

May 7th, 2023

A God-Centered Exodus for a Man-Centered World

Exodus 9:13-17

What does God-centered mean?

When I first came to Reformed Theology 15 years ago the most immediate challenge I faced was learning the new language. All the Christian cliches that I had learned like “let go and let God” and “God never gives you more than you can handle” and a whole host of others were immediately replaced with terms like the *sovereignty of God, covenant, the doctrines of grace*. But the concept that was most abstract to me was the idea of *God-centeredness*. “How could you be a Christian,” I thought, “and not be God-centered?” But actually, not being God-centered is the most natural thing we sinners do. We live in a man-centered world. That’s what sin is: man-centeredness. Sin has ruined us for beauty of God, the presence of God, the truth of God, the holiness of God, the glory of God. Sin displaces God from the center. That’s *why* this passage may be the most important passage in the entire book of Exodus. Because it reveals thy reason *why* God does everything He does. What was God’s *main goal* in the Exodus? What is God’s *main goal* in sending Jesus Christ into the world? What is God’s *main goal* in your life? The answer is immutably and invincibly the same.

The Big Idea...

Everything God does in the cosmos is for the sake of His own Name.

★ Our Doctrine

★ Our Duty

★ Our Delight

I. Our Doctrine

The last cycle of plagues¹

Please look at v.13-14 “Then the LORD said to Moses, “Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, “Let my people go, that they may serve me. ¹⁴For this time I will send all my plagues...” Stop. There is a resolve here. God began His judicial hardening of Pharaoh’s heart in the last plague, and now He is announcing that the final cycle of plagues are determined.

Pharaoh’s heart to be plagued

v.14 “For this time *I will* send all my plagues *on you yourself*, and on your servants and your people...” Stop. Notice he says “*on you yourself*.” The Hebrew means *on your heart*. The plagues will now target Pharaoh’s heart—his inner man. Thus far Pharaoh has suffered physically, but now he will also suffer spiritually. We see this immediately in 9:27 after this plague he says “This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong.” We

¹ Why ten plagues? Where else in Exodus do we see the number ten? The ten commandments. The ten commandments are “symbolic of the fullness of God’s moral law.” Likewise the ten plagues are symbolic of the fullness of God’s judgment against the wicked. What do the ten commandments mainly *show* us? God’s righteousness. What do the ten plagues mainly *show* us? God’s judgments. That’s our **first clue** to the question of God’s *main goal* in Exodus: *the ten plagues are meant to show us the fullness of God’s judgment*. [Source: <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Ten-Plagues-For-Ten-Gods> Accessed May 6, 2023]

see the same thing after the 8th plague in 10:16-17.² The point is from here here forward Pharaoh is terrified. When God punishes the wicked He strikes at both their flesh and their conscience.

God-centered logic

Why has God determined these final plagues? End of v.14 “...so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.” Notice God *doesn't say* “I will send all my plagues...*so that you finally let my people go.*”³ We will misunderstand the entire book of Exodus if we don't get this. God *did not* send the plagues to secure Israel's freedom. God sent the ten plagues *mainly* so that Pharaoh and all of Egypt would know that there is no one like God in all the earth.⁴

God prolonged Israel's suffering

This is evident from v.15 “*For by now* I could have *put out my hand* [an expression indicating how easy it would have been for God] and struck you and your people with pestilence [the same plague He struck the cattle with causing death], and you would have been cut off⁵ from the earth.”—that is utterly destroyed. In other words, God didn't need 10 plagues to free His people. He

² “Then Pharaoh hastily called Moses and Aaron and said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. ¹⁷ Now therefore, forgive my sin, please, only this once, and plead with the LORD your God only to remove this death from me.””

