**HEALTHY CHRISTIANS GLORIFY GOD**

**(1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1)**

Stacey King grew up and graduated from high school in Lawton, OK. He became a standout basketball player for OU. In 1989 he was drafted by the Chicago Bulls in the 1st round. He was the sixth player picked over all. King won three consecutive NBA championships with the Bulls (1991, 1992, and 1993). King, however, mostly sat on the bench. He said the highlight of his career was the night he and Michael Jordan combined for 70 points. On that night Jordan scored 69 points and King netted one point. When Bulls fans filled the United Center in Chicago back in the dearly 90’s, they didn’t go there to watch Stacey King. They were there to see Michael Jordan, but King and his teammates got to catch some of that reflected glory.

Ideally, when you and I and others attend worship, it is not to hear the preacher preach. It is not to hear Rodney sing. It is not to watch who comes and to see what they are wearing. Our goal is to witness the glory of God. Our desire is not that His glory would be reflected upon us. Rather, it is our intent to reflect His glory like the moon reflects the light of the sun. We seek not to bring attention to ourselves but to add to the weight of His glory.

By the word, the Hebrew word for glory literally means “weight.” All that this world has to offer is feathery light, but God alone is substantial. The character of God is weighty while all the allures of this world are inconsequential in comparison.

Our job is to draw people’s attention towards the glory of God. We are to point people to His beauty, His excellence. In John 3:30 we read the words of John the Baptist, and what John said is a good summation of what we are to be about as the Church. Speaking of Jesus, John said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” That should be our goal.

Let me turn your attention to 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1. I believe the key verse of this passage is 10:31. I believe that one verse governs what we find in this segment of Scripture. What comes before and after that verse shows us how we are to go about glorifying God.

We have been looking at what healthy churches do. In this message we are going to focus on what healthy Christians do because healthy churches are made up of healthy Christians. We will see that healthy Christians glorify God, and we will learn how they do that.

1. **HEALTHY CHRISTIANS GLORIFY GOD BY FLEEING FROM TEMPTATION.**

The first verse of our text, 10:14, instructs us to flee from idolatry. This follows naturally from 10:13 which teaches that when we face temptation, we need to look for the way of escape.

I view this truth in football terms. We are the running back. We receive the handoff. The defensive line represents temptation. Temptation is coming after us. God, however, is on the offensive line. He is blocking for us. We need to follow Him because He is going to open up a hole for us, and we need to run through that hole. If God goes one way, and we go the other, we are going to be thrown for a loss, and we just might be injured on that play when temptation trip us up and falls upon us with all his weight. Worse yet, we may fumble the ball and give the Enemy cause to brag. To keep those things from happening, we need to follow God’s lead.

The one sin that Paul identifies in v. 14 is idolatry. That may well be the greatest temptation that you and I face and that temptation is everywhere we look. The temptation to idolatry surrounds us.

In the introduction to his book *Counterfeit Gods,* Tim Keller wrote:

A counterfeit god is anything so central and essential to your life, should you lose it, your life would feel hardly worth living . . . It can be family and children, or career and making money, or achievement and critical acclaim, or saving “face” and social standing. It can be a romantic relationship, peer approval, competence and skill, secure and comfortable circumstances, your beauty of your brains, a great political or social cause, your morality and virtue, or even success in the Christian ministry. When your meaning in life is to fix someone else’s life, we may call it “codependency” but it is really idolatry. An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, “If I have that, then I’ll feel my life has meaning, then I’ll know I have value, then I’ll feel significant and secure.” There are many ways to describe that kind of relationship to something, but perhaps the best one is *worship.*

. . . If anything becomes more fundamental than God to your happiness, meaning in life, and identity, then it is an idol. (*xviii-xix*)

Keller went on to point out that the Bible uses three metaphors to describe how we relate to the idols of our heart. We *love* idols, *trust* idols, and *obey* idols. Let me ask you, other than God, what commands your love, trust, and obedience? (*xxi*)

Keller also wrote:

The only way to free ourselves from the destructive influence of counterfeit gods is to turn back to the true one. The living God . . . is the only Lord who, if you find Him, can truly fulfill you, and, if you fail Him, can truly forgive you. (*xxiv*)

The Church in Corinth lived in a culture where idols abounded. That is no less true of us. We should not be surprised that Paul commands us to flee from idols. The only successful way to flee from idols is to flee to the true God. We can’t just renounce idols. We have to replace them. When

we **love** the God of heaven,

and **trust** the God of the Bible,

and **obey** the God who created us,

we can live without our little gods who vie for our attention and allegiance.

