

3 Building Blocks for Upward Ministry

Part 2

John 13:31-38 - NCBC, October 9, 2016

- **Glory.** (31-32)

** It's all about God's glory. (Luke 24:25-27)

So then ... Share this Gospel for God's Glory!

- **Love.** (33-35)

** Love is how you know. (1 John 3:11-24)

So then ... Love Christians for God's Glory!

- **Humility.** (36-38)

- o Humility is willing to wait for God's timing (36)

- o Humility refuses to trust oneself (37)

- o Humility is willing to suffer for God's sake (38)

** God's grace is sufficient. (1 Peter 5:6-11)

So then ... Watch & Pray for God's Glory in His Time!

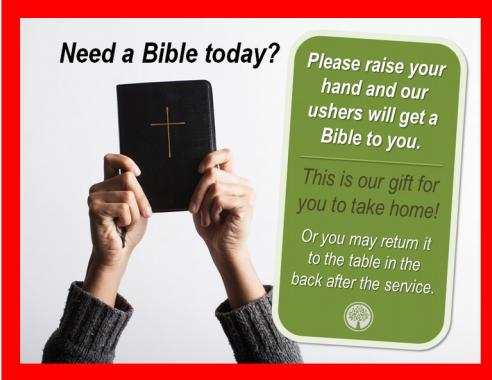
Opening Announcements:

<<Speak O Lord>>



I trust that you prayed those lyrics as you sung them together. We are so thankful that our God is a speaking God. And how does God speak to His people today? Not with a whisper. Not with a guttural promptings. But by His Word – the special revelation of God is before us this morning in the Holy Scriptures! And His Spirit is our teacher – opening our hearts to hear, understand, and obey what He has to say to us this morning from His Word.

So please open your Bibles to **the Gospel of John chapter 13**, where we continue where we left off in the classroom of the Upper Room ... considering Jesus' teaching of 3 Foundational Building Blocks for Upward Ministry.



If you don't have a Bible with you this morning, please catch the attention of the ushers now. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just simply return it after our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

You will find **John chapter 13** on page 900 in the giveaway Bibles this morning.



Please stand with me in honor of God's Word as I read from **John chapter 13:31**. Starting in **verse 31 of John 13**, reading from the English Standard translation:

31 When he [Judas] had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. 33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” 36 Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.” 37 Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” 38 Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

This is the teaching of Christ. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

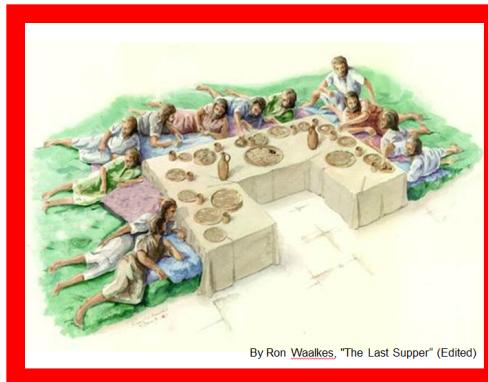
Last week our study of these verses in John 13 was greater than our time allowed, and so today we continue our consideration of 3 Building Blocks for upward ministry. These primary instructions to the disciples after Judas departed would become foundational to their future ministry. In fact, the themes of God's glory, The Spirit's love, and humility should serve as foundational pillars to all believers' lives today.

Foundations are important...even if they are unseen by most. But grounding your life on Christ and His foundational teaching doesn't just happen by regularly attending church. It takes faith. Personal repentance is required – for Scripture calls us to forsake our wrong thinking and replace it with grace and truth. Living a life that is grounded upon God's Glory, Love, and humility is not natural to us.

But it is the foundational underneath our lives that make all the difference in eternity. What are you living for today? Every one of our lives is resting on a foundation of some kind. Are you building upon sand? Or does your life and ministry rest squarely upon the bedrock of Jesus Christ and His glory?

So here's how we're going to approach today's study. Last week we already covered verses 31-35, as we discovered the first two building blocks for upward ministry – the vertical glory of God and horizontal love for other Christians. So today, we'll briefly review these first two building blocks...drawing out some additional implications for our lives today...and then focus most of our time on verses 36-38, where we discover the third foundational building block for all upward ministry.

