



**Glenn Brown**

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441 ½ Lark Drive

Grand Junction, Colorado 81504

telephone 970-434-1377

## **THE GLORY OF GOD**

When I remember all of the blessings and experiences that God has given me over the years, it amazes and perplexes me. Since I missed the mark so many times and in so many ways, how could God have been so kind to me? The obvious conclusion is that it's because that is who God is. Think about the "fruit of the Spirit" as listed in 1 Corinthians 12: *Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control*. That is a description of God. That is His nature. I suggest you write these words down and look at them every morning. Wow! What a beautiful Person God is. How lovely and kind He is. I've been thinking about one of those amazing experiences and although I probably wrote about it before, I want to do it again:

Back in the late 1970's and early 1980's a group of dedicated Christians built a new church facility in north Loveland and named it after the Good Shepherd, Jesus. Shortly after we moved into our new facility, on a Sunday morning I was walking down the hall to the sanctuary for the Sunday service when I glanced out a window at the corn field just next to our parking lot. I can't describe what I saw because I don't understand it myself, but I "saw" the glory of God over that corn field. In Isaiah 6, when Isaiah had a vision of God seated on a throne, he heard the angels singing, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory*.

For some reason God decided on that particular morning to grant me a glimpse of his glory not over the whole earth but just over a corn field. The beauty and majesty of that brief glimpse did me in. I became drunk in the Spirit (really) and staggered down the hall to the sanctuary and sat down in my chair on the platform and started weeping. When it was time for me to preach I couldn't stand up, much less talk. I just cried. The presence of God was palpable. Some people finally came down to the front and knelt in prayer. It was a different kind of service.

One day, friends, the curtain will be pulled back and all of us will see the glory of God over the whole earth. Glory to God most high!

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## **WITHOUT EXCUSE**

In A Western Jesus, Mike Minter says, "It is important to note that God will not be moved by excuses for rejecting Him on Judgment Day. He won't say, 'I understand your dilemma and the confusion that caused you to reject Me.' This will not happen for the following reasons:

1. God has placed eternity in the hearts of men. *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also put eternity in their hearts, but man cannot discover the work God has done from beginning to end.* (Eccles. 3:11) This means that all people are aware not only of their mortality in this world but that their spirit will live on beyond this life. Man has a yearning for a life free of evil, suffering, and death, for heaven. God placed this yearning, this awareness, in every heart.

2. The Law of God is written in the heart of man, and he has a conscience that accuses or excuses his actions. (Romans 2) Man knows right from wrong in a general sense. To violate the conscience brings inner guilt. Man senses he needs forgiveness. If there is no God, where does the guilt come from? What standard has been violated, and who created such a standard?

3. In John 16, God tells us that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Man has a deep inner knowing that he will be held accountable for all his actions in this life, and he fears there might be a place of darkness and suffering called hell. Man avoids the guilt and fear of this possibility by suppressing the truth or adopting a philosophy or religion that pacifies his conscience. (Romans 2 and 3, and the books of James and 1 John)

4. God speaks to man through nature in order to reveal himself and his power. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims the work of His hands. Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge.* (Ps. 19:1-2) That the cosmos had a beginning and will have an end is now acknowledged even by science, and it requires remarkable mental gymnastics to deny the awesome wisdom and power behind the created order.

Note: See the following article.

5. God subjects man to futility and frustration.

*Meaningless! Meaningless! Says the teacher.*

*Utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless.*

(Eccles. 1:1) The whole book of Ecclesiastes points

out that life without God is futile and meaningless: “Pleasure is meaningless, work is meaningless, wisdom and folly are meaningless.” Solomon concludes Ecclesiastes by saying, *Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing,*

*whether it is good or evil.* (Eccles. 12:13-14)

Thank the Lord that the Bible goes beyond stating that life without God is meaningless and futile; beyond warning us that there will be a final judgment. The New Testament presents the Gospel, which is the Greek word for “Good News,” that God loves us so much that He has come to us personally in his Son and made the ultimate sacrifice on the cross so that we might through faith receive the free gift of eternal life. And more than that, Jesus changes our life in this world so that it becomes an “abundant life.” It is no longer meaningless but meaningful, purposeful. He takes away the fear of death and replaces it with an assurance that a loving Father is waiting for us when we pass over the finish line. Hallelujah!

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## **HOW THE UNIVERSE FORMED WITHOUT GOD**

In the book, A Curious Discovery, John Hendricks told about an episode that appeared on Discovery Channel with “the world’s most preeminent scientist, Stephen Hawking.” (Note: Mr. Hawking was an admirable and courageous man in the way he battled ALS for so many years, but his statement about the creation of the universe was ridiculous.) Hendricks said that Hawking addressed the most profound question of humanity: *Did God create the universe?*

“I knew this would be a highly controversial topic. Hawking explained in his book The Grand Design that invoking God isn’t necessary to explain the origins of the universe, that the Big Bang is a

consequence of the laws of physics and nothing more. His explanation isn't simple. A brief summary of his conclusion is that:

*'The universe could have spontaneously arisen from probabilistic quantum fluctuations acting to bring the negative energy of empty space – 'nothingness' – into balance.'*"

When I (Glenn) read that profound statement I laughed so loud that someone heard me in another part of the house. When people refuse to acknowledge the obvious, they will end up believing utter nonsense. It is either *In the beginning God...* or *Once upon a time*. It is either God or a fairy tale.

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## **MONEY OR GOD**

Speaking to the people, He said, "Watch out! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot." Then He told them this story: "A certain man started out as a stock clerk in Kroeger's. His diligence, integrity, and good attitude caught the attention of his boss, and he went up the chain very rapidly. He became the youngest regional manager in the history of the company. He felt pangs of conscience for not spending more time with his wife and children, but he took exceedingly good care of them financially.

