

Glorifying God . . . Period

On January 5, 2001, I was introduced to Campus Outreach. I was standing in front of 4,000 students in Atlanta at the Campus Outreach National Christmas Conference. From that first meeting, it was in my heart to bring Campus Outreach to Minnesota and to Bethlehem. I have said more than once publicly that maybe the greatest legacy I will leave to the church I pastored for 33 years will be the presence of Campus Outreach as part of the ministry of the church.

One of the reasons I have loved this ministry is the fact that your mission statement begins with the supreme passion of my life: “Glorifying God by building laborers on the campus for the lost world.” And so it is a great honor to be asked to speak to you on that theme: Glorifying God.

Definition and Title

Definition: “Glorifying” means feeling and thinking and acting in ways that reflect his greatness, that make much of God, that give evidence of the supreme greatness of all his attributes and the all-satisfying beauty of his manifold perfections.

The title of this first message is “Glorifying God . . . Period.” That is: Glorifying God as the ultimate, absolute, all-pervasive reason for being everything we are, and doing everything we do. The main point of this message is this: The reason you should glorify God in everything is that God glorifies God in everything.

And the way I aim to show this to you is by turning with you to the book of Exodus and by watching God reveal himself as God, as personal, as glorious, and as passionate to be known for the glorious personal God that he is. Those are the four steps we will take: He reveals himself 1) as God, 2) as personal, 3) as glorious, and 4) as passionate to be known for the glorious personal God that he is.

“I Am Who I Am”

So let’s turn first to Exodus 3:12–15. God has come to Moses and told him to go down to Egypt and tell the Israelites God is going to deliver them from bondage.

He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.” Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

They ask me my name, God says, and I will tell you three things in response to their request.

First (verse 14), “God said to Moses, ‘I Am Who I Am.’” He did not say that was his name. He said, in effect: Before I tell you my name, I want you to be stunned by this fact: “I Am Who I Am.” And it seems to me that God would say this to us right now. You want to ask about what it means to glorify me, to do everything to my glory? Let me tell you something first. Let it sink in

that I AM. Before you talk about me or do anything for me, be amazed that I exist. I absolutely am. This is first. This is foundational. This is of infinite importance.

Second (verse 14), “And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, “I Am has sent me to you.”” He still hasn’t given Moses his name. He is building a bridge between his being and his name, which we will see in verse 15. Here he simply puts the statement of his being in the place of his name. Say, “I Am has sent me to you.” The one who is — who absolutely is — sent me to you. This is not yet his name. It’s the basis of his name.

Third (verse 15), “God also said to Moses [and now comes his name], ‘Say this to the people of Israel, “The LORD [Hebrew: “Yahweh”], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.”” “This is my name forever,” referring to Yahweh (LORD).

Finally, he gives us his name. It’s almost always translated LORD (all caps) in the English Bible. But the Hebrew would be pronounced something like, “Yahweh,” and is built on, or associated with, the word for “I Am.” So every time we hear the word Yahweh (or the short form Yah, which you hear every time you sing “hallelu-jah,” “praise Yahweh”), or every time you see LORD in the English Bible, you should think: this is a proper name (like Peter or James or John) built out of the word for “I Am” and reminding us each time that God absolutely is.

What Does It Mean That God Is?

What does it mean that God gives himself a personal name essentially meaning “I am who I am,” and then uses it over 5,000 times in the Old Testament, and makes it his purpose that Israel and all the nations know him by this name?

In a few minutes, we are going to see how jealous he is to be known as the glorious Yahweh, but first, what does it mean to be Yahweh? What does it mean to be I am who I am? What does it mean for God to be?

Here are ten answers, for starters — the foundation of all his glory:

That God is means he never had a beginning. This staggers the mind. Every child asks, “Who made God?” And every wise parent says, “Nobody made God. God simply is. And always was. No beginning.”

That God is means God will never end. If he did not come into being; he cannot go out of being, because he is being. He is what is. There is no place to go outside of being. There is only he. Before he creates, that’s all that is: God.

That God is means God is absolute reality. There is no reality before him. There is no reality outside of him unless he wills it and makes it. He is not one of many realities before he creates. He is simply there as absolute reality. He is all that was eternally. No space, no universe, no emptiness. Only God. Absolutely there. Absolutely all.

