

The Barnabas Letter

a newsletter from
The Barnabas Center a
non-profit counseling,
discipling and teaching
ministry in Charlotte, NC

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To Glorify God & Enjoy Him Forever

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The title for this issue of The Barnabas Letter comes from the first answer contained in the Westminster Confession. The question?:

**What is the
Chief End of Man?**

The Glory of Glory

Written by Giorgio Hiatt, Assoc. Pastor at Uptown Christ Covenant. He is the husband of Amanda and new father of Carver.

The Meaning of Glory

My English professor once warned us of peppering our papers with buzz words, using them too often with too little care. He reasoned that repetition without precision would gut a word of its meaning and leave it lifeless on the page—what C.S. Lewis called *verbicide*. I am afraid the Christian community is in danger of committing *verbicide* with the word “glory.” Used in everything from website domain names and Christmas ornaments to Bible covers and t-shirts, the word has been trivialized and misused to the point of having no meaning—not just lifeless on the page, but on the lip and the heart.

This has not always been true. The Westminster Standards, the most agreed upon Protestant document of the Reformation, begins with this question, “What is the chief end of man?” After a decade of gatherings and debates, theologians from diverse doctrines agreed: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” Our purpose, our goal, our end, is to bring God glory. How do we do this? First we must resuscitate a word.

As good theologians do, the dons of Westminster only reflect the value that Scripture puts on “glory.” From the cloud guiding the covenant people out of Egypt, to the picture of the throne room of God in Revelation, God’s glory shines through the pages of Scripture. In Hebrew the word for *glory* is the same word for *weight* or *heaviness*, implying magnitude, importance, gravity, and heft. The Greek word for glory refers to grandeur, reputation, splendor, and brilliance. As one writer puts it, glory is the *weighty importance and shining majesty that accompany God’s presence*. Odd, isn’t it? When we think of *weighty importance* we think of something solid, dense, and significant. When we think of *shining majesty* we think of something airy, radiant, and illuminating. But these melded ideas describe the Biblical experience of God’s glory perfectly.

The Burden of Glory

David says that day after day creation pours

forth speech that brings attention to God’s glory (Ps 19:2). Paul says that this glory reveals God’s power and nature and leaves us without excuse regarding the knowledge of God (Rm 1:19). The shining majesty of God’s glory blazes forth to the ends of the earth leaving us responsible for acknowledging it. The pressure of God’s glory weighs so heavily on all of creation that it imposes on us, demanding a response. Moses had to turn his face from God’s glory while receiving the Ten Commandments. Israel thought they would die when they saw it at Sinai. Peter and John wanted to bask in His glory at the Mount of Transfiguration. Isaiah says that he was ruined when he witnessed it. Stephen experienced God’s glory at his stoning, falling into the peace of heavenly sleep as the rocks struck his head. In terms of shining majesty, the light of God’s glory exposes as much as it enlightens, and in terms of weighty importance, the burden of God’s glory compresses as much as it consoles.

The Scripture teaches that God’s glory bombards humanity at every turn. We must respond to it. God’s glory will define us; the question is “How?” Will we run from it in dread or repent toward it in joy? As C. S. Lewis says, “*In the end that Face which is the delight or the terror of the universe must be turned upon each of us either with one expression or with the other, either conferring glory inexpressible or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised.*” My sense is that most humans, including Christians, live as if God’s glory fueled their shame more than their delight. So how do we come to see God’s glory as our delight? How do we glorify God and enjoy him forever? Let us return to the Scriptures.

The Bible broadens its teaching about God’s glory, showing us that we don’t just respond to it. The Psalms go on to declare something astounding: *You made [man] a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor* (Ps 8:5). As the highest work of His creation, God crowns us with His *weighty importance*, and as the rulers over creation, God instructs us to refract His *shining majesty*. God

“So how do we glorify God and enjoy him forever? We become cup-like containers and mirror-like reflectors.”

made us not just as glory-responders, but glory-receptacles and glory-reflectors. So how do we glorify God and enjoy him forever? We become cup-like containers and mirror-like reflectors.

You know the problem though. The Fall, and our rebellious participation in it, have broken our cups and sullied our mirrors. About us, Paul says *“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him...”* (Rm 1:21). With haunting breadth he says, *“All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God”* (Rm 3:23). And we all experience the ache, the sorrow, and the restlessness of knowing that we are made for so much more.

