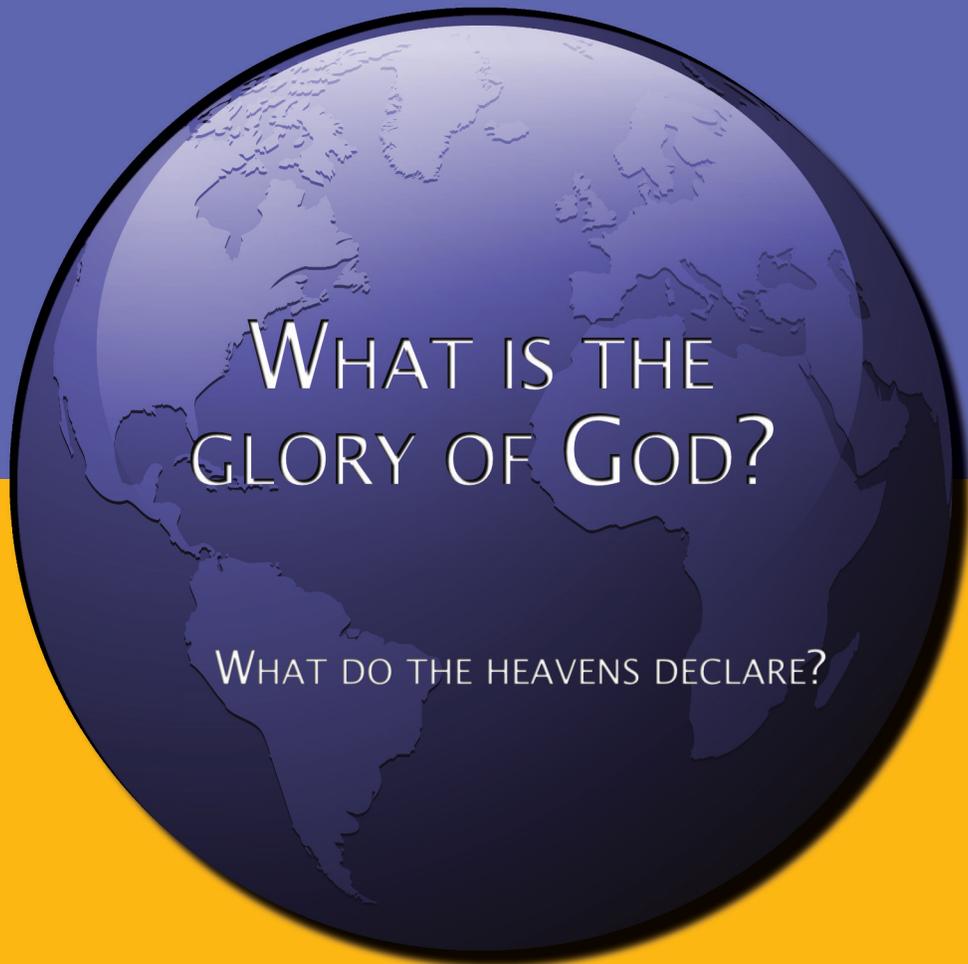


TO THE ONLY WISE GOD BE GLORY FOREVERMORE  
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST! AMEN.

(ROMANS 16:27 ESV)



THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD,  
AND THE SKY ABOVE PROCLAIMS HIS HANDIWORK.

(PSALM 19:1 ESV)

## What is the glory of God?

- (Psalm 19:1 ESV) The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

John Piper calls his attempt at defining the glory of God as “defining the impossible.” And that is true to a very real degree because our temptation—our *inclination, our default*—is to bring a definition or a description of the glory of God into our categories of understanding ... except there are no human categories which can contain the attributes of God fully understood.

- (Isaiah 55:9 ESV) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

### So what do we do?

We draw some conclusions from what God reveals about himself and his glory and do not go further.

- (1 Corinthians 4:6 ESV) I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

### What would you identify as the sin in the following two verses?

- (Psalm 106:19–20 ESV) They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a metal image. 20 **They exchanged the glory of God** for the image of an ox that eats grass.
- (Romans 1:21–23 ESV) For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 **and exchanged the glory of the immortal God** for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

**Answer:** They exchanged what was beyond them for things that were tangible, within their grasp, explainable, controllable.

### What would you identify as the sin in this verse?

- (John 5:44 ESV) How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes

from the only God?

**Answer:** Self-interest and arrogance. They settled for less because they were concerned for the immediate gratification of another person recognizing their goodness.

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### Insight from the field of epistemology ...

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion. The natural man cannot accept the spiritual truths in Scripture because he does not have the ability to apprehend this truth.

- (1 Corinthians 2:14 ESV) The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

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### Epistemology—A Partial Definition

Defined narrowly, epistemology is the study of knowledge and justified belief. As the study of knowledge, epistemology is concerned with the following questions: What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge? What are its sources? What is its structure, **and what are its limits?** [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy / First published Wed Dec 14, 2005]

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology>

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### The Doctrine of Glory Paul Tripp

I will never forget that evening. I can't think of a moment when I was more blown away by a musical composition.

I don't recall the composer or the conductor, but I was at a performance played by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. My ticket put me in the first row and it was worth it. The music was powerful, foreboding, amazing, haunting, compelling, and glorious, all at the same time.

There were moments when I wished this night would never end, and moments when I wanted to get up and run out of the concert hall. There were moments when the music caused my chest to rattle and moments when it lured me in with a whisper. There were moments when musical joy collided with musical fear in a beautiful disharmony of sound.

When the performance was over, I felt both sad and exhausted. I wanted more, and yet at the same time I felt like I had had enough. I didn't know why this particular performance had affected me so deeply until I looked at the program and saw the name of the composition. It read: God, the most formidable word ever spoken.