So remember as a review,



By Ron Waalkes, "The Last Supper" (Edited)

Jesus is now in the upper room. Judas has left... there's just 11 future church planters left in the room. And at this moment, Jesus' thoughts go immediately towards the glory that is before Him.

Glory
13:31-32

God is glorified through Jesus' obedience (31a)
God is glorified through Jesus' death (31b)
God is glorified through Jesus' triumph (32)

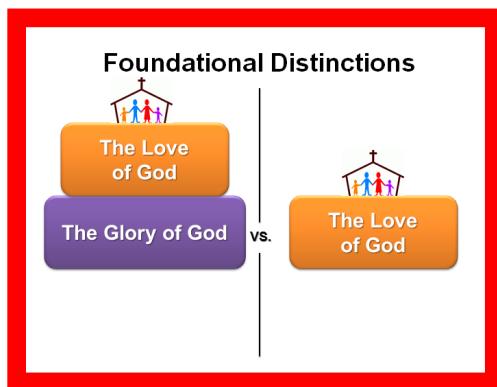
It's all about God's glory.
~ Luke 24:25-27 ~

The glory of God is the necessary foundation for all upward ministry. Every part of God's redemptive plan builds on the foundation of God's glory. The reason Jesus died and rose again was ultimately rooted in showing off God's beauty and perfections. The glory of God motivates Jesus – and so should it motivate all of His disciples.

There is no stronger grounding that can motivate our lives through suffering and sacrifice but the glory of God.

So you ask, ok pastor... I get it. It's all about God's glory. But what other option is there really? Isn't all Christian ministry rooted in the glory of God? What alternatives should I be aware of as I give my live to serving Christ and fulfilling the mission He has given me?

Great question! Because in reality, I believe many American churches and ministries have shifted their foundation over time....and traded the glory of God, for the love of God, as their primary foundation for ministry.



Instead of building ministries upon the greater reputation of God and all His perfect characteristics... the modern American church has instead claimed the love of God for sinners as the foundational pillar upon which all of its ministries are based.

And while we obviously affirm and celebrate the biblical doctrine of God's love... this is a significant and important shift.

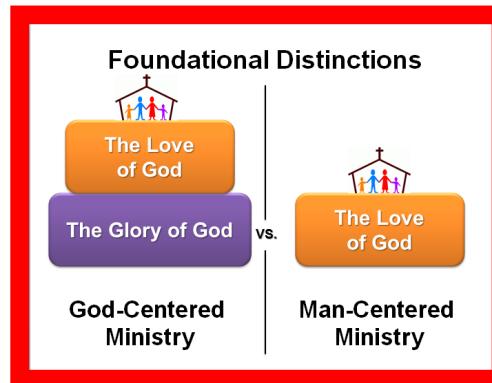
Notice what Jesus did *not* say in John 13:31,

Now... the Son of Man loves the world. And God loves those who trust in Him. If God loves those who trust in Him, then God will also love Him who loves His own, and God will love Him right away.

There's nothing biblically wrong with any of those statements. Jesus could have said this, and it would have all been true. But at this important turning point of His life and ministry, Jesus went *first* to the glory of God, *before* He considered the love of God. Because ... don't miss this! ... the love of God must always be rooted and based in the glory of God! God's love for sinners is rightly rooted in God's love for Himself!

Stick with me here.

If you base your ministry on the love of God *without* a conscious tethering to the glory of God, your well-intentioned ministry will eventually become centered more on man than God.



Let me explain.

The love of God for undeserving sinners always demands a first-cause. It begs an explanation or reason. And if we are not conscious about the majestic excellency of God's own character as the foundation for His gospel love – then... man's own worthiness himself becomes the reason for God's love.

Such subtle shift has significant impact upon how the Gospel is understood and taught. Grounding your ministry on the love of God for sinners alone...moves your motivating drive from the applause of God, to the applause of mankind. God-centered ministries are ultimately driven by what's going to bring God the most glory. While man-centered ministries are ultimately going to define success by what's most good for people.

Can you break it down and give me a practical example pastor? Sure. But only since you asked!

A ministry that subconsciously leaves the foundational glory of God will have great struggle with the biblical doctrines of election, predestination, and the so-called "problem" of evil things happening to 'good' people. For man-centered ministries emphasize how God is a servant to the believer, and struggle with any aspect of God's attributes that seems contrary to our own emotions and understanding.

