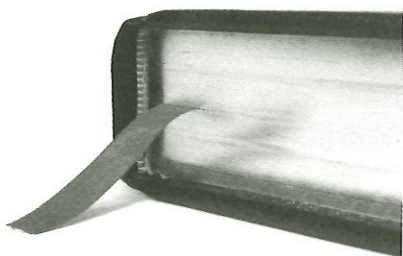


To the Praise of His Glory



Topic

God's glory

Theme

God's overarching purpose is to bring glory to His name.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider how his life fits in God's purpose to bring glory to His name.

Materials

- Resource 13
- Box of crayons
- Prism of crystal

Scripture Focus

Gen. 1; Exod. 3:14; 15:1–21; 24:16–18; Num. 14:20–24; 20:12; Ps. 19:1–6; Isa. 40; Matt. 17:1–5; John 1:14; Eph. 1:3–14; 5:8–21; Rev. 21:9–23

Summary

This lesson looks at God's overarching purpose as recorded in His Word. Namely, to bring Himself glory. The lesson will show that God's Word says God created, chose Israel, sent Christ, commissioned the church, and will consummate all things for His glory. The glory of God then becomes the construct through which to evaluate and understand His actions.

Outline

- I. God Created for His Glory
- II. God Chose Israel for His Glory
- III. God Sent Christ for His Glory
- IV. God Commissioned the Church for His Glory
- V. God Consummates All Things for His Glory

Memory Verse

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof"
(Revelation 21:22, 23).

GETTING STARTED

Box of Glory

Display a large box of crayons. Read some of the names of the colors. Note especially the colors named after things in nature.

ASK: What might this box of crayons have to do with the glory of God?

ASK: What might life be like if we had only one color?

Light was God's idea. When He made light, He essentially made color. To this day His creation causes us to stand in awe as we observe all sorts of colors and color combinations. The abundance of color in creation should cause us to glorify God. When we do, we are fulfilling His purpose for His creation in the first place.

This lesson is about God's overarching purpose that He reveals to us in His Word. We will see that beginning with the creation of light in Genesis to the presence of His light in Revelation, God's main focus has always been His glory.

A New Perspective on Light

Display a prism or a crystal. Shine light through it to show the various colors in the light spectrum. Explain that color is essentially light reflecting off a surface and that color becomes color only when it captured by the cones in our eyes. If our cones did not work, we would see only gray scales.

ASK: What might the refraction of light have to do with the glory of God? (Q1)

ASK: What might life be like if we could not see colors? (Q2)

Light was God's idea. When He made light, He essentially made color. To this day His creation causes us to stand in awe as we observe all sorts of colors and color combinations. The abundance of color in creation should cause us to glorify God. When we do, we are fulfilling His purpose for His creation in the first place.

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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

God's glory is the manifestation of all that is true about God. When He reveals His glory, He is essentially revealing truth about His character and ways. Bringing glory to God, then, is reflecting or declaring His glorious character and ways so that others might see them and learn about God. Bringing glory to God is telling or demonstrating Who God is.

I. God Created for His Glory

God began the six days of creation by creating light (Gen. 1:3). Later, on day four, He created the sun, moon, stars, and various other heavenly bodies that would produce and reflect the light we see in the heavens today (1:14). Why did

Lesson 1 had a section on Psalm 19:1–6. The focus in that lesson was on defining general revelation and describing its benefits.

God begin with light and then wait three days to give that light a physical source? Because God is the original source of light. He is light. No other light is needed besides Him. Yet He chose to put sources of light in the heavens as a testimony to the light in Him.

Psalms 19:1–6 relates God’s creation of the heavens to the revelation of His glory. The heavens are filled with an unmeasurable amount of stars, planets, moons, comets, asteroids, quasars, and other yet to be identified objects. The massive size of the things of space, their mindboggling quantities, and the unfathomable expanse of space itself declares God’s power and deity loud and clear (Rom. 1:20).

READ: Psalm 19:1–6. **ASK:** What part does the sun play in declaring the glory of God? (Q3) *Its constancy, light, and heat are universal revealers of God’s glory. Its testimony is unmistakable every day around the globe.*

That the heavens declare God’s glory is not by accident. God created the heavens and the rest of nature, including humanity, for the express purpose of declaring His glory.

