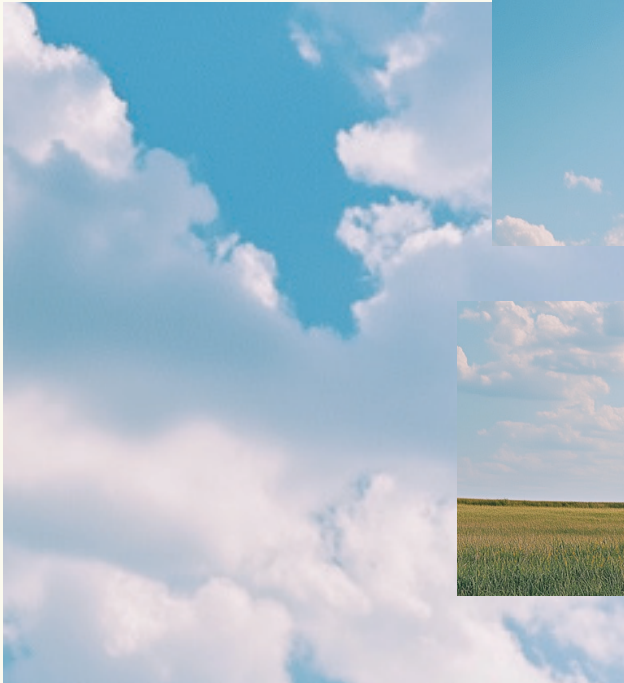
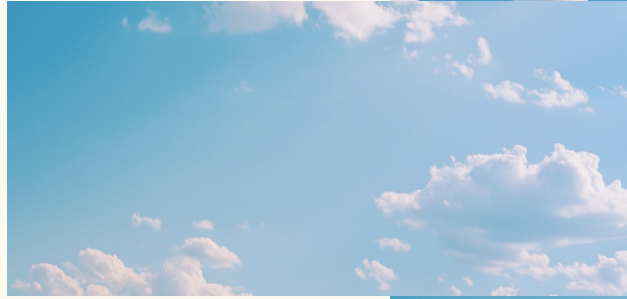




GLORY REVEALED

A 6-SESSION SMALL GROUP STUDY

WEEK 1:

GOD'S GLORY REVEALED IN THE HEAVENS

WATCH: [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/1178624658?SHARE=COPY](https://vimeo.com/1178624658?SHARE=COPY)

Reading:

One of the most amazing sights I have seen was when I was in high school and at summer church camp in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Some friends and I were out late by the river one clear night, and when we looked up, we saw an arm of the Milky Way. It left us in awe because of its beauty and grandeur.

The last couple years here in Central Illinois, we've been blessed to be able to see the Northern Lights illuminate the night sky with greens, purples and pinks. And while we live in flat farmland, there's nothing quite as beautiful as a Midwest sunset. To be witness to such wonders draws us to be in awe of not just creation, but the Creator as well.

Johannes Kepler, the 17th century astronomer and mathematician who is famous for discovering the laws of planetary motion, was a devout believer. Hear what this groundbreaking scientist had to say about the heavens:

"Great is God our Lord, great is His power and there is no end to His wisdom. Praise Him you heavens, glorify Him, sun and moon and you planets. For out of Him and through Him, and in Him are all things..... We know, oh, so little. To Him be the praise, the honor and the glory from eternity to eternity."

"I had the intention of becoming a theologian...but now I see how God is, by my endeavors, also glorified in astronomy, for 'the heavens declare the glory of God.'"

Because the heavens are so full of wonder and glory, it is no wonder that the Holy Spirit inspired the Psalmists to write songs of praise to God. Read what David wrote in Psalm 8. Imagine He just looked up at a clear night sky one night in Jerusalem, perhaps seeing an arm of the Milky Way himself. He bursts out in song:

"O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens." Psalm 8:1

While the heavens are glorious, and reflect God's glory, the heavens are not the greatest work that God has ever done. The heavens were actually pretty easy work for him that didn't take much effort or strength. They are simply the work of his fingers. Read what David continued to write in Psalm 8:

"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place..." Psalm 8:3

Wow. Some of the most beautiful things that we have seen are just the "work of his fingers." Planets, stars, moons, black holes, comets, supernovas and all of the mysteries of space that scientists have been studying for hundreds of years are just the "work of his fingers." This truly puts us in awe of God's awesome power and glory.

