



**BEHOLD THE SOUL-THRILLING,
SIN-DESTROYING GLORY OF CHRIST**

MATT PAPA



BETHANY HOUSE PUBLISHERS

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Matt Papa, *Look and Live*
Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2014. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

© 2014 by Matt Papa

Published by Bethany House Publishers
11400 Hampshire Avenue South
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Papa, Matt.

Look and live : behold the soul-thrilling, sin-destroying glory of Christ / Matt Papa.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: “Worship leader and speaker shows that people’s lives follow what their hearts focus on—whether the glory of God or themselves and their desires”—
Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978-0-7642-1251-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Spirituality—Christianity. 2. God (Christianity)—Knowableness. 3. God (Christianity)—Worship and love. 4. Idolatry. 5. Desire—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BV4501.3.P357 2014

248.4—dc23

2014017778

Emphasis in Scripture shown by italics is the author’s. Song lyrics from *Look & Live* album used by permission.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible®, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations identified ESV are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. ESV Text Edition: 2007

Scripture quotations identified KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture quotations identified NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture quotations identified NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Cover design by LOOK Design Studio

Author is represented by Wolgemuth & Associates

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Matt Papa, *Look and Live*
Bethany House, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2014. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

*This book is dedicated to
the precious people
of The Summit Church
in Durham, North Carolina.*

*It has been an honor to behold
the Lamb with you.*

Contents

Acknowledgments	9
Foreword by J.D. Greear	11
Introduction	13
1. Glory and Worship	19
2. The Glory of God	37
3. Bad Aim (Glory and Sin)	63
4. The Blazing Center	81
5. Let My Eyes Adjust	111
6. Scattered Beams	135
7. Glory and Mission	163
8. Glory and Suffering	189
9. Show Me Your Glory	219
Notes	247

Acknowledgments

On a theoretical level, this book's existence is owing to the teaching, preaching, and writing ministries of the following pastor-theologians: Jonathan Edwards, John Piper, Tim Keller, and J.D. Greear.

Edwards' philosophical theology has been unparalleled in helping me see the world with "God glasses." I think Edwards' life was, in a sense, an exposition of the Isaiah 6 truth: "The whole earth is full of His glory."

John Piper's Christian hedonism has been crucial in helping me make the connections between worship and joy. Psalm 67 jumps into mind when I think about Dr. Piper: "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy. . . . Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You." Glory, joy, worship, mission . . . these contributions from Piper into my thinking have been profound and life-altering.

Tim Keller's astute and pastoral ability to take lofty theological concepts and make them bear down on the heart is, to my limited knowledge, unequalled. The phrase "full of grace and truth" comes to mind when I think of Dr. Keller. His preaching has been personally transforming, and this book owes a great debt to his ministry.

J.D. Greear, my pastor, has been a dear friend, and sitting under his teaching has uniquely helped me to make the connections between glory, the gospel, and true transformation. “We love, because He loved us first” are words that come to mind when I think of J.D. and his distinct contribution. I am truly grateful for all of these men, and I hope I have honored them with this work.

On a practical level, I would love to thank Bethany House Publishers for making this book a reality. I’m not sure if this is stereotypical to say in an acknowledgments section, because I’ve never done this before (writing a book), which is precisely why I am so grateful to them. They took a chance with me, and I see it as a gift . . . a bright scattered beam.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the three gentlemen I affectionately call “my band”: Zach Smith, Tyler Mount, and Jon Dobberstein. These dear friends and partners in ministry have walked with me through a lot. I distinctly remember a van ride about three years ago during which the (seven-hour) topic of conversation was “What is glory?” (I know. We are nerds.) Virtually every idea you will read in this book I have said on a stage somewhere, or in a van somewhere, with hours on end of follow-up discussion about accuracy, precision, and helpfulness with these men of God. This book started a long time ago. The van rides I think will always be my favorite memories. Scattered beams.

