Foreword by

MATT CHANDLER

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God, the Gospel, and
Our Quest for Something More

JR Vassar

Study Guide For

GL RY P HUNGER

God, the Gospel, and Our Quest for Something More

JR Vassar



Glory Hunger: God, the Gospel, and Our Quest for Something More

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Introduction

Built for Glory

Overview

The desire for glory is a universal one deeply embedded in the human heart. We see it in children who long for the approval of their parents and peers and in adults who exhaust themselves to gain status and recognition or avoid embarrassment and shame.

Key Statement

A passion for praise or a fear of humiliation—it's all glory hunger. As we grow out of our childhood dreams, our glory hunger only intensifies and moves into more mature domains: social status, academic exploits, career advancement, wealth, marriage, and family. These all become means of "making it," and making it is an effort to satiate our glory hunger.

Questions

1	How	does	Vassar	define	olory?	What	does it	mean	to b	e glory	hungry?
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2. In what ways does glory hunger manifests itself in the culture in which you live? In what ways does glory hunger manifests itself in your own personal life?

Introduction 4

3. As you begin this study, how can you perceive a personal hunger for glory impacting a person's life and relationships?

Prayer

Take a moment to reflect on your heart's longings. How would God have you pray as you begin this study? What things would he have you pray to emerge in your life over this study? What things in your heart would he have you pray to wither and die? Go to the Lord with these things, asking him to work in you "that which is pleasing in his sight" (Heb. 13:21).

Glory in a Garden

Overview

When God created our first parents in his image, he set his commendation upon them, declaring them and the creation to be "very good." God crowned them with glory and greatness. But when Adam and Eve sinned against God, they lost the commendation of God and came under his condemnation. The image of God was shattered in our first parents, and they experienced the pain of guilt, shame, corruption, and eventually death. This is the condition we were born in, meant for glory and greatness, yet under the corrupting effects of sin and under the condemnation of God. Humanity has been looking to regain that glory and greatness ever since the fall. But instead of turning to God, we turn to other things. We try to reclaim the "very good" through beauty, power, wealth, success, and image creation.

Key Statement

We were made God's image bearers, having intrinsic dignity and worth. But, what we were made to be and experience was tragically lost by our first parents when they sinned. As his image bearers we were made to walk with him in intimate friendship, but we are alienated from him. We were made to hear the commendation of God spoken over us, but we are condemned before God. The beauty we were made to reflect is obscured by our inner corruption. And the greatness of ruling over creation with God is frustrated by our weaknesses, suffering, and death. Our greatest need is to have that glory restored to us. Deep down, it is the unnamed ache of every life. We need to have his commendation over us, his image renewed in us, and greatness reclaimed for us.

Questions

1. What is the greatest compliment anyone has ever paid you? What positive impact did it have on you and why?

2. In what ways do you feel you are trying to win a positive verdict in the court of human opinion? How is this a hunger for glory?

Glory in a Garden
3. Read Psalm 8. How is our glory hunger inextricably bound to the creation account? What did it mean for Adam to be "crowned with glory and honor?" Is glory hunger a legitimate human desire?
4. In Romans 3:23, the apostle Paul tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We are cu
off from the glory that God intends for us, which deep down we want restored to us. What are ways in which we reach to regain this lost glory?
Prayer
Genesis 3 includes a great promise that God will provide a savior who will crush the head of the Serpent and reverse the tragic effects of human sin, restoring to us the glory for which God made us. As the following

chapters will show, that savior is Jesus. Spend a moment asking God to use this study to give you a deeper

understanding of Jesus and a deeper experience of the freedom that is found in him.

Broken Buddhas

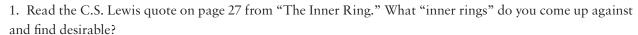
Overview

As fallen people living in a fallen world, it is futile to look to anyone or anything in creation to satiate our hunger for glory. Yet our ingrained response to our longing for acceptance and approval is to seek it from other people through performance. We are prone to the fear of man, and we live in the bondage of unrelenting effort to please others and avoid their disappointment. In the end we discover that people cannot heal us, because they are just as broken as we are.

Key Statement

Loving the glory that comes from man creates a life of bondage lived under the approving or disapproving gaze of people. It is as if we can feel the stares of others bearing down on us, forcing us to perform in hopes of their applause. Life feels like one big audition with the world as our audience and judge, and we just want to be liked.