Now please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. Of course we believe in the love of God. Our lives and ministries should be rooted and grounded in His love. But the reason the doctrine of God's love is so precious, is that God's love is just one of many glorious manifestations of His beauty! God loves, because He is so good! The love of God rests upon the foundation of God's glory. And this foundation underneath His love makes it even more precious to us!



So then ...a life that is committed to God's glory is a life committed to showing and telling others how good our God really is. A life committed to Sharing the Gospel!

Every time you tell someone about how good God is in His love for sinners, He receives glory!

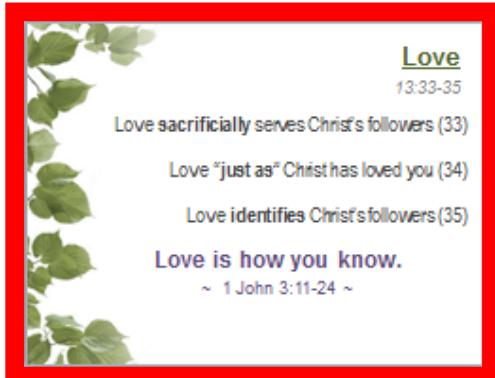
It's really quite amazing when you stop and think about it, isn't it? You and I are sinners. Perhaps you are guilty and troubled in your soul even this morning. Well we have a very good Heavenly Father. But He's so good He cannot wink at sin. Every individual sin requires judgment and death. So just stop and consider your own

life for a moment...have you ever sought your own glory – and not pursued God's glory with all your life? That is sin against a holy and jealous God who refuses to share His glory with anyone.

Dear friend – the only way you can be reconciled to our good God is through His gift of grace – believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Jesus Christ is your substitute – He took your place and died the death that your sins deserved so that you might live the life that only Christ could live in His perfection and glory. Will you believe on Jesus Christ today and be saved?

Your salvation—from your mysterious election to your final glorification – and all of your life in between – has been created by God to bring Himself glory. So confess your sins to God today – ask Him to forgive you, as you trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ for your forgiveness and your peace. It's all about the greater glory and reputation God!

So the first foundational building block for upward ministry is the glory of God. But then comes love.

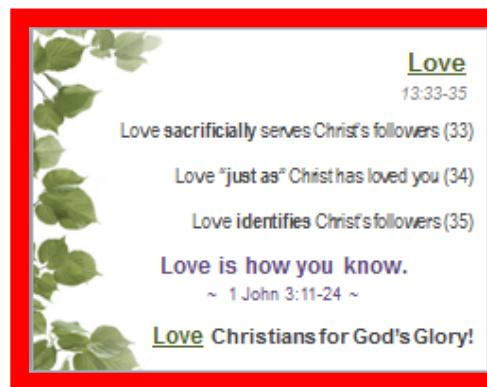


Remember what we learned last week from verses 33-35. John's later letter of **1 John** provides the best commentary on Jesus' teaching here.

The new commandment can only be obeyed by the power of God's indwelling Spirit. You must first be a recipient of God's sacrificial love, before you are able to share such love for others. New commandment love is sacrificial, and can only come from God.

1 John makes Christ's teaching here very clear... supernatural love towards other believers is the fruit of eternal life. The practice of your love towards God's children is how you know that you've been granted eternal life, and that you're one of Jesus' disciples.

So the implications are clear:



Because of the indwelling Spirit of God within us, we are able to love other Christians for God's glory!

Now it's interesting to notice what Jesus did not teach here. He didn't say,

A new commandment I give to you, that you love the world, just as I have loved you...you are also to love the world.

No... Christ's commandment was to love *one another*. The first priority of our Spirit-empowered love is clearly towards other believers. Last week we learned how the first application of this teaching – in its original context – has to do with Christian leaders loving other Christian leaders sacrificially, supernaturally, and humbly.

John 13:35 is the reason why our elder team meets once a month with our wives for a fellowship meal together. Of course there's always more church business that we could be doing together...but Jesus' teaching is clear – the watching world – all people – will know that you are Christ-followers, by the wise decisions you make? No. by the growth of your ministry? No. By the efficiency and effectiveness of your leadership? No.

All people will know that you are Christ-followers by the love you have *for one another*.