³ Clearly God wants His people freed—that's clear from v.13—He said “Let my people go.” *But* God does say that *here*. Here God is giving *a reason* for the remaining plagues. “I will send all my plagues...*so that so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.*”

⁴ That's our *first* clue to the question of God's *main goal* in Exodus: *God did not pour out His plagues on Egypt for Israel's freedom.*

⁵ “An antithesis with the previous verse is apparent: whereas Yahweh will become known throughout the earth, the King of Egypt and his people would become unknown if God so desired it.” John D. Currid, *Exodus Vol. 1: Chapters 1-18*, (Auburn, MA.,: Evangelical Press, 2000), pg. 202

could have spoken one word—and instantly Israel would have been freed and Egypt destroyed. If God’s main goal in the Exodus was to liberate His people, He could have softened Pharaoh’s heart to do so. Proverbs 21:1 “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.”⁶ But instead God hardened Pharaoh’s heart and by doing so caused Israel to suffer longer in her chains. God delayed her rescued. God prolonged her pain.⁷ Why?

God’s predestination and man’s responsibility⁸

That brings us to perhaps the central verse of the whole book of Exodus. God says to Pharaoh in v.16 “But for this purpose *I have raised you up...*” Stop. The Apostle Paul quotes this verse Romans 9:16 as a proof of God’s predestining all men.⁹ God predestined Pharaoh. Meaning, God unchangeably ordained from all eternity everything that happened in Pharaoh’s life.¹⁰ That’s what v.16 means when God says “*I have raised you up.*” Pharaoh is *not* the result of evolution. The gods of Egypt did not create him. Pharaoh was created by the LORD God,

⁶ He could have converted the whole nation of Egypt. “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases” (Psalm 115:3)

⁷ That’s our *second clue* to the question of God’s *main goal* in Exodus: *God was willing to prolong His people’s suffering.*

⁸ “The purpose of God--in distinction from his desire--toward the nonelect is expressed in Exodus 9:16 "For this cause have I raised you up, for to show in you my power and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth"...The purpose spoke of here was the decision of God not to interfere with the will of Pharaoh. God desired that Pharaoh would spontaneously and of his own accord let the people go (Exodus 9:1). But he decided not to overcome the unwillingness of Pharaoh to let the people go (Exodus 9:12). This "hardening" was the not softening of his already hard heart. God sent Moses to persuade Pharaoh. This indicated divine desire. But God at the same time informed Moses that his persuasion would fail (Exodus 7:1-4). This indicated divine purpose not to conquer Pharaoh's obstinacy.” William G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology 3rd Edition*, Ed. Alan W. Gomes, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2003), pg. 346-347

⁹ cf. Romans 9:17

¹⁰ WCF 3.1 God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

predestined by the LORD God, sustained by the LORD God to fulfill *this very role in human history*. Yahweh wrote Pharaoh's story before the foundation of the world.¹¹ As one author says "We face again the fact of God's absolute predestination of all things, and man's responsibility."¹² Dear congregation I submit to you that this is not mystery that can be solved. But it is Biblical fact that must be submitted to. God ordained all things in Pharaoh's life, *and yet* Pharaoh was guilty for his own sin. Don't you see that this is a wonderful proof of the infinity of God? What does the Scripture say? Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." If we could understand all God's ways, His ways would not be higher than our ways.¹³ We might not be able to untangle this mystery, but we don't have to. Psalm 100:3: "Know that the LORD, he is God!"

God was pursuing global fame

So what was God's purpose in predestining Pharaoh? Halfway through v.16 "...to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." God predestined all Pharaoh's rebellion, so God could show His power

¹¹ "Although God is said to have raised up Pharaoh up for this same purpose that he might show his power in him (Romans 9:17), it does not follow in his reprobation that he was considered before his creation and fall. He does not speak of first creation, but of his production from an unclean seed or his elevation to the kingdom which God brought about by his providence..." Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology Vol. 1*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 1992), pg. 349

¹² Rousas John Rushdoony, *Commentaries on the Pentateuch: Exodus*, Vallecito, CA.: Ross House Books, 2004), pg. 108

¹³ Likewise Romans 11:33 says "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments." If we could understand all God's judgments they wouldn't be unsearchable.

not in one but ten plagues, so that His name would be made famous in all the earth.¹⁴

Here it is, the *main purpose* of the Exodus:

God was pursuing global fame.

