

THE GLORY OF GOD AROUND US

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:20, NIV)

LAST FRIDAY, WE CONSIDERED THE GLORY OF GOD IN YOU. It was an amazing recognition that what God does greatly, he does in us. Sometimes, though, this can be hard to see. After all, we are pretty good at identifying our weaknesses and picking them apart—and this isn't true only for golfers.

What may be important, then, is to gain a sense of just how big God is (and how "small"), for when you see the breadth of God's glorious presence in the world around you, you may gain greater eyes to see what he has in mind for you.

I have often asked myself the question of what followers of Jesus are supposed to do with vacations. Many of us choose to visit spectacular man-made sites, from the Main Street of Disneyland to the Champs-Élysées, from Seattle's Space Needle to Sydney's Opera House. But shouldn't believers be spending their money on short-term missions trips or Bible-rich conferences? Sometimes, yes. But I also respect the thinking of one well-known pastor who encouraged his people to get to where the glory is. His thinking followed these lines:

You need to get to places that overwhelm you. You need to stand on the edge of the Grand Canyon and feel small. You need to stand on top of Pikes Peak and let the wind tear through your clothes. You need to sink your feet into the Pacific and look as far as the eye can see and recognize that what it sees is one vast expanse—the ocean—meeting another vast expanse—the sky—from one end of the horizon to the other.

In places like this, God is big—far bigger than man. And this is something our eyes need to see and our heart needs to process.

But it may be equally helpful to see how "small" God is. Pulitzer Prize winner Annie Dillard, who wrote that in a mere teaspoonful of forest topsoil, microbiologists estimate our finding "up to two billion bacteria and many millions of fungi, protozoa and algae."

See, the God to whom we look, the God who professes to love us, shows his glory in the magnificent and the minute. No wonder his glory can elevate even us!

Opening questions Where is the most beautiful place you've ever been? What captivated you about it? Would you say that you were moved to worship God there?

READING Psalm 8; Psalm 23; Luke 6:12; Luke 8:22-25

The Lord of nature and of us

What kind of questions did the glory of God's creation produce in David in Psalm 8? What conclusions did he make about the role God had for humanity in spite of our relative smallness?

The pastures and the valley

In Psalm 23, David wrote of the Lord's leading. Describe how God does this and consider how this assures us that we can count on him.

Jesus and the wilds

What authority did Jesus have over the wilds of nature? At the same time, how did he employ the quiet places to separate himself from the distractions of civilization? How might you follow his example in your own discipleship?

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