Foreword

“Bro, that makes me want to run through a wall.” That’s what Matt Papa said to me after we had spent an hour discussing the glory of Jesus revealed in and through the book of Revelation, and it pretty well summarizes Matt’s life. When I listen to Matt teach about or lead worship, I feel like I’m watching a guy who has caught a glimpse of something glorious trying to run through a wall. And he makes me want to go with him.

I honestly don’t know of anyone who has taught me more about worship than Matt Papa. For many years as a professional Christian I struggled to really love God. I knew a lot of facts about God, I was obedient in the church, and I knew how to engage fervently in mission, but the passions of my heart burned only lukewarm. Matt has helped me to see that love for God grows out of an experience of beholding the love of God. We burn only as we behold. The cross, as Matt loves to repeat, is the blazing center of the glory of God. So look, Matt says, and live.

Matt’s worship shows us that true worship begins with the gospel and ends in the mission. It is a rhythm of revelation and response: beholding the wondrous mystery and declaring that mystery to others. It’s what we see in Isaiah: God shows us His glory; we cover our faces and say, “Surely I am a man of unclean

lips” and “here am I, send me.” True worship never needs to be compelled. It is the natural response to seeing Something altogether glorious. True worship is simply glory reflecting off of our faces. It puts the value of the One we’ve just seen on display.

I believe Matt is the greatest songwriter of our generation. I know of no one who better grounds worship in the gospel or more passionately connects it to the mission. When I listen to his music I know that he has beheld something I want to behold. I want to follow him as he runs through a wall.

This is a fantastic book and I commend it to you with the most enthusiastic support. It will help pastors and worship leaders get a better grasp on how and why we worship, and how to teach that to others. It will help ordinary believers rediscover that Beauty calls for our most fervent acts of devotion. And it will help those who haven’t yet been convinced of the Christian faith to catch a glimpse of that glorious sight that has so captivated saints through history and empowered its beholders to do the most remarkable things.

So don’t just read this book, meditate your way through it. I’ll warn you, however—you may want to put on a helmet first, because at some point in this book you’re probably going to try to run through a wall.

J.D. Greear

Author of *Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart:*
How to Know for Sure You Are Saved

Introduction

Let me begin by saying this: This is a book about worship, and I am an expert on worship. I'm not being arrogant. It's just true.

You are an expert on worship, too.

Neurologist Daniel Levitin says, “Ten thousand hours of practice is required to achieve the level of mastery associated with being a world-class expert—in anything.”¹ This would mean that at the ripe age of fourteen months, you became a worship expert.

It's all we do.

What we perceive to be just “life happening” . . . is not. It is the pulse of worship. The shrapnel of worship. The blast site of worship. Life is just picking up the pieces.

We are all facing *some* deity. Some glory has swept us off our feet, and this very moment, like a rabid animal, we are pursuing it. That's what life is.

My hope in these pages is that I can help you sense what is stirring down there in your soul. To feel what is happening. To remember it . . . like when you begin to recall a dream in the early morning after you wake. The soul is on a quest.

And then, ultimately, to help you know what to do with it. To know where to aim it. To its proper Object. That's what this book's about.

Let me also begin by saying this: I am *not* an expert on worship. As I write this, I am thirty years old. I'm not a doctor of anything. Really. I'm just a guy who likes to write and talk and sing. But I do love God. I adore Him. And even though on a visit to Rome you would probably be most helped by a really intelligent tour guide, maybe you could also be helped, if even a little, by the kid in the back saying, "Wow."

"Look!"

Maybe the kid will spark a little wonder in you.

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

That's what I hope this book is for you. That's what I hope I am for you: a John the Baptist, the voice of one crying in the wilderness.²

"I thank the Lord if He makes my writings useful," John Newton once wrote. "I hope they contain some of His truths; and truth, like a torch, may be seen by its own light, without reference to the hand that holds it."³

Here's hoping you see the torch. The truth. The glory.

As fallen human beings we are plagued with inordinate affections. We love green pieces of paper more than God. We love balls made out of pigskin more than God. We've shown we even love apples more than God. We, like Esau, have traded our birthright—the dignity of our shameless, joy-filled, glory-beholding, glory-reflecting existence—for a bowl of beans.

