

- As a **church**—a spirit connected community of people and not a building, we have the opportunity to make a change by selling this facility. If we do eventually do that, I would like to help prepare us for that possibility by talking about some things I would encourage us to *"take with us as we leave."*
- One of my escapist escapades involved doing a doctoral fellowship with a bunch of United Methodist leaders in Kentucky. I didn't do it because I wanted a degree or necessarily to study with a bunch of Methodism's finest folks. They were great people and friends. I did it because someone was paying in order for me to have precious time, in a paradigm challenging setting, to think deeply about God, Jesus' Church and our mission in this world.
- The leader of the program, a successful mega-church pastor was probably not as excited about my presence in this cohort of younger-than-me leaders at the end of our more than yearlong time together as he may have been at the start. He could detect I was not as convinced by the megachurch movement "success" that he was and that he wanted all of the studying leaders to be.
- One assignment we were required to fulfill was writing a paper that had to be entitled ***"The Church of My Dreams."*** If you doubt the mystical, unbounded power of the Holy Spirit, what if I told you the title of my paper written in the year 2002, for "partial fulfillment of the class DM 217," was titled, in whole: ***"The Church of My Dreams (:) Fellowship Bible Church Colorado Springs"??*** Ok, that would have been really cool if it were the case, but sorry, it wasn't.
- This paper was not the dissertation for the degree, but it was considered a very important requirement. It was expected that the paper would lay out relatively specific plans for building a successful mega-church.

Series: May the Church Be the Church

Sermon: "What I Would Take With Us: Gloria Deo" Part 1

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1 & Colossians 3:15-17

RGJR/FBCCS/2-14-21 **UNEDITED**

- My paper did not do that. In courses of study like that one, grades are not a big issue. I wasn't marked-down because I rebelled against the expectation. However, the leader of the program was not thrilled with what I did.
- I learned a good lesson back then. Probably few people would ever be thrilled with what I considered the critical elements and biblical metrics of a successful church of Jesus Christ.
- As with my professor, when discussing "dream churches," people generally expect to hear about programs, staffing, locations, facilities, finances and concrete metrics for success.
- "*The church of my dreams*," both as the subject of a paper and as a real, flesh and blood church like FBC, for me, is not primarily about any of these things. In fact, these things that so many talk about when they talk about being a successful church don't even come into play for me until I've moved through five more important levels of things that matter.
- Of course, I would change some specifics in it after a decade, but here is a chart I drew in 2009 for the elders of FBC at the time, trying to express how I think about church and the success of church. I suspect some of those elders in 2009 wondered if I even thought about church success because I probably was not measuring it and trying to achieve it the same way they might do that.
- Today, I would likely move "*Missio Dei*" down to this most foundational level and I might change some of the ways I have worded specifics, but this chart entitled, "*How I Desire My Values to Inform My Actions*," is, basically, my heart's hierarchy for what matters in church success. I try to live by it because I believe it reflects biblical truth when it is lived-out in being the church.

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- I am not particularly proud of it but, this did not sit well with the leaders of that doctoral program in Kentucky and it hasn't always produced the happiest thoughts and conversations among other elders and church leaders as I have tried to live it consistently.
- If you are a man or woman of action, you'll see how frustrating a person that I might be for you if we are part of the same local, church body.
- I am always going to try to force a church to ask and answer the "why" questions before the "what" questions nearly every time.
- This comes out of my understanding of the nature of biblical truth and how we are meant to apply it. Biblical truth is not simply about distributing facts or information. Biblical truth is about facts and information that changes lives as it is energized by God. One must have the facts and information but the communicative process doesn't stop there.
- It is my experience, and now my somewhat hardened conviction, that when God's people *jump* immediately to the action of the "whats" without asking the "whys," they nearly always end up doing religious looking things measured as successful by the pragmatic standards of the world. Some months ago, in a few sermons, I tried to picture this for you as making "*church-bricks*" and stacking them up in order to declare that we have successfully made a church.
- We are all made differently by God for his wonderful purposes. Therefore, you may or may not agree with my thinking on this at all. Then, if we are part of the same church, or especially the same leadership group in a church, you can see where we might sometimes, maybe often times, butt heads.
- I like people to like me but I don't like that validation enough to overcome the need to live by this understanding that I believe is true

to Scripture. There is, I believe a good reason to be very careful about being consistent here.

