

The Compass

a tool for disciplers



Equipping Believers for Ministry

First Things First

Conversation On the Journey

“Put first things first and we get second things thrown in; put second things first and we lose both first and second things.” -C.S. Lewis

Our desire for this first discipleship time is to help your disciple start with a proper foundation of faith on which to build everything else. If you’ve ever watched a house or building being constructed it doesn’t seem to look real pretty at first. It’s easy to be impatient to see the more “practical” aspects of the construction - the doors, the windows, the color of the walls - the parts that would be seen and used and touched for years to come. However, without the foundation and less attractive aspects the construction would crumble. Similarly when building a thriving faith in Christ, it’s tempting to just skip to the parts that we can most easily “see” and “use” and “touch.” It’s critical, however, to build the right foundation of faith.

So what is the “first thing first?” *The glory of God.*

All throughout Scripture, from beginning to end, we see that God has one central purpose for all of creation (and that includes us!): to be glorified. Nothing matters more to God than the glory of His name. He absolutely cares about His reputation.

What is the Glory of God?

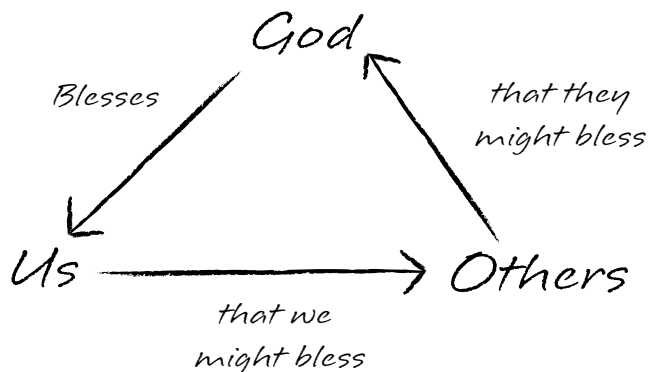
The obvious question then is, what is the glory of God? The Hebrew term for “glory” comes from a root meaning “heavy,” or “weighty,” and also “substance,” or “radiance,” or “beauty.” Images such as blinding light, raging fire, crashing thunder, flashing lightning, and a magnificent rainbow are used in the Bible to describe God’s glory. The word also describes honor given or awarded. To glorify someone is to recognize their intrinsic worth, beauty, radiance, and power and to speak of those features publicly. It is to exalt someone or to make him great. Therefore, “glory” is at the heart of true worship. And God wants everyone to notice His glory.

God’s reputation or His Name is God’s greatest concern. This is our very reason for existence. In Isaiah we read God saying, “everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory.” And also, “This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise.” Isaiah responds back to God, “You lead Your people, to make Yourself a glorious name.” (Isaiah 43:7,21; 63:14)

God’s utmost purpose for Israel was to bless them that they then might be a blessing to the nations around them SO THAT God would receive more glory. (Gen.12:3) Blessed to be a blessing.

This Week’s Excursion

Your objective in this lesson is to help your disciple understand the big picture - i.e., life is not about me, it’s about God. In order to lay the proper groundwork for each successive lesson, we must first understand that the big picture is about God and His glory. You’ll want to address the questions of: “What is God’s glory?” “What were my thoughts about what matters most to God?” “How does this truth change how I look at life?”



As God's people lived out His commands and pursued exalting His Name, other nations would see His glory and therefore glorify Him. His glory is the reason why He has done what He has done throughout history. Check out Is. 43:6-7, Jer.13:11, Psalm106:7-8, Ezekiel 20:14, Ez.36:22-23 and 32, 1Sam.12:20-22, Is.48:9-11, John 17:1, 2Thes.1:9-10. John Piper states:

From beginning to end, the driving impulse of God's heart is to be praised for His glory. From creation to consummation His ultimate allegiance is to Himself. His unwavering purpose in all He does is to exalt the honor of His Name and to be marveled at for His grace and power. He is infinitely jealous for His reputation.

Doesn't This Make God Egotistical?