But if the heavens are the work of his fingers, what is the work of his strength? When did God most show his power and glory?

It is when God saves and delivers his people from bondage. That is the work of his strong right arm.

"Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord does valiantly, the right hand of the Lord exalts; the right hand of the Lord does valiantly!" Psalm 118:15-16

"Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever...and brought Israel out from among them, for his steadfast love endures forever; with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for his steadfast love endures forever." Psalm 136:3,11-12

These psalms are recalling God's deliverance of his people from their bondage in Egypt, but they also call forward to Jesus' work on the cross that brought about our ultimate deliverance from the bondage of sin. Paul writes in Colossians 1:13-14:

"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

So it is good to give glory to God for the greatness of the heavens. They truly declare his glory. And while these "works of his fingers" put us in awe of God; remember the greatest glory is demonstrated in God's strong right arm shown in Jesus' saving work on the cross.

Discussion Questions:

1. The "Awe" Factor

The reading mentions seeing the Milky Way and the Northern Lights. What is the most breathtaking natural wonder you have ever seen in person? In that moment, did you feel more connected to the Creator, or did you feel small?

2. Fingers vs. Arms

The devotional points out that the vast universe is described merely as the "work of God's fingers" (Psalm 8:3), while salvation required His "strong right arm." Why do you think the Bible uses more "muscular" language for our rescue than it does for the creation of the stars?

3. Kepler's Perspective

Johannes Kepler shifted from wanting to be a theologian to seeing his work in astronomy as a way to glorify God. How can you "glorify God by your endeavors" in your specific job, hobby, or current season of life?

4. The Scale of Worth

In Psalm 8, David looks at the heavens and immediately asks, "What is man that you are mindful of him?" When you consider the sheer scale of the universe, does it make God's personal interest in your life harder or easier to believe? Why?

5. Deliverance from Darkness

The text quotes Colossians 1:13-14, stating God has "delivered us from the domain of darkness." What are some modern "domains of darkness" (fears, habits, or mindsets) that people are in bondage to today? How does the "strong arm" of Jesus provide a way out?

6. Living in the Light

If the "greatest work" God ever did was redeeming us through the cross, how should that change our perspective when we feel overwhelmed by our daily problems? How can we remind ourselves of His "strong arm" when we only feel our own weakness?

A Closing Thought for the Group

"The majesty of creation is meant to point us to the even greater majesty of His mercy."

WEEK 2:

GOD'S GLORY REVEALED IN THE EARTH

WATCH: [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/1178621092?SHARE=COPY](https://vimeo.com/1178621092?share=copy)

Reading:

When was a time that you were just stopped in your tracks and you had to catch your breath, because you were gazing at something incredible in nature? Was it a time being at the ocean? Or perhaps seeing the Grand Canyon for the first time?

A few years ago, my wife and I took a trip to Montana to Glacier National Park. The beauty we beheld was astonishing. Every turn of the hiking trail brought a new site: a mountain peak, bighorn sheep on the mountainside, a brilliant blue lake in between the mountain peaks. The beauty wasn't just stunning...it was glorious.

Isaiah 6:3 describes the song the angels sing as they circle around the throne of God:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

Genesis 1 tells us the beautiful, poetic story of God creating the heavens and the earth. God simply speaks, and creation appears. He would create an environment first: the sky, the waters, the land, and then fill those environments with life. The skies were full of birds. The waters teemed with all kinds of fish. The land burst open with all kinds of trees, flowers and animals. The creation we experience and walk on everyday is a manifestation of God's artistry and His glory.