READ: Isaiah 6:1–3. **ASK:** What do the seraphim around the throne of God declare concerning God’s glory? (Q4) *That the whole earth is full of His glory.*

The fact that creation declares God’s glory is not a coincidence. Rather it is a testimony to God’s forethought and desire for humanity to know Him. Of course we have to realize that we now live on a cursed earth. What God’s original creation in the pre-Fall days was able to communicate to humanity was better in some ways than what His creation is able to reveal today. But that God created for His glory is unmistakable.

II. God Chose Israel for His Glory

Once Adam sinned, the world changed and humanity’s relationship with God was broken. Eventually nearly the entire world’s population refused to glorify God. God then destroyed them all, sparing only Noah’s family. Noah’s ark is a demonstration of God’s glorious grace (Gen. 6:8).

After Noah, there was little acknowledgment of God as creator and nearly no recognition of the need for forgiveness of sin. God then called Abraham to follow Him. Abraham responded to God by faith. God made a covenant with Abraham, promising posterity, land, and blessing for all the earth (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:18).

Centuries later God chose Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. God came to Moses as *I AM THAT I AM* (Exod. 3:14), a name that captures God’s self-existence. God then went on to reveal Himself as the *I AM* to the people of Israel as they left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. After God drowned the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, Moses wrote a song about the revelation of God’s glory.

READ: Exodus 15:1–10. **ASK:** What did God make known about Himself by delivering Israel through the Red Sea (v. 6)? (Q5) *That His right hand is glorious in power.*

READ: Exodus 15:11–13. **ASK:** What else did the Red Sea crossing reveal about God (v. 11)? (Q6) *That He is glorious in holiness.*

The Red Sea crossing established the fact of God's power and character with both the children of Israel and the Canaanites in the Promised Land (Exod. 15:14–19). God *triumphed gloriously* in delivering His people from Egypt (15:20, 21). But His plans to use Israel to reveal His glory were only beginning.

God led His people to Mount Sinai where His glory rested on the mountain as a *devouring fire* (Exod. 24:16–18). The message to the people was that God is holy and demands holiness from His people. The people, being stubborn and inclined to do their own thing, disobeyed God by creating and worshiping a gold calf (32:1–6). Moses pleaded with God not to destroy His people. When God promised not to destroy them, Moses asked God to show him His glory (33:18). God did so in grand fashion.

READ: Exodus 34:5–7. **ASK:** What did God reveal about Himself to Moses? (Q7) *That He is merciful, gracious, longsuffering, abounding in goodness and truth, forgiving, and just.*

As Israel's leader, Moses understood that the journey to the Promised Land was not simply about reaching a destination; it was about glorifying God along the way and eventually in the Promised Land.

Israel continued to make their way to the doorstep of the Promised Land. When they arrived, they feared the giant inhabitants and refused to enter the land. God judged them severely, condemning all those twenty years old and older to die within a forty-year period in the wilderness.

READ: Numbers 14:20–24. **ASK:** What was God's purpose for giving Israel the Promised Land? (Q8) *His purpose was for all the earth to be filled with His glory.*

God's punishment of Israel was so serious because they robbed Him of His glory. How small God must have looked to the Egyptians and Canaanites as His people meandered through the wilderness for forty years. What a poor testimony to their great God.

Years after Israel finally entered the Promised Land, Israel was divided into two kingdoms, both of which were eventually taken into captivity because of their disobedience to God. Beginning in Isaiah 40, Isaiah prophesied concerning the captives of Judah in the land of Babylon. Isaiah anticipated the nation's captivity and her restoration seventy years later, and he wrote to encourage the people of Judah in their walk with God.

READ: Isaiah 40:5. **ASK:** What did Isaiah prophesy would happen? (Q9) *The glory of the Lord would be revealed to all flesh.*

Centuries later Isaiah's prophecy was partially fulfilled in the coming of Christ. The ultimate fulfillment still awaits Christ's return to set up His millennial Kingdom. Isaiah's prophecy shows that even when the Israelites were languishing as captives in Babylon, God still talked of His plan to reveal His glory to all flesh.

Isaiah wrote about Judah's return from captivity a century before Judah was even taken captive.

READ: Isaiah 40:6, 7. **ASK:** How sure is God's word concerning His plans to reveal His glory to all flesh? (Q10) *His word stands forever. No one could stop God from carrying out His word.*

Isaiah cried out concerning God's sure word so the captives in Babylon would have hope in their future as a nation. The message to us is that God took the revelation of His glory seriously. It was so important that He wanted Isaiah to shout about the message (40:6).