As Blaise Pascal so aptly put, "Man's sensitivity to little things and insensitivity to the greatest things are marks of a strange disorder."⁴ Our hearts are sensitive toward the little opinions of others, and insensitive to the great judgments of God.

And so, we worship our way into sin. We must worship our way out.⁵

We don't need more willpower. We don't need to get ourselves together. We need a greater thrill . . . a more captivating beauty.

What we need is a vision of God.

We need to see glory.

Are you addicted? Anxious? Unhappy? Still fighting that sin you've been fighting for years? Exhausted from trying harder? From religion?

I do not call you to work or to strive, but to simply lift up your eyes. *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

My aim is to help you overcome idolatry and certain sadness by pointing you to the all-satisfying, sin-destroying glory of Jesus. *Pointing* being the key word.

This is not a book *on* God's glory. There isn't enough paper in the world or words in language to adequately do that.

The call is this: Make your life one unflinching gaze upon the glory of Christ.

Do this, and you will live.

Do not do this, and you will die. You will *die*.

You won't have victory over sin. You won't make it through your struggle.

You will tinker with toys and technology and all manner of counterfeit beauty until your life is wasted.

Look and Live!

The title of this book, *Look and Live*, comes from a familiar story in the Old Testament in Numbers 21. God's people were wandering through the wilderness. They became grouchy (as we do, too, when in the wilderness). Tired and hungry . . . grown-up kids who needed a nap.

They had eaten manna for a while now, and they were getting sick of it. Bamanna bread, mannacotti, manna burgers (shout-out to Keith Green). So they began whining. Grumbling. Disbelieving that their all-knowing Father knew what they needed.

Never a good idea.

Insulted by their unbelief and ingratitude, the Father gave them a spanking in the form of reptiles. God sent poisonous

snakes to bite the people, and many of them began dying immediately. Naturally, as they often did (and we do, too, when our unbelief bites us), they returned and pleaded for mercy. The great intercessor Moses came to God and prayed for them, and God answered . . . in a rather interesting way:

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.”

Numbers 21:8

Thanks, Lord, but really?

Put a snake on a pole. That’s what’s going to rescue us?

Why show mercy in this way? Couldn’t God have just made the snakes vanish? Or maybe turned them into cute little puppies? Why the snake-pole?

Jesus explains why in the two verses that precede the most well-known verse in all of the Bible:

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life.

John 3:14–15

God, the Father and Master-Teacher, orchestrated that moment in history—a true historical parable—to show us what the cross is about and what faith is like.

Faith is a looking.

It is the serious looking of sin-stricken, snake-bitten people toward God’s peculiar and radical display of mercy . . . the crucified, bloody, exalted Son of God.

And if we don’t see Him, we die.

We die.

We go to hell.

We have no victory over sin. Our lives remain a self-destructive mess. We have no joy. We are slaves to our addictions.

Unless we see Him. Unless we run to survey the Savior on the pole. Unless we fight through the crowds and through our doubts, and lift up our eyes.

The poison of idolatry will rot our veins until the glory of the crucified God-man permeates our vision. To live is to behold Him.

My call is not “Look and get a better life” or “Look and get a warm fuzzy.”

From one who bears the fang-shaped scar, my call to you is: Behold the antivenom of the soul . . . the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Look and live.



Glory and Worship

The centre of me is always and eternally a terrible pain—a curious wild pain—a searching for something beyond what the world contains, something transfigured and infinite—the beatific vision—God—I do not find it, I do not think it is to be found—but the love of it is my life.

Bertrand Russell, 1916, Letter to Constance Malleeson,
The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell

For something brighter than the
Glory of my name in the lights
For something truer than this
Got-it-all-together disguise
I've got this cry deep inside
There's got to be
Something bigger than me

“Bigger Than Me”
from the *Look & Live* album

I think I always knew what “glory” was, but only in the way most human beings know what it is, in a distant, haunted, indefinable kind of way.