The Hope of Glory

But oh, my friends, there is hope. Though we deserve all the shame that God’s glory might reveal, the face of God turns to us in delight through the person of Jesus Christ. The rest of Paul’s haunting sentence becomes the fuel for our delight in God’s glory: *“All...have fallen short of the glory of God, but are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus”* (Rm 3:24). The writer of Hebrews adds *“the Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven”* (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus reflects and contains the glory of God perfectly. And as the perfect glorifier, He cleanses our sullied mirrors and restores our bro-

ken cups. Because of Christ’s work, we can bask in the light of His glory and reflect it just as we were created to do. But remember, we have proven to be too broken and too sullied on our own. To glorify God and enjoy Him forever, we must continually recognize that our ability to glorify comes from Christ alone. God has *“called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thes 3:14). That gospel boldly proclaims our weakness and sin; that gospel, in the same breath, boldly proclaims and hopes for God’s full redemption in Christ: *The God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you* (I Pt 5:10).

When shame is the only response we feel, and delight in the glory of God seems like a fairy tale, when all we can see is broken cups and sullied mirrors, we must despair of our self-striving and collapse on Christ, the perfect mirror, the perfect cup, and the perfect restorer of our ability to glorify God. Before His death, Jesus prayed for all those who would follow Him and receive His restoring work: *“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one... Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”* (Jn 17: 22-24) Let us trust His words so that the weight and majesty of God’s glory may surprise, humble, and delight us.

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Announcing *entitled*
a 6 Week Group for Couples!

Marriage R&R
Romance
REQUIRES
Repentance

Does your marriage need a little R&R?

Consider joining this 6 week marriage group, which is designed to help you and your spouse see eye to eye. The group will be based on the parable of ‘The Log in Your Own Eye’

DETAILS:
Begins in late October on Monday nights at the Center. The cost will be \$240 per couple and the group will be limited to 4 couples. Call The Barnabas Center for a brochure.

Led by Roger Edwards

The Barnabas Letter

is published three times a year by the Barnabas Center, a non-profit counseling, discipling and teaching ministry.

Our goal is to help people face honestly the struggles of life and to search out how the truth of the gospel applies to all circumstances.

Secondly, we hope to keep our friends and supporters abreast of the programs, events, and health of our ministry. Subscriptions are free, although donations are welcome for the general operation of the ministry.

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Enjoy God

Written by John Pierce. John is a counselor teacher at the Barnabas Center. He is married to Sandy and they have 3 children.

We are all guided by an internal sense of purpose. We have been taught in a million different ways to attend to certain things, to make them more important than others.

I was asked THE question the other day. We were just going to pickup a few things at the grocery store together and 'bam'. I was not ready, of course, what parent is? I was on one of those domestic reconnaissance missions to the grocery store, and for what I thought was going to be some harmless 'daddy-daughter time' with my three year old. I knew my purpose...hunt and provide, and love on your daughter along the way... But oh no...she had a different plan. "Daddy?" "Yea Honey (unsuspecting, distracted and intent on my mission - dodging other cars while trying to search my pockets for that grocery list and if I could not find it, trying to remember what was on the list). You get the picture. I was deeply engaged (ya right!) in this moment with my daughter and ready to hear her question. "Daddy....?"

Let me get back to this story in a moment and ask you a question or two. Do you get surprised often...can you still be delighted by simple things? Or are you like me...often trying very hard to keep everything nailed down...not necessarily trying to avoid surprises or delight, but intent on my agenda (or shall I say, "my agendas")...accomplishing or attending to the 'stuffs' of life, guided by my own internal sense of what is most important?

We are all guided by an internal sense of purpose. We have been taught in a million different ways to attend to certain things, to make them more important than others. Many of us grew up learning to pay very close attention to the externals in our life. Very early on we learned to avoid the scowl of important faces either through our pretending or through our achievement.

We all have learned to hide or pretend. Most of us learn early to give important people in our lives only what will be accepted and bring the smile. Perhaps you grew up in a home where anger was off limits for you. If you ever got mad it was considered bad and worthy of punishment. Anger expressed meant abandonment and loss of acceptance, not alert engagement with your soul. You learned to turn the other cheek, but not because you chose to out of a strong love. Rather you turned the other cheek to be nice and avoid the awful anxious possibility of being left alone again. You learned to please others to avoid the angst of conflict. And now you are 'stuck' and victim-

ized because you are above everything else supposed to be nice - and of course, hiding the truth is nice...isn't it?

