

The Fallen World

Re-Routing: God's Back Roads to Joy—part 5

May 19, 2019

Joy definition #5: Relaxed/Settled _____ / _____ dependence.

Route to Joy #5: The Fallen World

When we were young, we were naïve about the world and relationships. Life is tougher than we imagined, and that should not be surprising if we know the truth about what theologians call “the fallen world.” We find disappointments, hurts, frustrations and failures. But it's there we're most apt to hear God saying, “Re-Routing.”

DAY 1: The Garden of Eden

1. The creation of Adam and Eve was the apex of God's creation. He designed them for joy, the kind of joy natural in God. He wanted to share His joy, and for people to reflect that joy to others.

2. As you read through today's verses, underline words and phrases that hint at the joy God had of creating Adam and Eve, and providing them everything imaginable for their joy!

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." ²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.

³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground--everything that has the breath of life in it--I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

Genesis 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.

3. What did you sense about God's joy in creating Adam and Eve and providing them everything they would need and could enjoy?

4. This is how God would like us to experience Him. However, our sin nature makes a tremendous mess of things. How can God overcome our sin nature to bring us to a place where we want to know God and enjoy Him, and therein enjoy relationships?

DAY 2: The exit: east of Eden

1. After Adam and Eve sinned against God it would be impossible for them to continue to live in the Garden of Eden. Here's what happened next.

Genesis 3:21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

²² And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."

²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

2. Why did God banish Adam and Eve from Eden?

3. It would be impossible for Adam and Eve forever with a sin nature. They would "live" with an ever decreasing sense of joy, and an ever increasing sense of self-centeredness, demandingness, entitlement and would eventually destroy each other. No amount of blessings in Eden would or could ever change their sin nature.

4. Notice v. 24. Rich imagery is used to describe the exit and impossibility of making this world Eden again. What do each of the particulars say to you?

a. "He drove them out" –

b. Cherubim (mighty angelic warriors) were stationed as guards –

c. A flaming sword flashing back and forth -

d. "...to guard the way to the tree of life" -

5. Their "world" changed drastically. No longer was it a perfect Garden of Eden. The world as we know it is not heaven. It is not meant to be heaven. Theologians call the world we live in a "fallen world." The world in which they would now live, and the world we live in is hard. It is the perfect world in which hard hearts can be broken, and made whole!

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Our fallen world

1. Secular man assumes this world should be heaven, or close to heaven. It takes a tremendous amount of denial to continue to believe that. That's one reason why so many secular people become more cynical as they age (and why the suicide rate goes up).

2. The bible makes a clear distinction between three worlds:

a. Heaven – the perfect world where God's people, saved by grace, will enjoy forever, after this life.

b. Hell – the dysfunctional world where people who insisted on running their lives, “being in control,” and having their way in this world will “have their way” in hell, forever.

c. Our fallen world – The world that both (1) entices us with what heaven will be like and (2) gives us warnings of what hell will be like.

3. Paul gives us some pictures of this fallen world.

Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

4. Paul begins by comparing this present world (our fallen world) with heaven. What does he say about both?

Romans 8:20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ...

5. Paul describes our fallen world. What do we learn from v. 20?

Romans 8:21 ... that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

6. In the first part of v. 21, Paul describes our fallen world. How?

7. Paul sees a day when we can “be liberated from its bondage to decay...” What does he mean?

8. What does he say will happen with His people, the children of God?

9. What is your real “expectation” of how this world is supposed to be?

10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: A redemptive fall needed

1. The fallen world in which we live includes natural disasters, disease, and flawed human nature.
2. Why do things break? Not work? Why does the transmission on my car go out? Why does my roof leak? I get so tired of all these problems!
3. We are very committed to our way, to seeing ourselves in the most positive light, to believing that we deserve better. We are intentionally blind to our sin nature. As long as nothing “big” comes our way, we will continue to live with “self” at the center of our life and relationships. Living that way is the path to misery and personal and relational destruction.

Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

4. Jesus puts two choices in front of every human being. Describe each choice:

- a. The broad road and the wide gate -

- b. The narrow road and the narrow and small gate –

5. We are heading toward hell in eternity, and for misery in this life unless something shakes us out of our selves. What can God do? Here’s how C. S. Lewis put it.

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” C. S. Lewis

6. In the following verses underline how God describes the human heart.

Zechariah 7:12 They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry.

Jeremiah 17:9 (RSV) The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?

Ecclesiastes 8:11 (RSV) Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil.

Exodus 32:9 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people.

Genesis 6:5 (RSV) The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: God, who break hearts of stone, and makes hearts of flesh

1. The fallen world is just the kind of world we need if we have any chance of having our hard hearts broken and made new!

2. And this is the gospel purpose!

3. Under each of the next verses, jot down your thoughts.

Psalm 114:8 (God) Who turns the rock into a pool, the hard rock into springs of water.

Hosea 10:2 (RSV) Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt. The LORD will break down their altars, and destroy their pillars.

Ezekiel 11:19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give the m a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

4. When our stony hearts break, and we humbly come to God in delightful dependence on Him we will experience a different kind of joy, what we're calling "Joy #5."

Matthew 18:3 (RSV) "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

John 15:11 (RSV) These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

John 16:20 Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.

5. What has struck you from this week's devotionals?