

Glory!

by Grant Thorpe

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Everyone has a special glory. Those who are famous, powerful, rich or brave may have an obvious glory, but glory is important for everyone.

You may remember the film 'Glory'. It was about American blacks who enlisted among the Union forces during the Civil War, seeking glory in a country that had not treated them well. Many of them laid down their lives in the interests of being accepted in their country. The search for glory is certainly a very powerful one.

You can see how important glory is by asking what its opposite is: shame. We cannot bear shame. It goes deeply into who we are. So does glory. In a way, glory is what we really are. But having said this, it is just as clear that glory is something that we cannot have by ourselves. Glory is something that another gives to us.

We all have glory because we are made in the image and glory of God. God is glorious. In himself, that is, he is full of glory. But he has made us to reflect his glory, so we are the image and glory of God.

[Revelation 19:1; I Corinthians 11:7.](#)

When God made us, he made us male and female. He made man as his image and glory and woman as the glory of the man. Finally, we will not be able to understand being male and female in any other way. God is preparing us for the marriage of Jesus Christ to all who have trusted in him, his Church. On that day, his Church will have God's glory fully, and Christ will see his Bride as his glory.

[Revelation 21:2, 10-11](#)

When God made us, he also made us very different from one another. This is true within one country, one age, one group, one sex or one family. This gives us huge problems, particularly when our ideas of what we need for our glory gets in the road of each other. However, all the variation is needed to make up the full reflection. The differences should not be a problem. The problem lies elsewhere.

One writer in the Bible said that 'the God of glory appeared to . . . Abraham'. God said Abraham would have an inheritance and be a blessing in the earth. We find out what God's glory is by discovering that God is concerned for our glory. He made us to reflect his glory and he is still intent on making it so.

[Acts 7:2; Genesis 12:1-3](#)

We may think that the problem in having our true glory is the forces that compete with us and steal what is really ours. Those who defame others will bear their punishment, but the

problem is larger than what others can do to us. Our main problem arises when we are trying to gain our own glory. We try to make others like us or pity us, or favour us. At the same time, we must conceal from others what will make them ashamed of us. There are many means of doing this.

Jesus said: 'How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God?' What actually happens is that we try to gain glory for ourselves rather than reflect what he has already made us to be. We fall short of his glory. In trying to climb high we actually fall low. In fact, God has already placed us in a wonderfully high place. He has crowned us with glory and honour and put everything under our feet.

John 5:44; Romans 3:23; Psalm 8:4–6

There is a whole story of glory in the Bible, so we are not left to work out this whole matter by ourselves. As I said, the God of glory had an inheritance for Abraham and a blessing to bring to the world. God was and is more interested in giving us our glory than ever we could be.

The story continues with God coming to his people Israel when they were slaves in Egypt. He revealed his glory to Pharaoh through terrible plagues so that finally, Pharaoh was persuaded to release the Israelites. Then, God was present among them as a pillar of fire, and later, as a voice from Mount Sinai where he revealed his law to them. In all of these actions, God was not only revealing his glory but bringing Israel to the glory he had for them and for the world through them.

Exodus 14:4, 17–18; 15:11; Exodus 40:34–38; Exodus 24:16–17

Again, Israel was not eager to be that glorious people. They still wanted a glory they could secure for themselves. They made a terrible mistake of worshipping a golden calf and God said he would destroy them on the spot. Moses knew there was more to God than being a Judge to condemn them. He asked God to reveal his glory. Whatever he knew already was not enough. He knew there was something more to God's glory and he knew he needed to see it.

Exodus 33:18

Many have become sceptical and bitter because of human failure. That is natural enough—if that is all there is. But that is not all there is. There is a God in heaven whose glory is far greater than all the shame in the earth.

God told Moses he should climb Mount Sinai again. There, God would reveal his glory to Moses. Moses does not tell us what he saw on the next day, but he does tell us what he heard. The glory of God cannot be seen without hearing it.

'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation' (Exodus 34:6–7).

Here, God is telling us how he will deal with us. He is full of steadfast love and faithfulness. He was saying this to people who had just ignored him and built a golden calf. He says it to

the whole world that loves its many idols. He won't let us get away with ignoring him, but he comes to sinners and says that he will faithfully have mercy on his people. This is God's goodness, or his glory.