On the achievement end of things, perhaps it was a parent that paid very close attention to the grades you made, but ignored your love for certain subjects? Now you have spent much of your life trying to make the grade (sometimes frantically, sometimes subtly). And then somewhere along this pursuit, you realize you have been so busy making the grade you have lost track and cannot even discern the things you love. How is it that so many achievement oriented guys wake up in their forties and realize they have won some success in work and in attainment of wealth, but have lost connection with their families or friendships or connection with their God - the very things that make them feel human and meaningful? The achievements can look so good, but if the purposes are tainted, then they will lead to enslavement not freedom.

The marching orders given us in our early life like "be successful" or "be a failure" or "be busy" or "be good" or "be nice" or "be dependent" often unwittingly motivate us and are the lens through which our lives get interpreted and activities get prioritized. Now for the real question; do you know what purposes are at work in the undercurrents of your life? Stop for a second and write one or two down...

For me, I learned early on to "be self-sufficient" or "don't depend". I am easy to get along with, because I would not ask for much from you...even when I really needed something. So often under girding my doings is this subtle and yet pervasive passion to avoid having to depend on others. So easily and unconsciously is that mission pursued that I can scarcely recognize it at times. But often it becomes more visibly seen through its fruit like when I am exhausted, lonely, despairing, depleted and just wanting some relief (sin). It is the results of the purpose that often betray its life and health in me.

Ok, did you write down a couple of the purposes you see operating in your life yet? Stop now and write them down.

Now the obvious problem with the purposes I

often live by is that they run contrary to those meant for me, producing in me a weariness and burden. God made me to be ordered around a purpose worthy of my design and perhaps that purpose is much different than what I know.

I have always been challenged and intrigued by the question in the Shorter Catechism "What is the chief end of man?" Pondering the answer has been central to reordering myself around a calling higher than "being self-sufficient". What could it mean for me to "Glorify God and enjoy Him forever?" Below I offer some thought on what this may mean.

1 Glorifying and enjoying God can only come with a shift in focus born out of a security in His love. There is no chance of enjoying someone you fear is judging you...try relaxing at your next group gathering when you know someone is snickering about you in the background. Knowing that all judgment and condemnation from God toward us has been done away with through the grace of Christ, frees us to more and more leave behind our fearful focus on ourselves. There are few greater joys than knowing in your heart that God loves you. As only Brennan Manning can say it,

"Wallowing in shame, remorse, self-hatred, and guilt over real or imagined failings in our past lives betrays a distrust in the love of God. It shows that we have not accepted the acceptance of Jesus Christ and thus have rejected the total sufficiency of his redeeming work. Preoccupation with our past sins, present weaknesses, and character defects gets our emotions churning in self-destructive ways, closes us within the mighty citadel of self, and preempts the presence of a compassionate God." (Ruthless Trust, page 16)

2 Secondly, we must acknowledge that all I am longing to have and be is not found in the world. Learning to rest more in the fact that God has not cheated me or withheld his best from me no matter what my circumstances, will free me to live out of love. To know that the shouts of every commercial on TV ("you can get better", "you can find it", "happiness is here") are but another way to pull my attention away from all things of substance and divert it to the false promises of momentary happiness. It is far too easy to forget that...*"our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will*

transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." (Philippians 3:20-21)

3 And finally, to glorify and enjoy God we need to learn the art of refusing to see anything as ordinary, but with the fresh eyes of a child capturing the wonder of a good God behind all that is seemingly common.

I will never forget as a student in a Christian college that going to chapel four times a week became a very ordinary thing, almost mundane. I could often get to the other side of the 50 minutes and could no more tell you what happened than I could remember the names of the constellations in the sky. But there were moments.

It was an ordinary day, and as was the case, we followed the order of chapel events. This day, as on many others, the special music was given by one of the music professors. This person was talented and meticulous. She commanded the piano with passion and perfection. For a few moments, I tuned in and was pulled out and up into something that was more good and grand than I was accustomed to hearing...somehow it was a moment that all at once allowed me to know again that God was greater than I could ever imagine and that He enjoyed taking me off guard by this small wonder of music. Yes, the moment was about an accomplished pianist who had given her life to perfecting her art, but more than that, much more than that, it was about the creative genius of a God who was more awesome and kind than I could ever imagine...a God who could make fingers move that fast and make sounds that wondrous to be put together to reveal His heart...to me.

Sometimes I am sure that because of all MY agendas I make life a lot harder than God intended. What if my deepest purpose was to delight in and enjoy the strength and kindness of God...I think I would smile a lot more, worry a lot less, and be a lot lighter.

