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God's Will and the Glory of God



QUESTION 1:

*What's something you've experienced
that really took your breath away?*

THE POINT

We bring glory to God
when we obey His will.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so when it comes to art, our opinions can be quite diverse as to what makes good art. Some works of art can leave many of us scratching our heads. What was the artist thinking? Others can look at that same piece of art and think it's brilliant.

Some art is almost universally recognized as great art: for example, Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* or Michelangelo's *David*. When people observe these works in person, they do not marvel at the quality of the canvas or the wonderful piece of

marble. They marvel at the person who created it. A phenomenal work of art leads us to glory in its creator.

We are God's creation, and we were created for His glory. Unfortunately, we don't reflect God's glory as we should. In our sinful state, we too often seek our own glory. But if we want to bring glory to our Creator, where do we begin? When we live as He created us to live—when we follow His plan for our lives—our lives bring glory to God. And we experience our greatest joy.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

JOHN 11:1-4

¹ Now a man was sick, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick. ³ So the sisters sent a message to him: “Lord, the one you love is sick.” ⁴ When Jesus heard it, he said, “This sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

When Jesus received word that His friend Lazarus was ill, one might assume Jesus would have hurried to Bethany to heal him. Instead, Jesus waited two days before starting His journey. It may well be that Lazarus died shortly after the messenger was dispatched. It took one day for the messenger to make the journey to Jesus, and then Jesus waited two days before making the one-day journey to Bethlehem. When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead for four days.

Jesus noted the significance of Lazarus' sickness was not that he would die, but that his suffering would glorify God. Jesus recognized that the key issue was not Lazarus's death, but God's glory. Our lives, as well as our deaths, ought to bring glory to God.

Mary and Martha knew Jesus loved Lazarus. They believed Jesus could heal him. But now they would learn something greater about Jesus. Not only could He heal the sick, but He could raise the dead! Jesus would take His friends to an even deeper place in their walk with Him. The sisters were looking for healing, but Jesus focused on glory.

QUESTION 2:

How do you tend to react to God's delayed response to a prayer?

When we face a difficult situation or a health concern, our greatest worry is usually not tied to God's glory. We want immediate comfort and relief; we want the difficulty to go away now. That's what Mary and Martha wanted. When Jesus finally arrived, Martha said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died" (John 11:21).

Mary and Martha probably assumed they knew what was best in their situation, and we do that too. We tend to think that if God loves

us, He will make us comfortable. But we will have an eternity in heaven to be comfortable! For the moment we are facing a challenge, though we can certainly trust that God will be at work.

God might not work on our timetable, but He does work—and He will work in a way that brings Him glory.

JOHN 11:38-43

³⁸ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ "Remove the stone," Jesus said. Martha, the dead man's sister, told him, "Lord, there is already a stench because he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me. ⁴² I know that you always hear me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so that they may believe you sent me." ⁴³ After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

Mary and Martha likely wondered why God had placed them in their current situation. Jesus' actions must have bewildered them. They knew Jesus loved them but they could not understand why a loving God would allow a loyal follower to suffer and die. Lazarus was Jesus' good friend, yet he had apparently contracted a sudden illness and died abruptly. It made no sense to them.

The Jewish people had a belief that a deceased person's soul lingered near the corpse for three days. On the fourth day the soul finally departed. Therefore, mourners retained a slight hope for recovery until the fourth day, when all hope was lost. Lazarus had been dead four days when Jesus arrived, and his situation was deemed impossible.

When it comes to timing, God is never in a hurry; we are—and no situation is impossible with Him! Upon Jesus' arrival, He commanded the stone to be removed from the entrance to the tomb. His request seemed impractical. Martha, ever the pragmatist, reminded Jesus of the unpleasant odors that would assault them. But Jesus challenged her that in order to see the glory of God, she had to believe.

Could it be that we do not see God's glory more often because we fail to believe? When we do things the way we always have, we rarely experience anything new. Martha already knew Jesus could heal sick people. What she was about to learn was Jesus could also raise dead people. Jesus was asking Martha to go against her instincts and tradition and trust God for something that appeared impossible. By trusting Him when all seemed impossible, she would see the glory of God.

QUESTION 3:

How does our faith allow us to experience God's glory?

Jesus uttered a prayer; His petition was confident and thankful. Jesus knew His Father always heard Him when He prayed. Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!"



Why did Jesus shout? Did raising His voice grant Jesus' command more power? No. It may have been because Jesus wanted everyone within hearing distance to witness the incredible miracle. Jesus was not praying timidly. He was boldly putting His work on display for everyone to witness.

Think for a moment about the needs in your life: perhaps you're dealing with a broken relationship, a wayward child, or a financial need. Look at the problems in our nation today: crime, violence, loss, drug addiction, broken homes, and pornography. The remedy for these problems may seem as daunting as raising a dead man, but nothing is beyond God's ability to heal and remedy. Jesus' conversation with Martha reminds us to trust Him and we will see the glory of God at work.



JOHN 11:44-45

⁴⁴ The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unwrap him and let him go.” ⁴⁵ Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what he did believed in him.

Surely Mary, Martha, and Lazarus had eagerly told their neighbors about Jesus. Some may have believed while others remained skeptical. Then Lazarus died. People may have wondered how the great Healer could allow one of His best friends to die prematurely. People may have speculated how things might have been different had the famous miracle worker come earlier.

QUESTION 4:

How have you seen God demonstrating His glory draw others to Christ?

Jesus had finally arrived, but many of Mary and Martha's friends and mourners shared the view that Jesus was too late to do any good. When Jesus insisted that the stone be rolled away from Lazarus's tomb, a crowd was already present and they likely expressed either curiosity or confused anticipation. Moments later, Jesus' commanding voice rang out, "Lazarus, come out!" (v. 43). This was the greatest miracle these townspeople had ever seen, and it came on the heels of Mary and Martha's greatest suffering.

It may be that the greatest glory Martha and Martha ever brought to their beloved Lord was when they trusted Him in the midst of their greatest pain. Sometimes it is the same for us. We can bring great honor to Christ as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. If we assume that our purpose in life is to be happy and healthy, then our difficult circumstances will confuse us when they inevitably come. But if we desire above all else to glorify our Savior, then we will seize every opportunity—both joyful and painful—to glorify Christ.

Mary and Martha certainly praised and glorified God for this great miracle of receiving Lazarus back from the dead, but it didn't stop there. Others saw and believed. Christ was exalted as the Messiah. Instead of letting our problems define us, when we let God work through them for His glory, others notice. When we live our lives according to God's will, we honor Him. We draw people to Christ, which brings Him even greater honor.

QUESTION 5:

How can our group bring glory to God?

THE GLORY OF GOD

Which of the following images best represents the concept of “glory” in your mind?
Or, use the space below to record your own. Then answer the question.



What do you appreciate most about the way God has displayed His glory in your life?

*“Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that
glory I had with you before the world existed.”*

JESUS, IN JOHN 17:5