I had seen glimpses of it in sports, heard its echoes in music, felt its charm in romance, and tasted its promise in success.

I even knew, growing up as a church kid, that God “had” lots of glory, but I couldn’t really tell you why or how. I knew God was glorious much like the way a man who has never used a hammer “knows” the Burj Khalifa (the tallest building in the world) was difficult to build.

Of course it was. But what does he *know*?

The great theologian Jonathan Edwards described this kind of knowing well when he said, “There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness.”¹ The former, I believe, was my kind of knowledge of the most important reality in the world . . . the glory of God.

I knew it was there, but I didn’t love that it was there.

I believed it, but I never beheld it.

I could recite it, but I couldn’t relish it.

James speaks candidly about this sort of knowing: “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (2:19 NIV). In other words, there is a kind of knowing—a cold, heartless kind—that is pointless, even demonic.

I grew up in the Bible Belt, and when you are in church every night of the week because that’s what you do, your knowledge of God can become worse than demonic, because you forfeit the ability to do the one virtuous thing demons do: shudder.

Familiarity breeds apathy.

I was swimming in glory—surrounded by its sights and sounds—and my jaw was not on the floor where it should have been. I was rich but lived as a poor man, a guest to a feast but always hungry, like a man content to stare at stick figures while the *Mona Lisa* sits in his basement. I was too busy for Treasure. Too busy for Beauty.

Or so it seems looking back. Perhaps it will always be this way, remembering our faith of yesterday. The more you taste and

see the magnificence of God in the now, the more you wonder if you were even a Christian five years ago.

After college I went into full-time ministry. Me and the sizable chip on my shoulder were ready and determined to change the world. God needed me on His team, and I was sure I would be the one to do something great and give the devil a definitive deathblow. (Yeah, I know, Somebody already did that. But when you're running around building a kingdom, sometimes you forget.)

God was certainly using me in wonderful ways. I was going on mission trips. I was leading Bible studies. I was doing loads of Christian things. My schedule was full, and it seemed that lots of people respected me. All the while, I was depressed, enslaved to the approval of others, and addicted to pornography.

I would love to tell you that today I stand “cured” of these things, but I’m not. I have been radically changed, and these wounds of mine, these diseases that I thought might bury me, have been tremendously healed. But I’m not “fixed.” I’m still longing for the cure—that final, blessed remedy that happily waits in one place—the glory on His face. Until then, it’s all-out war. I can say, however, that today, by God’s grace, I’m standing. I’m in the fight, and I am living in victory. I’m generally content and at peace. From lust’s powerful bonds I’ve been released. God has truly done a miraculous work in my life. My scars are numerous, my flesh is powerless, my enemy is dangerous, but my God is glorious and His grace is totally sufficient.

So what brought about the change?

Well, I’d like to say it was sheer willpower, 100-percent human grit and determination. There may have been an ounce of that, but it definitely wasn’t that.

It wasn’t by trying harder. It wasn’t by my ability to say “no.”

I didn’t find victory by praying five hours every morning and fasting five days a week (although that would’ve been wonderful).

It wasn't the anti-porn computer software programs that I used on all of my computers that broke my addiction to pornography.

It wasn't all the accountability groups I was in.

These things all seemed to help me, but only on a kind of surface level. I was still sick, still dissatisfied, still *looking*.

The change came, but it was only by experiencing a greater Thrill. It was by beholding a greater Beauty. God.

I had a mentor ask me if I had simply been spending time with Jesus. Sadly the answer was no, so I began to set my own gaze on His glory, before I even knew what Glory was.

I began to look deeply into the gospel. Deeply into God's Word. Deeply into the cross.

I began to just sit with God—to seek Him in His temple (Psalm 27:4). And as I did this, slowly, something started happening.

Beauty began coming into view. A Light. A Brightness . . . which was there all along. I just had to let my eyes adjust. Now, an eclipse was occurring in my soul—a displacing of all counterfeit beauty and lesser thrills.

I began to taste the sweetness of the Honey.

I began to tremble, to smile, in the most self-forgetful way.

