

Glory war

Embracing the
greatest commandment



WELCOME TO THE GLORY WAR.

There is a war that has determined the lives of every individual and therefore the course of history since time began: the 'glory war'. Also known as the 'spiritual war' or the 'war of the flesh'. It's the war of who or what object will receive our *glory*, and it's fought on the battlefield of every human's heart.

Glory is abstract. In many Biblical instances it's used to describe the majesty of the character of God that sets him apart from everyone and everything else; his divine power in and over creation, his radiance, his holiness, his righteousness, his goodness, his steadfast love. The very nature of God is glorious!

When we translate that into our context, someone or something in 'glory' describes it at its height of brilliance. A bride adorned on her wedding day looks glorious. A brand new *rosso corsa* (racing red) Ferrari on the autobahn, is glorious. And as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "We all... beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." Becoming like Christ is to become glorious like he is glorious.

There's another meaning of glory though, in the Bible, that will especially help us as we move forward. Glory is often used as the "*ascription of praise, honour, or recognition, to a person or a thing for its worth and works*". We attribute glory to the football team we support by turning up to their games in the team colours and fanatically cheering as if their victory is our victory. We give glory to those who succeed in their HSC by praising them and honouring them for their years of study and academic achievement.

In this series, we're asking the Holy Spirit to remind us that the Lord of glory who made heaven and earth and everything in it is our God, and we can be completely satisfied in him. The goal for us is that by his mercy and grace we will be compelled by his Spirit to live as those who will glorify him and him alone. Learning that everything is in its right place when God sits above it, around it, and in it, being glorified.

For like Paul writes in Romans 11:36, "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever."

Essentially, our aim is to fight the Glory War by embracing the Greatest Commandment to, "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength (Mark 12:30)." Put even more simply, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we are to do it "all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

We hope this guide, your time in your groups, and personal studies serves God to this end.

ST. FAITH'S MINISTRY TEAM.

Contents

The War of Worlds <i>Sermon: February 9-10</i>	5
The Pursuit of Pleasure <i>Sermon: February 16-17</i>	8
The Seduction of Sex <i>Sermon: February 23-24</i>	11
The Rule of Relationships <i>Sermon: March 2-3</i>	14
The Allure of Approval <i>Sermon: March 9-10</i>	17
The Weight of Wealth <i>Sermon: March 16-17</i>	20
The Worry of Work <i>Sermon: March 23-24</i>	23
The Resurrection of Rest <i>Sermon: March 30-31</i>	26

A dramatic sky scene with a biplane flying through a trail of dark smoke and a streak of light. The title "Glory War" is written in a large, white, serif font, with "Glory" on the top line and "War" on the bottom line. The subtitle "The War of Worlds" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, centered below the main title. The background is a dark, smoky sky with a streak of light and a biplane flying through it.

Glory War

The War
of Worlds

The War of Worlds

“Men think of the world not as battleground, but as a playground. We are not here to fight; we are here to frolic. We are not in a foreign land; we are at home. We are not getting ready to live, but we think we’re already living.”
“A right view of God and the world to come requires that we have a right view of the world in which we live and of our relationship to it. So much depends upon this that we cannot afford to be careless about it.”¹

1. Consider the above quotes together. In what ways might our attitude to the world in which we live affect our view of the world to come?
2. The quotes come from a book called, *This World: Playground or Battleground?* By A.W. Tozer. Discuss the title. What tension does it raise for you as a Christian living in “two worlds”?

WHAT IS THE BIBLE SAYING?

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7

In this passage the world is pictured as a battleground.

1. How do the examples below challenge our thinking about how we live in this world?

Soldier (v3-4)

Athlete (v5)

Farmer (v6)

2. In what ways might we lose sight of the following goals as we live in this world?

Pleasing our commanding officer (v4)

The victor’s crown (v5)

The share of the crops (v6)

3. How is verse 7 an encouragement to us?

¹ Tozer, A.W. *This World: Playground or Battleground* (pg. 3).

Read John 15:5-8

4. The world at large is not concerned with glorifying God or seeing him honoured. How is Jesus' attitude in these verses different to that of the world?
5. How does he see God being glorified through us as his disciples? (v. 8)
6. What might it look like for us to bear fruit that honours God? What does Jesus say about how we might achieve this?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD TO OUR LIVES

1. What do you feel are the pressing tensions as a Christian living in "two worlds"?
2. How are God's priorities and concern for His glory shaping your life, decisions, and relationships?