It would have been extremely difficult for the believers in Corinth to escape the allure of idolatry. If you were invited to the home of an unbeliever, you would have been certain there would be a small household god placed in a prominent position. It is quite likely the meat served would have been offered to a god before it made its way to the table.

Look at what Paul wrote in vv. 19-21. To participate in any form with idol worship is to condone it, and to condone idol worship is to defy the One who died for us.

God is glorified when He alone is the One we **love, trust,** and **obey.** And when that is the case, the world will sit up and take notice because we will be so unlike the world around us.

1. **HEALTHY CHRISTIANS GLORIFY GOD BY SEEKING OUR NEIGHBOR’S GOOD.**

Look at vv. 23-24. We want our actions to be helpful not just lawful. We have to ask, “Will this course of action build people up? Will it be for the good of my neighbor?” It matters not whether your neighbor is a Christian. “Will my actions draw them to the Lord or repel them?”

When Bill Clinton was the President, he instituted a don’t ask, don’t tell policy in the military. A soldier was not to be asked about his sexual orientation, nor was he to volunteer that information.

Paul encouraged the use of a don’t ask/don’t tell policy regarding the origin of meat at a dinner table. You weren’t to ask whether the meat was used in pagan worship. If your host, however, said, “Oh, by the way, this meat was used in idol worship this morning,” you were to say, “No thank you. Would you pass the salad, please?”

When I was a kid, every Saturday night, my family would watch the CBS TV show, All in the Family*.* You remember that show. It featured Archie Bunker and his wife Edith. They had a daughter named Gloria. Gloria had a husband named Michael. In one episode, Archie’s son-in-law, Michael, and his wife, Gloria, are in the kitchen. Michael is eating a sandwich and Gloria is baking cookies. Gloria asks him, “Michael, do you love me?”

“Yup,” he says in between bites.

“Would you give up your life for me?” she asks.

“Right after I finish this sandwich.”

“Ma saw this movie on TV. It takes place in the desert. The husband gives up his life so his wife can live. I was just wondering if you would do the same for me.”

“Sure, honey. If we’re ever in the Sahara Desert together, you got my life. You got any pickles?”

Gloria sighs and says, “Michael, I’m serious. I mean, if we were stranded in the desert, and we had just enough water for one of us, what would you do?”

“I’d flip you for it.”

Gloria is visually exasperated, so Michael adds: “Well honey, what do you want from me? That is a very difficult question to answer. Not many people know how they’d react in a life-and-death situation.”

“Okay, forget the desert,” she says. “Let’s say we’re out in the ocean, and there’s this shark coming at us. Would you swim in front of it to save me?”

“How big is the shark?”

“He’s big. He’s a man-eating shark.”

“Well, then maybe you should swim in front of it to save me.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s a man-eating shark. You didn’t say woman-eating shark.”

At this point Gloria has about had enough. “I’m just trying to find out how much you care for me!”

“I care for you, honey. If you care for me, you’ll let me finish this sandwich.”

Gloria grabs the sandwich out of his hands and looks him in the eye: “Michael, we are lost in the mountains. This is our only food—our only chance for survival. Would you give me this sandwich?”

“I wouldn’t have to. You’d take it from me.”

“Michael! I just want to hear you say you’d give up your life for me. Would you say it?”

Gloria angrily walks out of the kitchen and into the living room. Michael follows her.

She looks back at him again, saying, “Just say you’d lay down your life for me.”

“This is ridiculous. How did we get into this?”

“Just say the words, Michael!”

Michael finally gives in, exhausted by the whole conversation. “All right! All right! I’d lay down my life for you!”

Words are easy to say. It is our choices that matter. The Bible teaches that we are to give up our rights in order to serve our neighbors. Are you willing to do that?

By doing that we glorify God. We glorify God when we flee from temptation and seek our neighbor’s good.

1. **HEALTHY CHRISTIANS GLORIFY GOD BY BEING SEEKER-**

**SENSITIVE.**

There are many churches that have what they call “seeker-sensitive” worship services. They attempt to eliminate any elements of the service that might offend lost people.

I’m not a big fan of seeker-sensitive worship services. In my view, the focus of a worship service should not be what appeals or doesn’t appeal to a person who doesn’t even know the Lord. It occurs to me that the gospel can be very offensive to lost people. I am more concerned that we not do things that offend God. He is the One we should seek to please.

Outside the worship service, however, we should seek to live “seeker-sensitive” lives. Our key verse is v. 31. Look at what follows in vv. 32-33.

