



In a Perfect World Worship Series

In this series, we're going to explore our unrelenting pursuit of perfection. The desire to be perfect traps and burdens all of us. It leaves us stressed, anxious, leaves us with unrealistic expectations and often creates havoc in our relationships. We are raised to believe pursuing perfection is a good thing, but, the truth is, if we dig a little deeper we find that the pursuit of perfection makes little sense. And, believe it or not - contrary to popular religions - the pursuit of perfection is the opposite of the life God intended for us.

The pursuit of perfection suggests that if we work hard enough we can reach a state of flawlessness - that we really can reach a level of excellence that cannot be exceeded. Now, seeking perfection at a particular task might be achievable - your son or daughter may strive to attain a perfect grade, you can hope to bowl 300 or produce a perfect report at work. Yet, the goal of being perfect *in life* is altogether a different story. A machine or electronic device may operate perfectly - at least for a while. Humans, however, were never intended to be perfect. That's part of the definition of being human. How many times have you used the phrase, "Hey, I'm just human."

In our culture, we're so driven by achievement and attaining goals we rarely pause to question if our focus reflects our values. For example, we ask our children what their grade was, not what they learned. We tend to measure our lives in terms of success, attainment and achievement, but rarely wonder: What does it mean to live well?

Consider this image: You see a magnificent rainbow across the sky. But, noticing that the width of one color was imperfect because it was narrower than the other colors,

you start to complain. That would be ridiculous, and yet that is exactly what we do when we judge ourselves for our imperfections.

Series Graphics:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/86rbxgbal7j3ew59m2vib/h?dl=0&rlkey=jat8bdpr6gw4dqzbe72hvcppi>

Week 1: We're all a mess

Week 2: Am I Good Enough for Heaven?

Week 3: The Comparison Trap

Week 4: How Good is Good Enough?

Articles:

- Book: *I Thought It Was Just Me (But It Isn't)*, by Brene Brown
- <https://faithgateway.com/blogs/christian-books/perfectionism-stunts-childrens-growth>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/shift-mind/201105/the-problem-perfection>
- https://www.economist.com/1843/2021/08/10/the-perfectionism-trap?utm_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm_source=google&ppccampaignID=17210591673&ppcadID=&utm_campaign=a.22brand_pmax&utm_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gclid=CjwKCAjwkeqkBhAnEiwA5U-uM7VMIMKOnCe27D14qwZIGaY7_bUNKAfij5bkqsAU3flFw2ZjTzI6cBoChUEQAvD_BwE&gclidsrc=aw.ds
- <https://melschwartz.com/the-problem-with-perfection/>
- <https://hbr.org/2011/08/the-problem-with-perfection>
- <https://www.lse.ac.uk/research/research-for-the-world/health/over-stressed-and-under-pressure-the-problem-with-being-perfect>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/5-problems-perfection-aishwarya-sinha-ray>
- <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20180219-toxic-perfectionism-is-on-the-rise>

Week 1: We're all a hot mess

Romans 3:9-10,19-20

John 3:16-17

Here's a link to Hans' message:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/17Y_S-caSRZn4wqyagPrDGkmbD6xa0KJI5rdjI0kP_wg/edit?usp=sharing

We all want our kids to succeed. Your parents wanted you to be successful and their parents wanted them to have a better life than they had. We all want this. So, we do whatever it takes to give our kids "every opportunity in life." We push them to be the captain of the hockey team and valedictorian of

their class. We help them get into that program or college that will ensure them the biggest paycheck. We push them to be perfect.

The problem is: God never asked us to raise perfect children. But, isn't that what we do? From the moment we come into this world we are surrounded by images and lessons and voices that set us on a lifelong pursuit of perfection. The truth is: The pursuit of perfection can actually have a detrimental effect on us, our mental health, on our relationships and our future.

That's why God only asks us to do one thing when it comes to our children: Wrap them up in my love. We see this in the example of Jesus. Children had little or no rights in that ancient world - what example did Jesus give us? What alternative to the pursuit of perfection do we find in Jesus.

Week 2: Am I Good Enough for Heaven?