Above every other consideration, God wanted His name to be proclaimed in all the earth. The Hebrew verb for *proclaimed* here means to commend, give great praise, to recount the greatness of God.¹⁵ God wanted all the tribes and nations of the earth to hear what He did in Egypt, and to be astonished, to be in fear, to know there is a God who rules over all the earth. And this is precisely what happened.¹⁶

- 40 years later, Rahab the prostitute helped the spies because, she said in Joshua 2:10 *“For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt...”*
- The Gibeonites entered into a treaty with Israel saying in Joshua 9:8-9. *“From a very distant country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God. For we have heard a report of him, and all that he did in Egypt.”*
- 400 years later the Philistines were still afraid to fight Israel because of the plagues of Egypt. 2 Samuel 4:7-8. *“The Philistines were afraid, for they said, “A god has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. ⁸Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of*

¹⁴ 2 Samuel 7:22-23

¹⁵ Currid, pg. 202

¹⁶ also see Exodus 15:14-16; 18:8-12; 32:12; Numbers 14:15

these mighty gods? *These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness.*¹⁷

The plagues recounted the greatness of God throughout the whole OT. They entered into Israel's lore, shaped their ceremonial laws (think Passover), and formed the very songs they sang (Psalm 78:12-16; 78:43-51; 105:16-22; 105:26-36; 135:8-9; 136:10-15;).

The Exodus today

But these plagues are making a Name for God's today. Children, boys and girls, can you think of a popular animated movie that tells the Exodus story? The Prince of Egypt. That movie exists because, as one author put it "the plagues made God famous."¹⁸ How many other movies and books and Youtube videos have been made talking about this one event? 3500 years after the Exodus, God is still famous for what He did in Egypt.

Our Doctrine: All for His Name's Sake

That brings us to **our doctrine**: *Everything God does in the cosmos is for the sake of His own Name.* It's not just the Exodus, but the totality of every act— without exception—God has done for the sake of His own Name. Consider 5 proofs.

¹⁷ Jonathan Edwards further points out the wonders that God did in Egypt shaped the entire Old Testament. The events in Exodus are mentioned countless times in the rest of the Bible. These plagues entered not only into Israel's lore, but they invaded their ceremonial laws (the Passover), and the very song they sang (Psalm 78:43-51; Psalm 105:26-36; Psalm 135:8-9; Psalm 136:10-15; Psalm 78:12-16; Psalm 105:16-22). See Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 2*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), pg. 683

¹⁸ Philip Graham Ryken, *Preaching the Word: Exodus, Saved for God's Glory*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2015), pg. 255

Proof 1: God redeemed Judah out of Babylon for *the sake of His Name*

Isaiah 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. ¹¹“*For my own sake, for my own sake*, I do it, for *how should my name be profaned?*” Here we see that God’s name is equal to His praise. For His name or for His praise or glory He redeemed Israel. To do anything for His name’s sake is the same as to do it for His glory.

Proof #2: The Apostle Paul’s suffered for *the sake of God’s Name*

Acts 9:15-16 “...he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶For I will show him how much he must suffer *for the sake of my name.*”¹⁹

Proof #3: God has redeemed Gentiles for *the sake of His Name*

Acts 15:14 “Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people *for His name.*”

Proof #4: We are directed to pray so that *God’s Name would be hallowed*

The first petition in the Lord’s prayer is “*Hallowed be Your Name*” (Matthew 6:9). Every other petition—God’s kingdom coming, His will being done on earth as it is in Heaven, His giving us daily bread, His forgiving us, His leading us not into temptation and keeping us from the evil—is requested so that God’s name would be hallowed. Jesus made every other petition to serve the first: “Hallowed be Your Name.”

¹⁹ Consequently this reason Paul gave to the Philippians for their suffering, and by extension ours. Philippians 1:29 “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.”

Proof #5: Our sins are forgiven for *the sake of God's Name*

Please turn to 1 John 2:12 for this last one. When I became Reformed 15 years ago it was this truth that shook me out of a man-centered view. Why did Jesus die? Evangelicals answer, to forgive us of our sin. That's correct. But not *ultimate*. Why did God want to forgive our sins? For the same reason He gave Pharaoh, so that His Name could be proclaimed in all the earth. 1 John 2:12 "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for *his name's sake*."