My whole being leaned toward this Eternal Weight. Everything inside of me was screaming, "I was made for this!" There was Substance.

I was seeing God, the Glory I was created for. And I knew in that moment, in my bones, what it would mean for me to choose to fix my soul-gaze upon this Beauty. It was clear what the result would be.

Life.

Transversely, I understood in that moment the consequence of choosing to look away. I knew the result of going back, back to the numbness, back to the short-lived, candy-coated, one-night-stand idols I had once adored.

Back to gulping from the empty, ever-deepening wells of wealth and pornography.

I knew the consequence of throwing the full weight of my
inconsolable soul onto the shadows of this creation.

Disillusionment. Disappointment. Despair.

I knew in that moment the consequence of turning away from
this matchless Glory . . . of looking back.

Pillar of salt.

Death.

The change didn't happen overnight. It occurred over about a
three-year period of regularly setting my eyes toward God. But
as Beauty began coming into view, I began to feel something
I had never felt before. A satisfaction, an incomparable thrill,
and a displacing of all lesser ones.

Suddenly, sin wasn't as sweet anymore. Like being offered a
McRib sandwich after I enjoyed a filet mignon.

I got a glimpse of Glory, and I was changed. Forever set on a
trajectory of seeking more of these Glory-glimpses.

I looked, and I lived.

The Quest of the Soul

I discovered that I was not alone in my hunt for glory, something
more than myself. It has been going on since time began.

Sehnsucht.

That's right. *Sehnsucht* (pronounced zeyn-zookht). Don't
blame me. Blame twentieth-century British author C. S. Lewis,
who wrote about it in his book *Surprised by Joy*.

Sehnsucht is a German word that is hard to translate directly.
It is made up of three words:

Sehn (to long for, to sigh, to yearn, to desire, to miss),

Sehen (to see, to view, to watch, or to behold), and

Sucht (a mania, an addiction, an obsession).

In other words, *Sehnsucht* describes the deep desire that exists
in all of us like a throbbing obsession.

It is the soul's aching addiction to see Glory.

It is the soul's cry: More!

It is that feeling we all know—that sensation awakened by viewing a beautiful sunset, by watching an underdog's comeback victory.

Sehnsucht, that sleeping hungry giant, is awakened by and hungry for *glory*.

My aim in these pages, my hope by the Holy Spirit, is to awaken a giant in you. To revive a glory-hungry giant and then point it to its proper and necessary Object. To point it away from the empty wells that cannot satisfy and toward the Fountain of infinite satisfaction.

Whenever we place Sehnsucht on any created thing, the thing is devoured and the soul is disappointed. The insatiable must have the Inexhaustible. The inconsolable must have the Incomparable.

We were made for only one glory. One glory that Sehnsucht cannot consume. One glory that is enough.

The glory of God.

The Grammar of Glory

If someone asked you, “What is glory?” what would you say?

Many would respond in nebulous, romantic, confusing speech, even though the term is somewhat common Christian vocabulary.

Glory is difficult to define for two reasons.

First, it is difficult because it is so similar to the word *beauty*. Beauty is something we all recognize immediately when we see it, but something we can scarcely give parameters in a definition. It is something transcendent that we experience—some pleasing quality that demands our attention, found in a thousand places. Glory is very similar. We know it when we see it. It is a word befitting poetry . . . and Deity.

Second, *glory* is difficult to grasp because of its broad uses in the Bible. *Glory* (and its word-kins) appears in the Scriptures as

a noun, a verb, an adjective, an adverb, and the object of prepositions. Think about these various uses of the word *glory* in the Bible:

Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory.
(Revelation 4:11)

Then Moses said, “I pray You, show me Your glory!” (Exodus 33:18)

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

... looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. (Titus 2:13)

Therefore in the east give glory to the Lord; exalt the name of the Lord. (Isaiah 24:15 NIV)

Awake, my glory! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. (Psalm 57:8)

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:4)

But You, O Lord, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head. (Psalm 3:3)

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Galatians 6:14 KJV)

So glory is something that God *has*? Maybe something God *is*? And it’s something that we give *to* God? Like praise or something? And it’s a *place* that I’m going to go one day?