Oh yea, before I close, you must want to know what got me thinking about all this in the first place. It was my daughter's great question that intruded into my grocery store agenda...you know what she wanted? She wanted to know where babies come from? Now you try driving, remembering a grocery list, while trying to search for a lost list, and answering that one on the fly.

What could it mean to "Glorify God and enjoy Him forever?"

1 Glorifying and enjoying God can only come with a shift in focus born out of a security in His love.

2 Secondly, we must acknowledge that all I am longing to have and be is not found in the world.

3 And finally, to glorify and enjoy God we need to learn the art of refusing to see anything as ordinary, but with the fresh eyes of a child capturing the wonder of a good God behind all that is seemingly common.

"The danger is that you will... listen to the great blaring, boring, banal voice of our mass culture, which threatens to deafen us all by blasting forth that the only thing that really matters about your work is how much it will get you in the way of salary and status, and that if it is gladness you are after, you can save that for weekends."

**Frederick Buechner,
The Hungering Dark**

Forever & the human contradiction

Roger Edwards is a counselor teacher with the Barnabas Center, and is married to Jean. Together they have seven children.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. *Ecclesiastes 3:11*

When it comes to the subject of forever, there is no better place to begin than a graveyard.

Graveyards teach two fundamental lessons about life. Both are profound, yet they conflict with each other. The first thing we learn is that of course, we don't want to be in a graveyard. The second discovery is that of course, we will be.

These conflicting lessons succinctly express the human dilemma. At creation, God set eternity into the hearts of men. And then in judgment, He set the hearts of men into decaying bodies. In an absurd arrangement, life is encased in death, eternity is confined to a mere lifespan.

We are eternal beings, yet we are dying. To be human, we find, is to be a contradiction in terms.

I first learned these lessons at my hometown church, or to be precise, behind it. Our small building sat on the curve of a lonely country road. Oak trees framed the front lawn. A gravel driveway looped behind accessing the graveyard.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that cemetery every Sunday. It was literally the background scene for my religious education. I have concluded that death is the background scene for anyone's religious education.

On Memorial Day, it was tradition for families to gather near the graves of their departed. Our preacher, Mr. Reese, would climb atop a stump and call out to the knots of people scattered around that field. "Remember those that have gone on," he would preach. "Remember, life is but a vapor, and your days too, are numbered". As soon as it ended, I would run up the hill to play with the other boys.

My grandparents on my father's side are buried there. I remember them being lowered into the

ground. At my father's graveside service, I was seated close enough to touch the casket. Although it was tough to be there; I was sure glad I came. Although it was healing; I was sure glad to leave.

Since that day, I have visited his grave only once alone. It was a cold day. I left the truck running as I walked to his headstone.

*Glosson Ross Edwards
Born July 15th, 1918
Died July 19th, 1999*

Beside his grave is his own father's plot.
*Charlie Ross Edwards
Born 1898, Died 1969*

Beside his, there is a vacancy, I observed.

Uneasiness With Graves

When I was young, my uneasiness about graves was impersonal. I used to imagine all sorts of ghost-like shapes hovering about. But now, as an older man, I imagine just the opposite. Instead of strange and nameless forms, I now think of people familiar to me; Aunt Mary, Mr. Andrews, Daddy. Instead of disembodied spirits, I picture dis-inspirited bodies.

The apprehension becomes more and more personal as you age, if you know what I mean.

Besides the name, two dates are about all you see on most headstones. From these you can sketch brief biographies. You can deduce ages, and the birth order of siblings and such. But the most obvious conclusion has nothing to do with arithmetic. The shocking observation gained at a graveyard is that all people really die. They live for a while, and then they just die. The 2 dates summarize.

All the concern, of course, is about that second date. It is fine and well to have the birth date. It is a number to document your existence on all the

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forms we fill out. We know about living. But what on earth does it mean to be dead? At that point, I got back in my truck and left. You know, because of the chill.

But if a graveyard makes any point at all, it asserts that you will return. We will come back to that ground, that's for sure. We just don't know how or when. We live with the odd experience of being uncertain of a certainty. Small wonder that people are so ambivalent, we don't quite know what to do with ourselves.

Life is like riding on a runaway train. For now it is safe, but the train is steadily accelerating. You know that around some bend (perhaps the next one) the tracks will contort, crashing the train against the far wall of a dark cave.

Until then? Well, you can try to make yourself comfortable. You can even order lunch. But the eventuality of the collision never quite leaves your mind.

