11).**

**Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).**

**And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,<sup>10</sup> that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,<sup>11</sup> being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1:9-11).**

**...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10, 11).**

**But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.<sup>11</sup> To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 5:10, 11).**

**...to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen (Romans 16:27).**

**Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,<sup>21</sup> to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Ephesians 3:20, 21).**

**Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen (1 Timothy 1:17).**

**To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen (Jude 25).**

## Enjoying God

**Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you (Psalm 116:7).**

**You will show me the path of life; in Your presence *is* fullness of joy; at Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).**

**Oh, taste and see that the Lord *is* good (Psalm 34:8).**

## When Secondary Becomes Primary

### Subordinate Purposes

That the chief end of man is to glorify God does not suggest that there aren't secondary or subordinate purposes in a person's life.

**But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more;<sup>11</sup> that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,<sup>12</sup> that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and *that* you may lack nothing (1 Thessalonians 4:10-12).**

Work, family, rest, education, patriotism, and virtue are all noble quests. But when they are viewed as the ultimate versus penultimate quest of man, the smoothness of their skin crackles with corrosion.

### Who Do You Love More?

My children often muse at the notion that we are to love God more than each other. My four-year-old son often asks me the very difficult question, "Do you love God more than you love me?" To which I give the somewhat evasive, but true answer, "It is because of my love for God that I love you so much." It is when God's glory becomes man's chief end, that all other aspects of life ascend. Imagine a huge balloon tied to masses of debris on the bottom of the ocean. The balloon lifts all the debris attached to the surface. If the debris were merely tied to other debris (no matter how beautiful the other debris might appear – perhaps sunken treasure), it would remain submerged.

### Greater Nation, Love, Rest

The industry of a nation who does their work as unto the Lord rather than unto men (Colossians 3:23) will be more industrious than the nation that views industry as man's chief end. The family who is answerable to God over each other will have a greater love for each other (John 13:34). Those who rest from their labors, as God has determined, rather than seeking a life of leisure will find their rest more satisfying "***For so He gives His beloved sleep***" (Psalm 127:2).

When the source of our motivation and the goal of our achievements are the goodness and glory of God, excellence and consistency are more efficiently produced. This is easily seen. If I am motivated by the goodness of my boss rather than the goodness of the Lord, the gaps in my boss' goodness will often leave me empty. If we

love others the way they love us rather than the way Christ loves us, our love will find itself ebbing like the morning and evening tides which it is seeking to imitate.

### **Tethered to Debris**

If my chief purpose is education, patriotism, or even freedom rather than the glory of God I will eventually consign myself, and those under my influence, to ignorance, tyranny, and bondage. Many a treacherous villain had a wall laden with degrees. Few were more patriotic than Hitler and freedom itself becomes a vague, ambiguous term of undefined borders and infringements upon the property and possessions of others. When we tie our hopes to these noble, yet fluid, impersonal, and undefined entities we are tethered to sunken debris.

When I was dating my wife she almost broke up with me because she thought that her relationship with God was becoming somewhat stagnant. She told me that if she didn't perceive that she was becoming richer in her faith as a result of our relationship there wasn't going to be much of a future for us. I found great comfort in the notion of marrying a woman who was more motivated and answerable to God than to me. Marriages that tie their hopes to the brilliance of the partner rather than the glory of God are heading for icebergs.

### **Worshiping Idols**

The Scriptures are replete with warnings against placing even good things on too high a pedestal. The bronze serpent, which God told Moses to form in order to save the people from the serpents' poison, later became a false idol (Numbers 21:9; 2 Kings 18:4). The sons of Eli brought the Ark of the Covenant into battle as if it were their personal secret weapon. This resulted in their defeat and their death (1 Samuel 4:11). Peter, because he was used by God to deliver the gospel, was briefly worshiped (Acts 10:25). When man's chief end becomes something other than the glory of a holy, righteous, almighty God, it is step one on a path to destruction and chaos.

### **What Does it Mean to Glorify and Enjoy God?**

How does one go about glorifying and enjoying God? Unfortunately there aren't five simple steps to glorifying God in fifteen minutes or less. *A Family Instructional Guide* states it well:

**When inwardly they have the highest estimation of him, the greatest confidence in him, and the strongest affections to him, this is glorifying of God in spirit. "Glorify God in your spirit, which is God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).<sup>1</sup>**

**To enjoy God, is to acquiesce or rest in God as the chief good, with complacency and delight. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul" (Ps. 116:7).<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Vincent, T. 1996. *A family instructional guide*. Index created by Christian Classics Foundation. (electronic edition based on the first Banner of Truth ed., 1980.). Christian Classics Foundation: Simpsonville SC

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

To glorify and enjoy God means we have the loftiest estimations of Him. We seek to see and appreciate His perfection, purity, immensity, power, wisdom, holiness, counsel, righteous will, glory, love, grace, mercy, patience, abundant goodness, truth, justice, etc. It is in God and His attributes that we have our uttermost confidence. It is toward Him that we are to devote our strongest affections. It is when the Christian is immersed in these things that he has the greatest joy for he begins to grasp in whose hands his soul rests.

### **Found in Christ**

As discussed earlier, the means by which this information is brought to the minds of men are the Holy Scriptures. What we will learn is that the greatest manifestation of God is found in the person and work of God the Son, Jesus the Christ, **“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9)**. We are to nurture our relationship with our Savior through proper participation in the means God has provided. What has God determined to be the means by which this relationship is cultivated and preserved? This leads us to what God has determined to be man’s role in the nurturing of his relationship with God.

## Questions for Study

1. What are some reasons people go to church? Do you remember why you first went to church (page 1)?
2. What are some reasons people do anything? What are some of men's primary motivations in life (page 1)?
3. What should be man's chief purpose for doing anything (page 2)?
4. What are some of the dangers that take place when secondary purposes become primary purposes (pages 3, 4)?
5. Why will the world be better in every way if men view the glory of God as their chief purpose (pages 3, 4)?
6. What does it mean to glorify and enjoy God (pages 4, 5)?
7. How has God most fully revealed Himself to humanity (page 5)?