After a few years, he could have retired and done anything he wanted, but just then he was offered the top job, the dream job to which he had always aspired. It was too good an offer to turn down. Just before taking over his new job, while playing golf, suddenly his left arm started aching, then his jaw, then his chest, and he fell over dead. He had a huge funeral. He was respected for his wisdom, integrity, and hard work. His was an American success story. He was eulogized by the high and the mighty.

That night, at midnight, an angel appeared at the cemetery, moved to the oversized tombstone marking the man's final resting place, and wrote with his finger on the slab: 'FOOL!' That was God's verdict on this man's life." (Luke 12, paraphrase)

Jesus also said, in Luke 16:11 (Amp), *If you have not been faithful in the case of unrighteous mammon (deceitful riches, money, possessions), who will entrust to you the true riches?* He called money and possessions "deceitful riches." Why deceitful? Because they deceive people into feeling secure and successful apart from God. And what are the "true riches?" They are those things only Christ can give us: forgiveness, love, peace, a relationship with God, eternal life.

The Bible tells us in many places to emulate God, be givers, give offerings to special needs, give to the poor, etc. But the Bible never tells us to "give" our tithes to God, but to "pay" our tithes. Why the distinction? If you owe money to the bank on your mortgage, when you make your payment the banker doesn't come out and thank you for your generosity. It was their money you borrowed, and you are just paying back what is theirs, plus interest.

We are not "giving" God anything when we pay our ten percent. He makes it clear that all of it really belongs to Him. He is the one who gives us life, health, and the ability to work, and He generously allows us to keep 90 percent of it while promising to bless us for our faithfulness when we pay Him the first ten percent. It is sobering to see God's judgment on the nation of Israel in Malachi 3:9. He said, *"You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, even this whole nation"* - - because they were not paying their tithes. We understand that Christianity is based on grace, not law, but the Bible makes clear that giving the tithe is really for our sakes in order to wean us away from the terrible idolatry of putting money ahead of God. The Bible says that *"The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil,"* and Jesus warned in the Sermon on the Mount that you can't love both God and money but that

ultimately you must choose one or the other. Tithing is a discipline that can break the stranglehold of money over our hearts.

You may recall hearing that Jesus taught more about money than about any other subject. That is true. But it was not because Jesus needed people's money. He told the rich young ruler to give away all his wealth because money had his heart. Jesus didn't tell the young man to give Him the money, He told him to give it to the poor. A missionary friend of mine, I will call him Joe, told me a funny story on his recent visit. He has a friend here in the U.S. who is an investment councilor. Over the years of their relationship, this friend has told Joe again and again that if he ever had any money to invest he would help him multiply his money and prepare for retirement. Joe's father recently died and left him an inheritance. Joe's first thought was about giving the inheritance to missions, but then he remembered the investment guy and wondered if he should invest the money, let it grow, and then he would have a lot of money to give to missions. So he prayed and asked God what he should do. He said that God spoke to him very clearly: "I don't need your money."

Friends, God does not need our money. He is the Creator, *He owns the cattle on a thousand hills*. But we need to give it! The whole point is, who or what is the great love of your life? If you love anything or anyone, even your own family, even your own life, more than you love God, then that is your god, and your god is an idol. Money is a common idol in this world.

Tithing, giving the first ten percent of our income, is one way that God helps us break free of the love of money. Tithing is also a test of our relationship with God. I'm not suggesting that tithing is a fool-proof test, the Pharisees were rigorous tithers but they hated God and crucified His Son. But our tithing and giving, two separate categories, are a little test (Jesus said that our giving is "*a little thing*" in Luke 19) to show where our heart is. And, again, God promises an extravagant reward for being faithful to Him in this little way.

We have a loving, giving Heavenly Father. You can't really separate loving and giving, can you? And the Bible teaches that in this brief life we are to learn to be like Him. Are you a tither? That means that you pay the first ten percent of your income to your home church. Not two percent or three percent, but ten percent. The first ten percent, not what you have left over. And are you giving to people or missionaries or needs that God brings to your attention over and above the ten percent? And are you cheerful about it? It's a test of your heart.

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## **QUOTES FROM LARRY RANDOLPH**

(From my Ancient Files)

- Larry's prayer to start his teaching at the conference I attended: "O, Lord, stuff us with the stuff."
- Jesus is saying, *I AM doing a new thing*. Revival is a Person, not an event. A new thing means a fresh thing. Do such things as falling down, laughing, tongues, gold dust offend you? Be careful what offends you, it may be God. The Pharisees missed the coming of the King of Glory because He came as a baby and they were offended.
- Jesus never used the jargon of the old religion: High Priest, Son of God, Messiah. He told stories about farmers planting seeds, about a boy who ran away from home, about good fruit and rotten fruit.
- On a plane, when someone asks Larry what he does, he tells them he is an inspirational speaker, or a life-coach, or a mentor. "If I told them I'm a Deacon, they would say, 'What's zat?'" If I told them I speak in tongues, they would think I was in a weird cult. Joseph told Pharaoh he interpreted dreams,

not that he was a prophet. Joseph changed his approach in order to relate to Pharaoh. He didn't try to educate Pharaoh to his Judeo worldview.

- How do you relate to your relatives, neighbors, co-workers?

## GOD'S BLESSINGS AT EASTER!

Glenn

**e-mail address** [casabrn441@gmail.com](mailto:casabrn441@gmail.com)

**WEBSITE:** [www.glennbrownministries.com](http://www.glennbrownministries.com)

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736 24 ½ Road Grand Junction, Co. 81505