Questions



2. Read John 12:41-43. Where do you see this playing out in the church and in the culture today?

Broken Buddhas	8
3. What is the link between glory hunger and the fear of man? How have you experienced the fear of man creating bondage in your life?	an
4. Read Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18. How have you seen glory hunger and the fear of man taint even the virtuo endeavors of your life?	us
5. As you reflect on Vassar's account of people's prayers to a broken Buddha, what images come to your minthat vividly capture the futility of seeking the glory that comes from men?	nd
Prayer	
Spend some time reflecting on the "broken buddhas" in your own life. Ask God to give you the grace to tu away from those things and seek your life and joy in him and the glory that comes from him in the gospel	

his Son.

The End of the Sisyphus Cycle

Overview

Through faith in the crucified and risen Jesus, we can have our condemnation removed and have God's "very good" spoken over us once again. By faith in Jesus we can have our corruption reversed and once again begin to reflect the beauty and glory we were meant to reflect. In Jesus we have the promise of one day ruling and reigning with him in greatness and glory. Jesus is the end of our glory hunger, restoring to us everything that was lost for us by Adam.

Key Statement

When we are driven to recover glory for ourselves, it is like pushing a large boulder of our own goodness and greatness up an insurmountable hill. We struggle and strive in our attempts to feel good about ourselves by complying to our own moral code. We push and plod in our attempts to make everyone else feel good about us by meeting the cultural expectations for greatness. But we never quite make it over the top of the hill. We inevitably embarrass ourselves by failing to meet our own standards and by failing to embody the cultural values of successful, sexy, and cool. With every failure, the stone rolls back down to the bottom of the hill, and we don't feel good or great. So we start pushing the stone up the hill one more time. It is exhausting.

Questions

1. Vassar references Sisyphus to illustrate our futile attempt to gain glory and greatness for ourselves. How do you see this playing out in our culture and in your personal life?

2. What does it mean to be justified by faith? How does the doctrine of justification by faith address our glory hunger?

3. In this chapter, Vassar states, "Until the opinion of the one who matters most actually matters most to you you will never be free from your unrelenting glory hunger." Objectively, God and his opinion of us matter most. Subjectively, other people and their opinions of us often matter most to us. How can we practically experience God's opinion of us bearing more weight and consequence in our lives than anyone else's opinion?
4. As those who belong to a fallen race, sin taints our lives and produces shameful behavior and an inglorious
lack of virtue. Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. How is our hunger for glory addressed in this passage, and how does this passage say our hunger for glory can be increasingly satisfied?
5. When you consider the ultimate destiny for the Christian, how is Jesus truly the end of our glory hunger?

Prayer

Take a moment to reflect on the gospel and all that Jesus has won for those who believe in him. Pray prayers of praise and thanks as you reflect on his saving and glory-restoring work.

Renouncing Narcissism

Overview

Our legitimate hunger for glory easily can become twisted into a sinful narcissism that obsesses over self. If we live out of a narcissistic vision, we sabotage our lives and joy because we have embraced a life pattern that is out of step with ultimate reality. Jesus shows us another way, that of a selfless pursuit for God's rightly deserved glory.

Key Statement

If we are going to be whole and flourish, we must move in the direction of ultimate reality, which means we need to center our lives on the right thing. We must glorify most what is most glorious. We must love most what is most lovely. We must value supremely what is supremely valuable. The only way out of thinking too much about our glory, loveliness, and value is to be captured by a vision of the glorious, lovely, supremely valuable God. A vision of God's greatness and a zeal for his clout and fame are the only things that will displace a zeal for personal clout and fame.

Questions

1. Vassar writes, "The gospel says something wonderful about us, but it primarily says something wonderful about God." What does the gospel say about you? What does it say about God?

2. What are some things in the culture that reveal its obsession with beauty, celebrity, and fame? What does this have to do with glory hunger?

Renouncing Narcissism	12
3. According to Vassar, what is the greatest danger of narcissism?	
4. How does the life and way of Jesus stand in stark contrast to the culture's obsession with its own glor	y?
5. What does the cross say about Jesus's passion for the Father's glory?	
Prayer	
Prayer Read and reflect on John 12:27–28. Spend some time in silent confession, seeking the Father's forgiveness	over
any narcissism that resides in your heart. Pray that God would help you walk in the way of Jesus, seeking "glorify most what is most glorious."	ng to

Ordering Glory

Overview

Joy comes from having rightly ordered loves. When we love the glory of God more than our own glory, we find freedom from our over-attentiveness to self. Only a clear vision of the greatness, grace, and dominion of God revealed in creation and in his Son will reorient our lives away from ourselves and liberate us from narcissistic living.

