

The Work of the People's

EMBODYING THE DIVINE

Love as the Heart of Creation with Ilia Delio

SERIES INTRO

Welcome to Embodying the Divine with Ilia Delio, an American theologian who specializes in the area of science and religion, with interests in evolution, physics, and neuroscience. In this series with Ilia, we'll explore the profound implications of understanding God as the unstoppable force of love within creation. Each film delves into the nature of divine love as it manifests in the cosmos, community, and personal transformation. Through these discussions, you're invited to reconsider our relationship with the divine, ourselves, and the world, discovering how love is not only the essence of God but also the very fabric of existence. The series offers a transformative journey into the heart of a universe that is continually evolving toward greater union, freedom, and fullness.

We're so glad you found your way here and hope you find the time exploring through these films, prayers, practices - and listening to your own life - a mini, life-giving journey for you.

SERIES SESSIONS

Click on session titles to navigate to the beginning of the session.

1. [Unstoppable Love](#)
Exploring God's Self-Giving Love
2. [Love Is Community](#)
Exploring the Communal Nature of Divine Love
3. [The Fullness of Union](#)
Exploring Divine Unity in Chaos
4. [Reclaiming Thisness](#)
Exploring the Sacredness of Particularity
5. [Fullness and Freedom](#)
Exploring the Path to True Freedom

Click on the link below to visit the film series homepage on The Work of the People.

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/film-series/embodying-the-divine>

AUTHOR BIO

ILIA DELIO

Ilia Delio, OSF, PhD, is a Franciscan Sister of Washington, DC, and an American theologian specializing in the area of science and religion, with interests in evolution, physics, and neuroscience and the import of these for theology.

Ilia currently holds the Josephine C. Connelly Endowed Chair in Theology at Villanova University and is the author of twenty books, including "Care for Creation" (coauthored with Keith Warner and Pamela Woods), which won two Catholic Press Book Awards in 2009: first place for social concerns and second place in spirituality. Her book "The Emergent Christ" won a third-place Catholic Press Book Award in 2011 for the area of Science and Religion. Her recent books include "The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love" (Orbis, 2013), which received the 2014 Silver Nautilus Book Award and a third-place Catholic Press Association Award for Faith and Science. Ilia holds two honorary doctorates, one from St. Francis University in 2015, and one from Sacred Heart University in 2020.

GUIDE NOTES TO CONSIDER

Discernment vs. Debate

The Goal of these mini film journeys is to provide space for deep, personal, and communal listening. It's not about agreeing or disagreeing with a speaker but about where we are led.

The focus is on spiritual discernment, not intellectual analysis or doctrinal debate. Healthy wrestling and imagination are encouraged, but determining who's right or wrong doesn't nurture discovery and transformation.

Deep Listening

Essential for discovery and transformation, prompts throughout the guide will help cultivate awareness and fresh perspectives.

Spiritual Practices

Engage the suggested series practice provided below here in this intro on your own during the week to stay marinated in the ideas you are exploring through the series..

Groups

- **Start with Stories:** In a new group, consider having participants share their faith journeys in the first session to build connectedness through vulnerability.
 - **Be Present:** Use “I” statements when responding to others and avoid giving unsolicited advice. Focus on “hearing each other into deeper speech.”
 - **Pre-session Prep:** Encourage participants to engage with the film and discernment questions before the group meets for richer conversations.
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EXPLORE MORE

A few additional resources to consider exploring throughout the series.

Book: [The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love by Ilia Delio](#)

Book: [The Phenomenon of Man by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin](#)

Video: [Act As If you Were Free Visual Liturgy with Ilia Delio](#)

Podcast: [The Hunger for Wholeness Podcast](#)

TWOTP Author Page: [Ilia Delio's TWOTP author page with films, books, and links.](#)

Website: [The Center for Christogenesis](#)

FEATURED SERIES PRACTICES

Spiritual practices designed to be both grounding and expansive, helping you to integrate the insights from the *Embodying the Divine* series into your daily life and spiritual journey.

Series Visual Benediction

The [It Is Love That Matters](#) liturgy can also serve as a powerful visual benediction at the conclusion of each session in the *Embodying the Divine* series. As a closing meditation, this film beautifully encapsulates the themes of divine love, transformation, and wholeness. By watching it at the end of each session, participants can leave with a renewed sense of peace, inspiration, and a deepened commitment to embodying the divine in their lives.