Maybe one of our problems is that we fail to see how we can personally serve God. Take some time to encourage each other in how you think people in the group can and do serve God.

DIGGING DEEPER

Read Ephesians 6:10-20

1. Consider what this passage says about the 'War of Worlds'. What is the battle? Who is it against? How has God equipped us for the battle?

PRAYERFUL APPLICATION

Ask for a heightened awareness of the war that we're in, so that we would seek God and be equipped for the battle on a daily basis.

REFLECTION

Write a personal note, that under God and the power of his Spirit, you will seek to change in your thinking or behaviour in light of this study, to further grow as a godly disciple of Jesus.



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The Pursuit
of Pleasure

The Pursuit of Pleasure

“The pleasures of life are everywhere you turn. They greet you every day and all throughout the day. You couldn’t escape pleasure if you tried. Do you know why? There is only one answer: because God wanted it that way. With wisdom and purpose, he created a world that is stuffed to overflowing with pleasures of every kind. There are pleasures of sight, sound, taste, and touch. There are pleasures of thought and emotion. There are pleasures of location, situation, and relationship. Pleasure exists because it fits with God’s purpose for his creation.”²

1. What desires for pleasure dominate the hearts and minds of your friends, or those with whom you work or study? Discuss.
2. How do you see these desires shaping their lives? Discuss.
3. What desires for pleasure shape your own hopes and plans? Discuss.

WHAT IS THE BIBLE SAYING?

Read 1 Timothy 4:1-5

1. Some people say that to abstain from all earthly pleasures is the godly way to live (this is called ‘asceticism’). From these verses, what does the apostle Paul say about enjoying earthly pleasures? Discuss.

Read Colossians 2:20-3:4

2. What does Paul say is the value of rules about not enjoying certain foods, and other pleasures, for followers of Christ? (Col. 2:20-23)
3. What way of thinking does Paul say will keep Christians from “sensual indulgence”? (Col. 3:1-4) Why do you think Paul urges the Christians in this way?

² Tripp, Paul David. *Sex and Money: Pleasures That Leave You Empty and Grace That Satisfies* (pp. 55-56).

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5

4. What does Paul warn Timothy to expect amongst those who claim to follow Jesus?
5. What do you think it means to be a “lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God”?
6. What is Timothy to do, when he recognises such people in the church (v.5)? Why, do you think this is important?

APPLYING GOD’S WORD TO OUR LIVES

Scripture teaches us to enjoy God’s good gifts, but not to love them.

1. What does this mean in practice for us?
2. How do we recognise when we are loving pleasures instead of God?
3. How does unrestrained love of pleasure hurt those around us in our society?
4. What can we say as Christians to our friends who are battling with these issues?

PRAYERFUL APPLICATION

Thank God for the amazing array of pleasures that he has given us to experience in this world. Ask for God’s help to enjoy the gifts he’s given but not to love them.

REFLECTION

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The Seduction
of Sex

The Seduction of Sex

According to Paul Tripp and his book, *Sex and Money: Pleasures That Leave You Empty and Grace That Satisfies*. Christian's ought to be concerned with Big-picture sex. Here's what he says:

“Big-picture sex is sex that is understood as being part of how life was designed and what it is meant to be. Little-picture sex, because it is isolated, gets kidnapped by desires and agendas that rob it of its original purpose. Big-picture sex acknowledges that there is something bigger than personal physical pleasure. Little-picture sex exists in the small confines of what will give me pleasure at this point in my life. Big-picture sex serves something bigger. Little picture sex is owned by the individual and is entitled and demanding. Big-picture sex willingly submits to rules. Little-picture sex writes its own rules. Big-picture sex is driven by a commitment to others. Little-picture sex is dominated by the pleasures of self. Big-picture sex is patient and kind. Little-picture sex makes impatient demands and punishes you when you don't come through. Big-picture sex is viewed as a part of life. Little-picture sex tends to take over your life. Big-picture sex contributes to deeper love and worship. Little-picture sex leads to relational hurt and vertical rebellion. God designed sex to be inextricably connected to things of consequence. It doesn't work any other way.”³

1. As outlined above, perhaps the biggest difference today between Christians and the world is our attitude to sex. Do you agree or disagree? Discuss.
2. In addition, there is disagreement even between those who call themselves Christians on these matters. Can we rely on what is written in the Bible, or do we need to move with the times?

WHAT IS THE BIBLE SAYING?