Key Statement

When our glory and reputation and name are of greater concern to us than God's, we are loving ourselves more than God. We are centering our joy on ourselves. It's no wonder that we end up miserable, unable to bear up under the rank and responsibilities of being God. We are pathetic at being God. We are not built to bear the weight of being worshiped, by ourselves or by anyone else. It corrupts and crushes us. The life and joy that God intends for us is found only in a rightly ordered love for God and a rightly ordered love of self. This is what the gospel is designed to do—free us from the worship of self and bring us into the joy of worshiping God. The great aim of the gospel is not to redefine us to feel wonderful about ourselves but to reorient us to God so that we lose our attentiveness to self altogether and give our attention to the most worthy object.

Questions

1. Read the quote by David Naugle on page 66. Vassar states, "The joy you get from loving an object is directly proportional to the glory of that object." If that is true, how does a human-centered, narcissistic emphasis on self-esteem work against our joy?

2. According to Romans 15:8–9 what is the primary purpose for Christ's coming? How should this truth impact our prayers and our worship?

Ordering Glory 14
3. What stood out to you in this chapter about the character of God?
4. According to Vassar, what is at the heart of "name dropping," and how does a vision of God's greatness address this human tendency?
5. Vassar makes the argument that we must worship our way out of narcissism. Why is that the case?
Prayer Psalm 145 gives us a beautiful look at the greatness, grace, and dominion of God. On this side of the cross, we have a vantage point that the psalmist did not have. We have seen the greatness, grace, and dominion of God most clearly in Jesus. Take a few minutes to reflect on the life, miracles, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Pray prayers of adoration of Jesus, worshiping your way out of self-focus, giving glory where glory is really due.

Don't Look at Me

Overview

In the end, every competing glory that raises itself up against the glory of God will be brought low. God has bestowed upon Jesus the highest name, and when the smoke clears and the dust settles, every knee will bow to him. Those who have come to believe in Jesus have surrendered in the war for glory and bowed their knee to Jesus. But we continue to struggle with inner skirmishes, desiring glory that belongs solely to Jesus. We must intentionally fight our impulses to raise our name above his.

Key Statement

This is God's world, and our lives are lived before him as either the humble who delight in his name or the haughty who delight in our name. A day is coming when God alone will be exalted and when he will irrevocably reveal the transience of every glory raised up against his own. All lights that have generated their own brightness will be washed out by the brilliance of his glorious light forever.

Questions

1. What does the "age of the selfie" reveal to us about the human condition and human aspiration? What does the gospel of Jesus and the glory of Jesus have to say about that?

2. How does contemplating the glorious and victorious return of Jesus help curb your appetite for the transient glory that comes from the praise of others? How can you be more intentional in living with this end in mind?

Don't Look at Me	16
3. The cross forces a self-awareness upon us. What does the cross say about us and to us that can free us enslaving pride?	from
4. We can declare war against ourselves in our glory war against God by embracing intentional obscurity secrecy. How can you practically practice the discipline of obscurity in your fight against glory hunger?	and

Read Colossians 1:15–18. Take a moment to reflect on the preeminence of Jesus and on the promise of his glorious return. As you pray, praise the Son and ask the Father for the humility to give Jesus center stage in your

life, just as he will one day visibly take the center stage of this universe.

Prayer

Losing Glory to Gain It

Overview

In an increasingly post-Christian context, followers of Jesus must be willing to experience the loss of cultural approval and face the very real prospect of rejection and social shame for the sake of faithfulness to Jesus. As we grow content in being recipients of God's electing love and rest in his acceptance of us, we will unflinchingly face the rejection of others. We won't hesitate to suffer loss for Jesus if we value his reputation over our own. And as we keep our minds set on the unfading glory and reward that God will bestow on us in the end, we will not fear the temporary loss of glory that we must endure here and now.