This visual benediction offers a contemplative and immersive way to seal the experience of each session, allowing the message of divine love to resonate deeply as participants transition from the sacred space of the series back into their daily lives.

It Is Love That Matters Visual Benediction with Ilia Delio (3:39)

- Stream or download [here](#).

- Benediction text included here.
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Lectio/Visio Divina *It Is Love That Matters* Practice Option

Introduction: This practice invites you to engage with the words and images of the *It Is Love That Matters* visual liturgy film through a combined *Lectio Divina* (sacred reading) and *Visio Divina* (sacred seeing) approach, allowing the message to resonate deeply within your heart and mind.

The Practice:

1. Prepare Your Space:

- Find a quiet space where you can focus without distractions.
- Light a candle or use a meaningful object to center yourself.
- Take a few deep breaths, grounding yourself in the present moment.

2. Invocation: Begin by inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your reflection: "*Spirit of Love, open my heart and mind to receive your word and vision. May these moments draw me closer to the divine presence within and around me.*"

3. First Reading/Viewing: Listen and See with the Heart

- Play the *It Is Love That Matters* film. As you watch and listen, allow the words and images to wash over you without trying to analyze or interpret them. Simply receive them.
- Pay attention to a word, phrase, or image that stands out to you. Let it rest in your heart.

4. Reflect: What is God Saying to You?

- After the first viewing, sit in silence for a moment.
- Reflect on the word, phrase, or image that caught your attention. Consider what it might be saying to you about your life, your relationships, or your spiritual journey.
- Journal your thoughts or feelings.

5. Second Reading/Viewing: Engage More Deeply

- Play the film a second time. This time, focus more intently on the word, phrase, or image that resonated with you.

- Ask yourself:

How is this message inviting me to change?

What is God calling me to embody or release?

In what ways am I being invited to evolve in love?

6. Pray: Respond to God's Invitation

- Offer a prayer in response to what you have heard and seen.
- Your prayer can be one of gratitude, a plea for guidance, or a commitment to embody the insights you have received.

7. Contemplate: Rest in God's Presence

- Sit quietly, allowing the experience to settle into your being.
- Simply rest in the presence of God, who is love. Trust that this love is at work in your life, guiding you toward wholeness and freedom.

8. Act: Live Out the Message

- Reflect on how you can embody the insights from this practice in your daily life.
- Consider one small action you can take to live out the message of divine love in your relationships, community, or personal journey.

Living the Divine Presence: A Daily Practice of Embodying Love

This spiritual practice is designed to be both grounding and expansive, helping you to integrate the insights from the *Embodying the Divine* series into your daily life and spiritual journey.

Overview:

The *Embodying the Divine* series invites you to recognize and embody the divine love that flows through every aspect of life. This spiritual practice is designed to help you integrate the insights from the series into your daily routine, fostering a deep connection with the divine presence within you and around you. Through mindful reflection, intentional action, and a heart-centered approach, you will cultivate an awareness of the sacredness of all creation and your unique role within it.

The Practice:

1. Morning Intention: Aligning with Divine Love

Daily Focus: Setting the Tone for the Day

- Begin each day with a moment of stillness. As you wake, take three deep breaths, inhaling the divine love that sustains you and exhaling any tension or anxiety.
- Set an intention for the day:
"Today, I choose to embody the divine love that flows through me. May my thoughts, words, and actions reflect this sacred presence in all I do."
- Reflect on one quality of divine love (e.g., compassion, patience, kindness) that you will consciously practice throughout the day.

2. Midday Check-In: Noticing the Divine Presence

Daily Focus: Mindful Awareness

- Pause at midday to reconnect with your intention. Take a few moments to reflect on how the day is unfolding.
- Ask yourself:

Where have I noticed the divine presence today?

How have I embodied divine love in my interactions?

Where might I need to adjust my attitude or approach to align more closely with love?

- Offer a brief prayer of gratitude for the opportunities to connect with God's presence, both in yourself and in others.

3. Evening Reflection: Embracing the Day's Gifts

Daily Focus: Reflecting and Letting Go

- At the end of the day, find a quiet space to sit and reflect on the day's experiences.
- Journal or meditate on the following questions:

In what moments did I feel most connected to divine love today?

