

“I am FBC Diana”
We exist for God’s glory!

Intro: Very many churchgoers today, and those who are not interested in organized religion, have a very low view of God and an exaggerated focus upon themselves. This is not new, and outside of the church this is to be expected, but it is agonizingly regrettable that this misappropriation of emphasis and focus has become commonplace inside of the Christian church. It is the basest human sin to exchange the glory of God for some lesser counterfeit, yet every human is meant to find supreme satisfaction in the glory of God. Additionally, every local church is commissioned to be a bastion of God-glorifying individuals in covenant community together. We exist, as does everything, for the glory of God.

Psalm 23:1-3 – “1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”

The current worldview and focus defined:

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism – as defined through the research of Christopher Smith and his team¹

1. **“A god exists** who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.”
2. **“God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other,** as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.”
3. **“The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about ones self.”**
4. **“God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life** except when God is needed to resolve a problem.”
5. **“Good people go to heaven** when they die.”²

Summary – Life is generally about me, and God (if He is involved much at all) is mostly here for my benefit and use. He is certainly not the object of my affections; He is only a means to achieve my own happiness.

¹ The National Study of Youth and Religion is a research project directed by Christian Smith, Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame and Lisa Pearce, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of North

² This summary is an excerpt from an article by Albert Mohler reviewing and commenting on the research from the National Study of Youth and Religion. See article here: <http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/04/11/moralistic-therapeutic-deism-the-new-american-religion-2/>

The Biblical worldview and focus restored:

Question: What is the chief end of man?

Answer: The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.³

Many people may perceive this to mean: “What is the chief responsibility of man?” or “What is the heaviest obligation of man?”

This is still thinking in terms of a *man-centered* worldview... “This is what I must do (the most important thing I must do) in order to be happy...”

However, this is a dramatic shift from that sort of thinking. The focus in this answer is upon God, and man is the subjective apparatus, which is created for a particular end or purpose. Man is the transient and restless being; God is the transcendent and gloriously self-sufficient being – from which all other beings derive purpose, joy, and satisfaction.

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

1. God is glorious beyond imagination and most desirable – and my Shepherd.

- Summary of Psalm 148 – The Lord God is to be praised by the heavens, by all angels, by every star that shines, and even by the atmosphere of the earth. God deserves praise because He commanded all these to come into being, and He is the one who sustains them every moment. God deserves praise even from the depths of the sea – the most untamed force known to man – because fire, wind, and water obey His every word. Earth itself, including all of the creatures upon the land and those that fly, kings and rulers, and all generations of humanity are to offer praise to the Lord of glory because “His name alone is exalted,” and “His majesty is above earth and heaven.”

If the Lord is my shepherd (my caregiver and provider), I shall not want...

- Summary of Psalm 96:7-9 – The covenant God of heaven deserves glory from all families and peoples, for He is absolutely strong. His name is due glory, and those who approach Him should do so with offering in hand and purity in life. Added to these, worship is the posture of all who behold His splendor and all the earth necessarily trembles under the weight of His presence.

If the Lord is my shepherd (my companion and friend), I shall not want...

³ This is question and answer number 1 in the Westminster Shorter and Longer Catechisms, and it is question and answer number 2 in the Baptist Catechism (or Keach’s Catechism, named for its author – Benjamin Keach).

- After writing about and deeply considering the beautiful salvation that God has brought to sinful humanity, the Apostle Paul explodes in a song of adoration.
 - Romans 11:33-36 – “33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” 35 “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

*If **the Lord** is my shepherd (my leader and guide), I shall not want...*

- Summary of Titus 3:4-7 – God’s goodness and loving kindness are distributed according to His mercy, and these are poured out forever upon all those He loves, revives, and saves by the power of His Spirit.

*If **the Lord** is my shepherd, I shall not want indeed.*

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

2. God is the bringer of peace and the sustainer of His sheep.

- While all humanity is naturally under the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1-3), God has declared peace for sinners through the person and work of Christ. Reconciliation has occurred, and sinners are made new by the power of God (2 Cor. 5:17-21).
- Jesus told His disciples that He was leaving, but that the Holy Spirit would come and bring peace in the name of Christ (John 14:25-29).
- Jesus is the God of creation, and He upholds and sustains the universe itself by the power of His command (Heb. 1:3). Surely He sustains those He loves and those He has called His own.
- Jesus declares that He is the Good Shepherd, and that He makes every provision for His sheep (John 10:14).

