

The Quest for God-Centered Ministry

Intro

Values and the VALUE

- ▶ A city-outreach church
 - ▶ A believer-equipping church
 - ▶ A doctrinally-grounded church
 - ▶ A praying church
 - ▶ A Spirit-empowered church
 - ▶ A holy church
 - ▶ A missions-minded church
- All of these are energized by an overarching vision – our desire to magnify the worth of God in everything that we do (reaching, praying, working preaching, relating, etc.)

Grounding Our God-Centeredness

Principle #1: The church is to be God-centered, because the Bible is God-centered.

The God-centeredness of Scripture

Rom 11:36 “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

- The Bible teaches us that creation, history, redemption, heaven – all things were created not only BY him but FOR him. (Heb 2:10)

Principle #2: The Bible is God-centered because God is God-centered.

The God-centeredness of God

Is 48:9,11 “For my name’s sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off.... For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.”

Ezek 36:22-23, 32 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name...”

- The New Testament also picks up this theme, bringing the glory of God to bear on everything in life – including things as mundane as food, drink, sermons, hospitality, service projects, parenting, work, etc.

1 Pet 4:11 “whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”

Rom 15:7 “Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

1 Cor 10:31 “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Church Life with God at the Center

- A God-centered church is a Godward-looking church.

1 Cor 3:18 “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

“Transformation into the likeness of the Lord happens as we gaze at Him together over time. The biblical hallmarks of church health – holiness, faith, love, sound doctrine – are cultivated in us as we are captivated by Him.”

–Mark Dever & Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church*, p.195

Corporate Worship: God-centered songs → God-centered singing

- When we come to worship God in song, we need to be reminded of where God is, who God is, and His relevance for our lives.

All-of-Life Worship: God-centered preaching → God-centered living

- Gathering to hear the Word preached is at the same time gathering to learn how to please God. The gathering is a gathering for worship (congregationally) and a preparation for worship (in everyday life).
- Preaching is intended both to show us *how* to glorify God as well as, more foundationally, to show us the glory of God (so that we *want* to glorify Him).

“My burden ... is to plead for the supremacy of God in preaching – that the dominant note of preaching be the freedom of God’s sovereign grace, that the unifying theme be the zeal that God has for his own glory, that the grand object of preaching be the infinite and inexhaustible being of God, and that the pervasive atmosphere of preaching be the holiness of God. Then when the preaching takes up the ordinary things of life (family, job, leisure, friendships) or the crises of our day (AIDS, divorce, addictions, depression, abuses, poverty, hunger, and, worst of all, unreached peoples of the world), these matters are not only taken up – they are taken all the way up into God.”

–John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, p. 24

“The job of the church, then, is not to show people a reflection of themselves. We are instead biblically obliged to raise their gaze, redirecting their attention from themselves to their Creator.... So a healthy church is a Godward-looking church. We look in dependence on Him for our message, our method, and the transformation of our churches into the image of Christ.”

–Mark Dever & Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church*, p. 197