What challenges did I face, and how did they invite me to grow in love?

How did I honor the unique “thisness” of myself and others?

- Gently release any regrets or unmet expectations. Offer gratitude for the day’s blessings and the lessons learned, trusting that tomorrow brings new opportunities for growth.

4. Weekly Deepening: Embracing Community and Creation

Weekly Focus: Expanding Your Practice

- Each week, engage in an activity that connects you with the broader community and creation:

Take a walk in nature, paying attention to the sacredness of all living things.

Reach out to someone in your community with an act of kindness or support.

Participate in a group discussion, meditation, or spiritual gathering where you can share and receive insights about embodying divine love.

- Reflect on how these activities deepen your sense of connection to the divine presence in all things.

5. Ongoing Integration: Living into Your Divine Potential

Long-Term Focus: Becoming an Embodiment of Divine Love

- As you continue this practice, notice how it transforms your awareness, relationships, and daily life.
- Regularly revisit the teachings from the *Embodying the Divine* series, allowing them to guide your ongoing spiritual journey.
- Consider how you can embody divine love in ever-expanding ways, contributing to the wholeness and harmony of the world around you.

Closing Thought:

This practice is an invitation to live with greater intention, awareness, and love. As you engage with it, may you discover the fullness of who you are as an expression of God’s love, and may your life become a radiant embodiment of the divine presence that flows through all creation.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS & TRANSCRIPTS

Click on session titles to navigate to the beginning of the video transcript.

Unstoppable Love - This opening video introduces the overarching theme of the series: God's nature as unstoppable love. Ilia Delio explores the idea that God's essence is pure, self-giving love that cannot be contained or limited. This love is the driving force behind creation, constantly drawing everything toward greater unity and wholeness. Delio challenges traditional images of God and invites viewers to see God not as a distant figure, but as an intimate presence woven into the very fabric of the universe.

Love Is Community - In this video, Delio reflects on the communal nature of love. She discusses how divine love calls us into relationships with others, forming communities that mirror the relationality of the Trinity. This video emphasizes that love is not only personal but communal, urging us to build relationships that reflect the divine unity and diversity within creation.

The Fullness of Union - Delio explores the concept of union in this video, highlighting how divine love draws all things into deeper unity. She explains how chaos and disruption can be opportunities for co-creation, where new patterns of relationship and order emerge. This union is not static but dynamic, continually inviting us to participate in the unfolding creativity of God.

Reclaiming Thisness - This video shifts the focus to the particularity of divine love, emphasizing that every element of creation, from the smallest quark to the most complex beings, is a unique expression of God's love. Delio speaks about the sacredness of "thisness," the distinctiveness that each being carries as a reflection of divine love.

Fullness and Freedom - The final video in the series brings together the themes of love, union, and freedom. Delio discusses how true freedom is found in living fully into our divine potential, which is made possible through love. She emphasizes that freedom is not about autonomy but about being fully alive in relationship with God, others, and creation.

It is Love That matters Visual Benediction - This contemplative visual benediction, inspired by Ilia Delio's profound reflections, invites viewers into the sacred space of love's transformative power. With evocative imagery and thoughtful narration, it centers on the boundless, unifying force of love that permeates all of creation. As a closing blessing, it gently reminds us that love is not just an emotion but the very essence of our existence—calling us to embrace our interconnectedness and live out the fullness of love in our daily lives.

// SESSION ONE //

Unstoppable Love

Exploring God's Self-Giving Love

WELCOME

In this session, Ilia Delio reflects on the nature of God as unstoppable love, a force that cannot be contained or limited. This love is the foundation of creation, continuously calling everything toward unity and wholeness. Delio challenges us to see God not as a distant figure but as an intimate presence at the heart of all existence.

About this guide: *It's simply that—a guide. A "trellis" to support your exploration of the wisdom and questions offered up here for you to consider. Receive what is yours to receive. Ditch the rest.*

PREPARING and PRESENCING

Create a Sacred Space

Set aside your phone to allow for deeper focus and engagement. Consider grabbing a cup of tea as a grounding ritual. Pay attention to its aroma, taste and warmth as you prepare

you to be present and to receive. Or maybe light a candle or incense to relax and to nurture a more mindful experience.