Exodus 33:18 – 34:9

Glory is a very tricky thing. Many fights, whether in school yards, courtrooms or whole continents come down to this: 'Will you give me my glory?' To have glory is to be human, and yet, we cannot have it if we make it ourselves. It must come from another. In fact, we should seek the glory that comes from God..

Romans 2:6–7

It has taken Jesus to settle the matter. He could see that his fellow countrymen were trying to get glory for themselves, but their lives were shameful. He didn't complain about this. Rather, he set about restoring the glory we had lost. He himself was the outshining of God's glory; not just its reflection like the rest of humanity but its outshining. He was the Son of God and he was full of grace and truth. Moses heard this on Mount Sinai, but now, the disciples of Jesus were looking at it.

Hebrews 1:1–3; John 1:14

The disciples saw Christ's glory in his miracles. They showed that he had come from his Father, God. He was not building up his own glory. The glory he had was the glory his Father was giving him, and that was glory enough; glory enough to change the world.

John 2:10; John 8:50

The glory that God especially gave to his Son was the glory to die for the sins of the world. In all the world, there is nothing more glorious than this. It is the thing the world most needs and the most powerful thing to bring glory back to people who are full of shame.

Hebrews 2:5–10;

Because Jesus has died for us, the glory of God which Moses heard about has now been seen in all the earth. That is why we talk about it now. God's glory actually shines as his people tell of this wonderful deed.

II Corinthians 4:1–7

God raised his Son up from the dead and gave him glory. This time, it is the glory of a fully formed human being, seated at God's right hand. There, Jesus has responsibility for everything so that the knowledge of God's glory will finally fill the earth.

I Peter 1:21; Revelation 5:6–14; Habakkuk 2:14

This may sound very grand but it is also very practical. Jesus said that the glory the Father had given him he would give to us. The glory the Father had given him was the glory of being the Son of God and of conveying the love of the Father to us. Now, everyone who trusts in Christ has the same Father, God, and is loved with the same love with which the Son is loved. If you think about it, that is glory!

John 17:22–23; John 1:14; Ephesians 3:14–21

I said that we cannot do anything about getting glory for ourselves—not successfully. We can't do anything about the shame we feel either. Christ has loved us and borne the shame

that was ours. Now, God has raised him up and, in his name given us the glory of his Son to share. We can certainly do something about this. We can believe in Jesus Christ and receive the glory, honour and immortality that comes from believing in him.

This is more than a human being can understand, let alone receive. However, God poured out the Holy Spirit so that we would understand these gifts from God. By the Holy Spirit, God shows us that Jesus Christ is really Lord. The Spirit teaches us to call God our Father. By the Holy Spirit, the love of God is poured into our hearts. That means that the same love with which God loves the world he pours into us so that, instead of complaining about the world, we love it. We are actually changed from one degree of glory to another in readiness for the day when everything will be glorious.

I Corinthians 2:6–13; John 16:12–14; I Corinthians 12:3; Romans 8:15–16; Romans 5:5; II Corinthians 3:18

No-one can pretend that everything is already glorious and that nothing needs to change. People who imagine this become arrogant, pushy, and then, perhaps, anxious and violent when things don't work out. Jesus said he would come back to earth. He will come in glory. On that day, he will reveal the glorious thing he has been doing in his people all the time. Nothing will have been wasted. Nothing will have been useless. Even if we have to suffer for Christ and be shamed by the world, the Spirit of glory is on us. The coming of Christ will show that we have had glorious lives, not shameful ones.

Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; I Peter 4:14; I Peter 1:7; 4:13; 5:1

So, what should we do? We should do everything for the glory of God. If we get caught up seeking our own glory, we will lose everything. Look at Jesus Christ! Then you will see that the God of glory has come to us. His glory will shine in your hearts and it will be the glory of his grace and faithful love. His glory will bring you to glory. Then, when he says, 'Do everything to the glory of God' you will want to do just that. This is what it really means to be human—to reflect the glory of God.

I Corinthians 10:31

An old friend of mine once said: 'God didn't mean us to live just anyhow, but gloriously!' He was dying at the time, but he was still living gloriously. At the last day, we will see him, with Christ, together with all who have trusted in him rather than themselves. In that day, the whole earth will be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. No one then will doubt God's glory. No-one, then, will doubt their own glory either.