That God is means that God is utterly independent. He depends on nothing to bring him into being or support him or counsel him or make him what he is. That is what the word “absolute” being means. It’s what the linguistic construction “I am who I am” means.

That God is means rather that everything that is not God depends totally on God. All that is not God is secondary, and dependent. The entire universe is utterly secondary. Not primary. It came into being by God and stays in being moment by moment on God's decision to keep it in being.

That God is means all the universe is by comparison to God as nothing. Contingent, dependent reality is to absolute, independent reality as a shadow to substance. As an echo to a thunderclap. As a bubble to the ocean. All that we see, all that we are amazed by in the world and in the galaxies, is, compared to God, as nothing. "All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness" (Isaiah 40:17).

That God is means that God is constant. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He cannot be improved. He is not becoming anything. He is who he is. There is no development in God. No progress. Absolute perfection cannot be improved.

That God is means that he is the absolute standard of truth and goodness and beauty. There is no law-book to which he looks to know what is right. No almanac to establish facts. No guild to determine what is excellent or beautiful. He himself is the standard of what is right, what is true, what is beautiful.

That God is means God does whatever he pleases and it is always right and always beautiful and always in accord with truth. There are no constraints on him from outside him that could hinder him in doing anything he pleases. All reality that is outside of him he created and designed and governs as the absolute reality. So he is utterly free from any constraints that don't originate from the counsel of his own will.

That God is means that he is the most important and most valuable reality and the most important and most valuable person in the universe. He is more worthy of interest and attention and admiration and enjoyment than all other realities, including the entire universe.

God is. That's the first thing he reveals. This is the God you are to glorify on your campuses. The students were made to know this God. Their hearts ache to know him, but they don't know that's what their ache is. Glorifying this God means showing them the one they were made for.

Why Did God Give a Personal Name?

But we ask now: Why did God reveal himself by giving himself a personal name. Yahweh is not a generic term. The fact that it is translated LORD could be misleading, since Lord is a title not a name like Mary or Jane or James or Ken. But Yahweh is a personal name.

In Exodus 3:15, God said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This [Yahweh] is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

Knowing God's Personal Name

God was not content to be known only by divine attributes. He means to be known by name. That's why he gave himself a name and then made it his identity over 5,000 times in the Old Testament.

One reason he put such an emphasis on the revelation of his name is that persons relate personally by name. If you only call someone by a title, you probably don't have a personal relationship. God means to be called upon by name. Yahweh is not a title. Every time you see all caps LORD in the Bible, think: I am calling God by his personal name.

The Personal Name Jesus

And if, by the way, you wonder how the personal name Yahweh relates to the personal name, Jesus, consider these two amazing things. Jesus is from the Greek form of Joshua, which is built on the personal name of God ("Ja") and the Hebrew word for "salvation." So Joshua and Jesus mean, "Yahweh saves," or, "Yahweh is salvation." An angel told Joseph, "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Who will save his people? Yahweh will. That's what the name means.

It even gets more amazing when we hear Paul say of the risen Jesus in Philippians 2:11, "Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father." That is a quote from Isaiah 45:23 where Yahweh is the one to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. Paul is saying that in the end, we will see that Jesus is, in fact, Yahweh incarnate. You don't have to choose between knowing him personally as Yahweh and knowing him personally as Jesus. In fact, you dare not choose.

Yahweh Is Glorious

Now we turn to the third thing God revealed about himself. First that he is. Second that he is personal. Third that he is glorious.

You can see the connection between God's glory and his name most clearly in Exodus 14. In verse 2, God says to Moses, "Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth." Now this seemed crazy. It was backward. They were almost free. Why go backward? God's answer: Because it will trick Pharaoh into thinking they are lost in the wilderness. He will be hardened against them and against God and will go out to capture them. And God will get one more opportunity to show the glory of his name in utterly defeating the arrogant Egyptians in the Red Sea. Verses 3-4 (this is Yahweh talking):

For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, "They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in." And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh.

And so it happens. Pharaoh pursues the Israelites and traps them at the Red Sea. And in Exodus 14:16-18, God says:

Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.