Reflective Journaling

Write down thoughts to help internalize and process things more deeply.

Notice Your Deep Listening Limiting Voices

- **Judgment:** Can block new understanding.
- **Cynicism:** May close you off from divine possibilities.
- **Fear:** Could prevent you from experiencing God's presence.

Centering

Take a deep breath. Set your intention to receive what is yours during this session.

Invocation

- Allow your heart and to receive these words from Ilia as a way to awaken your imagination and to enter in:

"God is not just a being; God is the unstoppable love that animates all of life."

WATCH THE VIDEO

Unstoppable Love with Ilia Delio (10:03)

- Watch the video [here](#).
-

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

As you reflect on the video, consider these prompts. Let them guide you without pressure to answer each one:

- What resonated with you? A word, image, or phrase?
- How did the video connect to your own experiences?
- What emotions surfaced? Where did you feel expansion or contraction?
- How might the Spirit be moving within you? What is being revealed?

Second Viewing: *Consider watching the video again to deepen your reflections.*

A Note to Groups: *Engage in deeper conversation about how these ideas resonate or challenge your current understanding.*

DEEPER EXPLORATION

As you contemplate Delio's reflections on divine love, explore the following:

- How does the idea of God as “unstoppable love” reshape your understanding of God's presence in the world?
- Reflect on how this concept of love challenges traditional images of God. How does it change your perception of the divine?
- Consider Delio's invitation to see God not as distant but as intimately present in every aspect of creation. How does this influence your spiritual journey?

A Note to Groups: *Take time here to share deeper explorations with one another.*

REFLECTING / RECEIVING / RESPONDING

Take time to process what you've heard:

- Sit quietly, focus on your breath, and move from your head to your heart.
- What is the Spirit stirring within you? What new invitations are emerging?
- Respond by journaling:

“I sense the Spirit inviting me to...”

“My attention is drawn to...”

“I am willing to release...”

“I am ready to embrace...”

RESTING

Pause before closing:

- Take a deep breath, exhale slowly, and rest in God's presence.
- Allow yourself to be held in the love of God, fully accepted as you are.
- Be still and know that you are deeply loved.

A Note to Groups: *Group prayer is a powerful way to affirm and close out a vulnerable time of deep listening with one another. Consider inviting each participant to say a one-word phrase that they are taking with them from this time exploring together. At the conclusion, the leader may wish to say, "May this be our prayer and our practice. Amen."*

CLOSING

Carry the insights from this session forward:

- Revisit your journal entries in the coming days.
- Relax into the truth that you are loved abundantly and unconditionally.
- Remember that you are a work in progress, ever-accompanied by God.

Benediction

Allow these words to accompany you as you move from this sacred space into your daily life:

BOUNDLESS GRACE

A Closing Blessing

May you be anchored in the unstoppable love of God,
a love that knows no bounds and is
present in every breath and moment of your life.

Go forth with confidence, knowing that this love guides you,
sustains you, and empowers you to
embody the divine in all that you do.

Amen.

// SESSION TWO //

Love Is Community

Exploring the Communal Nature of Divine Love

WELCOME

Ilia Delio explores the communal dimension of divine love in this session. She reflects on how God's love calls us into relationships that reflect the unity and diversity of the divine. This session invites us to deepen our understanding of love as a communal force that connects us to one another and to all of creation.

About this guide: *It's simply that—a guide. A "trellis" to support your exploration of the wisdom and questions offered up here for you to consider. Receive what is yours to receive. Ditch the rest.*

PREPARING and PRESENCING

Create a Sacred Space

Set aside your phone to allow for deeper focus and engagement. Consider grabbing a cup of tea as a grounding ritual. Pay attention to its aroma, taste and warmth as you prepare you to be present and to receive. Or maybe light a candle or incense to relax and to nurture a more mindful experience.

Reflective Journaling

Write down thoughts to help internalize and process things more deeply.

Notice Your Deep Listening Limiting Voices

- **Judgment:** Can hinder openness to new insights.
- **Cynicism:** May prevent connection to others.
- **Fear:** Could block you from experiencing the fullness of community.

Centering

Breathe in, release distractions, and set your intention to be present to the communal love of God.