3a He restores my soul...

3. God alone satisfies, restores, and delights my soul.

- Psalm 84:2 – “My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts [or the presence] of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.”
- Psalm 42:1-2 – “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”

- Psalm 63:1 – “O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”
- WHY?
 - The Psalmist says elsewhere that God’s glorious splendor and majesty are worth deep consideration. All God’s deeds are worth proclaiming day and night. The stories of His greatness are truly legendary. Songs have been written that tell the stories of God’s impressive works, and people sing them to remember and marvel. God is merciful and good, strong and powerful, gracious and kind. This God is one who satisfies, restores, and delights my soul (Psalm 145:5-13).

3b He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

4. God shepherds all His children into righteousness for His name’s sake!

- Ephesians 1:3-14 – “3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.”
 - Whatever else we can see here, we can at least see that God has adopted sinners as sons and daughters, blessed them with every spiritual blessing, and forms them in holiness – and God has done all this “to the praise of His glorious grace” (v6).
- “7 In him [that is in Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”
 - Here again we see that God does the work of saving sinners “to the praise of His glory.” God unites all things in Christ and provides all that is necessary to redeem sinners in Him. He makes known the mystery of how He planned to save sinners and

lavishes wisdom and insight upon all those who hear and believe the Gospel of Christ. Working all things according to His will, God has given eternal life in glorious relationship with Him to all those who hope in Christ – and all this He has done and/or is doing “to the praise of His glory” (v12).

- “13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”
 - Finally, God seals all believers with His Holy Spirit, who guarantees that the promise of God is sure. The Holy Spirit assures each believer until he or she fully enjoys all that God’s promise of salvation carries with it – and, again, both the assurance and the possession of the inheritance is “to the praise of His glory” (v14).

God leads sinners into paths of righteousness – He saves sinners and makes them righteous. God generously lavishes grace and mercy upon sinners in Christ Jesus “to the praise of His glory” or FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE!

5. Therefore, God’s glory is the goal, the purpose, the joy, the satisfaction, the reason we exist, and He is the ultimate Shepherd of all His children.

Because this is true individually, it must also be true of His children gathered in covenant community together.

- Paul exhorts Christians to do everything that they do to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).
- God commands Christians in covenant community together to live righteous lives and do good to others in order to reflect a manner of life that is “worthy of God.” After all (the logic goes), God has called them into His own kingdom and into His own glory; therefore, they should live to the glory of God and not for themselves (1 Thess. 2:12).
- Jesus commands men and women to do good works, not for personal honor or reward, but so that others will glorify God (Matt. 5:16).
- Peter reiterates the same idea, but he emphasizes the importance of living a holy (or pure) life in front of others so that God will be glorified (1 Pet. 2:11-12).

We exist, individually and collectively, for God’s glory!

So what are the implications of this kind of shift in our focus?

1. You and I are not the point of anything.

- We don't generally make decisions based on personal preferences... We ask ourselves, "what would best glorify God?"
- We don't give up biblical convictions because they offend you or me... We remain faithful to God's word – for His glory.
- We look to the Scriptures for life, nourishment, and wisdom... For in His word God has revealed the height of His glory, and we are grateful recipients.

2. You and I are not consumers of goods and services.

- Sunday worship services are not for our entertainment or comfort... Rather, weekly worship gatherings are according to biblical principles and for God's glory.
- Life Groups are not meant to merely provide us with another friend-network... Instead, we seek God's glory through our fellowship in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We expose ourselves to others for the sake of accountability and encouragement, so that we might be conformed to the image of Christ – to the glory of God.
- Children's, Youth, and Adult ministries are opportunities for you to glorify God through service to others... Far from providing a buffet of activities to meet the felt needs of any and all we encounter, we create specific environments and structures that we hope will best facilitate discipleship among our entire congregation.

3. God is our supremely desirable shepherd, and He has promised to lead us and build us up in Christ and by the power of His Spirit – for His own glory!

- Dever writes: "God's purposes for all of human history revolve around the local church as the visible, corporate manifestation of His Son, Jesus Christ! He has ordained that His most important objectives both here and in heaven be accomplished through the agency of the local church (Eph. 3:10-11)! He has promised that His church will not fail (Matt. 16:18)! His love for the church is so great that Paul has to pray for capacity just to comprehend its dimensions (Eph. 3:17-19)! The church is of cosmic importance to God – literally."⁴

⁴ Dever, Mark, and Paul Alexander. *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005. 72.