Yes.

Confused? Me too.

But don’t be discouraged. This great scope of uses for the word *glory* is perhaps just another reason it is wonderful to ascribe to our great God.

The word *glory* appears in Scripture most commonly in two ways.

First, in its most recurring sense, *glory* occurs as a noun, as some adorning quality that something or someone possesses (e.g., the glory of God in Exodus 33:18 and Titus 2:13). For practical purposes, let's call this *glory-within*.

Second, it most often appears as a kind of response of worship to something or someone, which can take the form of a noun or a verb (e.g., glory to God, to God be glory, or glorify God in Revelation 4:11 and Isaiah 24:15). Let's call this *glory-given*.

The business of this book is to examine glory-within and to understand its relevance to God and to our lives. *Relevance* being the key word. Greater knowledge of God is useless if it is not for the greater worship of God.

Stay with me.

Let me show you three biblical puzzle pieces that fit together to fully explain glory-within.

Biblical puzzle piece #1: The most common Hebrew word for glory is *kabowd* (pronounced kaw-bode). It means “honor, dignity, splendor, or abundance.” More clarifying, though, is the root form of this word, which is *kabad* (pronounced kaw-bad). *Kabad* essentially means “weight,” the heaviness or the weight of something or someone.

With respect to God, then, the glory of God would be God's weightiness—His infinite importance and value.

Biblical puzzle piece #2: The Scriptures teach us that glory is in a multitude of places and things, and exists in varying degrees. For example, there's the glory of fruitfulness (Isaiah 35:2), the glory of the land (Ezekiel 25:9), and the glory of horses (Job 39:20 kjv).

Then there's the glory of men and women individually (1 Corinthians 11:7), the glory of Solomon (Matthew 6:29), the glory of the church (Ephesians 5:27), the glory of angels (Hebrews 9:5), and, of course, there is that which is above

all, over all, the Source of it all and the point of it all . . . the glory of God.

So, if we, like good puzzle enthusiasts, combine puzzle pieces 1 and 2, it would seem that all things exist with some degree of weight, value, or importance. A tree or a dog might possess glory—some degree of worth or value—simply because it exists. But the glory of a tree is certainly less than the glory of a man, since man is crowned by God with glory (Psalm 8:5) and made in His very image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). Similarly, the glory of a man—his importance or dignity—is infinitely less than the glory of the God who created him.

It would seem that a thing's sheer existence is a display of its glory, its worth, for if it had *no value* it should not exist at all.² However, we should not say that *all* things exist with glory, for many of the things that mankind creates do not possess goodness, because mankind is fallen. Therefore, it follows to say that all things, or actions, possess glory to the degree that they are a reflection of the glory of God.

Do you have a puzzle headache yet? Just one more piece.

Biblical puzzle piece #3: The *goodness* of something seems to be an important aspect of glory, especially in light of Exodus 33.³

When Moses said to God that greatest of prayers—“Show me Your glory”—God’s response was, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you.” It seems that perhaps the goodness of God *is* His glory. Or, as Charles Spurgeon said, “The brightest gem in the crown of God’s glory is His goodness.”⁴

So, now we combine all these puzzle pieces. And glory-defined appears. As Jonathan Edwards said, “Glory is the outshining of internal excellence.”⁵

Glory. The weight of intrinsic goodness. The manifest gravity of dignity.

From Glory to Worship

Now let's move on to what I call *glory-given* (i.e., “glory to God”).

Glory-given is the reverence of glory-within.

To glorify something is to say, “Wow! This is *good*. Everyone look!” This is the way that *glory* most often appears in the New Testament. It is the Greek word *doxa*. Glory-given.

Worship.

Perhaps you have heard some of the common Christian buzz phrases:

“You were made to worship.”

“Worship is a lifestyle.”

“Worship is more than a song.”

