

WEEK 5

TO READ IN THE BOOK:
CHAPTER 7, THE SHRINK DYNAMIC
CHAPTER 8, IN THE CENTER OF IT ALL

BIBLE STUDY: PSALM 145

It's easy to lament the smallness of our little kingdoms rather than reflect on the largeness and beauty of God's Kingdom. In v. 5, the psalmist says "I will meditate on your wonderful works." When you think about God's wonderful works, what comes to mind?

What feelings are stirred in you as you reflect on those works?

In v. 6, the Psalmist says "I will proclaim your great deeds." What 2-3 things has God done in your life or your world that you want to proclaim to the other people in your group?

The psalmist writes, "You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing" (v. 16). As you look back on your life, has God satisfied the desires of your heart? Which desires of your heart have not yet been satisfied by God?

BIG IDEAS SO FAR

Our lives were meant to connect with God's kingdom. That is, we were created in such a way that we will only flourish when we are devoted to the Kingdom of God. Illustration: a whale has a tremendous amount of power, beauty, and grace when it is swimming in the ocean. With a singular back and forth motion of its tail, the whale propels itself through water with power, beauty,

and grace. However, if the whale is in 3 feet of water—rather than 300 feet of water—the tail is unable to do what it was designed to do. We are like whales. When we are devoted to the Kingdom of God, our lives display a tremendous amount of power, beauty, and grace. We are swimming in 300 feet of water, as we were designed to. But when we are devoted to a smaller kingdom, we are like a whale in three feet of water—we may be striving furiously, but we don't accomplish much and only hurt ourselves in the process. This is because *we are not built to swim in 3 feet of water*. We have too much glory for such a small life.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM CHAPTERS 7 AND 8

The shrink dynamic means that, as a result of sin entering the world, we make our lives much smaller than they were designed to be.

Because Jesus Christ has conquered the power of sin in the world, we can turn away from living a small life and re-align our lives to the Larger Story God is writing in the world.

The first step in breaking free from the shrink dynamic is to see that God has given you a role to play in the Larger Story.

The paradox of being human is that if you focus on meeting your own needs, you'll never succeed. But if you focus on becoming the man or woman God created you to be and playing the role that God created you to play, then the desires of your heart will be satisfied.

To live for Christ is the only way to be freed from the confines of our little kingdoms and recapture the transcendence for which we were created. By following Jesus, we find our true humanity, purpose, and meaning.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHILE READING

When is the last time you meditated on God's greatness? What was it like?

How is reaching out to God for help (and to others) one way to experience your true glory and true humanity?

Identify areas this past week when sin shrank the size of your cares and concerns to the contours of your life.

What are some areas of your life where you would like to invite God to cut a hole in your shrink wrap and pull you back into living for his Kingdom?

How does living for Christ lead to transcendence, meaning, and purpose?

How does living for yourself actually rob you of your humanity?

When you are sitting at a stop light or brushing your teeth, what occupies your mind and fills your daydreams?

Place an X on each continuum where you think it best describes you. Most of my time, energy, and resources are focused on:

Satisfying my desires God's desires/needs of others

Physical appearance Spiritual growth

Protecting my rights/property Building the Kingdom of God