

OUR OFFERING, PHIL.4:18

40 Days of Community #6

◆**Intro:** A renowned philosopher was held in high regard by his driver, who listened in awe as his boss lectured and answered difficult questions about the nature of things and the meaning of life. Then, one day, the driver approached the philosopher and asked if he was willing to switch roles for just one evening. The philosopher agreed, and, for a while, the driver handled himself remarkably well. However, when the time came for questions, someone at the back of the room asked him, "Is the epistemological meta-narrative that you seem to espouse compatible with a teleological account of the universe?" "That's an extremely simple question," he replied. "So simple, in fact, that even my driver could answer it."

◆I'd like to think with you today about the deep question of the meaning of life. It is simple, yet complicated. People struggle with it on a daily basis, and there are lots of different, incompatible answers to it. Before we discuss the biblical view of our meaning and our final and most important purpose on earth, let's just go over the popular contemporary view which is often called postmodernism. Postmodernism holds that truth is really unknowable either by faith or by reason. After all, our existence is an evolutionary accident. We are all on a par with tadpoles and flower pollen, and baby seals. That means then, that meaning and truth are relative to the feelings of the individual. If I like it, and it seems to "work" for me, then it's right. What may be right for you, may not be right for me. I shall have to decide.

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◆The result, of course, is a whole world of people who have no clue as to who or what they are. For example, while science (which Christianity agrees with, and of which Christianity is the historical source) tells us there are two genders in the animal kingdom, that doesn't matter to the postmodernist who has no ruler, or measuring stick with which to describe life. He must decide anew for himself. So Facebook now offers over 58 gender choices for your profile. Congratulations, you are free to be whatever you want. There are no absolutes.

◆Trouble is, there's a part of us that knows down deep some things must be true. Something must be real, and knowable. We see it in the laws of nature all around us. Drop your pen and it always falls to the ground. Nor does it matter how much you desire to or feel truly at home there, you can't breathe underwater. So we still know instinctively that some things are absolutely true, and some are not. It is the same in the moral realm, the epistemological realm, the philosophical realm, or the religious realm, as it is in the physical realm. Some things are true, and some are not true.

◆So back to the meaning of our lives? Your purpose on earth. Our purpose as a community of people called the followers of Christ. What has God revealed about it all? What is central to being a human being?

◆**1. There is no higher purpose for my life than to love my Maker.** Another way to put it is "**You and I were made to**

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worship God. (This is our final biblical purpose in our 40 Days of Community study but it is the central one.) That is to say, I am not the center of my world, and neither are you of yours. The center of reality is the Creator God and there is no higher purpose than know him. It is more important than growing up, or getting older. It is a bigger reason than getting your degree or discovering your calling. It is a more primary purpose than finding a life-mate. It is obviously far more central to your existence than excelling at your chosen sport, which has become god to many.

◆ See, your life is not *your* story. There is only one story; God's story. All things come from him, are for him, and to him, as Paul puts it in several of his New Testament letters. Here's how one of our confessions, the Belgic Confession, puts it:

*We all believe in our hearts
and confess with our mouths
that there is a single
and simple
spiritual being,
whom we call God--*

*eternal,
incomprehensible,
invisible,
unchangeable,
infinite,
almighty;*

*completely wise,
just,
and good,
and the overflowing source
of all good.*

◆ I know this sounds radical so let me just point out where God says it.

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◆a) God gathers his Church to display himself to the rest of mankind.

◆*He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendour." (Isaiah 49:3, NIV). (Cf. 1Pet2:9)*

◆b) The weather, that the world so dutifully hungers after to know all about, the rain clouds and sun, -all exists to point to God's worth.

◆*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. (Psalms 19:1, NIV).*

◆c) People get elected, or enthroned as kings or queens not because they are important, but so God can become known.

◆*And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." (Exodus 14:4, NIV).*

◆Romans 13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

◆d) If God should bless some folks with good fortune it is not because they deserve it, have some right to it, or are intrinsically worth it. He does it so we will notice, and know him.

◆*For as a belt is bound round a man's waist, so I bound the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to me,' declares the LORD, 'to be my people*

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for my renown and praise and honour. (Jeremiah 13:11, NIV).

◆e) Oh, listen to this one. When God forgives people for sinning, it is not first for their sake, but for his glory. It is because of his worthiness.

◆*For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another. (Isaiah 48:9-11, NIV).*

◆f) Even your death is not really about you. And at your funeral, the center point ought NOT be the one in the casket but the one who gives life and takes life.