Read Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:18-25.

1. What do these verses tell us about God's plan for mankind? Whose idea was sex?

Read Ephesians 5:3, Hebrews 12:16 and 13:4

2. What emphasis does God place on the right use of sex?

³ Tripp, Paul David. *Sex and Money: Pleasures That Leave You Empty and Grace That Satisfies* (pp. 71-72).

3. We will look specifically at marriage next week. For today, briefly discuss Jesus' attitude to marriage, as shown for example in Matthew 19:4-6.
4. What does this say to those who for any reason are not able to marry? Look at 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 and 25-38.

Read Romans 1:21-27

5. What does this tell us about God's attitude to any sexual immorality, and in particular, what about homosexuality?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 18-20

6. What reassurance is there for those who have sinned in the area of sex?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD TO OUR LIVES

1. How can we encourage one another in sexual purity? What can parents and grandparents do to teach and guide their family?
2. In a time when pornography abounds on the internet, what measures can be taken to protect ourselves from this?

PRAYERFUL APPLICATION

Ask God to help our church and our families model biblical faithfulness and purity. Pray especially for those in leadership that their example will be a godly one.

REFLECTION

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The Rule of
Relationships

The Rule of Relationships

Consider the most significant friendships in your life (if married, outside of your spouse).

1. List the things that characterise and makes this a 'good' friendship.
2. What importance should we place on friendships with people who don't follow Jesus?
3. What about friendships with those who do follow Jesus?

WHAT IS THE BIBLE SAYING?

Creation & Marriage

Read Genesis 2:18-25

1. What is the one aspect of God's creation that is described as 'not good'? Why?
2. God creates male and female, to relate to each other, for companionship (amongst other important reasons). In these verses, (and Gen. 3:8-9), who else are they created to interact with? And in what way?
3. Part of being made in God's image is about being created for relationship. How do we see this in the Lord Jesus? Give some examples.

Read Matthew 22:30

4. For many, their primary companion is their husband or wife. What does this verse tell us about marriage in the future?
5. How might this shape our thinking and thus avoid idolatry in the form of our marriage and family?

Biblical Friendship

Read the following passages and consider what they have to say about friendship:

Proverbs 18:24; 1 Cor. 15:33

Proverbs 27:5-6, 17

Hebrews 3:13; 10:24

Colossians 3:12-14

Read John 15:12-14

6. Discuss together the characteristics that make Jesus the ‘ultimate’ friend (consider also John 10:14-18). How do they compare with the list you generated at the beginning of the study?

APPLYING GOD’S WORD TO OUR LIVES

1. Reflecting on what we’ve learnt from the Bible in this study regarding friendship (Q6), what aspects of ‘biblical friendship’ do you love? What aspects do you find hard?
2. In our church family many of us are married, many of us are single, and some are single again (be it through marriage breakdown or death). As a church community how can we grow in our mission to ‘love like Jesus’ amidst such diversity? Are there things that need to change, cliques that need to break down, cultures that need to shift? Discuss.

PRAYERFUL APPLICATION

Ask God to bring comfort to those in our community who don’t have the relational support they need. Weep with those who are weeping, and rejoice with those who are rejoicing. Ask God to continue to transform his people at St. Faith’s to radically love like Jesus.

REFLECTION

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The Allure
of Approval

The Allure of Approval

How we view ourselves in comparison to others can be crippling. Not so long ago the only approval we sought was from our family, friends, and leaders from within our local community. Over the last hundred years—and more pointedly since the birth of the internet, humanity has become overwhelmed by digital connectivity. We now no longer need to leave our lounge room to compare ourselves and to seek the approval of millions of other people. It should be no surprise then that the statistics for anxiety and depression—particularly among young people, is so prevalent.⁴

1. Discuss the above quote. In what ways has our society become ‘overwhelmed by digital connectivity?’
2. In what ways might such connectivity negatively affect our identity? How might the allure of approval from others dominate a desire for approval from God?

WHAT IS THE BIBLE SAYING?

Read 1 Corinthians 5:17-21

1. From these verses discuss what it means to be ‘in Christ’.
2. In the writing of Scripture, the Apostle’s provided great clarity on the identity of those ‘in Christ’. Read the following passages and discuss the significance of them together with regards to our identity:

Ephesians 1:3-14 — 1 Peter 2:9-10 — 1 John 3:1-2

Read Matthew 6:5-8

3. How do these verses warn us of the dangers of seeking approval from people in the church?
4. How do these verses remind us of the one approval that is required?