Invocation

- Allow your heart and to receive these words from Ilia as a way to awaken your imagination and to enter in:

“God’s love is not solitary; it calls us into community, into a shared life that mirrors the divine relationality.”

WATCH THE VIDEO

Love is Community with Ilia Delio (13:37)

- Watch the video [here](#).
-

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

As you reflect on the video, consider these prompts. Let them guide you without pressure to answer each one:

- What stood out to you? A specific idea, phrase, or image?
- How did this reflection connect with your experience of community?
- What emotions did you feel? Where did you sense connection or disconnection?
- How might the Spirit be nudging you toward a deeper understanding of community?

Second Viewing: *Consider watching the video again to deepen your reflections.*

A Note to Groups: *Share your observations, focusing on listening without judgment.*

DEEPER EXPLORATION

As you contemplate Delio's reflections on communal love, explore the following:

- How does the idea of love as inherently communal shape your understanding of God and relationships?
- Reflect on a time when you experienced divine love through community. What made that experience sacred?
- How might understanding love as a communal force change the way you approach relationships in your life?

A Note to Groups: *Discuss how this communal vision of love challenges or enriches your view of faith and spirituality.*

REFLECTING / RECEIVING / RESPONDING

Take time to process what you've heard:

- Sit quietly, focus on your breath, and move from your head to your heart.
- How is the Spirit inviting you to engage more deeply in community?
- Respond by journaling:

"I feel drawn to..."

"I sense a call to deepen..."

"I am letting go of..."

"I am embracing..."

RESTING

Pause before closing:

- Take a deep breath, exhale slowly, and rest in God's communal love.
- Know that you are connected to the divine and to all of creation.
- Be still and rest in the truth that you are part of a greater whole.

A Note to Groups: *Close with a prayer where each participant shares a word or phrase that captures their reflection.*

CLOSING

Carry the insights from this session into your life:

- Revisit your reflections during the week.
- Embrace the reality that you are part of a divine community, held in God's love.
- Remember that love connects you to others and to God.

Benediction

Allow these words to accompany you as you move from this sacred space into your daily life:

DIVINE CONNECTION

A Closing Blessing

May you know the joy of living within the communal love of God.

May this love guide you to build relationships that reflect the unity and diversity of the Divine.

Go forth, embracing your place within the community of creation, ever connected by the love that sustains all things.

Amen.

// SESSION THREE //

The Fullness of Union

Exploring Divine Unity In Chaos

WELCOME

In this session, Iliia Delio reflects on the concept of divine union, highlighting how love draws all things into a deeper, dynamic unity. She explores the creative potential within chaos and disruption, inviting us to see them as opportunities for new patterns of relationship to emerge. Delio challenges us to participate in the divine flow, where love continually seeks greater wholeness.

About this guide: *It's simply that—a guide. A "trellis" to support your exploration of the wisdom and questions offered up here for you to consider. Receive what is yours to receive. Ditch the rest.*

PREPARING and PRESENCING

Create a Sacred Space

Set aside your phone to allow for deeper focus and engagement. Consider grabbing a cup of tea as a grounding ritual. Pay attention to its aroma, taste and warmth as you prepare you to be present and to receive. Or maybe light a candle or incense to relax and to nurture a more mindful experience.

Reflective Journaling

Write down thoughts to help internalize and process things more deeply.

Notice Your Deep Listening Limiting Voices

- **Judgment:** Might close you off from new insights.
- **Cynicism:** Could prevent seeing the creative possibilities in chaos.
- **Fear:** May inhibit your ability to embrace change.

Centering

Breathe deeply. Allow yourself to be present to the unfolding conversation about divine union and the creative potential of chaos.

Invocation

- Allow your heart and to receive these words from Ilia as a way to awaken your imagination and to enter in:

"God is the ever-newness in love, always creating, always drawing us into deeper union."

WATCH THE VIDEO

The Fullness of Union with Ilia Delio (11:36)

- Watch the video [here](#).
-

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

As you reflect on the video, consider these prompts. Let them guide you without pressure to answer each one:

- What captured your attention? A word, image, or idea?
- How did the video speak to your experiences of chaos and change?
- What emotions arose as you considered the potential for newness in disruption?
- How might the Spirit be inviting you to see chaos as part of the divine creative process?

