



In the beginning God created the heavens
and the earth.

—Genesis 1:1

WEEK 3

Perspective— A Picture of Harmony

Guide: The World as It's Meant to Be

After two weeks of reviewing our story, and seeing it as a story of God's faithful presence in our lives, we move now to look at the bigger picture.

This week we want to reflect on, and be inspired by, God's creative desire for us as part of the whole of creation.

St. Ignatius of Loyola put it so simply:

God created us

to praise, reverence, and serve God

and in this way to save our souls.

God created all of the rest of creation

to help us achieve the purpose for which

God created us.

Let's let the background of this whole week be two wonderful imaginative reflections:

- To simply walk around, doing all that I do each day, more and more conscious of why I was created:
 - To give praise to God.
 - To revere God: to grow in awe and love for God.
 - To be of service: in God's service.
- To *notice* the rest of creation more consciously, and how all that I notice is intended by God to help me—it is all created for me.

Again, this is about *gratitude*. We want to *appreciate*, to become more *sensitive to* and more *aware of* something about God: God has an intense desire to help us achieve the end for which God lovingly created us. So, by our thinking and watching this week we are coming to know God better.

Again, make use of the helps provided for this week. Let the photo draw us into wonder and awe and a sense of God's plan for us. Let's try to begin and end each day this week with openness and delight in all that God intensely desires to show us.

Some Practical Help for Getting Started This Week

For Week 3, our perspective changes. Notice the dramatic view in this week's photo. It gives us a picture of how to get started with this week.

It's about *perspective*. This week, we will try to step back and see the whole view of ourselves in creation. So, throughout the week, let that picture of an expanding view of our world help us with perspective. This week, try not to let anything become *too big* and mess up our perspective.

It's about *purpose*. Concrete focusing can help greatly. Throughout the week, think of what things are *for*. We know

what our coffee cup is for, what the toaster is for, what paper clips are for, what the telephone is for. As we consciously focus on the purpose that everything in our lives has, we will gradually feel the growing power of the words of Ignatius. It's all here for the purpose of helping me attain the end for which I was created.

Remember what we are *practicing*. We want to grow in the ability to find, see, experience, some connection with God *in all things*—and right in the midst of our busyness. So, we keep focused on practicing the use of the *background* times each day. Perhaps this week I can especially focus on *going to places*. So, on the way—to a meeting, to the restroom, to my lunch, to my car—I will consciously reflect on my *purpose*. *With practice*, I can situate myself, in a brief few moments, on that overview site from the photo. En route to the restroom, in my mind I'll be sitting on one of those chairs and looking out, thinking, *I was created, as part of this whole vast creation, for the one purpose of praising, reverencing, and serving you, Lord.*

Remember the other helps *from past weeks*. Naming graces is important. Saying *thank you* is critical. Try to *say it*—what is it that I'm receiving this week? "Lord, thank you for showing me the big picture." "Lord, thank you for reminding me about your desires for me."

Remember *our bodies*. What *posture* best says what I want to express? For example, I may imagine myself *standing* on that overlook in the photo and *raising my arms up* in praise. Then, perhaps, when I get out of bed and when I am ready to get into bed, I can raise my arms in praise that way, for only a moment. Or, maybe, as I look out over that vista, I imagine feeling drawn to kneel in awe before this God who is so much grander than I ever let God be. Perhaps I can kneel at the side of my bed for a brief moment. Or maybe I will imagine myself sitting on one of those chairs looking out at this creation, and I just open my hands on my lap, symbolizing my openness to be of service, as I am called. Then, perhaps, when I begin work

each day, I might lay my open hands on my desk, or kitchen counter, for just a moment. These are powerful gestures that help us *interiorize* what we are expressing with our bodies—and they take only a few moments.

Remember to make use of the readings and prayers.

We are just beginning to see what God can do with our openness and trust.

For the Journey: The Foundation

A basement, or the basis or base of a building, is also the foundation of that building. In the Spiritual Exercises Ignatius begins with a most basic foundational statement. It is a simple formula but not always easy to accept. “Human beings are created.” Each one of us is always being created by God’s grace and the experiences that come from living our lives each day.

One of the more difficult factors to accept in being created is that we are limited; we have actual limitations of all kinds. We have age, size, abilities, personality, and gifts, but they are all limited by our not being God. We are who and what we are by God’s creative love. Ignatius begins where we wish we might get to in time and with God’s care.

Why we are being created is the second major section of this “basement platform.” Ignatius was aware of the many answers humanity had proposed for this huge question. He had accepted that there is a God and that he is, and we are, creatures, but now the next big question had to be solved. How he answered these big questions and how we are invited to answer them determined the style of his life and will fashion ours. For Ignatius the answers to these big questions were simple, but it was far from easy to live them. With our limited selves, we are created to praise God for who God is as infinite Creator, and for creating each of us with these sometimes-hard-to-accept limitations. We are created as well to serve this creating God with and through the gifts we have been given—of course, through and with these same limitations.

No gift is meant just for ourselves; instead, they are gifts from God to me and through me to God’s creating family.

The third aspect forming the major section of this basement is that, to serve in praise this God, we must reverence creation, which possesses God’s fingerprints. Reverencing God will become a way of living by our becoming aware of the very holy presence of God in all other creatures. The challenge in our prayer is to be freed to reverence our own limitations enough so that, in our life given to serve God, we gratefully allow those limitations to be public, yet prophetic.

In These or Similar Words . . .

Dear Lord,

Today as I reflect on the world around me, it feels like gratitude is the first thing that comes to my mind. In the retreat this week I am trying to simply *notice* my life, to really see all of the wonderful gifts of nature that cross my path. Coming to work this morning, I couldn’t help staring into an incredible sunrise through the cloudy sky. It created colors that were indescribable. A small tree in my yard is already turning colors, with bright red leaves that contrast with everything else that is still green. My tomato plants are still bearing fruit and the fall flowers are starting to line my sidewalk.

I see these as gifts to us—*us*—but I’m not sure I’ve ever really seen them as a gift from you to *me*. How can I fathom the depths of your love for me—that you have created each flower, each leaf, for my enjoyment? I’ll be honest, God. I usually don’t tune into this kind of thing. I just don’t always pay attention to the gifts of nature that are literally under my feet.

Now as I pray, as I pay attention, I am moved by the phrase in the prayer guide this week, “God has an intense desire to help us achieve the end for which God lovingly created us.” Could you really have a real desire for *my life*? For what

becomes of *me*, not just as one of the billions of people who inhabit this planet, but as an individual?

I look outside at nature and inside at the family and friends you surround me with and I am so thankful. Please, Lord, help me to fully express my gratitude to you for my life and for the way you care for me. Help me to see what your desire for my life really is. I want to make my life a way to serve you.

Scripture Readings

Ephesians 1:3–12

Psalm 138