Summa Theologica

Countless more Biblical examples could be given.²⁰ This is what it means to be God-centered. To see that God predestines all events, works all events, accomplishes all events for one end: to bring glory to Himself. That's **our doctrine**: *Everything God does in the cosmos is for the sake of His own Name.*

II. Our Duty

Elentict Use

Our **first duty** is to *answer an objection*. And this is probably the toughest objection any one of us may ever have to answer. Imagine you are one of these Hebrew slaves. Your father, grandfather, great-grandfather all died in slavery. Now you and your children are slaves. This Moses guy shows up, and you just now you discover that God could have released you from bondage some time

²⁰ For a brief summary, see <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/for-the-sake-of-gods-name/> For an in-depth study, See Jonathan Edwards' book *The End For Which God Created the World*. See especially Section IV.

ago. But He hasn't. He delayed your suffering. Because this Yahweh, wanted to make sure that He would be made famous in your release. Or picture right now Wang Yi who has been in a Chinese prison since 2018 for preaching the gospel. He has several years left on his term. He wife and children have suffered. He has suffered. God could have arranged for him to spend no time in prison. But God wanted His name to be made famous. Or you have cancer, or your spouse leaves you, or your child dies, or imagine any spirit crushing scenario. God delays. God allows you to suffer. *Why?* Because He wants to make His name famous? Why kind of a God does that? How are those the actions of a loving God?

1. Is God an idolater?

You see in our man-centered world—ruined by sin—we have been poisoned into thinking that God is *only loving towards us*, if He makes much of us. We think that God's priority should be us, our needs, our priorities. The **first problem** with that thinking is that it makes God an idolater. If God makes man His number one concern, then He has made us His god, and He has broken the 1st commandment "You shall have no other gods before me."²¹ Whoever has the priority in the universe is god. If man has the priority then man is god, and God must serve him. But we know that's wrong.

2. How does God love us?

The **second problem** is that we don't know what love is. Or better yet, we don't understand how God *must* love us if it is going to be for our good. Think hard. *How must* God love us? What do our souls need more than anything else?

²¹ Exodus 20:3

Our souls need to *see* God. Our lives are worthless if we don't get to feast on Him. God loves us most when He shows us *more* of who He is.

The Psalmist's one thing

Psalm 27:4 “*One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD...*” The only thing the Psalmist wanted was to gaze, to stare, to behold, to feast with His eyes on the beauty of the LORD. To see God was his life, his portion, his diadem, his wealth, his food, his everlasting treasure.

Job's instant cure

Or think of Job, after all spirit-crushing anguish, he was cured instantly. Not by God making much of Job and fixing all his problems, but by giving Job a “show.” Four chapters of God showing Job who He was, His power and wisdom and mercy and goodness and Job's heart found its resting place. When Job “saw” God more clearly, He was able to say “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, *but now my eye sees you*; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6). The more Job saw of God, the more He knew God loved him.

Jesus' most important prayer for us

What did Jesus pray for right before He went to the cross? What did He want the Father to give us more than anything else? An easy life? A life without suffering. No. He prayed above all else that we would see His glory. John 17:24 “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, *to see my glory...*” Christ died so that this prayer would be answered. He suffered under the wrath of God for man's sin. Nailed to a tree. Tormented by

Satan. Hated by men. He became a curse, all for this one end—that we might see His glory. That was all that mattered. All will be made right in the universe, all will be made right with our soul, when we see Him. That’s why Jesus died *mainly*. So that we could see His glory.