- Do you know the "*Babylon Bee*" site on the internet? It is a Christian satire site that satirically bills itself as "*The Place for Christian News.*" Some of you don't think satire is very Christian at all, so please forgive me. I, however, love their ability to play with words and contexts in a comical way to speak truth to me in the end. They are now popular enough, after having been around a long time, to be brought up in the public discourse and on cable programs, especially when someone mistakenly takes them seriously by failing to recognize they only write in satire.
- One satirical piece recently poked fun at internet "fact-checking." It was entitled, "*Snopes Rates the Devil's Lies As 'Mostly True.'*" The last paragraph of the satirical piece concludes, "*In the article, Snopes explains that while the Devil has clearly made some factually inaccurate statements over the year, they observed that he tended to 'mix a lot of truth with a little bit of lie,' thus earning the 'Mostly True' label.*"
- Just one small piece of my recent cogitating is something I call the 98% and 2% strategy. I believe Satan is at his best when he can mix in 2% of lies with 98% of good-looking, spiritual seeming—churchy truth. I also believe this is when he can do his most devastating work to oppose God's redemptive plan.
- It is my contention that when we don't purposefully force ourselves to ask why we do what we do, think what we think and value what we value as a church, we usually miss the 2% factor. Then, the 98% looks so good and seems so successful but it is, in reality a trick. It is a deception that causes us to settle for a bit less than God—something good but, none-the-less something, less than God. This

keeps God from ultimately getting the glory—as in the foundational value of *Gloria Deo* at the foundational level of my little chart.

- This 98% and 2% issue is applicable to church and to each of our lives individually as a tool of Satan to make us settle for the good and not God.
- When it comes to the church, the ultimate end—the purpose of all this church stuff, is not to build the church of *any* human's dreams—mine or yours—never! The ultimate purpose is to *glorify God* by being the church of Jesus Christ. You may not see much practical difference between those two purposes especially if the effort includes some very spiritual sounding and successful looking ideas of church.
- And you would be right! There isn't *much* difference. Maybe just a difference of only 2%. However, that 2% is how the Devil makes it *his* work instead of God's *glory*. That 2%, can be so elusive and so difficult to think about and so seemingly impossible to picture and explain and so meaningless to getting something—anything at all—done right now that. Many people think I am crazy even to care about it. I feel that 2% is the most important factor for any church's true success, including FBC's as we think about our future.
- For nearly a month of Sundays now, I have promised I would preach a sermon along the lines of, as a church, "*What We Should Take with Us if We Move.*" I apologize in advance if you thought I was going to talk about strategies and programs and equipment and practices. Those certainly become important eventually, but they are at levels 6-8 and I am still dealing with levels 1 & 2.
- [If I may step outside my sermon's argument for a minute, I would say this to comfort you who are disappointed. I believe and it is my experience that when levels 1-4 are considered, and they are very

often part of the very difficult 2% factor, levels 5-8 of doing and activity, simply align in miraculously powerful ways.

- The time element of thinking like this is not a happy matter for people who like a concrete plan for the sake of feeling in control. But we have discussed that need and found it wanting biblically. It can be quite scary if the need to know specifics of future "actions" is uppermost.
- If one sees the church as a machine that produces spiritual stuff to consume, one will be very frightened that they might be cut-off and need to look for a new supplier of those spiritual commodities they get from going to church. In the successful and wealthy, good-old, USofA church, they will easily find a new dealer to supply those needs.
- There will be no need to trust God through what can be a difficult process of considering the 2% stuff as a real spirit-community that is bound together to serve rather than be served. As professional consumers in America, it is much, much easier simply to shop elsewhere for what we need and want. After all, a product that is at least 98% pure is easily found.]
- Now, back to the sermon at hand and, in order to make it as complicated and difficult for you as I possibly can, the rest of this sermon will deal mainly with *Latin*. ????
- As the Apostle Paul thought about the future of a divided and failing Corinthian church, he addressed many issues in his letters. One issue that he addressed in *1 Corinthians* chapter 10 was about freedom for believers when it came to whether or not they might eat meat being offered in pagan temples at their feasts. This is a corollary to the meat offered to idols from the marketplace debate and it goes further.