Key Statement

In a world that laughs at the church's convictions and values, it becomes socially safer to hide in the shadows and distance ourselves from the church. We face the constant pressure to compromise convictions in order to stay in the good graces of friends and strangers who reject our faith and our understanding of reality. We don't want to be excluded or rejected; it hurts. It is normal to avoid pain, so we lean toward guarding ourselves against criticism. If we speak our convictions regarding areas that are culturally off-limits, we face being denounced as unloving, bigoted, narrow-minded, or judgmental. We find ourselves in a situation similar to the men in John 12:42–43, who would not confess Jesus for fear of social consequences. There are people who once walked with Jesus who today no longer openly confess him because the glory that comes from people means too much to them. It cannot be risked.

Questions

1. Where do you see evidences of the increasing marginalization of followers of Jesus in our culture? How is this similar to the world of the first-century Christians?

2. What does the apostle Peter mean in the opening of his first letter when he refers to his readers as "the elect exiles of the Dispersion?" If you are a follower of Jesus, how have you personally experienced the sociological status of being an exile?

Losing Glory to Gain It	18
3. Vassar writes, "When our glory hunger tempts us to privatize our faith in order to preserve our honor be people, we have lost sight of the worth and preeminence of Jesus and have valued our reputation above How can you preserve the worth and preeminence of Jesus as a settled reality in your own heart?	
4. Read Luke 6:22–23. What words in this passage describe the treatment that most people fear? How Jesus's promise of future reward motivate us to endure that treatment?	does
Jesus s promise of future reward motivate us to endure that treatment.	
5. See the definition of "despise" on page 116. How does hope fuel endurance and help us to "despise" present sufferings and inglorious treatment from people? How can you keep this hope constantly set before	
Prayer	
Using 1 Peter 1:3–9 as a guide for your prayer, ask God to give you greater anticipation for what awaits t	hose

who faithfully follow Jesus. Rejoice in the hope of the gospel. Confess your fears and failures and rehearse the hope that is yours in Jesus. Ask for the strength to endure the testing of your faith, a strength that comes from

rejoicing in Jesus.

Glory Next Door

Overview

The world needs glory-hungry people, but not the insecure type who fret over what people think about them. It needs glory-hungry men and women who are satisfied with God's approval. The world needs men and women who are awed by God's glory and passionate about his reputation over their own. The world needs men and women who are so secure in God's verdict over them that they do not need glory from others but rather want glory for others. The world needs men and women who gladly risk and sacrifice to see others brought into the glad enjoyment of the glorious God and to see others lay hold of the staggering promise of glory.

Key Statement

Think of how radically different your life would look if you stopped seeking glory from people and started seeking glory for them. Think of how your life would look if Jesus was enough for you, and from his fullness you steadily received grace upon grace (John 1:16), satisfying your heart so you did not need anyone else to satisfy your heart. Think of the freedom that would come to you to serve the needs of others because you had been freed from needing others. When we are hungry for the glory that comes from people, we will use them, and we cannot properly love people whom we are using.

Questions

1. How does the theme of glory run through the entire Bible?

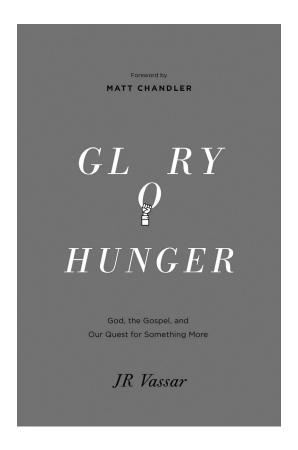
2. How are the desires we have for greatness, beauty, victory, and affirmation clues as to what we were made for, and how do they point us to Jesus?

3. Read the C.S. Lewis quote from <i>The Weight of Glory</i> on page 124. How does this challenge your view of "ordinary people?"
4. Describe the difference between the outcomes of a life that wants glory from others and a life that wants glory for others.
5. As you completed the section "A Final Appeal," did God stir your heart about anything in particular?
Prayer
Use this concluding benediction of <i>Glory Hunger</i> to guide your time of prayer:
May we who have come to live under the affirmation of our God and Father, and who are zealous for his honor among all peoples, gladly give ourselves to his mission, risking the status of outcast so that others might be brought into the enjoyment of his grace and glory now and forevermore. And as we ready ourselves to lose the glory that comes from men, may we love and eagerly anticipate the glory that comes from

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Glory Next Door

God. Amen.



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