Nourishment for generations to come

Dear congregation this is how God loved Israel. In delaying their rescue, in prolonging their suffering, He was revealing Himself in plague after plague—His omnipotence, His wisdom, His justice, His faithfulness, His mercy, His steadfast love. That was what Israel truly needed, to see God, to see His fame, His glory, His beauty. These plagues became the nourishment of Israel for all of redemptive history. As one author said “Generations later, the great grandchildren of these Israelites would yet be nursing on the milk of God’s word, recounting His glorious deeds. God’s glory became the nourishment, strength, and comfort of their children.”²² Psalm 78:4 “We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.”²³

Consolatory Use

Our **second duty** is to *comfort* ourselves. What do we do with all those other things I mentioned? Persecution, cancer, death? What do we do when God delays, and that delay means more suffering? Dear congregation, that delay

²² L. Michael Morales, *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption*, (Downers Grove, IL.,: IVP Academic, 2020), pg. 42

²³ Furthermore “Humanity’s exilic ignorance of God and the nations dark perversion of his character and attributes would not have been helped by an easy, quiet release of Hebrew slaves from Egypt. Yahweh God orchestrated, therefore, the bondage of his own people and strengthened Pharaoh’s pompous resolve all in order to shine the light of the knowledge of the glory of God into the darkness of exile.” *Ibid*, pg. 46

may indeed mean more suffering, but it certainly produce in You a greater vision of God, His Name, His Kingdom, His glory. Your greatest need is not to be relieved of your suffering. The Scripture *does promise* that Your suffering will one day be over. Revelation 21:4 “He will wipe away every tear from [your] eyes...” But that is not your greatest need *now*. You are not the center.

To my fellow slaves

Young adults, I want to especially help you to see this. I’m speaking to those of you who are no longer children but you are in that in-between stage, and you feel stuck. Perhaps you want to be married, or you don’t know what your career is, you feel lost, lonely, like a ship wandering at the sea. You’re wondering “What is God doing in my life?” How can you find comfort from this passage? Well, just like Israel, you are a slave. Israel were slaves of Egypt. But your slavery is so much more delightful. You are a slave of Jesus Christ. This is one of the major identifications of a Christian in the NT.

- 1 Corinthians 7:22 “For he who was called in the Lord while a *slave*, is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who was called while free, is Christ’s *slave*.”
- Romans 6:22 “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become *slaves* of God...”

What does that mean? Two things.²⁴ **First** it means that as a slave, you do not own yourself. Christ owns you. He bought you with a price, the highest price possible. You were bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. No slave has ever been bought at a higher price than you. **Second**, it means that Christ is not going to waste your life. If your life cost Him everything, do you think He’s going to be careless with your slavery? Look to Israel. What did Yahweh

²⁴ Explore this sermon more in the future: <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-321/slaves-for-christ> Accessed May 7, 2023

accomplish through them? He put them in a very painful circumstance, and then He delayed and delayed and delayed. But what was the end of the matter? His Name was proclaimed in all the earth! Take courage, God's Name will be made great in Your life! That is His highest commitment. And you will discover—that is what your heart longs for most.

Experimental/Admonitory Use

Our **third duty** is a *warning*. God tells Pharaoh in v.17 in our text “*You are still exalting yourself* against my people and will not let them go.” Pharaoh is the typical unconverted man. He exalts himself. He is man-centered. He is focused only on himself, his concerns, his desires.²⁵ To be converted to Jesus Christ *means* that you will want God's name to be proclaimed, exalted, loved, adored in all the earth. To remain unconverted means that you are still exalting yourself just like Pharaoh. Dear friend, if you are still exalting yourself, if you are unconverted, then we don't have to guess what your end will be. Pharaoh lost everything, then He was swallowed up in the Red Sea. Likewise those who refuse to come to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, will be swallowed up on the last day. Is that how you want your life to end? Are you satisfied living a man-centered life? I know you are not. There is no joy, no peace when you are at the center. Your heart was made the exaltation of God. It hungers and thirst for it. Don't perish like Pharaoh. Come to Jesus Christ. Come and proclaim His Name with us. The promise is “that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”²⁶

²⁵ This is what is wrong with the world today, man-centeredness, the exaltation of man.