This background anxiety wears on us. It is the mortal's chronic dis-ease. We try to relax. We try to find something that offers rest and permanence, but they keep decaying or rusting away. And if we count on people, we keep losing them somehow too. You begin to suspect that maybe there really isn't any place to rest in this life.

Graveyards teach the human situation. As we approach a graveyard, the eternity within us recoils. It struggles for escape like Houdini against his chains in a box. "But there is no escape," graveyards assert, "All that is left, is to wait for the end."

Who will Rescue us from this Body of Death?

Every grave declares this, that is, every grave except one. Actually it is a tomb. All other graves evoke despair because they are full of dead men's bones. The striking fact about this one is that it is empty. The fact of the missing body gives rise to intriguing possibilities.

Think again about that train ride, but this time in light of the empty tomb. After the sickening drop into the dark mouth of that cave, the passengers brace for the final collision.

Without warning, they feel a rough pull upward!? Blinking, they realize the train is climbing out of a tunnel. Sunlight flashes in the windows; bright flowered fields race by. The passengers

gasps, then laugh, and finally cheer. They gasp from the shock of ascent. They laugh, grateful for life. They cheer, because some great Captain has gone before. He has made a way through.

Normal graves are like walking into a stone wall, where everything stops, where everything goes black. But this tomb has, of all things, a back door that opens into a secret passageway. There is a way into brightness. A way through to where everything begins again.

To Be Immortal

This whole idea is so fantastic it takes some getting used to. Having been mortal for so long, you are used to living for the short term. Your mindset is calibrated to the small scale of a 'life span'. Things like retirement, reputation, and material gain dominate your thinking. Even worse, some people live merely for the moment; a cookie at lunch, a verbal jab at a spouse.

But being immortal expands your thinking. You begin to identify with what is of eternal consequence; like the souls of men and the glory of God. True, these new interests take time to develop. They require study, long-term investment, and the willingness to ponder and savor. But then, immortals can afford to be patient.

They can also afford to be extravagant. Hope compels immortals to live with a kind of deliberate abandon. They live with less caution and more generosity. The great tension that dominates mortal life has been miraculously resolved. Death has no more dominion over them.

And so, knowing that they will receive it back, immortals give their life away. They do it willingly, and for the joy set before them. They sacrifice, just like their Captain did for them.

The Other Side of the Grave

At the empty tomb, the human contradiction is divinely contradicted. Instead of death swallowing life; life swallows death.

That new graveside service will not be somber, nor silent. There will be a trumpet call. God will appear, and will set our eternal hearts into imperishable bodies. We will be at home within ourselves and at Home with Him.

With certainty of life we will do what immortals do. We will glorify and enjoy the God of Life. Forever.

"But being immortal expands your thinking. You begin to identify with what is of eternal consequence; like the souls of men and the glory of God."

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

1CO 15:51-54

The Barnabas Center

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**To Glorify God &
Enjoy Him Forever**



Date	<i>Upcoming Events opportunities and Current Events</i>	Facilitator
Beg. Sept. 18th at 7:30	Healing Hearts— a biblically based, professionally led, confidential, closed group context where women can find their heart again, and struggle with the difficult realities of being harmed by sexual abuse.	<i>Lisa Godman</i>
Projected Start Thursday, Sept 26, 12:15PM	Honors Path for Wives— for spouses of men who struggle with sexual compulsivity or are in a relationship that is recovering from sexual betrayal	<i>John Pierce & Lisa Godman</i>
Begins Late Sept.	Honor's Path— A Group for Men— ministry to sexually addicted men who want a better path. Please call (704-365-4545)	<i>Pete Bondy</i>
Sept 27-29	Spokane Washington Women's Retreat	<i>Lisa Godman</i>
October 10th	2002 Golf Classic	<i>Roger Edwards</i>
October 12th	Ministry Fair at Quail Hollow Presbyterian	<i>Roger Edwards</i>
October 11-13	The Quest - Men's Camping Weekend: Hiking, conversation, and reflection with a focus on deepening relationships with God and other men.	<i>Pete Bondy</i>
October 18-20, 2002	Charlotte Heart to Heart A marriage enrichment weekend	<i>Palmer Trice & Roger Edwards</i>
October 23, 2002	First Presbyterian— Wednesday Night "Other Gods"	<i>John Pierce</i>
Begins November 2002	Marriage R & R - Romance Requires Repentance – a 6 week group for couples at The Barnabas Center (see box on page 3)	<i>Roger Edwards</i>

More information on the above groups and seminars at our website: (www.thebarnabascenter.org)