⁴ See: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/about-us/research-projects/statistics-and-references>

5. Consider the following examples - what do they teach us?

Philippians 2:5-11 — Acts 20:24 — 2 Peter 3:14

APPLYING GOD’S WORD TO OUR LIVES

A large part of the allure of approval is that we desire glory for ourselves and fail to give it to God. It’s the heart of the Glory War! John Piper comments on this problem, saying:

“Is not the most effective way of bridling my delight in being made much of, to focus on making much of God? Self-denial and fixation of the self are essential, but O how easy it is to be made much of even for my self-denial! How shall this insidious motive of pleasure in being made much of be broken except through bending all my faculties to delight in the pleasure of making much of God!”⁵

1. Discuss the above quote together. What rings true?
2. Is the allure of approval from others a problem for you? Why or why not?
3. How does the Social Media phenomenon contribute to this topic? What steps can you take to not get caught up in this personally?
4. How can we encourage one another to ‘make much of God’ in our lives, and so seek his approval over all else?

PRAYERFUL APPLICATION

Spend some time in repentance and confession for your own failure in this. Pray that we would seek God’s approval rather than that of people, and seek his glory over and above that of our own.

REFLECTION

Write a personal note, that under God and the power of his Spirit, you will seek to change in your thinking or behaviour in light of this study, to further grow as a godly disciple of Jesus.

⁵ Piper, John. *What Jesus Demands* (pp. 136–137).

A red sports car is parked in front of a building at dusk. The sky is dark with some light clouds. The car is a convertible with its top down. The building has several windows and a classic architectural style. The overall mood is sophisticated and luxurious.

Glory war

The Weight
of Wealth

The Weight of Wealth

“Greed today is, by comparison with times past, a trivial sin. ‘Don’t be greedy’ is most commonly heard when someone wants a second piece of chocolate cake. Greed may even be said to be a public good, the engine which drives economic progress. The condemnation of greed is the last thing in the mind of the media when interviewing or reporting a story about some fabulously wealthy celebrity. And even though, if you stop to think about it, greed makes many people’s lives a misery, modern psychology generally does not take greed to be a problem worth treating.”⁶

1. Discuss the above quote. What rings true in it? What do you disagree with?
2. Finish this sentence: “If only I had more money I could...”

WHAT IS THE BIBLE SAYING?

Read Ephesians 5:1-7

1. The Apostle Paul presents greed as a big issue. What do the above verses say about the seriousness of greed?

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10

2. What in your life are you not content with (regarding material possessions)? How does this passage speak to this?
3. In what ways do you think the temptation to get rich is a trap for you? (verse 9)

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Scripture challenges us with a number of commands to avoid the trap of greed. Discuss the following:

v17 | How might greed make a person arrogant?

⁶ Brian Rosner, *Beyond Greed*.

v17-18 | What does it look like to put hope in God? Give specific, practical examples.

v19 | How do these things help us take hold of the life to come? (see also Matt 6:33).

APPLYING GOD'S WORD TO OUR LIVES

1. Do you think greed is a struggle for you personally (not the cake kind)? Why or why not?
2. What am I sacrificing to get these things? In what ways do I draw back from serving God in order to fulfil the greed that is in my heart?

“Because love of money sits at the dark intersection of love of self and worship of the creation, it doesn’t lead us to keep the two great commandments, and because we don’t, we will do many things that are evil in the sight of God. The love of money is not a little thing; it really is a portal to all kinds of evil. Why? Because it connects us to foundational, life-shaping issues of the heart, such as contentment, identity, how we understand and relate to the world we live in, eternity, and worship. If we get these issues wrong, there is no way that we will live as God intended.”⁷

3. Considering the quote above, what steps can we take as a group so that we don’t get caught up in the love of money?

PRAYERFUL APPLICATION

Ask God to help us to learn contentment in all circumstances including our wealth. Pray together about some of the steps discussed in Q3 above, so that we might be people who are good stewards of all that God has given us. Pray that we would show generosity to others, particularly those in need.

REFLECTION

Write a personal note, that under God and the power of his Spirit, you will seek to change in your thinking or behaviour in light of this study, to further grow as a godly disciple of Jesus.

⁷ Tripp, Paul David. *Sex and Money: Pleasures That Leave You Empty and Grace That Satisfies* (p. 176).