I certainly would not disagree with them. We are all worshippers. However, these phrases are wimpy in their power to communicate the truth of our condition. Worship is not merely a lifestyle choice.

We cannot not worship.

In 2005, New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady was interviewed by Steve Kroft of *60 Minutes*. At one point in the interview, Brady said:

Why do I have three Super Bowl rings, and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, “Hey man, this is what is.” I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think: God, it's gotta be more than this. I mean, this can't be what it's all cracked up to be. I mean, I've done it. I'm 27. And what else is there for me?⁶

Brady was already one of the most decorated QBs of all time. Three Super Bowls. Hall of Fame stats. Television ads. Ladies love him. And he wanted *more*?

What was he after? What did he want?

In Exodus 32, God's people find themselves in a similar situation.

Feet tapping. Getting restless.

Israel had just seen the fireworks of the exodus . . . the giant walls of water and the plagues and the drowning armies. They had just experienced the terrifying thunder and lightning of Sinai. They had seen God's hand and mighty outstretched arm. But now, suddenly, it's as if they forgot it all.

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." Aaron said to them, "Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."

Exodus 32:1–4

Now, many times we give Aaron and God's people a hard time here.

I mean, come on, guys . . . a gold cow? Really?!? After all the smoke and pyrotechnics of the exodus?

But what I want to point out is not the stupidity but the craving—the hunger. Moses really wasn't up there that long, but look . . . *the people are bored*. They are getting busy.

It's almost as if they *need* something to worship.

And this is the truest condition of our souls. You see, it is not merely that "we are worshipers" or merely that "worship is a lifestyle." That is far too weak.

We cannot not worship.

We are worship machines.

Pascal called it our propensity to "diversion." Augustine used the word *restless*. Edwards used the word *disposition*. Call it what you want, but we are continually bowing down to our

highest perceived beauty. We are obsessed. Addicted. All of us, addicted to something.

The question is, to what?

Tim Keller, in his book *Encounters with Jesus*, tells how American writer David Foster Wallace articulated this idea perfectly in a commencement speech to the graduating class of Kenyon College in 2005:

Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god . . . to worship . . . is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. . . . Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure, and you will always feel ugly. . . . Worship power, and you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. Look, the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they are evil or sinful; it is that they're unconscious. They are default settings.

Not even a religious person, Wallace understood that everyone worships. Everyone builds their life on something. Sadly, two years after giving that speech, Wallace committed suicide.⁷

Do you see? Something is going to eat you alive. “When we sin, worship does not stop,” Harold Best says. “It changes directions.”⁸

We never begin worship. We aim it.

The crucial question is: *What* do you worship?

And closely connected to that question is another question: *Why* are we always worshipping?

Worship, like love or faith, is a response.

As pastor David Platt says, “Worship is a rhythm of revelation and response.”⁹ You see something magnificent, and then respond in the praise or adoration of that thing. That’s worship.

You behold or experience some glory, whether it's the glory of a slam dunk, the glory of a sunset, the glory of a rock band, or the glory of God, and then, quite naturally, you overflow with awe.

You sing. You say “Wow!” You call others to experience it with you.

Are you beginning to see the relationship between glory and worship? Worship is offering *glory-given* in response to seeing *glory-within*.

It is giving value to whatever we see to be valuable.

We worship whatever we enjoy and respect most. This is why the glory vision is always before the worship expression—the way that eating the filet mignon happens before the “Mmm,” the way the touchdown happens before the eruption of applause.

Glory entices and “begins” worship. The vision of glory is where the journey of worship starts. The reason we are always worshipping is because we are always looking at something. And sometimes the glory appears so great, so massive, so important, you will sacrifice whatever it takes to get it.

This is why, after being a worship leader for fifteen years, I have chosen to focus on the topic of glory rather than worship. Worship is the natural by-product of seeing glory. Glory is foundational to worship. And if I can point just a few eyes to the glory of Jesus in these pages, songs of worship and lives of praise will rise unending to my glorious King.