Second Viewing: *Consider watching the video again to deepen your reflections.*

A Note to Groups: *Share your observations, focusing on deep listening and understanding.*

DEEPER EXPLORATION

As you delve deeper into Delio's insights on divine union, consider the following:

- How does the idea of “good chaos” challenge or confirm your understanding of God's work in the world?
- Reflect on a time when disruption led to new growth or understanding in your life. How might this be an example of divine union at work?
- How does embracing the concept of chaos as co-creation shift your perspective on current challenges or changes in your life?

A Note to Groups: *Discuss how the theme of union in chaos resonates with or challenges your current understanding of faith and spirituality.*

REFLECTING / RECEIVING / RESPONDING

Take time to process what you've heard:

- Sit quietly and connect with your breath, moving your awareness from your head to your heart.
- How is the Spirit inviting you to embrace chaos as a path to deeper union?
- Respond by journaling:

“I sense the Spirit calling me to...”

“I am beginning to see chaos as...”

“I am letting go of...”

“I am ready to embrace...”

RESTING

Before moving forward:

- Take a deep breath, exhale slowly, and rest in the truth that God is at work even in chaos.
- Trust that you are held in divine love, even when things seem disordered.
- Be still and know that you are part of a greater unfolding union.

A Note to Groups: *Close with a prayer where each participant shares a word or phrase that captures their reflection.*

CLOSING

Carry the insights from this session with you:

- Revisit your reflections throughout the week.
- Trust in the divine process that seeks to bring all things into unity, even through chaos.
- Remember that you are part of a dynamic, evolving relationship with God and creation.

Benediction

Allow these words to accompany you as you move from this sacred space into your daily life:

CREATIVE UNION

A Closing Blessing

May you embrace the fullness of divine union,
knowing that even in chaos,
God is at work bringing forth new life.

May you trust in the ever-newness of God's love
allowing it to draw you into deeper relationships, greater creativity,
and profound wholeness.

Go forth, grounded in the peace that comes from knowing you are part of this divine flow.

Amen.

// SESSION FOUR //

Reclaiming Thisness

Exploring the Sacredness of Particularity

WELCOME

In this session, Iliia Delio delves into the concept of “thisness”—the unique, irreplaceable essence that each person and thing possesses. She explores how every part of creation, no matter how small, carries the divine imprint and is a unique expression of God’s love. Delio challenges us to reclaim the sacredness of our individuality and the particularity of all creation, recognizing the divine presence in every “this.”

About this guide: *It's simply that—a guide. A "trellis" to support your exploration of the wisdom and questions offered up here for you to consider. Receive what is yours to receive. Ditch the rest.*

PREPARING and PRESENCING

Create a Sacred Space

Prepare to engage with this session by clearing distractions.. Consider grabbing a cup of tea as a grounding ritual. Maybe light a candle or hold a meaningful object that reminds you of your own uniqueness.

Reflective Journaling

Write down thoughts to help internalize and process things more deeply.

Notice Your Deep Listening Limiting Voices

- **Judgment:** May prevent you from appreciating the uniqueness in yourself and others.
- **Cynicism:** Could cloud your ability to see the sacred in the particular.
- **Fear:** Might make you hesitant to embrace your own unique calling.

Centering

Breathe deeply, calming your mind and body. Open yourself to the Spirit's presence and to the sacredness of "thisness" in all things.

Invocation

- Allow your heart and to receive these words from Ilia as a way to awaken your imagination and to enter in:

"You are a unique, unrepeatable expression of God's love, as is every part of creation."

WATCH THE VIDEO

Reclaiming Thisness with Ilia Delio (8:54)

- Watch the video [here](#).
-

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

As you reflect on the video, consider these prompts. Let them guide you without pressure to answer each one:

- What resonated with you? A word, image, or idea?
- How did this concept of "thisness" connect with your sense of self or others?
- What emotions did you feel as you considered the sacredness of every individual being?
- How might the Spirit be inviting you to honor the uniqueness of yourself and others?

Second Viewing: *Consider watching the video again to deepen your reflections.*

A Note to Groups: *Share your observations, focusing on deep listening and understanding.*

DEEPER EXPLORATION

As you explore the theme of “thisness,” reflect on the following:

- How does recognizing the sacredness of “thisness” shift your view of yourself and others?
- Reflect on a moment when you felt deeply seen or valued for your uniqueness. How did this experience affirm your sense of worth?
- How might understanding every being as a unique expression of divine love change the way you interact with others and the world around you?