Glory war

The Worry
of Work

The Worry of Work

Circle three words that you most identify with when thinking about “work”.

PURPOSEFUL HARD STUDY MEANINGLESS FUN WANTING WORSHIP

EVANGELISM MONEY FAMILY ANXIETY MORTGAGE SERVING RETIREMENT

SUCCESS UNAPPRECIATED FAITH CONSTANT WEEKENDS IDENTITY TIME

Share with your group as to why you picked those words.

WHAT IS THE BIBLE SAYING?

Read Genesis 2:1-2

1. What do these verses teach us about God and work?

Read Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15-25

2. God created Adam and Eve and gave them work to do in the Garden. What were some of the tasks they were given?

3. What do these verses teach us about Mankind and work?

Read: Genesis 3:17-24

4. What was work like after Adam and Eve sinned?

5. Do you think this is still the case today?

Not only has the curse for Adam and Eve’s sin made work harder, our sinful desires can take a good thing like work and do two foolish things with it:

Turn work into an idol.

Be lazy and try to avoid work

6. What might be some signs that you have fallen into one of these traps?

Read: Ephesians 2:8-10

7. What does this verse tell us about how we are saved and what we are saved to do?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD TO OUR LIVES

1. What "good works" might we see for a Christian:

In a paid job?

In retirement?

In the home?

In study?

In their church family?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Colossians 3:23-24

2. How might these verses shape and give purpose to our daily tasks and priorities as Christians?

3. Go back to the words you circled in question one. Would you add any words or change what you have circled?

PRAYERFUL APPLICATION

Spend some time thanking God for the work he has provided for you (if applicable). Pray with one another, that we would be people who walk in the good works that God has prepared for us to do.

REFLECTION

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Glory war.

The Resurrection
of Rest

The Resurrection of Rest

“When we are crazy busy, we put our souls at risk. The challenge is not merely to make a few bad habits go away. The challenge is to not let our spiritual lives slip away.”⁸

1. Consider together the quote above. In what ways do we put our souls at risk by being ‘busy’?
2. How would you define ‘busy’ in your life? In what ways can ‘busyness’ become an idol in our lives?
3. How would you define ‘rest’? What is the purpose of rest?

WHAT IS THE BIBLE SAYING?

The pattern of God’s creation is to allow for rest - often referred to in the Old Testament as the “Sabbath”. Yet our lives today are filled with events, tasks, activities and appointments that seemingly prevent any form of meaningful rest. Let’s consider together God’s purpose in rest.

Read Genesis 2:1-3

1. Genesis chapter 1 has just described God’s work in creation. What differences do you notice from the first six days of creation, to the seventh day of creation?

Read the following passages and note down the reasons given for keeping a “Sabbath” day of rest.

Exodus 20:8-11; 23:10-12; 31:12-17

2. From these passages, summarise what the Old Testament says about “rest”.

When we arrive in the New Testament, we find that Jesus is often ‘breaking the rules’ of the Sabbath according to the Jewish religious leaders.

⁸ Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy*.

Read Matthew 12:1-12

3. What was wrong with the Pharisee's approach to the Sabbath? What were they missing?
4. How does Jesus respond to the 'legalistic' approach of the Pharisees?
5. In what ways might we fall into the same mistake(s) as we think about rest today?

Read Colossians 2:16-17 and Romans 14:1-6

6. What attitude should Christians have to the "Sabbath" today? Why?

APPLYING GOD'S WORD TO OUR LIVES

"If someone recorded your life for a week and then showed it to a group of strangers, what would they guess is the "good portion" in your life? What would they conclude is the one thing you must get done every day? Folding the laundry? Cleaning the house? Catching up on e-mails? Posting to Facebook? Mowing the lawn? Watching the game? I know you have things to do. I have plenty to do myself. But out of all the concerns in our lives, can we honestly say and show that sitting at the feet of Jesus is the one thing that is necessary?"⁹

1. Consider the above quote. Share the challenges you face in 'sitting at the feet of Jesus' in rest.
2. What changes might you need to make to your schedule to resurrect rest so that it serves the purpose that God intended for it?

PRAYERFUL APPLICATION

Ask God to help us make the changes we discussed in Q2 above. Pray that we would be those who do take the time to stop, rest, and 'sit at the feet of Jesus', listening to his words.

REFLECTION

Write a personal note, that under God and the power of his Spirit, you will seek to change in your thinking or behaviour in light of this study, to further grow as a godly disciple of Jesus.

⁹ Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy*.



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