III. God Sent Christ for His Glory

The Babylonian captivity was eventually ended and a remnant of God's people returned to Israel to rebuild Jerusalem. Over five centuries later, God sent His Son into the world. In his Gospel, John wrote about the arrival of Jesus, the *Word*. He wrote that Jesus had given *life* as the creator and in Him was God's *light* (John 1:4). So Jesus gave *physical* light at the creation of the world and then gave *spiritual* light at His coming to earth. In giving spiritual light, Jesus revealed the truth about Himself and the Father. That truth shows humanity their need for a Savior and that Jesus is the One Whom the Father sent to save them. Jesus' revelation of the truth about salvation means that there is also *eternal* life in Jesus.

The word *comprehended* in John 1:5 is better translated as *overcame*. So the world was not able to keep Jesus from shining the light of God's truth in a dark world.

READ: John 1:1–5, 14. **ASK:** What did John say Jesus revealed? (Q11) *The Father's glory.*

As the world watched Jesus, they got a glimpse of God's glory. His words and actions made God's glory visible to them. Jesus was a testimony to what God is like. Ultimately Jesus' humble death on the cross revealed God's love and grace.

As mentioned above, Christ's ultimate glory will be seen in the millennial Kingdom. Jesus' transfiguration, witnessed by Peter, James, and John, was a preview of the glory He will reveal in His future kingdom (Matt. 16:28–17:9; 2 Pet. 1:16–18). Christ's glory at His transfiguration was evident as a bright light. Matthew's description is that Christ's face shone *as the sun* (Matt. 17:2). That comparison harkens back to the creation of light on the first day of creation and the dependence on God's light until the sun was created on the fourth day.

The apostle Paul wrote about the connection between Christ's mission to bring salvation and the glory of God.

READ: Ephesians 1:3–6. **ASK:** Why did Jesus choose us before the foundation of the world and predestinate us to the adoption as His sons? (Q12) *So that we might praise the glory of His grace.*

READ: Ephesians 1:7–12. **ASK:** Why did God redeem and forgive us (v. 12)? (Q13) *So that we might praise the glory of His grace.*

READ: Ephesians 1:13, 14. **ASK:** Why did God seal us by His Spirit until the day of redemption? (Q14) *So that we might praise His glory.*

Paul leaves no doubt that God's ultimate purpose in choosing us, redeeming us, and sealing us was that we might praise His glory. When we consider the bless-

ings of salvation, praising God's glorious grace is a no-brainer.

Redemption denotes a release from slavery by paying a ransom. Christ paid a ransom to deliver us from the bondage and consequences of sin (Mark 10:45). *Redeem* means to loose from something. Before we trusted in Christ, we were slaves to sin. However, when Christ redeemed us by His blood, He emancipated us from our slavery to sin. That is worth praising God every day of our lives.

The means of redeeming us from sin was Christ's blood (Eph. 1:7b). The apostle John wrote: *The blood of Jesus Christ his [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin* (1 John 1:7b). Paul explained the practical meaning of redemption by assuring the Ephesians—and us—that Christ's redemptive work provided the *forgiveness of sins* (Eph. 1:7c). Although redemption includes more than forgiveness, forgiveness is basic to its meaning.

IV. God Commissioned the Church for His Glory

Salvation is just the beginning of God's plan to glorify His name through us. His will is for the church to bring glory to His name throughout this present age. He has commissioned us to make disciples, teaching them all that He commanded us to do (Matt. 28:18–20). The disciple-making process will lead to God being glorified.

Paul addressed what it means to live as a disciple that is pleasing to God (Eph. 5:1–21). He commanded the believers at Ephesus to be imitators of God by walking in love and in the light (5:1, 8). To *walk as children of light* is to reflect God's glory. It is to live as Christ would. This is possible because of the power of the Holy Spirit to produce *goodness, righteousness, and truth* in us (5:9, 18). *Goodness* is showing love to others. *Righteousness* refers to our character from God's perspective. Other people will see our righteous character in our actions. *Truth* is genuineness. It speaks of pure motives and honesty.

As we walk in the light as disciples of Christ, we will be in stark contrast to the darkness around us. Paul told the Ephesians to *reprove the unfruitful works of darkness* (5:11). God's light, or His glory, in our lives will shine into the lives of the lost and help them see their need for a Savior. This process of exposing *unfruitful works of darkness* is actually what God expects of us (5:12, 13). We really don't have an option to not walk in the light.

READ: Ephesians 5:14. **ASK:** What did God tell the Ephesian believers to do?