◆*Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" (John 21:19, NIV).*

◆Now I know what you are thinking; wow, isn't God a little self-centered? Seems like he has a "kinda big head", when it comes right down to it. It's like he loves his own glory more than anything! And to this I say, your are right, he does, and that's both appropriate and beneficial. Think it over. If there is a power above all, a source of everything good and worthwhile, of happiness and joy, and meaning, -if there is a God...

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◆**2. It is to everything's and everyone's advantage that God pursues the display of his own glory.** Let's ponder and apply this: if I want the best for my son/daughter, and God is the best thing in existence, then isn't it logical that what I want for my son is that he knows God. I want this *more than* I want him to make money, and *more* than I want him to be free from pain, and more than I want him to have a successful career, and *more* than I want him to be married, or experience the Caribbean. But wouldn't we have to admit that often we are more concerned about our child's grades, or our child's job, or the athletic achievement than we are about our child's relationship with God. They have to do their homework, and they have to show up for the job, but they don't have to go to worship Jesus or read the Bible. That's oddly "up to them."

◆A. It's like the song says, "Above all powers, above all kings, above all nature and all created things, above all wisdom, and all the ways of man, you were here before the world began."

Whatever or whoever God is, must be by definition the best there is, so giving him first place is the best thing we can do. We call that worship. Whatever you make most important in your life is what you worship. Some folks think they are worshiping God because they believe he exists, but let's clarify. The old English is *worthscipe*. It literally means to ascribe (write) worth. This is what, for example, a demon would never do.

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◆ *Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.*

Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. Ps.96:7-9

◆ Now I said that this is the wisest thing we can do. Think of it like this. Suppose you were working in a nuclear reactor where pushing the wrong button, or opening the right door at the wrong time could cause a leak, or a spark or an explosion, or contamination of some sort. And the Manager walks in to meet with all personnel and says, "Ok Everyone, in here we have a strict set of procedures. Everyone must follow them precisely. There is no room for alternatives or your opinions. If you are unsure, ask me." You may say to yourself, "Well, isn't he arrogant. A loving manager would let us choose for ourselves what radioactive materials we want to touch, or which buttons we'd like to push." You could think that, but you would be a fool. It's the same in any factory, or machine shop, or warehouse. There are truths that matter for the operation to succeed, and we'd be fools to ignore them. But this is exactly what so many of us do daily in the moral and spiritual realm. We think, "Well now, if God were truly loving, he would allow us to decide for ourselves our identities, and our behaviors, because love means acceptance and acceptance means we can be who we want." We might think that, but we'd be fools to do so. A good parent

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doesn't let his child eat whatever she wants, or wander wherever she wants, or touch whatever she wants. Why? [For their own _____ (good)]. Why would God do any less? It is for my own good that I attend to God. That's what worship is, attending to, paying attention to, giving place to...God.

◆ Now a distinction about worship:

◆ **3. When I worship, I am offering myself to God.** Perhaps the most tangible act of worship is the offering; it's a concrete, touchable, seeable demonstration of giving to God. Singing is the same way. When we sing we are speaking to and of God or repeating his truths. When we listen to the Word preached we are offering God our ears, and our thinking.

◆ We sometimes get side-tracked and think that a "worship service" is something done for us. So we ask, did I like music, was the sermon any good? How balanced or loud was the sound? Was anybody nice to me in the cookie line? Did the Sunday School class wash me with magic sauce?

But in reality a worship service is our service/work offered to God and not the other way around.

◆ More broadly, when we attend a Life Group, or make time in our schedule for a Bible study so as to build up fellowship (one biblical purpose), or when we witness to what we believe or tell a coworker that God loves them (another purpose) –we are foundationally "offering" ourselves to God; it's an act of worship.

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◆ *Romans 12:1 So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.*

◆ Our text, v18, shares the same concept... What the Philippian church did for Paul, Paul calls a sacrifice/offering made to God! It's a very practical lesson: how do you give to God, or offer to God, or worship God, or love God? -One primary way to worship and love God is to give to and love people. God doesn't need our money, but people do. God doesn't need our love, but people do. God doesn't get depressed, but people do.

◆ **Conclusion:** Come on, let's tie it up. God's top priority is the glory of his own name. But this is so far from being anything like selfishness on God's part. For what do we know about God? He is good, he is loving toward all he has made, he is Creator, and compassionate (Ps.145). We know that while he is infinite and almighty, he is also most deeply concerned and in love with people. So much so that his glory, the highest priority, is as a being who gave his own Son as an offering for us! That's right. God's greatest glory is the Gospel truth of him sending Jesus to pay off our sinfulness and allow us the right to life once again! I urge you to offer yourself back to him even now. Give him first place in your life. Commit your heart to it's highest calling.