This is a foundational and directive priority for our lives. This means when I have to make a decision on whether or not I offend an unbeliever that I'm trying to witness to, or I offend one of my brothers and sisters in Christ ... **1 Corinthians 10:28** agrees with **John 13:35** here that I should love God's child more than I love the unbeliever.

Now think of the implications of Christ's teaching here for all evangelistic ministries. Because the glory of God is foundational to all of life, I will love God's children first and most among all people. And it is the love of God's disciples for one another that becomes an evangelistic attraction to unbelievers who were made to be participants of such familial love in Christ.

So whether you are interacting with another Christian leader, or your own Christian family member – make sure your life and ministry is Gospel-centered enough to prioritize your love for God's people even more than your love for the world. For by your Spirit-empowered love for other Christ-followers, all people will know that Jesus is your Lord and Master.

And with that review, we come now to verses 36-38, where we discover the third foundational building block for upward ministry,



Humility. (36-38)

Peter's rash dialogue provides a narrative contrast from which we observe Jesus' foundational priority of humility. So as we consider these verses...ask yourself...is my approach to life more like proud Peter, or true humility?

Verse 36 makes it obvious that Peter got hung up back in verse 33. He seemed to have missed everything about the new commandment...and so while John is sitting there captivated by this power to love others in the same way Jesus loved him... Jesus takes a breath and Peter interrupts,

Lord, where are you going again?

Can't you just picture Jesus looking across the table at Peter, and quietly repeating the same words He had said in verse 33 – except now in the singular – making it personal to Peter.

Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.

Where was Jesus going again? To the cross. To His death. And God still had work for Peter to do on this earth yet for His glory. Church history tells us that Peter did eventually die a martyr's death for the sake of the Gospel... but now was not the time for Peter to go with Him to death.

So we start to glimpse the impatience of pride in Peter's response in verse 37,

Lord, why can I not follow you now. I will lay down my life for you!

How do you read that verse? With a whiney tone? Or an insulted tone? Either way – Peter's response betrays his pride, doesn't it?

Because,



Humility is always willing to wait for God's timing (36)

But pride makes demands. Pride boasts. And pride is quickly insulted and hurt ...that Jesus would dare to leave him behind against his will.

Pride is too quick to make promises that it can't keep. Peter was far too confident in his own loyalty to Christ at this point, wasn't he? And this becomes our second contrasting observation now, that



Humility refuses to trust oneself (37)

Humility refuses to embrace self-confidence, but rather depends wholly upon God and His Words for what is needed. So Jesus questions Peter's proud confidence in verse 38 asking,

Will you lay down your life for me?

Peter I've taught you that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep. But you're not the good shepherd now are you Peter? No. I'm going to lay down my life for you. You have needs that your pride is refusing to acknowledge right now. So listen carefully to this sober warning,

Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

In other words, Peter – Satan is going to test your loyalty to me in ways that you can't even imagine right now. And your proud self-confidence will never be strong enough to withstand Satan's attack...for pride hates to suffer.



Only Humility is willing to suffer for God's sake (38)

Now let's pull the bus over for a moment. Can you imagine the shock it must have been for Peter to hear this dreadful prophecy come out of Jesus' lips? Peter – the rooster will not crow before you've denied me three different times.

Interestingly, after Jesus gives Peter this warning – Peter is uncharacteristically quiet for the rest of the disciple's time together with Jesus. We don't hear from Peter again until **chapter 18, verse 10** where he tries to physically fight for Christ, before Jesus stops him.

Like the disciple John... I believe this night of Jesus' teaching was often replayed in Peter's mind in the years to come. As the years passed, and Peter was entrusted with Gospel ministry to the Gentiles, I believe he came to embrace humility. For years later, as Peter was wrapping up his letter of **1 Peter** to his followers who were under horrific persecution for their faith, Peter no longer believed the self-confident promises were sufficient to carry a life and ministry through such a trial. Peter came to believe that only,



God's grace is sufficient. (1 Peter 5:6-11)

Turn your Bible to **1 Peter 5**, and let's consider how the aged apostle came to understand this foundational building block for upward ministry.