In their book *Good Faith,* David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons tell the story of Anne Snyder. Anne Snyder is a young Christian who spent her first three years after college trying to break into the world of journalism while trying to serve Christ through her career at the same time. She ends up landing a dream job. David Brooks, a nationally known columnist with *The New York Times*, hires Anne to be his research assistant. She acts as his sounding board by reading early drafts of his columns and offering story ideas.

Anne is exceedingly intelligent and articulate, so it’s not a surprise she was offered the job. But it *is* surprising that this young, evangelical Christian is working so closely with Brooks, who is an influential public voice, prominent journalist, thought leader, and non-Christian.

In 2015 David Brooks released a critically acclaimed book entitled, *The Road to Character*. In the beginning of Brooks’ acknowledgement page, he offered this glowing honor to his new research assistant:

Anne C. Snyder was there when this book was born and walked with me through the first three years of its writing. This was first conceived as a book about cognition and decision making. Under Anne’s influence, it became a book about morality and inner life. She led dozens of discussions about the material, assigned me reading from her own bank of knowledge, challenged the superficiality of my thinking in memo after memo and transformed the project . . . I have certainly stolen many of her ideas and admired the gracious and morally rigorous way she lives her life. If there are any important points in this book, they probably come from Anne.

Of course, there’s a story behind this acknowledgement: Anne’s vibrant faith, uncompromising work ethic, her God-given brilliance, and her extensive reading list influenced Mr. Brooks in a profound, and relevant, way. Her faithful presence made a difference. In good faith, Anne made Christianity a little more relevant to one person, who happens to write bestselling books and a regular column for *The New York Times*.

Are you having a positive influence on someone else who doesn’t know the Lord? If you are, you are glorifying God.

1. **HEALTHY CHRISTIANS GLORIFY GOD BY IMITATING OUR LORD.**

Look at 11:1. It is one thing to say to someone else, “You need to imitate Christ.” It is something entirely different to say, “Take a close look at my life. Do what I do. Pattern your life after mine, because I am focused on living my life like Jesus lived His.”

Can you honestly say that? With a good conscience, can you honestly encourage someone to follow your example because you have patterned your life after Jesus?

All of us need coaches and teachers. Take handwriting for instance. When you started school, you needed someone to show you how to hold a pencil. You were likely given a piece of paper that had dots. You were to trace those dots as you learned how to form letters.

The teacher wrote a couple of sentences on the board, and you were to write on your paper what she had written on the board. You needed an example to follow.

It occurs to me that even professional athletes have coaches. A team doesn’t just have a head coach. It also has position coaches. On just the offense, there is a quarterback coach, a wide receiver coach, a running back coach, and a font line coach. These professional athletes who are getting paid millions of dollars have someone working with them to help them get better at their craft.

The same goes with athletes who play individual sports. The best tennis players in the world all have coaches. Golfers, who are multi-millionaires, have swing coaches and strength coaches.

You and I need coaches, and we need to be coaches or mentors to others. People don’t just need to hear us talk about the Christian life. They need to see us live the Christian life.

As you imitate Christ and model the Christ-life to someone else, you are at the same time, glorifying God.

In his book *Vertical Church,* James MacDonald wrote:

* As heat is to fire, glory is to God.
* As wet is to water, glory is to God.
* As light is to bulb, glory is to God.

Glory is what emanates from God. (p. 82)

We are to be about the business of publishing the glory of God, making His glory known throughout the world.

Later in his book, MacDonald wrote, “When a believing church amplifies worship as their ultimate priority, they are shaped by that adoration into the most powerful human force possible.” (p. 168).

The strength of our church is directly tied to the strength of our worship. If we are weak in worship, we are weak. If we are strong in worship, we are strong. It is that simple.

The Hebrew word for worship was the word “kabod.” Keep that in mid as we close with an Old Testament story. It is found in 1 Samuel 4. The Israelites went out to battle, and the battle did not go well. Not only were many Israelites killed, but even worse, the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines. The Israelites viewed the ark as more than furniture for the tabernacle. They believed it represented the very presence of God. If they no longer had the ark, they no longer had God’s presence among them.

At this time, the chief religious figure in the nation was Eli the priest. He was old. Let’s read vv. 15-22. In the English language, if you want to articulate the opposite of something you add the letter *a* to the beginning of the word. The opposite of theism is atheism. The opposition of political is apolitical.

In Hebrew you signify the opposite of something by adding the letter *i.* If *kabod* means “glory,” the opposite of glory is Ichabod.

When people look at out church, do they find *kabod* or do they see Ichabod?

What will we be? Will we be a church where the glory of God is clearly evident or will we be a church where the glory of God is obviously absent?

What should be written upon the doors of our church—kabod or Ichabod?