The Crushing Weight of Glory

When the US stock market crashed in 2008, the chief financial officer of Freddie Mac hanged himself in his basement. A French money manager who invested many of Europe's leading families' money lost over a billion dollars, so he slit his wrists and died in his Madison Avenue office.

What happened? Their god got crucified. These people set their gaze on the glory of wealth. They invested their entire

lives, their wallets, their family's wallets, and their businesses into something that was never strong enough or stable enough to merit that kind of investment. They gave money too much weight, too much glory. We see the same story in Scripture in Luke 12:16–20:

And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'"

Crash.

This is the essence of sin, and the story of all our lives. We have all set our hopes onto something or someone we thought was really impressive and important. Something we thought would really make us happy . . . money, another person, a position. So we examine the thing. We lean on it a little bit. We test it. We taste it. It seems *good*. We respect it a little more, so we lean on it a little more. Pretty soon we trust enough to place the full weight of our soul upon it, and then . . . crash.

We end up disappointed. Despairing.

Why?

Because it wasn't God. And everything crumbles under the weight of worship except God.

When I had just graduated from college, I was beginning my pursuit of a career in Christian music. My band and I were playing a lot of places, and God was extremely gracious to provide us with lots of opportunities. However, I wasn't really happy, because I wasn't on a "label."

For me, getting a record deal was that next level of success I needed (it was my god). I was sure that when that happened,

I would be totally content and wouldn't live in white-knuckled anxiety anymore.

Well, guess what? It happened.

And I wasn't content.

On top of that, I was so exhausted from all the interviews, traveling, etc., to this place of "happiness" that I ended up in a depression!

That god just wasn't good enough. Sadly true in my life were the words of philosopher Ravi Zacharias: "The loneliest moment in life is when you have just experienced what you thought would deliver the ultimate—and it has let you down."¹⁰

The triune God is the only thing large enough and interesting enough to bear the weight of glory, and ultimately worship. Anything else will break your heart.

Money isn't secure enough.

Sex isn't thrilling enough.

Entertainment isn't impressive enough.

Music isn't interesting enough.

Food isn't satisfying enough.

People aren't reliable enough.

This world isn't good enough. Creation isn't permanent enough. We were created by God and for God, and until we understand that, we are restless, brokenhearted glory chasers, always seeking something more.

Only God, the highest and greatest good, the infinite holy One, is finally *enough*.

Where Do You Go for Glory?

Maybe you're having a great time living life the way you want to live it—spending your money where you want to spend it, using your time how you want to use it, setting your gaze on the glory that's around you—and you are perfectly happy and content with no God telling you how you should live.

Let me say this to you with all the love in my heart: Your crash is coming. It's called death.

Everything around you is passing. This life is a vapor. Don't wager your soul on a glory so small—this world and all of its beauty bluffs. Only the infinite God is enough. Don't gamble away your existence for stuff.

“For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?” (Mark 8:36).

So what do you worship? What “glory” are you looking at? Where is the whole attention of your soul? And most importantly, can the object of your worship bear the weight of worship?

Sometimes it is difficult to know what exactly we worship. Many of us would like to say “God,” but many times our lives indicate otherwise.

Take some time now to prayerfully work through the following questions. Examine each one of them and ask God to lay your heart bare before Him. Write, if that helps you.

In your life, what achievement would finally make you happy? What one thing, if you lost it, would ultimately destroy your happiness? That is what you worship.

Where do you spend your time and your treasure? Our money and our time flow effortlessly to whatever our true god is.

What things typically make you angry? Anxious? Deeply depressed? Our emotions are like smoke from the fire of the altar of the true god we worship.

Turn to God. Now. Test Him. Try Him. See if He won't satisfy the depths of your soul.

Look to Him, really look. Linger long enough to let your eyes adjust.

See if He isn't as magnificent as what I can describe and more. Examine if He might be that treasure you are seeking—that

deep-seated, death-defying satisfaction that you hunt like a throbbing obsession.

Labor to see Him, to know Him the way you have labored and sacrificed in service to your other gods. He will not disappoint.

As C. S. Lewis famously said, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”¹¹

Let us turn now to that world . . .