Why does God care ultimately about His glory or His reputation? And does this mean that people don't matter to God? Many Christians grow up thinking that we are most important to God. Indeed, Scripture speaks again and again of God's great love for us. And we DO matter much, but not most. It has been stated simply that, "God must supremely value that which is of supreme value. If He doesn't, He's no longer perfect." John Piper does a beautiful job of explaining this in his article, "Is God For Us or For Himself?":

Here is the answer of which I want to persuade you. Since God is unique as the most glorious of all beings and totally self-sufficient, He must be for Himself if He is to be for us. If He were to abandon the goal of His own self-exaltation we would be the losers. His aim to bring praise to Himself, and His aim to bring pleasure to His people, are one aim. They stand or fall together. I think we will see this if we ask the following question.

In view of God's infinitely admirable beauty, power and wisdom, what would His love to a creature involve? Or to put it another way: what could God give us to enjoy that would show Him most loving? There is only one possible answer, isn't there? HIMSELF! If God would give us that which is best and most satisfying, that is, if He would love us perfectly, He must offer us no less than Himself for our contemplation and fellowship and joy. 'In thy presence is fullness of joy. In thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' (Ps.16:11)

Next Steps

With God in His proper place (first), we are now in good shape to move down the road toward glorifying Him. Lend your disciple a concordance (and briefly explain how to use it!) and encourage her to look up everywhere "Name of the Lord," or "Name of God," or "His Name," or "God's Name," (you get the idea) is found. Encourage her to jot down things she learns about His "Name."



This was precisely God's intention in sending His Son. Ephesians 2:18 says that Christ came that we might 'have access in one Spirit to the Father.' And 1 Peter 3:18 says, 'Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous that He might bring us to God.' God is after us to give us what is best - not prestige, wealth or even health in this life, but a full-blown vision of, and fellowship with, Himself.

What's the Norm?

Unfortunately, these truths are little known to most Believers today. What is the current reality? More often than not, Christ is proclaimed as being the One Who can fix your life. The common idea is that if you have God on your side, then things will go better for you: you'll feel better about yourself; feel less guilty; be more successful in your job and financially; be a better husband/wife or dad/mom; experience less pain from your past; experience fulfillment in life; be a better person, etc., etc. Perhaps you've seen the popular bumper sticker, "God is My Copilot."

HOWEVER, as we have now seen, God is no one's copilot, and that is for our own good. He is in absolute control and solicits advice from no one. The purpose of our faith is to glorify God, not fix our lives. We exist for Him as opposed to His existing for us. A few questions we can then ask ourselves: Not, "is God on my side, responsive to my call?" but instead, "am I on God's side, responsive to His call?" and not, "how is God fitting in to what I'm doing?" but instead, "how am I fitting in to what God is doing?"

First Things First

C.S. Lewis was right: "Put first things first and we get second things thrown in; put second things first and we lose both second things and first things." When we look at God primarily as One Who is most concerned about us, we'll lose both first and second things. When we believe that our needs are His main agenda, our lives will not only fail to reflect His glory, we will never experience joy, power, and fulfillment in the deepest, richest sense. When, however, we delight most in the majesty, radiance, beauty, weightiness of God - when His reputation, His name, His glory, becomes our greatest pursuit - we experience "fullness of joy" and "pleasures forevermore."

"Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31) This is our primary calling, the very purpose of our existence.

That's a lot of information! But it's great stuff, isn't it? Ask your disciple some questions. Draw out the diagram. Look up lots of Scripture together. It will be a beautiful start to a beautiful journey. Here are some extra passages that you can read and talk through with your disciple about the glory of God: Exodus 24:15-17; 33:18-23; 40:34-38; Numbers 14:20-24; Deuteronomy 4:34-38; 2 Chronicles 7:1-3; Psalm 29:1-9; Psalm 96; Isaiah 40:5; Ezekiel 1:25-28; 39:21-24; 43:1-5; Habakkuk 3:3-6.

End 

Side Trails

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