- You can enjoy the details of the argument, starting as an inference in verse 14 but those details are not my point right now. My point is that the Apostle seems to wrap up the whole matter with a statement of general value and a principle for life as a believer in verses 31 through the first verse of chapter 11. These words are the end of **any** argument for Paul—the capstone of wisdom to be applied in a general way. **READ 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1**
- Paul’s admonition is., *“Whatever you do in your life—all of your life—every single bit of your life—do it with the overarching, overriding, controlling purpose of the (in Latin Gloria Deo)—glorifying God.*
- Lest one conclude this is only a call for needed corrective in a messed-up church—if any churches can be said to be **un**-messed up—Paul says nearly the same thing to the Colossian Church in *Colossians 3: 15-17*—a context there talking about being the church together. **READ Colossians 3:15-17**
- I won’t go through all the theology of **“The Name”** from *Genesis* this morning. Suffice it to say, that first book of the Bible establishes a pattern of all human life being created to bring **glory** to **THE** Name of the LORD because God alone deserves it. The **Latin Gloria Deo (glory to God)** is the purpose of human existence and the purpose of all human living.
- Which Christian would not answer a multiple-choice question with the selection of, “to glorify God” if the quiz asks, “What is the purpose of your life?” We would all say, “Of course we are meant to live to “glorify God”—Of course we live for “Gloria en Excelcis Deo” as the *“angels we have heard on high”* sing each Christmas.
- But, which of us is willing to dig into the 2% factor of that answer? What does that *really* mean for ALL of my life?

- It is much easier to conclude that a good moral life with some religion mixed in as a even a major segment of that life is indeed how we are meant to "glorify God." But, is that biblical?
- My mom heard a sermon I preached a few weeks ago and she said, "*I don't understand what you are saying.*" That was no surprise because I sometimes don't either. What did she mean? It was not that the definitions of the words and the syntax of the sentences had eluded her. It was that the **implications** of what I said were very difficult to lay out. They were part of that 2%. She didn't understand clearly, fully and immediately what it might mean to her life if she decided what I had said was truth and she needed to allow God to work out that truth in her life at 90 years old.
- She said, not knowing—i.e., not understanding those implications was "scary!" You bet it is scary. It is as scary as walking the promised son up a mountain with the God-commanded intent of killing him on an altar. It was scary because the implications were, if I was correct an being biblical, Gloria Deo—glorifying God with my LIFE, meant I had to pay attention with ALL of my life—every bit of my life. It could not be a segment of my life. It had to be 24/7 and 366 days in a Leap Year. Not 98%.
- In my personal insecurities, I think some of you may think I am angry with you or disappointed in you because I am saying things that scare you and scare my mom. I am saying things like, God has given believers a wake-up call—a reset time so they will ask, "*Is my life truly given over completely to the purpose of glorifying God?*"
- Some of us have been so "churched" in the definitions of the American consumer church that this sounds like I am asking for a commitment to attend more services or do more activities. That isn't

even in the foundational category discussion I am still having with you now. Not even in the picture at all!

- I am talking about something potentially much more frightening—scarier for all of us. Are we truly intending to glorify God with 100% of who we are as a church—or are we settling for 98%?
- I believe, that we will not even ask this question if we start out in the categories of action and activity. They are to come at the end of a process and, as I said, I think they are relatively easy when the foundation of Gloria Deo is truly in place.
- The reality is that we won't even ask that question if we have decided the 98% that looks spiritual by the definition of the American church is enough and the other 2% is unnecessary even to think about. We will just copy the 98% and go on doing church that way.
- Gloria Deo—Gloria in Excelsis Deo—thoughtful, 100% glory to God is the very first thing I think we should always take with us as a church, whether we leave or not. AND, I don't think it comes as naturally to do this as we tend to assume it does. I think that is the devil's 2% trick. I think that last 2% is where the gold is in being the church.
- Do you watch Gold Rush on the Discovery channel? Now there is another spin-off program following a semi-rough Coloradan Gold man and his trusty sidekick who can make things with a cc cutting machine he hauls around in his trailer.
- The show is called "Gold Rush: Freddy Dodges Mine Rescue" Gold guru Freddy and Juan Iberra travel from small placier gold mining operation to the next small placier gold mining operation operation trying to help the operators be successful gold-miners.
- Most of the gold mined in these operations is fine gold—even gold dust rather than big nuggets. Freddy and Juan work hard to adjust

machines and operations to capture just a small percentage more of that fine gold. That tiny percentage is the difference between the failure and the success of a mine.