### Trying To Capture Glory

What I experienced that night was the attempt of a very gifted composer to capture God – in all his amazing and variegated glory – in a single piece of music. In one sense, it was a triumphant effort, and in another sense, a dismal and embarrassing failure.

For any human being to think that they could capture the glory of God in a single artistic statement is delusional at best and vain at worst. To squeeze what is infinite into what is finite is vastly more impossible than trying to cram the entire body of fully-developed elephant into a thimble. No matter how gifted you are or how hard you try, it just won't happen! The composer, the conductor, and the orchestra had done marvelously well by human standards, but with their grandest effort, they only captured less than a drop of the never-ending ocean that is the glory of God.

Glory is not a thing, like a shoe, a steak, a candle, or a cottage. Those are particular physical items that could be so carefully described with words that you would immediately have an accurate picture in your mind of what is being talked about. One could draw a picture of a shoe or take a photograph of a cottage and you could see it and know what it was. But glory isn't like that.

**No single drawing, painting, photograph, or verbal description could ever capture glory. Glory isn't so much a thing as it is a description of a thing. Glory isn't a part of God; it's all that God is. Every aspect of who God is and every part of what God does is glorious. But even that's not enough of a description. Not only is he glorious in every way, but his very glory is glorious!**

### What Is Glory?

With many other doctrines in Scripture, we typically run to a couple of default passages that describe the issue at hand, and we feel as if we're able to walk away with some general understanding of that topic. But that strategy

doesn't work with the doctrine of God's glory, because God's glory lives above and beyond any type of description or definition.

...

**So, when the Bible speaks of God's glory, what is it talking about? The doctrine of God's glory encompasses the greatness, beauty, and perfection of all that he is.**

In everything that he is and in everything that he does, God is greater than human description. Every attribute and action of God is stunningly beautiful in every way. Each characteristic of God and every accomplishment from his hand is totally perfect. This is what we mean when we talk about God's glory.

The stunning reality of this universe is that there exists One who is the greatest, the most beautiful and the most perfect in every way. God is gloriously great, gloriously beautiful and gloriously perfect. There is none like him; he has no rivals, and no valid comparisons can be made to him. He is the great Other, in a category of his own beyond our ability to estimate, understand or describe.

Every part of God is glorious in every way possible; there's nothing more to be said. And because God is glorious in every possible way, he alone stands in this vast universe as the only One who is worthy of the worship, surrender and love of every human heart.

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### Other Key Scriptures

- (2 Peter 1:3 ESV) His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.
  - (Jude 24–25 ESV) Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.
  - (Romans 5:2 ESV) Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
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**What Is God's Glory?**  
**Interview with John Piper**  
**Defining the Impossible**

**Defining the glory of God is impossible.** I say, because it is more like the word beauty than the word basketball. If somebody says that they have never heard of a basketball — they don't know what a basketball is — and so they say, "Define a basketball," then that would not be hard for you to do. You would use your hands, and you would say,

Well, it is like a round thing made out of leather or rubber and about ten or nine inches in diameter, and you blow it up. You inflate it, so it is pretty hard. Then you can bounce it like this, and you can throw it to people, and you can run while you are bouncing it. Then there is this hoop at the end (but it used to be a basket), and you try to throw the ball through the hoop. That is why it is called a basketball.

**God is in a class by himself. He has infinite perfections, infinite greatness, and infinite worth.**

They would have a really good idea of what it is. They would be able to spot one and to tell it from a soccer ball or a football.

You can't do that with the word beauty. There are some words in our vocabulary that we can communicate with not because we can say them, but because we see them. We can point. If we point at enough things and see enough things together and say, "That's it! That's it. That's it," we might be able to have a common sense of beauty. But when you try to put the word beauty into words, it is very, very difficult.

**Holy Spells Worthy**

It's the same thing with the word glory. So, how shall I do it? You have to try, because we can't just leave it for people to fill up on their own. Here is the way I am going to try to do it. I am going to take it and contrast it biblically with the word holy and ask, "What is the difference between the holiness of God and the glory of God?" In doing that, I think we get a little handle on the nature of this term the glory of God. That is the way I am going to try to do it.

**The holiness of God is, I think, his being in a class by himself in his perfection and greatness and worth.** His perfection and his greatness and his worth are of such a distinct and separated category — we have been taught that the word holy means separate — that he is in a class by himself. He has infinite perfections, infinite greatness, and infinite worth.

His holiness is what he is, as God, that nobody else is. It is his quality of perfection that can't be improved upon, that can't be imitated, that is incomparable, that determines all that he is and is determined by nothing from outside him. It signifies his infinite worth — his intrinsic, infinite value.

Intrinsically holy, and the whole earth is full of his glory — **from which I stab at a definition, by saying that the glory of God is the manifest beauty of his holiness.** It is the going-public of his holiness. It is the way he puts his holiness on display for people to apprehend. So, the glory of God is the holiness of God made manifest.

**So, here is an attempt at a definition:** the glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of God's manifold perfections.

**NOW PIPER POINTS TO  
THE RELEVANCE OF  
A DISCUSSION OF THE GLORY OF GOD.**

*So I ask, "Do you see it? Do you love it?" You were made for this, deep down in your heart. If you are a totally disinterested person, sitting there tonight just eager for the service to be over, there will come a day (and I hope it's tonight) when enough of the crust is scraped off that you will say, "I am made for this. This is why I exist: to see that. Everything is pointing to that. All the glory that I thought was so attractive is going there. This is all husks and ashes. He was right. The Bible was right. Jesus was right."*

I hope it will not be too late when that happens for you.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-gods-glory--2>