

IN HOW MANY WAYS MAY WE GLORIFY GOD?

19 Reasons Given by Thomas Watson in his book, *A Body of Divinity*

(SUMMARIZED BY LARRY STOUT)

The book, *A Body of Divinity*, was written by Thomas Watson, a British pastor in 1692. This book is a commentary (actually a series of sermons) on the Westminster Catechism. The first question of the catechism is "What is chief end of man?" and the answer is, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever." Watson then proceeds to write twenty pages expounding on that answer! He does so by unpacking the answer with more questions. What are we to understand by God's glory? What is it to glorify God? Why must we glorify God? In how many ways may we glorify God? To this last question, he gives nineteen reasons.

1/ "When we prefer God's glory above all other things, above credit, estate, relations; when the glory of God coming in competition with them, we prefer his glory before them." This is what Jesus was getting at in Luke 14:24-25, "*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.*" Though "hate" seems an extreme term here, Jesus is using an extreme metaphor to show much we should value the glory of God above all else.

2/ "We aim at God's glory, when we are content that God's will should take place, though it may cross ours." Jesus was, of course, the most vivid example of this when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane that God's will would be done, in essence saying to God that if God receives more glory by his suffering, he was content to suffer, Matthew 26:39.

3/ We aim at God's glory when we are content to be outshines by others in gifts and esteem, so that his glory may be increased. The apostle Paul had some who were trying to "outpreach" him, "*Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry...*" (Philippians 1:15), but Paul's response, "*What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.*" (v.18) Don't worry about what man gets the credit – just be sure that all the glory goes to God!

4/ We glorify God by an ingenuous confession of sin. Watson explains that a confession is ingenuous when it is free not forced. In Luke 15:18, the prodigal son confessed to his father, "*I have sinned against heaven and before you.*" The wayward son charged himself with sin before his father charged him with it.

5/ We glorify God by believing. No better example of this can be seen than Abraham, where in Romans 4:20 it states, *"No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God."* Watson said it well when he stated, "God honors faith because faith honors him."

6/ We glorify God by being tender of his glory. This is a great insight by Watson. Just as an loving child weeps to see a disgrace done to his father, so should believers be ever mindful when the Lord is dishonored. If we are comfortable with people using the name of our Savior as a swear word around us, we are not tender of his glory.

7/ We glorify God by fruitfulness. Jesus said this very clearly in John 15:8, *"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."* A Christian demonstrates that they have Christ's life in them by the fruit that is evident in their life. As Philippians 1:11 describes us, *"filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."*

8/ We glorify God by being contented in that state in which Providence has placed us. This idea goes against many of the television Bible teachers who convey that God is only concerned about our health, wealth, and happiness. It is hard to reconcile that idea with what Paul said in Philippians 4:12, *"I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need."* The secret was not to pray harder, but *"I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content."* (v.11) Why is that true? Because we are demonstrating in contentment that we are more satisfied with God than we are with our external circumstances, even if there are unpleasant. THAT is giving God glory!

9/ We glorify God by working out our own salvation. Watson stated this beautifully, "God has twisted together his glory and our good... What an encouragement is this to the service of God, to think, while I am hearing and praying, I am glorifying God; while I am furthering my own, I am increasing God's glory." Living as Christ would have us live is a delight to Him!

10/ We glorify God by living to God. Everyone centers their lives around something. Some live for money, others fame, and still others just for the pleasures of life. But the greatest joy in life comes by living unto God. Whatever God has given us, we should understand that everything is a gift from God. Therefore, as Romans 14:8 states, *"For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's."*

11/ We glorify God by walking cheerfully. Watson hit this hard when he commented that any service we do for God does not glorify him, unless it is with gladness. If we consider what Christ has done for us by his blood, and delivered to us through the Spirit, we should experience of great cheerfulness, and this cheerfulness glorifies God. Psalm 100:2 tells us, *"serve the Lord with gladness."*

12/ We glorify God by standing up for his truths. We are quick to defend ourselves when someone disparages us or those we love. In fact, if we are honest, we are even quick to defend our favorite sports team, or our recipe for lasagna or a hundred other things. But what Watson challenges is that we should be as diligent in standing up for the truth of God. Jude 3 tells us to "contend for the faith." When we do, we glorify God.

13/ We glorify God by praising him. Psalms 50:3 states, *"He one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me."* Praise itself is a God-exalting work. It is one of the highest and purest acts the believer can perform. Psalm 86:12, *"I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever."*

14/ We glorify God by being zealous for his name. As Watson notes, a Christian fired with zeal, takes a dishonor done to God worse than an injury done to himself. Remember how Jesus drove out the money-changers out of the temple (John 2:14-17).

15/ We glorify God when we have an eye to God in our natural and in our civil actions. Everything, literally everything, should be done with an eye to glorifying God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, *"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* These are sobering words when we even think about everyday matters of life. Do we put in an honest day's work for our employer? When a cashier makes a mistake and gives us too much change, do we just keep it? Small things, but it is just these things that Watson is reminding us about. Everything we do should be with an eye toward giving God glory.

16/ We glorify God by laboring to draw others to God; by seeking to covert others, and so make them instruments of glorifying God. Watson put this in a beautiful way when he stated, "it is a great way of glorifying God, when we break open the devil's prison, and turn men from the power of Satan to God."

17/ We glorify God in a high degree when we suffer for God, and seal the gospel with our blood. This is not a popular method for glorifying God, to be sure. In John 21:18,19, Jesus tells Peter, *Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you*

wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.)

Watson said it best, "The sufferings of the primitive saints did honor to God, and made the gospel famous in the world." Their deaths glorified God!

18/ We glorify God when we give God the glory of all that we do. This is the challenge. We all like to be recognized, especially when we have something well. To be commended is fine, but we must quickly offer the true praise to the one who is deserving of all praise. Again, Watson states this wonderfully well, "When we have done something praiseworthy, we must hide ourselves under the veil of humility, and transfer the glory of all we have done to God."

19/ We glorify God by a holy life. We all know the shame and dishonor that comes when a Christian is caught in sin. This dishonors God. A believer in Christ is to be the exact opposite – live a holy life that glorifies God. *"Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."* (1 John 2:6).

Some closing thoughts -- In the 1981 film, *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell, a world-class runner, was being reprimanded by his sister Jenny, because he was neglecting his church activities aimed at missionary work to China to prepare for the 1924 Olympics. He looked her straight in the eye and said, *"Jenny, I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast! And when I run I feel his pleasure."*

Yes! God's pleasure is when we are doing what we were created to do – run, sing, write, build, fix, and even bake cookies. The joy of being a Christian is that our whole lives are transformed, not just some 'religious' part of us. Paul tells us, *"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."* (1 Cor 6:20).

In your body... get it? With your whole life. And going back to Paul's quote earlier in 1 Corinthians 10:31, even in the most mundane of everyday tasks, eating and drinking, we do it by recognizing how great is our God in giving us life itself. Enjoy and even celebrate the gifts, skills, talents, and abilities that the Lord has blessed you with by using them "to the glory of God."

In summary we glorify God by being a disciple of Jesus Christ.