Sadly, when sin entered the world in Genesis 3, not only did it cause a separation between God and humans, it also negatively affected his creation. Part of the curse on Adam (and all mankind by extension) was that the ground itself was cursed. Thorns and thistles would grow and choke out the beauty of the plants and flowers. The harmony that was between all living things was now thrown into chaos. Paul writes in Romans 8 about creation:

"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly...for we know that the whole of creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth..." Romans 8:20,22

Sin has a personal effect on humans and their relationship with God and creation. Romans 1 tells us that the beauty and wonder of creation actually drive people to worship the earth, instead of the Creator of the earth. Paul writes,

"For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things." Romans 1:20,22-23

Where is our hope? Where is the hope of creation? The hope lies fully in Jesus Christ. Revelation 21:5 quotes Jesus:

"And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'"
Jesus began his work not just of salvation, but of restoration with his death and resurrection. His raising from the dead shows that while we were dead in our sin, we have new life in him. His raising from the dead shows us that even though we will physically die, we will be raised

again at his return. His raising from the dead shows us that even though all creation groans now, it also will be made new and restored to the glory it had before the fall (see Revelation 21).

When you see a glorious sight in the earth, remember that revealing the glory of the Creator.

When you see destruction in the earth – anything from a weed to a tornado – remember that one day Jesus will make all things new.

Creation does indeed reveal the glory of God both now and in the world to come. Enjoy God's creation and give praise to him for it.

Discussion Questions:

1. The "Gasp" Moment

The author describes being "stopped in [his] tracks" by the beauty of Glacier National Park. When was the last time you were "stopped in your tracks" and felt that kind of "holy awe" in nature? What specifically about that moment made you feel God's presence?

2. The Whole Earth is Full

Isaiah 6:3 says that "the whole earth is full of His glory." Even in a flat cornfield, majestic mountains or an expansive ocean shoreline, how can we train our eyes to see God's artistry in the "ordinary" parts of creation this week?

3. The Beauty and the Thorns

The devotional mentions that sin brought "thorns and thistles" into God's perfect harmony. When you look at the world today (natural disasters, decay, etc.), how do you see creation "groaning" as described in Romans 8? How does that brokenness affect your own spirit?

4. Creator vs. Creation

Romans 1 warns that humans often "exchange the glory of the immortal God" for created things. In our modern culture, what are some ways we accidentally worship the gift (nature, beauty, experiences) instead of the Giver?

5. The Promise of "New"

Jesus says in Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I am making all things new." Notice He doesn't say He is making "new things," but making "all things new." What is the difference, and why is that distinction so hopeful for us as we deal with aging, loss, or brokenness?

6. Our Response Today

The reading suggests that when we see a weed or a tornado, we should remember that Jesus is a restorer. How can we practically hold onto hope when we see "destruction in the earth" this week? How can we represent that "new life" to the people around us?

Closing Prayer:

Ask the group to spend a moment in silence. Have everyone think of one specific area of their life—or one specific part of the world—that feels like it is "groaning" right now. Then, close by thanking God that He is the Master Artist who is currently in the process of making all things new.

WEEK 3:

GOD'S GLORY REVEALED IN HIS WORD

WATCH: [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/1178621092?SHARE=COPY](https://vimeo.com/1178621092?SHARE=COPY)

Reading:

Just the other week I was able to view some of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These were discovered in 1947 in a cave near the Dead Sea in Israel, and they contained multiple manuscripts of Old Testament scripture and other writings dating back nearly 2000 years. It was one of the most significant biblical archeological discoveries in history. As these ancient texts were studied and translated, what was discovered was that the scriptures we read today in our modern bibles match what the scrolls contained all those years ago. The durability of God's word is undeniable.

The old testament prophet Isaiah writes, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." - Isaiah 40:8

This durability...this longevity...this faithful and unchanging word reveals to us the glory of God. God has promised that when he speaks, what he says will stand for all time and can be counted on as faithful and true. Isaiah again writes:

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." - Isaiah 55:10-11

Jesus, God the Son, spoke the very words of God as he only said what the Father told him to say (John 12:49-50). This is why the teachings of Jesus are true and life changing. His words provide the only true and firm foundation for life. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, Jesus says:

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." - Matthew 7:24

The people who heard Jesus teach recognized that his words - his teaching - were different than anyone else they had ever heard. As Jesus taught, the promise from Isaiah 55:10-11 was coming true, as hope and faith were watering dry and desperate souls and making new life to sprout and grow. Read the people's response to Jesus:

"And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes." - Matthew 7:28-29

When you slow down to read the bible, you are reading the actual words of God given to us! Think about how incredibly wonderful and important that is. The word "glory" in both Hebrew and Greek (the main languages the bible was originally written in) literally means "weight." It holds the connotation that something is of utmost importance and holds the highest value. These words were inspired by the Holy Spirit - literally "breathed out" by God (2 Timothy 3:16) - and recorded for you and me, that our lives may be built on the solid rock of Jesus and that we may grow to become like Jesus and accomplish the calling that God has for each and every one of us. What a glorious thought!

Each time you open your bible, remember that you are reading the very words of God and are experiencing his glory. Each time you go read your bible, try praying this Psalm and see what God reveals to you:

“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.” – Psalm 119:18

Discussion Questions:

1. The “Rock” of Reliability

The author mentions that the Dead Sea Scrolls prove our modern Bibles match what was written 2,000 years ago. How does knowing the historical and archaeological reliability of the Bible change the way you feel when you read it? Does it make it easier to trust its promises? Why or why not?

2. Withered Grass vs. Eternal Word

Isaiah 40:8 contrasts the “withering grass” with the “standing word.” In a world where trends, technology, and even our own feelings change so rapidly, what is one “fading” thing you’ve been tempted to rely on lately instead of God’s unchanging Word?

3. The Purpose of the Rain

Isaiah 55:10–11 compares God’s Word to rain that “waters the earth” to make things grow. Can you share a time in your life when a specific verse or teaching from the Bible “watered your soul” during a dry or desperate season? What “new life” sprouted from that?

4. Hearing vs. Doing

Jesus tells the parable of the wise man who builds his house on the rock (Matthew 7:24), but He defines the wise man as the one who both hears and does His words. Why is it so much easier to be “astonished” by the teaching (vs. 28) than it is to actually put it into practice on a Tuesday morning?

5. The “Weight” of Glory

The devotional explains that “glory” literally means “weight” or “importance.” If we treated the Bible as the “weightiest” thing in our lives—above our phones, the news, or the opinions of others—how would our daily schedules or stress levels look different?

6. Opening Our Eyes

Psalm 119:18 is a prayer for God to “open my eyes” to see wondrous things. As you look at the week ahead, what is one “wondrous thing” or specific area of guidance you are asking God to reveal to you through His Word?

Practical Application Tip

The “Breath” Test: Since 2 Timothy 3:16 says Scripture is “God-breathed,” try a new approach to your devotions this week. Before you read, take three deep breaths. On the inhale, thank God for the life He gives; on the exhale, ask Him to breathe His truth into your specific situation.

WEEK 4:

GOD'S GLORY REVEALED IN MORAL AUTHORITY

WATCH: [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/1179030317?SHARE=COPY](https://vimeo.com/1179030317?SHARE=COPY)

Reading:

If we could say one thing about our current society, it's that we are dealing with some deep divisions. These divisions are not the normal experience of people from different cultures learning to live and work together, or even differences of preference when it comes to what sports team you like. The divisions we face today are deeply rooted in ideological perspectives; and instead of people being either "a little right of center" or "a little left of center," people are finding themselves more and more on the polar ends of the spectrum. While this is not the place to begin to dissect the myriad of factors that go into this, there is one idea that is common across these spectrums of ideas:

Everyone thinks they are right.

People will fight, argue and debate whatever issue is on the table because they believe that their position is the right position. The more this fighting happens, the bigger the divide becomes and ultimately, people stop listening to each other. This has caused friendships to end, families to divide and nations to be at war with each other and with itself. This echoes a Proverb that is actually appears twice:

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25

This proverb exposes the natural limitations of humans. We think we know what is right, but try as we may, we have way too much pride and self-interest to truly be able to always know and do what is right. What we need is someone who is truly, purely and always good to define what is right, and what is wrong.

An interaction between Jesus and a person described as a "rich young man" in three of the gospel accounts. The man confronts Jesus with the question of what "good things" he needs to do to have eternal life. Jesus' response provides the man, and us, the baseline for knowing what is good:

"And he said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.'" - Matthew 19:17 (cf. Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:19).

Jesus is clearly talking about God the Father being the only one who is truly, purely and always good. The commandments that God has put into place that we find in scripture are purposed to not just give us guidelines on how to make God happy, but to actually experience life and relationships in the way that he has designed so life is full of joy, meaning and peace. Read what the psalmist David wrote regarding God's commandments:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing they heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether." Psalm 19:7-9

So when we read the laws, commands and rules of the Lord, we must remember that they are not there to constrict our lives in negative ways, but they are there to lead us to free our lives from the restrictions this world puts on us. God's ways revive us, bring wisdom, cause us to rejoice, enlighten our understanding and provide a solid, enduring foundation on which to live. This is where we get to experience the glory of God! To understand that he has revealed his glory to us through his decrees is something to celebrate and give thanks for. The Apostle John writes:

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome." 1 John 5:3

You don't need to feel the pressure to choose sides to any human ideology or philosophy. You can enjoy your preferences and not allow them to cause division with others. Through a saving relationship with Jesus and by the leading of the Holy Spirit, you can joyfully submit yourself to the only One who is truly good and the commandments that He was given for your flourishing. And when you do that, you experience God's glory being revealed in your life.

Discussion Questions:

1. The "Rightness" Trap

The author notes that "everyone thinks they are right," which often leads to people stopping listening to one another. Have you ever been in a situation where being "right" became more important than the relationship? How did that impact your ability to show the love of Christ?

2. The Danger of "Seems Right"

Proverbs 14:12 warns that a way can "seem right to a man," but lead to death. Why is our own intuition or "gut feeling" sometimes a dangerous guide when it comes to morality or big life decisions?

3. The Source of Goodness

In Matthew 19:16-17 when Jesus says, "There is only one who is good," He redirects the rich young man's focus from "good works" to a "Good God." How does focusing on God's goodness—rather than our own performance—change the way we view our mistakes and failures?

4. Restrictions vs. Revival

The devotional suggests that God's laws aren't meant to constrict us, but to "revive the soul" (Psalm 19:7). Can you share an example of a biblical boundary or command that actually brought you more freedom or joy once you followed it?

5. Breaking the Polarizing Cycle

The author states we don't need to feel pressured to choose sides in human ideologies. In a culture that demands we "pick a team" on every issue, how can we stay grounded in God's truth without becoming cold or divisive toward those who disagree with us?

6. Not a Burden

1 John 5:3 says God's commandments "are not burdensome." If you currently feel like following God's Word is a heavy "chore" rather than a delight, what is one truth from this devotional (or a verse from Psalm 19) that could help shift your perspective this week?

A Closing Perspective

Think of it this way: A train is most "free" when it stays on the tracks. If it leaves the tracks to go "wherever it wants," it becomes stuck and broken. God's commandments aren't a cage; they are the tracks that allow our lives to move forward with power and purpose.

WEEK 5:

GOD'S GLORY REVEALED IN THE CROSS

WATCH: [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/1179764634?SHARE=COPY](https://vimeo.com/1179764634?SHARE=COPY)

Reading:

The Winter Olympics happened this past February. Nearly 2900 athletes from around the world participated, all with the ambition to win a gold medal. These athletes dedicate every moment of their lives to train for their sport. Their diet, sleep, work outs and skills are precisely and purposefully developed over the course of months and years to put them in the optimum condition and ability to compete at the highest level possible. To get to the gold medal match, they must first win all of the qualifying events necessary just to get to the Olympics, and then once they are there, they must win or place in the heats or games to actually get to the gold medal match. When that moment happens, it is the culmination of all of their focus and efforts. Their hour has come.

This phrase, "the hour has come" communicates that the sole purpose of a long term goal has finally arrived. We see Jesus use this phrase often. Whenever Jesus uses some variation of the phrase "my hour" he is specifically talking about the cross. What he accomplished on the cross - once and for all paying the penalty for mankind's sin, satisfying the wrath of God toward sin, and creating the only way for mankind to be born again and have eternal life with the Father - was the only reason that he came to earth. Read what Jesus himself says about his purpose and his "hour":

"Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." - John 12:27-28

"When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.""

Jesus reveals something incredible in these passages: the cross both reveals the glory of God and glorifies God. Why is that? If you think back to our first devotional of this week, we talked about how glorious the heavens are. But as glorious as they are, they are only the work of God's fingers. It is his work of deliverance and salvation that is the work of his strong right arm.

The cross reveals the glory of God more than anything else. The cross - what once was a symbol of fear, torture, shame, punishment and death - is now the ultimate symbol of God's glory. The cross is the place where God's perfect love and perfect justice met. The cross is where the penalty of our sin was paid, the regeneration of souls and our restoration back to the Father began.

Read what the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatian church regarding the cross and God's glory:

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." - Galatians 1:3-5

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." - Galatians 6:14 (KJV)

As you reflect on the cross of Christ today, allow the reality of Jesus' sole purpose of accomplishing God's plan of salvation to inhabit your mind and your spirit. Like the apostle Paul, may the reality of the purpose of the cross in your life be the only thing you truly boast and "glory" in. And may this reality cause you to burst forth in worship, joining the whole host of heaven:

"Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

"To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" - Revelation 5:11-13

Discussion Questions:

1. The "Olympic" Focus

The author describes how athletes build their entire lives—diet, sleep, and training—around a single goal. If someone looked at your "training" (your daily habits and schedule), what would they say is the "Gold Medal" or primary goal you are currently living for?

2. Understanding "The Hour"

Jesus said, "For this purpose I have come to this hour" (John 12:27). How does it change your view of the cross to realize it wasn't a tragic accident or a plan gone wrong, but the very reason Jesus was born?

3. The Beauty of the "Strong Arm"

Think back to our first week together. This devotional also contrasts the "work of God's fingers" (the stars) with the "work of His strong right arm" (our salvation). Why is the act of forgiving and restoring a human soul "harder" or more glorious than creating a galaxy? How hard is it for you to extend forgiveness to people?

4. Justice Meets Love

The text states that the cross is where "God's perfect love and perfect justice met."

If God were only just, what would happen to us?

If God were only loving (without justice), would sin truly matter?

How does the cross solve this dilemma?

5. Boasting in the Cross

In Galatians 6:14, Paul says he will "glory" (or boast) in nothing except the cross. In our culture, people "glory" in their status, their kids, their careers, or their political views. What are you tempted to "glory" in other than the cross? What does it practically look like to "glory in the cross" in your everyday conversations?

6. A Symphony of Praise

Read Revelation 5:11-13 aloud together. The devotional ends with this vision of "every creature" giving glory to the Lamb. How can we make our small group or our individual lives a "rehearsal" for this eternal song of worship this week?

A Closing Thought for the Group

The Transformation of the Cross: Think about how radical this is—the cross was a Roman tool of execution, meant to symbolize the ultimate "low" of a person's life. Through Jesus, it became the ultimate "high." If God can turn a cross into a symbol of glory, what "low" point in your life might He be working to transform right now?

WEEK 6:

GOD'S GLORY REVEALED IN MANKIND

WATCH: [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/1180028697?SHARE=COPY](https://vimeo.com/1180028697?SHARE=COPY)

Reading:

Since we're made in God's image, why don't we "feel" more glorious?
Why aren't more of our lives filled with glorious things like peace, love, unity and joy?
Why do we have so much anxiety, conflict, struggle and disappointment?

Genesis 1 & 2 tell us of our original intended design as image-bearers of God. But then Genesis 3 happened. God's enemy – Satan – deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve chose to believe Satan instead of God. They bought the lie that they could be "like God" (Genesis 3:5), and they took part in the one thing that they were instructed not to do.

Here's the tragedy of it all: they were already "like God." Genesis 1:26 says "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'"

The enemy twisted that truth. He led Adam and Eve to believe that being "like" God (ie, reflecting God's image and character) wasn't enough. They were tempted to believe that they should be equal to God – that they should be able to determine what is right and what is wrong, be in control and fully autonomous, apart from their Creator.

Their decisions led to horrific consequences. Their desire for autonomy led to their disobedience. This is called sin. And now sin became a part of them – like a spiritual cancer. Sin caused the intimate relational connection with God to be severed. Instead of feeling loved by God, they were afraid of God. Instead of feeling secure and confident in themselves as beloved children of God, they were filled with shame. Instead of feeling accepted and being vulnerable, they were driven to protect themselves and hide their true selves. Sin also caused them to be in conflict with each other, where there once was peace. And if that wasn't bad enough, the effects of sin rippled throughout all of creation. Harmony became havoc. Again, the consequences were horrific.

If you have experienced any of these consequences – shame, relational conflict, the driving need to protect yourself, the havoc of destruction we see in the world – you have felt and experienced sin in yourselves and in the world. And the sobering truth is that you are not just a victim, subject to Adam and Eve's choices thousands of years ago; you are also responsible. You and I both, in small and big ways, make choices to be our own God; to do what we think is right and ignore and defy our Creator. Because of Adam, we are born in this sinful condition and willfully make sinful choices.

Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."

Sin causes death. And death is being severed from our good, loving Creator God. We continually live in the consequences of sin, devoid of hope.

Romans 3:23 says "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." This is why we do not feel or experience the glory of God that we were intended for.

But even in our rebellion, disobedience and sinful condition, God loves us. He made a way to not just reconnect us to Him, but be renewed and reborn. He made a way for us to experience

the crown of glory we were originally designed for. God's first promise to make things right came immediately after the fall (Genesis 3:15) and even in the wake of their sinful choices, God caringly covered them so they didn't have to feel shame and hide (Genesis 3:21).

The apex of God's plan to save and restore His creation happened when He sent Jesus, God the Son, to live the life sin keeps us from living, die the death that sin deserves and rise from the grave, forever defeating sin and death. When we put our faith in Jesus, we find salvation from sin, are spiritually reborn, restored into our position and relationship with God. Read these incredible, hope-filled verses from Romans 5:

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God...God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us...Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men...so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:1,2,8,18,21).

Easter is the culmination of God's plan for our restoration. God's perfect love for His creation and perfect justice against sin perfectly meet at the cross. The destruction that happened when Adam & Eve rebelled was undone by Jesus.

How do you regain this glory that you were designed for and live in the grace of God's love? First, you need to recognize your sin and rebellion against God. Second, you need to repent of your sin. This means you willfully turn away from doing things your way and turn back toward God's good and perfect way. Third, you must believe in Jesus; that Jesus is God and that His death and resurrection is your only hope for restoration and eternal life. Lastly, your belief in Jesus is evidenced by you following Jesus as Lord in your daily lives; living in His grace, telling others about Him and ordering your daily decisions according to God's design and decrees. When you order your heart and life like this, you can experience the glory of God in your life as He intended.

Discussion Questions:

1. The "Already" vs. The "More"

The author points out that Adam and Eve were tempted to become "like God," even though they were already made in His image. In what areas of your life do you struggle with "not being enough," and how does the truth that you are already an image-bearer of God change that feeling?

2. Autonomy vs. Intimacy

The devotional defines sin as the desire for autonomy—wanting to determine right and wrong for ourselves apart from our Creator. Why is "being our own boss" so appealing, and what are the specific "horrific consequences" you've seen it produce in modern life?

3. The Armor of Shame

When sin entered the world, the "vulnerability and acceptance" of the Garden was replaced by a need to hide and protect ourselves. Where do you find yourself "hiding" or "protecting your true self" most often today (e.g., at work, in social media, even in church)?

4. Victim vs. Responsible

The text notes that we aren't just "victims" of Adam's choice, but we are "responsible" for our own willful choices to ignore God. Why is it important for us to acknowledge our own responsibility in sin before we can truly experience God's grace?

5. The Grace Stand

Read Romans 5:1-2 aloud. It says we have obtained access to a "grace in which we stand." What is the difference between trying to earn God's favor and standing in His grace? How would your stress levels change this week if you truly believed you were "standing in grace"?

6. Ordering the Heart

The author concludes that we experience God's glory when we "order our hearts and lives" according to His design. What is one practical area of your life (your time, your finances, your speech, or your relationships) that you want to "re-order" this week to align more with Jesus' leadership?

A Closing Visual

The Restored Masterpiece: Imagine a priceless painting that has been vandalized and covered in soot. The "glory" of the artist is still there, but it's hidden. When we put our faith in Jesus, He doesn't just give us a new painting; He begins the meticulous work of cleaning off the "soot" of sin to reveal the original masterpiece He intended you to be.





CALVARY
CHURCH