We'll start reading in verse 6,

1 Peter 5:5b-11

...Clothe yourselves, all of you, with **humility** toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."⁶ **Humble yourselves**, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that **at the proper time** he may exalt you,⁷ casting all your anxieties **on him**, because he cares for you.⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.⁹ Resist him, **firm in your faith**, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.¹⁰ And **after you have suffered a little while**, the God of all **grace**, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Peter writes his final thoughts to the persecuted exiles here saying,

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,⁷ casting

all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

I believe we hear a lot of the Upper Room and Gethsemane in Peter's words here. As he concludes his Divinely-inspired letter to the suffering and persecuted exiles, he emphasizes this foundational building block of all Christian life and ministry - humility. God is opposed to the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

Humility is willing to wait for God's timing – trusting the mighty hand of God to exalt you *at the proper time*.

Humility refuses to rely upon one's self...but casts all your anxieties *on a God who cares for you*.

And humility is willing to suffer for God's sake for a little while...since humility waits for the glory that is being prepared for all those who are hidden in Christ by faith.

So here's Peter – years after the cross – looking back and giving testimony, that God's grace is sufficient for our lives and ministry. So clothe yourselves – all of you, with humility.

So what is humility? How would you define this third building block for all upward ministry?

C.J. Mahaney gives us a helpful definition in his classic book: "Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God's holiness and our sinfulness."¹

So in contrast, pride is refusing to acknowledge our own sinfulness or God's glory. Pride is a glory thief – seeking to exalt oneself into the place of God, and refusing to admit any true dependence upon God and His undeserved grace.

Pride always seeks to help itself. Humility acknowledges its neediness, and depends wholly upon undeserved help.

In other words – you can't get humility by trying to become more humble. Humility can only be pursued indirectly...as you go deeper and deeper into faith's personal embrace of the Gospel realities of our own sinfulness, and God's own glory!

So contrary to our proud culture, God doesn't help those who help themselves. God helps those who humble themselves.

And to humble yourself – means that you admit your neediness – accept your dependence – and wait upon God's grace for your present suffering!

This is a foundational and necessary footing for all upward ministry. God opposes the proud – but He gives grace to the humble.

Do you believe God's grace is sufficient for your life today? How can you know?

Well one of the greatest evidences of humility is a strong commitment to prayer. Fervent prayer is how we acknowledge our neediness. By crying out to a God of grace!

So how do you pray, when you pray? Is your life and ministry bathed in prayer? Are you watching and praying more than you are working and promising?

Remember Jesus told all the disciples to watch and pray as they concluded that final night before the cross together. And Peter – like the rest of the disciples – in his pride, failed to pray. But now ... at the end of 1 Peter 5, Peter reminds the suffering exiles – Be watchful! Cast all your anxieties on God! Watch and pray church! You can resist Satan – only as you stand firm in your faith of Christ's sufficiency supply in His Gospel!

¹ Mahaney, C.J. *Humility*, 22.

Humility
13:36-38

Humility is willing to wait for God's timing (36)
 Humility is unwilling to trust oneself (37)
 Humility is willing to suffer for God's sake (38)

God's grace is sufficient.
 ~ 1 Peter 5:6-11 ~

Watch & Pray
 for God's Glory *in His Time!*

So then ... **watch & pray for God's Glory in His Time!**

All upward lives and ministries today are built upon these same foundational truths which we see Jesus highlight in the upper room.

Is your life motivated by increasing the reputation of God as you testify to His goodness and grace? You know you're living for God's glory when you're sharing His Gospel with others. For all the Scriptures reveal the glory and exaltation of God!

Is your life and ministry practicing a genuine Spirit-produced love for other Christ-followers? Love for God's children is how you know that you're a participant in God's saving love! Is your love for others self-serving in any way? Repent. Freely pass along God's love through your life.

And finally, is your life and ministry dependent upon God's grace alone, or have you stopped crying out to God? When the last time you can remember really crying out to God in prayer? Not to change His mind –

but to acknowledge your neediness, and invite His grace – for God gives grace to the humble!!

These are foundational and necessary building blocks for all upward ministry. May God continue to build His church in and through our humble participation in His grace.

UPPER ROOM:
 Foundations
 For Upward Ministry

John 13:31-38

3 Building Blocks
 for Upward
 Ministry

Let's pray.

<< Blessed Assurance >>

Let's pray our Benediction now as we are dismissed,

Benediction

May the **grace** of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and the **love** of **God**, and the **fellowship** of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of
God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:14

Amen.