

A GOAL THAT IS GREATER THAN OUR DIFFERENCES

Introduction

- A. Text: **2 Thess. 1:11,12.**
- B. The Lord's body is made up of people who differ from one another in many ways. Is there a force strong enough to keep us *working together despite our dissimilarities*?
- C. But not only are we different in personality and background, we also disagree in matters of judgment and doctrine. Can anything *overcome the disruptive forces that would tear the Lord's people apart*?
- D. Do we not have a *goal* that is greater than our differences?

I. GOD'S GLORY IS OUR GOAL

- A. The highest *purpose* and *privilege* of God's people has always been to *bring glory to Him by their obedience* - **Deut. 4:5-8.** Cf. **Isa. 49:3; 1 Cor. 6:20.**
- B. A failure to glorify God is a part of the very essence of *sin* - **Rom. 1:21.** Contrast **Psa. 86:11-13.**
- C. Jesus' own purpose was to glorify His Father, even by His death - **Jn. 12:27,28; 17:1.** Cf. **Jn. 13:31,32.**
- D. Like Him, our highest aim must be to glorify God, whether by life or by death - **Phil. 1:20,21.** Cf. **Jn. 11:3,4; 21:18,19; Rom. 14:7,8; 1 Pt. 4:16.**

II. DOING EVERYTHING TO GOD'S GLORY

- A. As Christians, we should do *whatever we do* in such a way that God is glorified - **1 Pt. 4:10,11.**
- B. In obedience, our goal is not *self-centered*, but *God-centered* - **2 Cor. 9:12,13.**
 - 1. Jesus saw His work as that of glorifying the Father - **Jn. 17:4.**
 - 2. Jesus did His work in a way that resulted in the glorification of God - **Mt. 9:8; 15:31;** etc.
 - 3. Like Him, we are to let a light shine from our lives that results in the glorification of God - **Mt. 5:16.** Cf. **Tit. 2:10; 1 Pt. 2:12.**
- C. Even our assemblies are to be such that the outsider "will worship God and report that God is truly among you" (**1 Cor. 14:25**).

III. DISCIPLESHIP AND THE GLORY OF GOD

- A. We are not faithful disciples of Jesus Christ if we do not bear *fruit that glorifies God* - **Jn. 15:4-8.**
- B. God's intent was that He be glorified not only by Christ's apostles, but also by all those who believed in Christ through their preaching - **Jn. 17:10,11,20-22.**

IV. A GOAL GREATER THAN OUR DIFFERENCES

- A. The goal of glorifying God is of greater importance than any differences among us - **Phil. 1:18,27.** Cf. **1 Thess. 5:12,13.**

1. We are told that “love will cover a multitude of sins” (**1 Pt. 4:8**). Cf. **Prov. 10:12**.
 2. Like love, *a common desire in all things to see God glorified* will cover many of our differences with a mantle of patience. Cf. **Col. 3:12-15**.
- B. There are few unifying forces stronger than *a great common purpose*, one which means more to people than the things that separate them.

V. DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES SO THAT GOD IS GLORIFIED

- A. We should work diligently to *remove any differences that hinder us* in bringing glory to God - **Rom. 15:5-7**. Cf. **Jn. 17:20,21**; **Hb. 12:12-15**.
- B. It should be a cause for *embarrassment* if the members of a congregation *lack the maturity to work out their differences* among themselves. Cf. **1 Cor. 6:1-7**.
- C. But there are two kinds of differences that can separate Christians: (1) *insignificant differences* and (2) *serious differences*.
- D. The goal of glorifying God should make a big difference in how both of these are handled.
1. *Insignificant differences*.
 - a. The greatness of our goal will cause us to allow for these and not let them disrupt our work.
 - b. In reality, variety and diversity make us stronger, not weaker. Cf. **Gal. 3:28**.
 2. *Serious differences*.
 - a. If we properly value God’s glory, we will constantly be *studying* together and *working to remove* any serious difference that detracts from the unity we need in order to glorify God.
 - b. As we work to remove these differences, we can extend *gentleness* and *patience* to those with whom we differ. Cf. **2 Tim. 2:24-26**.
- E. Even when we *disagree over whether a difference is insignificant or serious*, our overriding desire to seek God’s glory will cause us to be *patient, forbearing, and humble as we continue to study and work toward greater unity in understanding* - **Eph. 4:1-3**. Cf. **Phil. 2:1-4**; **2 Thess. 1:11,12**.
- F. **Disagreements are inevitable — but folks who are committed first and foremost to God’s glory will deal with disagreements in a very different way than those who have other priorities.**

Conclusion

- A. Our common *goal* — the glorification of God — ought to be a unifying force among the Lord’s people.
- B. We also have a common *adversary* — the devil — and we simply must not allow him to influence us in any way that would diminish our role as those whose work is to glorify God.
- C. Whatever may confront us, our greatest concern should be that “the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified” (**2 Thess. 3:1**). That concern will:
1. **Keep us STUDYING to remove any differences that would detract from the Lord’s work.**
 2. **Keep us, while differences remain, from ACTING TOWARD ONE ANOTHER in any way that would detract from the Lord’s glory.**
- D. We do not always have a “map” of the territory we must traverse, but the goal of glorifying God is our “compass.” This reliable compass will lead us through the dangers of divisiveness and disruption.
- E. Ultimately, we look forward to that day “when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe” (**2 Thess. 1:10**).