So verse 4: "I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh." Verse 17: "I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host." Verse 18: "The Egyptians

shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

They will know I am Yahweh when I reveal my glory. But this can't mean merely that they will know that God's name is Yahweh. They may or may not have heard of his name. Doing these miracles doesn't put a name in their ear. What they know, when they see his glory, is something about what it means to be called Yahweh, the God who is. It means he has great glory. Greater glory than the greatest empires of the world. To be Yahweh is to be supremely glorious — great, awesome, beautiful.

That's the third thing God reveals about himself.

First, God reveals himself as the God who is. Second, he reveals himself as personal. Third he reveals himself as supremely glorious. And finally he reveals that he is passionate to be known for the glorious, personal God that he is.

God's Passion to Be Known

This truth comes to us with massive implications for how we live our lives and do our ministry. God is passionately committed to making himself known as glorious above all other glories in the universe — all other competing glories in your life and on your campus.

If it has been clear that God is who he is, and if it has been clear that God reveals himself with a personal name, not just a title, and if it is clear that this God is glorious, it is crystal clear that God is passionate to be known as the glorious personal Yahweh that he is. The dominance of this point in the story of the Exodus is unmistakable.

- Exodus 6:7, “You shall know that I am Yahweh your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”
- Exodus 7:5, “The Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.”
- Exodus 7:17, “By this you shall know that I am Yahweh. . . . I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood.”
- Exodus 8:10, “That you may know that there is no one like Yahweh our God.”
- Exodus 8:22, “No swarms of flies shall be in Goshen, that you may know that I am Yahweh in the midst of the earth.”
- Exodus 9:16, “For this purpose I have raised you up, Pharaoh, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.”
- Exodus 9:29, “There will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is Yahweh's.”
- Exodus 10:2, “Tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson what signs I have done among the Egyptians, that you may know that I am Yahweh.”

• Exodus 14:4, “I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh.”

• Exodus 14:18, “The Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh.”

God has revealed himself to us as a God who is passionate to make known the glory of his name — not the pronunciation of it, as if this were magic, but the reality of it — the God who absolutely is, the God who is personal and the God who is supremely glorious.

And he has never ceased to be this God with this passion. This God of the Exodus is worshipped and celebrated in the Psalms. Psalm 106:7–8,

Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, . . . rebelled at the Red Sea. Yet God saved them for his name’s sake, that he might make known his mighty power.

This God of the Exodus is worshipped and celebrated in the prophets.

Isaiah 63:11–12, “Where is he who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name?”

Hosea 13:4, “I am Yahweh your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior.”

Ezekiel 20:5, 9, I made myself known to them in the land of Egypt; I swore to them, saying, I am Yahweh your God. . . . I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt.

And the God of the Exodus has come into history in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord. That’s why the baby fled to Egypt — so that Hosea’s prophecy would be fulfilled, as Matthew put it in Matthew 2:15, “This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

So this Jesus fulfills the destiny of his people as the new Israel, and the new Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7), and the new Deliverer who would make a new Exodus for his people out of the bondage of sin, just as we see on the mount of transfiguration in Luke 9:30–31, “Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory spoke of his exodus, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

And when he came to that night in Jerusalem, he was in great distress, and in his crying out to God he reveals to us that the original passion of the exodus has never changed: God the Son and God the Father are unwaveringly passionate for making known the glory of God. John 12:27–28:

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

And everyone of us who has been delivered from bondage through what happened on the cross the next morning, know that we owe our life to the passion of Jesus for the glory of the name of God. Which is why 1 John 2:12 says, “Your sins are forgiven for his name’s sake.”

God Glorifies God in Everything

God the Father and God the Son covenanted together to bring God’s people out of the Egypt of sin and slavery into the freedom and everlasting glory of sonship for the very same reason that God brought Israel out of Egypt — that he might get glory over sin and Satan and Hell and all the principalities and powers that brought Jesus to the cross and all the world systems that rise up against his people—that he might get glory over them and all the world might know that Jesus, the crucified and risen one, is Yahweh, the glorious personal God who is.

This is what God is calling you into. The reason you should glorify God in everything is that God glorifies God in everything — that Jesus glorified God in everything.

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whether you pour your life out to build laborers on the campus for the lost world, or whatever you do — in everything you do — do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).