John 3:16-17

Romans 3:10, 19-20

Here's a link to Hans' message:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_iRVj_CaRkfG2AmZyJxXa6d935JtAzr12CX6zrRzA04/edit?usp=sharing

Most Americans believe in heaven. Most Americans believe in some sort of afterlife. And, most of us believe we're going there. And the two assumptions that fuel this confidence that most Americans have: 1) Good people go to heaven, and 2) "I'm a good person."

The belief is this: "Good people go to heaven." If I live the right kind of life - which I have - I'm going to heaven.

Well, the truth is: This sounds nice on the surface. But it doesn't make sense - especially when you set this idea next to what Jesus had to say.

Week 3: The Comparison Trap

Galatians 4:4

Our pursuit of perfection has us "looking around" a lot, doesn't it?

We spend a lot of time looking at the people around us because, the truth is, we all have a need for approval. So, we look and look for someone or thing to compare ourselves to. Who or what do you use as your reference point to tell you you're "good enough"? We usually find ourselves looking around at those - those who are the best at this or that - and when we do it sends messages in our brains that tell us, "I've got to be the best at all of it." And guess what? We've fallen into the comparison trap. This week, we'll consider the only opinion that has the power to change the way you feel about yourself.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/201711/the-comparison-trap>

Week 4: How Good is Good Enough?

John 8:1-11

Luke 23:33-34

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

Matthew 5:17-48 (Note the "You have heard it said" phrases)

Here's a link to Hans' message:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wKEL9zbBofdWs5PAA44uYX-ay8F1FqKfDvVM0-QN4d8/edit?usp=sharing>

We've been raised to be "good" little boys and girls. But, how good is good enough? Is 50% good enough? 70%? How about 49%?

Good is a moving target.

Some people want to use the Bible as the standard for good, but that's a terrible idea, because in some places - if the Bible is the standard - you in fact don't make the cut. Held up to what the New Testament says about whether or not you're good enough to go to heaven - you're not. Paul wrote: "There is no unrighteous, not even one". But other places it seems to suggest we're all good enough. And then there's the fact that - If God has refused to make it clear to us how good we have to be, then the truth is by our understanding God isn't even good. He's toying with us. He's teasing us. He's not just moving the goalpost.

Honestly, Jesus raised the standard of good enough so high that everybody fell short. Over and over he said, "you've heard it said, but I say this is the new standard." I say this is how good you have to be. And by the end of it, his disciples are like, "Well, then there's no hope. We're all doomed". And Jesus didn't say, "Oh no, no, no, you misunderstood". I think he just smiled and walked - "Yeah, you're all doomed. The Pharisees are doomed, the fishermen

are doomed, the men are doomed, the women are doomed. Everybody's doomed". But he has this big grin on his face because he's now got their attention.

Jesus consistently rejected the religious notion that a person could be in good standing with God while mistreating people God loves. Jesus completely rejected the idea that you can be on the same page with God and good standing with God, while at the same time mistreating people, the very people God loves.

Prayer of the Day

God of mercy, help remind us that perfection was never the goal. Free us from judgment of ourselves and others, and help us to experience your grace and love. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

God, we give thanks today for your unfailing presence in our lives. When we're tempted to chase the idea of perfection, remind us – that we are exactly who you created us to be. Lord, in your mercy; Hear our prayer.

Gracious creator, the world and everything it is is yours. When we see people hurting or experiencing injustice, move us toward reconciliation and peace. Remind us that goodness abounds in your creation. LIYM HOP

Loving savior, we pray for those who are sick and suffering. Bring healing and hope to the people who have lost loved ones, who are recovering from illness, or who struggle in their relationships. Make your presence known in their lives when they need it most. LIYM HOP

God of mercy, we are humans who are full of imperfections and brokenness. When we compare ourselves to others, give us confidence in what makes us unique. When we aim for only achievement, remind us that the ordinary is holy too. LIYM HOP

Thank you God, for hearing our prayers – those that we speak, and those that we repeat in our hearts. Be with us throughout this week as we carry on your work in the world. In your name we pray, Amen