

To God Be the Glory

Posted by admin

I recently had an opportunity to share the truth of God receiving glory with Jeff, who is Jewish. He dropped by to share what has been happening in his life and we found ourselves thumbing through various passages in the Old and New Testaments, discovering biblical truth that was highly applicable.

I met Jeff in September at the Honda dealership and since then we have been enjoying a great friendship and some very stimulating conversation. I have attended synagogue with him and he has shown interest in the teachings of Jesus and is very open.

On this particular morning, we got into a lively discussion about humility and since I had just given him a copy of the Gospel of John in *The Message* by Eugene Petersen, I shared I Corinthians 4:7 from *The Message* with him, which reads,

“Isn’t everything you have and everything you are sheer gifts from God? So what’s the point of all this comparing and competing.”

Earlier that day I had been meditating on this verse in *The Message* so shared my deliberations with Jeff.

Everything I have - Here I include all the material, tangible things I have, that are sheer gifts: house, car, clothes, food, etc. It is so tempting to begin thinking that because I am smarter, shrewder or cleverer than others, I have what I have. I need to be reminded that everything that comes my way of an earthly, tangible nature is a sheer gift. As James puts it in James 1:17, “Every good and perfect gift comes from above.”

Everything I am - Here I include things such as gifts, personality, capacity, individual design, intelligence. What I am is a gift and what I have is a gift. Everything is a sheer gift. I know of no role in life more susceptible to pride and arrogance than the role of “leader.” I know several young pastors who are seeing quite a bit of success in ministry. It is so tempting and so easy for them to think that it’s about them, to be full of themselves. It can get to the heart and head so quickly when over a thousand people hang on your every word each week; when the newspapers are clamoring for an interview and the book publishers are chasing you down to do your first book. The risk is you can begin to take personal credit for what happens rather than saying from the heart, and meaning it, “To God be the Glory.” Praying against pride and for a humble spirit is a daily exercise with me. The long-term prospect of a prideful spirit frightens me.

I was impressed this last week in my personal devotions with two passages from the book of Acts. The first one is in chapter 10. It is the story of Peter showing up at Cornelius's home. Cornelius's first response was to fall on the floor before Peter and worship him. The text says that Peter commanded him to stand up and said that he was a human being just like Cornelius. I noted in my journal, "So much "star worship" in your body today. Way overdone. Enough fallen idols should have cured us, but I fear not. What is it in our human nature that needs to have heroes to worship and believe in? Help me never, never succumb to this."

The second passage is in Acts 12 where we read the account of Herod. On a special day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and gave a speech that must have been a humdinger as people said that it was the voice of a god, not of a man. Then immediately follows this sobering statement, "...because he (Herod) did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down and he was eaten by worms and died." Where did we get the idea that the God of the New Testament is a God of love only and not also a God of judgment?

How many Christian leaders would we loose in short order if, in their hearts, they accepted the worship and praise of men and as a result were struck dead by the sovereign Lord who alone should get praise for what we have, what we are and what we are enabled to do.

My fellow Christian leader, do you find yourself playing the comparing and competing game? Do you often discover yourself evaluating, and comparing where you are in the pecking order because of what you have (your salary, your perks, your home, your car) and who you are (your title, your position), and what people think of you (your reputation, your following, your numbers, your notoriety)? When praise comes your way because of something you do in your leadership role, are you quick in your spirit to give it back to God, or are you secretly, in the recesses of your spirit, taking credit and thinking of yourself as better than your fellow workers and leaders, drawing the conclusion that it is because you are smart or faithful or gifted or clever that you have what you have and are who you are. We all need to be reminded that everything is a sheer gift from God—EVERYTHING!

"For this is what the high and lofty One says—He who lives forever whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the contrite one" Isaiah 57:15