(Q15) *To awake from sleep, a reference to their spiritual unawareness and indifference.*

The word *circumspectly* in verse 15 means to *look around*. Paul told the drowsy Ephesians to be aware of what is really happening around them. We also need to take time to look around us and consider how things really are. The world desperately needs to see the light of the truth in our lives. They need a glimpse of God's glory. Shining God's glory through our lives shows wisdom. Wisdom is seeing life from God's perspective and responding accordingly. Ignoring reality is foolish (5:15).

Our time to walk in the light and introduce the lost to the reality of Christ is limited. Paul instructed the Ephesians to *redeem, or buy up*, their time on earth (5:16, 17). *Time* refers to a critical period of time or a special opportunity. Every believer's life is critical to the cause of Christ.

Paul summarized his instructions in Ephesians in one verse in his letter to Corinth.

READ: 1 Corinthians 10:31. **ASK:** What one statement summarizes Paul's instructions to the Ephesians? (Q16) *Do all to the glory of God.*

Walking in the light is to reflect God's glory. We should strive to make God's glory known through our lives every day (Phil. 1:21; 3:17–21).

V. God Consummates All Things for His Glory

The Bible begins with the glory of God illuminating God's creation for three days. It ends with the glory of God again providing illumination in eternity. When God consummates all things, His glory will be our focus forever.

READ: Revelation 21:9–11a. **ASK:** How does John first describe the New Jerusalem (v. 11a)? (Q17) *As having the glory of God.*

READ: Revelation 21:11b–21. **ASK:** What part does light and color play in the New Jerusalem? (Q18) *Its light is pure like a clear precious stone. Its foundation is made up of various colorful precious stones.*

The New Jerusalem on the new earth will be a sight this earth has never or will ever know. Its brilliance and colors will reflect God's glory forever on the new earth. In fact, the new earth will have neither a sun nor a moon. God's glory will illuminate it forever (Rev. 21:22, 23). There won't be dark places or even shadows on the new earth.

The consummation of all things will be wonderful as the glory of God shines brightly forever. God's purpose to glorify His name will be fully realized. Until then, we ought to heed His Word and be about His business of glorifying His name through our lives.

RESOURCE: Display resource 13 as a summary of God's overarching purpose in the Bible.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Glorifying God with My Life

ASK: Has bringing glory to God been a goal for your life? Explain. (Q19)

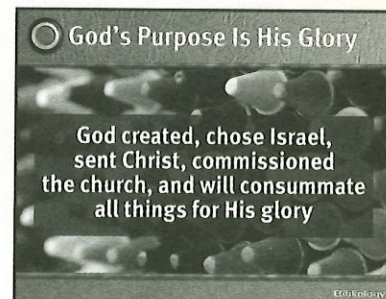
ASK: What have you done recently to bring glory to God? (Q20)

ASK: How will you let God's glory impact your life going forward? (Q21)

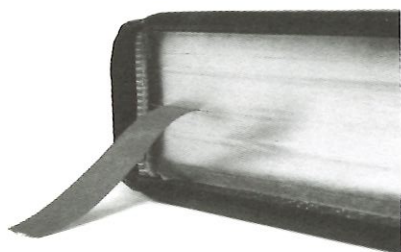
Encourage your learners to look for God's glory in the Scriptures and to see it as the unifying theme.

Glory Reminder

Distribute crayons, colored pencils, and paper. Students use the supplies to create a picture, write a saying, or record a verse about the glory of God. Have them use their creation as a reminder to focus on bringing glory to God through their lives.



Equipped to Serve



Topic

Equipping for service

Theme

God equips us to do good works through His Word.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will use the Bible as his or her equipper for service.

Materials

- Resources 14 and 15

Scripture Focus

John 13:3–17; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10; Eph. 2:10; 2 Tim. 3:17; Heb. 4:12, 13; 1 Pet. 2:2; 3:9–15

Summary

This lesson expands on the previous lesson, giving more attention to the Bible's equipping ministry in our lives. God created us for His glory and commissioned us for His glory. His Word plays a key role in actually helping us achieve the goal of bringing glory to God.

Outline

I. Reasons for Good Works

- A. To fulfill our purpose
- B. To prepare for the Judgment Seat of Christ
- C. To imitate Christ

II. Implementing Good Works

- A. Prepare your heart
- B. Share your heart

III. Effects of Good Works

- A. Hunger for the Word
- B. Opportunities for evangelism
- C. Fellowship with God

Memory Verse

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).