²⁶ Acts 2:21

III. Our Delight

Desiring God

Perhaps the best book in our generation that deals with this whole subject is *Desiring God* by John Piper. In it he shows that we don't have to choose between being God-centered and being happy. The glory of God is the happiness and joy and delight of the Christian. I remember when this clicked for me in 2009, everything changed for me. I was in pastoral training, and I really wanted to be a pastor and it completely stressed me out. I got acid reflux, I was my teeth at night, deep down I felt that I would be disappointed if didn't become a pastor. Then I read Piper's book, which was just Biblical Theology, and I was set free. If I never became a pastor, if I was a tile setter for the rest of my life, I would be satisfied because I knew that God would glorify Himself in my life, and that glory was my highest joy.

Hortatory Use

So I **charge** you this morning dear congregation: seek your highest joy in the glorification of God's Name. Remember our big idea is: *Everything God does in the cosmos is for the sake of His own Name. **Therefore we are to do everything for the sake of His Name.*** That's our highest duty. Where do you start? Children, boys and girls, do you know how to do everything *for the sake of His Name*?

Step 1 is to ask: Who is this God? If I were to ask you: Who is your mom? You would give me her name and start to describe her and give me her characteristics. Do you know what the characteristics of God are?

SCQ4. What is God?

A. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

Take each one of those attributes and study them out in Scripture. If you are an adult and haven't done this yet, this is a life changing study. Daniel 11:32 "...the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits." A.W. Tozer once said "The man who comes to a right believe about God is relieved of ten thousand temporal problems, for he sees at once that these have to do with matters at the most cannot concern him for very long."²⁷

Step 2 Praise God and thank Him for who He is. The benefit of studying God's attributes is that you are given fuel for prayer and praise. Go look at how the Psalmist prays. How does the Psalmist pray? Psalm 7:17 "I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the **name** of the Lord, the Most High." Psalm 8:1 "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" He spends so much of his time recounting all of God's excellencies. The person who knows the attributes of God and what Scripture says about them will never run out of prayers. Prayer is not meant to be man-centered, it's meant to be God-centered.

Step 3 Seek to make God the center of everything in your life, your relationships, your work, your family life, your politics, you economics, your education, your entertainment. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Parents is the discipline

²⁷ A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, (New York, NY.,: Harper Collins, 1961), pg. 2-3

of your children God-centered? Christian are your interactions with non-believers God-centered in your conduct and speech? We either exalting ourselves like Pharaoh or we are seeking to exalt God. There is no neutral territory.

Step 4 Repent in a God-centered way. My favorite kids book is *The Priest With Dirty Clothes* by R.C. Sproul. It's the story of a priest name Jonathan who ruined his priestly clothes and wasn't allowed to preach before the Great King until he could get his clothes clean. But He couldn't no matter how hard he tried. And He could never earn a new set of clothes. And so He could not appear before the King. But then the Great Prince appeared and gave Jonathan His clothes so that He could appear before the King. The story ends Jonathan being filled with all joy and he asked the Great Prince:

“How can I ever thank you for being so kind to me?”

The Prince said, “If you are really thankful, and if you want to show me that you love me, then keep all the commandments that I give to you.”

“Oh, I will,” Jonathan said. “I want to be good enough to wear your clothes.”

“But you cannot be good enough, Jonathan. You must live your whole life trusting in my goodness while you wear my clothes.”²⁸

²⁸ R.C. Sproul, *The Priest with Dirty Clothes*, (Orlando, FL.,: Reformation Trust, 2011), pg. 35

Beloved that is so key. Jesus, the Great Prince wants you to obey His commandments. That's what it means to be God-centered. But we will never be good enough, we will never be God-centered enough. If our repentance is simply, *I'll try harder*, then we are being man-centered. Our repentance must be God-centered. "God I have failed again. I repent, please forgive me. And I know You will, because my righteousness does not come from me, but it comes from Your Son. You made Him who knew no sin to be sin for me, so that in Him I might become the righteousness of God." Dear congregation that is God-centered repentance. That is a repentance that proclaims God's Name in all the earth. That God saves sinners, and sustains sinners, and satisfies all the sins of sinners through His Son.

Summa Theologica

Dear congregation, this is what God is calling you to do. Do everything so that God's Name may be proclaimed in all the earth.