- That small percentage is the hardest to capture. Most small operators just miss it and send it into their tailings piles without much thought. Freddy and Juan first give that tiny unconsidered percentage a great deal of thought then they make a plan and act decisively to make that plan happen.
- I submit to us that it is easy to accept that 98% of Gloria Deo in life and not give the other 2% much thought. However, in mining the gold of God's glory, that 2% is absolutely necessary for success. Yet it is the most difficult part of the process.
- I submit it first takes thought putting our reality through the grid of Scripture by the illumination of the Holy Spirit about what is really going on in the life of a person or a church. Only then comes a plan and action.
- It is easiest just to assume the same 98% everyone else is doing that looks like church. Or simply to take everything we are used to as the church called FBC with us. Just pick it all up and make it look the same somewhere else.
- The reality is that the Gloria Deo of which I speak may end up looking much the same but resets are the opportunity to work on the tiniest and most difficult 2% through evaluating by Scriptural truth, seeking wisdom by prayer, and discussing with one another by loving admonition.
- However, I understand, some church people don't see the value in pausing the planning to consider capturing the last 2% of the gold. It is indeed the hardest part to capture! And it doesn't look like it matters much—at first glance.

- Gloria Deo is the Latin part of the sermon. Let's make sure we are taking the value of **truly** glorifying God with us as a church. As I said, it will seem to some that would be automatic—an assumption, of course we will!
- But I would say it is not that automatic and not that easy. It takes intentional focus. It's implications can be scary.
- It is certainly scary when one realizes a life or a church that truly glorifies God is a life or a church that is 100% given over to God's purposes rather than one's own—and given over 24/7.
- Am I suggesting any of us lives out that reality all of the time. Not me! Probably not you either! But Satan's trick is to get us to set the standard at a very high 98% and just let the other 2% wash on by into the tailings of life.
- There is not a church in the NT that lived for God's glory this 100% of the time 100% of the body parts doing that. Not a single church.
- Some of them were pretty-good Bible churches that lived for the glory of God maybe 98% of the time in maybe 98% of the ways they could do that. I mean 98% is an "A," a good grade, right?
- In the OT, the prophet Ezekiel was given a vision. Its record is found in *Ezekiel* chapter 10. In the vision, the prophet described the glory of the LORD moving from the inner Holy of holies ever-further outward until finally it left from the threshold—the porch of the Temple. The edifice was still there. The gold and fine craftsmanship were still there. The priests were still there. The sacrifice times were still there. It still looked like the functioning Temple of the Living God. In maybe 98% of respects, it was still the same. I wonder how many noticed the difference—how many paused to think about the truth of Israel's relationship with Yahweh before the next time they went to the building.

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- The first thing I would want to make sure we take with us wherever we are as a church is the value that we exist as a church only to "glorify God" and nothing less. No, not one drop less!
- To keep that in our moving van, we will need to pay attention to one of Satan's best schemes—the 98% & 2% scheme.
- It is my contention that we often find this reality scary and difficult both in our lives and in our life together as a church. BTW: Another scary thought is that I think the Bible teaches us these lives are meant to be one and the same—not separate aspects of life and not segments of the whole of life. That thinking is another 98% & 2% trick.
- Being intentional about *actually* glorifying *God* and not simply labeling our personal church preferences and comforts and our church traditions as "God-glorifying" is not easy to do. It is not even easy to talk about it without creating misunderstanding, frustration and even some anger. I wonder why that is. I *wonder* why that is!
- So, let's pack the full and true value that FBC exists ***only, yes ONLY***, to glorify God and take that with us as a governing value for the days ahead!