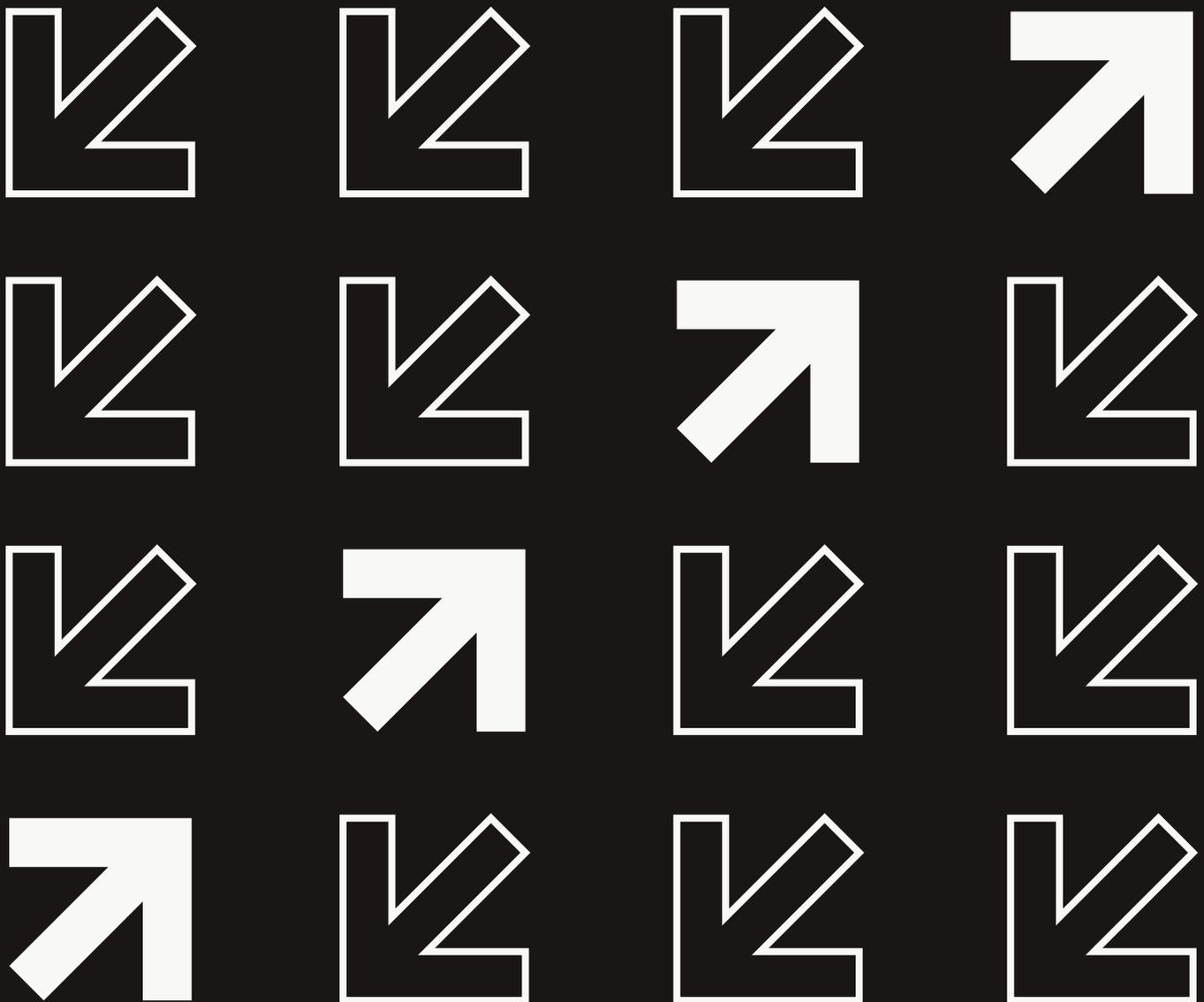


Week 2

The Grand Scheme of Things



The Grand Scheme of Things

A Foundation for Living FDFD

Week 2

Day One:

The Search for Happiness

Go to the Living FDFD website, Week Two, to listen to the audio resources for this day.

Notes:

- Happiness is possible.
- Real happiness—the kind God offers—is not superficial and is not destroyed by tragic circumstances. It is determined by your fundamental allegiances.
- This happiness can never be found directly. It is always and only a by-product of seeking something more foundational and ultimate.
- Happiness is not something that happens to you. It is something that you choose.

SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 1:1-6 NIV | *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, 2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. 3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers. 4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.*

1 Peter 1:6 NIV | *In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*

Matthew 6:33 NIV | *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

OBSERVATION:

APPLICATION:

PRAYER:

Day Two: Why did God create us in the first place? (part one)

Answer #1: God created us to be His IMAGE BEARER by enjoying Him forever.

God created us as His IMAGE BEARERS; in other words, to be the kind of people that would spread an appreciation of His GOODNESS and GREATNESS.

According to **Genesis 1:27 NIV**, "*God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*"

One way to think about this passage is to focus on the fact that every person who has ever existed has inherent dignity because they were created in God's image. We embrace this concept and insist that no one's value be measured by what they contribute to society or by what position of power they inhabit.

Everyone has the ability to bring glory to God since they have been created with an ability to relate to God and others, have a sense of right and wrong, and have an appreciation of what is good and true. In reference to God, theologians call these attributes the COMMUNICABLE attributes of God. INCOMMUNICABLE attributes of God, such as being all-powerful, all-knowing, eternal, and having the ability to be everywhere all at once, are possessed by God alone.

But for our purposes allow me to focus on something very simple but important: the fact that God made us for the purpose of IMAGING Him, pointing others to the fact that God is good and glorious. In **Colossians 1:15 NIV**, the Apostle Paul wrote, "*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*" (Note that the word "firstborn" means "preeminent one.")

That is, He is the best there will ever be at bearing the image of God and showing others what God is like.) In **Isaiah 43:17 NIV**, God is recorded as saying that His people are those "*whom I created for my glory.*" As image bearers we are God's "glory-spreaders". God created us as those who would talk, act, feel, behave and think in such a way that others would see what God is like. The desired end game is that many would say to themselves as they look at us, "God must be great" or "God must be real."

Jesus came to earth to show us what God was like. To describe that mission, He called Himself "*the Light of the world.*" In **John 9:5 NIV**, Jesus says "*While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*" Then He said to us (those who bear His image) in **Matthew 5:14-16 NIV**, "*You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*"

The best way we can show that God is infinitely valuable is to be supremely happy in Him. If God's people are bored with Him, they make themselves to be horrible image bearers. That's what we will consider on Day 3.

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 1:27 NIV | *So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

OBSERVATION:

APPLICATION:

PRAYER:

Day Three: Why did God create us in the first place? (part two)

Answer #2: God created us to be His image bearers BY ENJOYING HIM forever.

It is important that we understand God as TRINITY. This means that there is ONE God and THREE persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Instead of self-centeredness, the Father, Son, and Spirit are characterized by what is essential to their existence: mutual, self-giving love. In **1 John 4:8 NIV** we read, “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” There is way more to this description of God than most people take time to recognize. Let’s make some observations.

1) God IS love. This means that love is essential to who He is—which means that nothing has to change in order for God to be loving. He, as always, exists as One who loves.

2) Love requires TWO PERSONS: One who gives love and one who receives love. This means that God has always existed in relationship. The three persons of the Trinity have always made one another the object of their love.

An example of this is found in **Mark 1:9-11 NIV**: “At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You

He created us NOT TO GET JOY, BUT TO GIVE IT. When we come into the dance, we step into HIS JOY.

are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’” When Jesus came out of

the water, the Father enveloped Him and covered Him with words of love. Meanwhile, the Spirit covers Him with power. Mark is giving us a glimpse of what has been happening for all eternity. The love that flows out to each person of the Trinity from each person of the Trinity is the heart of reality and a pointer to the true meaning of life.

Each Person of the Trinity displays love by GLORIFYING the others. When we make a big deal about others, we are displaying a generous sort of love. We are taking the attention off ourselves and putting it on others as if to say, “Look at him (or her). See how wonderful, beautiful, and good he (or she) is.” Jesus says these words in His prayer found in **John 17:4-5 NIV**: “I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” Each Person of the Trinity GLORIFIES the others.

Theologian Cornelius Plantinga once wrote,

The persons within God exalt one another...Each divine person harbors the others at the center of his being. In constant movement of overture and acceptance, each person envelops and encircles the others...God’s interior life (therefore) overflows with regard for others. (Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living [Grand

NOTE | to “glorify” simply means to draw attention to the goodness and greatness of something or someone. You’re glorifying something when you find it beautiful or great for what it is in itself. In other words, you are compelled to ADORE IT even when seeking nothing FROM IT. You simply value and love it—or in the case of a person, him or her.

Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002])

Because the Father, Son, and Spirit are giving glorifying love to one another, God is infinitely and profoundly happy. Here's something to think about: If you love and adore someone with all your heart and then find out that they love and adore you—well, does it get any better than that? The greatest joy in life is to be fully known by someone and also fully loved by that person. That's what God has been enjoying for all eternity. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are pouring love, joy, adoration, value, and praise all over each other, each seeking the other's glory. Tim Keller has identified this as a sort of dance. **And the most beautiful idea ever is that we are invited to the dance!**

If God were not Trinity, but instead unipersonal, we might wonder, "Did God create us to give Him something that He didn't already have?" But because He does exist in Trinity, He already enjoys unlimited love. Therefore, we know that God created us NOT TO GET JOY, BUT TO GIVE IT.

When we come into the dance, we step into HIS JOY. We were not made to simply believe that He exists; we were made to center our lives on Him. We FLOURISH when everything in our life revolves around Him and is connected to Him. That's where the joy is. It is a BY-PRODUCT of DANCING with Him.

SCRIPTURE:

John 4:8 NIV | *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

OBSERVATION:

APPLICATION:

PRAYER:

Day Four: Why did God create us in the first place? (part three)

Answer #3: God made us to SPREAD HIS FAME.

None of us like it when people try to draw attention to themselves or try to get others to compliment them. It seems vain to us. But is this what God is doing when He commands us to make a big deal about His goodness and greatness? For instance, the Apostle Paul encouraged the Christians at Thessalonica that someday God would "...be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed" (**2 Thess. 1:10 NIV**). Also, he wrote to the Christians in Ephesus to cooperate with the purposes of God; "...that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory" (**Eph.1:10 NIV**).

Here are two reasons why God is not out of line in commanding us to exalt His greatness:

God is not like us. Some things are wrong for us but not wrong for God. One reason why seeking to be glorified by others is wrong for us is that God warns us not to do that. "*Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others **to be seen by them**. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others*" (**Matthew 6:1-2 NIV**). The attempt to get others to think you're great is not loving. If someone honored, praised, and worshiped you or me, they would ultimately be disappointed. Unlike God, we are deficient and needy which makes us unworthy of the devotion of others.

The other reason why it is wrong for us to seek glory from others but not wrong for God is because, unlike us, **God is not weak**

and has no deficiencies. "*For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen*" (**Romans 11:36 NIV**). "*And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else*" (**Acts 17:25 NIV**).

There is only one person who is ULTIMATE and, therefore, ULTIMATELY satisfying—God Himself. Therefore, the most loving thing for God to do is to insist that we worship Him EXCLUSIVELY. Because God made us, He knows what will satisfy our deepest longings for satisfaction, meaning, purpose, and love. And because He loves us, He directs us away from all pursuits that fall short of satisfying us and points us to Himself. In other words, He must be for Himself if He is to truly be for us.

The rules of humility that belong to the creature cannot apply in the same way to the Creator. Ultimate self-denial would be idolatry in God. By upholding his own glory, he upholds the ground of our joy. (John Piper. *Desiring God : Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* [Sisters, Or. :Multnomah Books, 1996])

There are three ways we GLORIFY God in our daily lives:

We gain our IDENTITY from Him. When we get this right, we are happy to embrace God's valuation of us. Our sense of self, our sense of value and significance, all come from what He says about us rather than from any other source. The more we embrace this reality, the better we REFLECT Him. **We embrace God as our AUTHORITY.** At the end of the day, we know and understand what is right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust, because God has declared it. The more willing we are to embrace God's

authority, the better we will REFLECT Him.

We take what God has done for us and use that as inspiration for our ACTIVITIES.

In other words, we enjoy doing for others what God did for us through Jesus. We act as a conduit of His love, grace, kindness, and care to others. When we do this, the better we REFLECT Him.

If we are going to experience FULL DELIGHT as believers in Christ, we will have to embrace our role as image bearers and mirrors, showing others the glory of God.

SCRIPTURE:

Romans 11:36 NIV | *For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.*

OBSERVATION:

APPLICATION:

PRAYER:
