

DEUTERONOMY 8:10-14 When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹ Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. ¹² Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

DEUTERONOMY 8:17-18 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." ¹⁸ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

ECCLESIASTES 5:19-20 When God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. ²⁰ They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.

1. What happens when we consider ourselves to be the source of our success and well-being?
2. What are some of God's gifts that we tend to take for granted?
3. What are some of God's gifts that we tend to make larger than life?
4. What happens when we treasure God's gifts more than we do God himself?
5. In light of the fact that everything we have comes from God, how should we view our material possessions?



My grandfather was the most creative person I've ever known. He was a child of necessity. He grew up poor, but he also grew up on a farm with a blacksmith shop. He learned how to work the forge. He would bend steel and shape wood into plows, cycles, and planters. I am convinced that many of the tools in grandad's shop were his invention. He never found a task so difficult that he could not fashion a tool to complete it.

He built his own house. He designed and constructed solar panels before solar panels were even a thing. When we visited in the summer, we would bring a long list of projects and spend endless hours working on them together in his shop.

We loved sleeping in his old camper. One he found behind an old barn and brought back to life. He would tuck us in with epic stories he made up as he went along. He was a great storyteller. All of his characters came to life. He described the setting with meticulous detail. You could imagine the cascading waters, feel the cold in the air, and hear the twigs snap as people crept through the woods under cover of night.

A visit with grandpa was the best adventure a little boy could hope for.

For all grandad's creativity, though, he was simply borrowing from the world he lived in. One tool became the inspiration for the next. One scene in the story created space for the story to unfold in a hundred different directions. Grandad never created anything from nothing. Nor did his imagination encompass everything that would ever come into being.

He was simply availing himself of the raw materials, creativity, and imagination his Creator placed in his hands. When it comes to creativity, God is in a category by himself. He is Creator. Everything else is creation.

To know God as Creator dramatically shapes the way we think about and respond to him.

GOD IS OVER AND ABOVE CREATION

The Bible envisions a God who is high above us, yet intimately engaged with us. He is beyond our reach, yet near as our breath. He is not bound by creation, yet he works in and through creation to accomplish his purposes.

PSALM 113:4-6: The Lord is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens. ⁵ Who is like the Lord our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, ⁶ who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?

ISAIAH 57:15: For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

1. Why is it a comfort to know that God is far above all creation, and cannot be contained within creation?
2. Why is it a comfort to know that he is, “also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite?”
3. How should we respond to God’s transcendence?
4. How should we respond to his immanence?

GOD IS INDEPENDENT OF CREATION

God does not create out of necessity, but out of delight. He does not need us or anything else in creation. He lives in perfect unity as Father, Son, and Spirit. He was, is, and always will be complete in and of himself. Yet in the mystery of God’s grace, he has chosen to enjoy and delight in us, as we find our ultimate joy and delight in him.

ACTS 17:24–25: The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

PSALM 50:7, 9–12: Listen, my people, and I will speak... ⁹ I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, ¹⁰ for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine. ¹² If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it.

JOHN 17:5: And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began... ²⁴ Father, I want those you have given

me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

ZEPHANIAH 3:17 (ESV): The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

ISAIAH 62:4-5: For the Lord will take delight in you... as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

1. Why is it essential for us to know that God does not need us to be happy or complete?
2. Describe the union that God has as Father, Son, and Spirit?
3. How is God complete in and of himself?
4. How does it feel knowing that God has invited us to share his glory even though we add nothing to his glory?
5. What are some of the images that the Bible uses to describe God’s delight in us?
6. Which of these images is most meaningful to you? Why?
7. How should we respond to a God who, though he does not need us, chooses to rejoice over us with singing?

CREATION DESPERATELY DEPENDS ON GOD

While God does not depend on creation, creation desperately depends on him. The air we breathe, the food we eat, the homes we live in, the friends we enjoy, the family we cherish, the dignity we possess, the knowledge we gain, the ingenuity we display, the small things that bring us delight are all gifts from God.

ACTS 17:24–25, 28: The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else... ²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’

COLOSSIANS 1:15–17: The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.