A Note to Groups: *Discuss how this session challenges or deepens your understanding of individuality and the divine.*

REFLECTING / RECEIVING / RESPONDING

Take time to process what you’ve heard:

- Sit quietly and connect with your breath, moving your awareness from your head to your heart.
- How is the Spirit inviting you to honor the “thisness” in yourself and others?
- Respond by journaling:

“I am being invited to embrace...”

“I recognize the sacredness in...”

“I am letting go of...”

“I am ready to honor...”

RESTING

Before concluding, take a moment to rest:

- Take a deep breath, exhale slowly, and rest in the truth that you are uniquely loved by God.
- Know that you are a singular, irreplaceable expression of divine love.

- Be still and cherish the “thisness” within yourself and in all creation.

A Note to Groups: *Consider closing with a prayer where each participant shares a word or phrase that honors their unique experience.*

CLOSING

As you move forward, let these reflections guide you:

- Revisit your thoughts throughout the week, embracing the sacredness of your “thisness.”
- Affirm that you are uniquely created, deeply loved, and called to express your individuality in the world.
- Remember that every being, no matter how small, carries the divine imprint.

Benediction

Allow these words to accompany you as you move from this sacred space into your daily life:

UNIQUE SACREDNESS

A Closing Blessing

May you live in the awareness that your ‘thisness’ is a unique gift to the world.

May you honor the divine presence within yourself and others, recognizing the sacredness of every being.

Go forth, empowered by the knowledge that you are an irreplaceable expression of God’s love, and may this awareness guide you in all you do.

Amen.

// SESSION FIVE //

Fullness and Freedom

Exploring the Path to True Freedom

WELCOME

In this session, Ilia Delio reflects on the relationship between fullness and freedom, inviting us to consider how true freedom is found in embracing our divine potential and living fully into who we are meant to be. She challenges the idea that freedom is about autonomy and instead presents it as the capacity to live in harmony with the divine and the fullness of life. This session encourages us to discover what it means to be truly free in the love of God.

About this guide: *It's simply that—a guide. A "trellis" to support your exploration of the wisdom and questions offered up here for you to consider. Receive what is yours to receive. Ditch the rest.*

PREPARING and PRESENCING

Create a Sacred Space

Prepare to engage with this session by clearing distractions.. Consider grabbing a cup of tea as a grounding ritual. Maybe light a candle or hold a meaningful object that reminds you of your own uniqueness.

Reflective Journaling

Write down thoughts to help internalize and process things more deeply.

Notice Your Deep Listening Limiting Voices

- **Judgment:** Can prevent openness to new understandings of freedom.
- **Cynicism:** Might block your ability to see the fullness of your potential.
- **Fear:** Could keep you from embracing true freedom.

Centering

Breathe deeply, calming your mind and body. Open yourself to the Spirit's presence and to the sacredness of "thisness" in all things.

Invocation

- Allow your heart and to receive these words from Ilia as a way to awaken your imagination and to enter in:

"You are a unique, unrepeatable expression of God's love, as is every part of creation."

WATCH THE VIDEO

Fullness and Freedom with Ilia Delio (10:11)

- Watch the video [here](#).
-

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

As you reflect on the video, consider these prompts. Let them guide you without pressure to answer each one:

- How did the video connect with your understanding of freedom and fullness?
- What emotions arose as you reflected on the connection between freedom and divine love?
- How might the Spirit be inviting you to redefine freedom in your life?

Second Viewing: *Consider watching the video again to deepen your reflections.*

A Note to Groups: *Share your observations, focusing on deep listening and understanding.*

DEEPER EXPLORATION

As you explore Delio's reflections on freedom and fullness, consider the following:

- How does the idea of freedom as "living fully into your divine potential" challenge or confirm your understanding of freedom?

- Reflect on a time when you felt truly free. What were the circumstances, and how did it align with your sense of fullness?
- How might embracing a deeper sense of freedom, rooted in divine love, change the way you approach your life and relationships?

A Note to Groups: *Discuss how this session challenges or deepens your understanding of individuality and the divine.*

REFLECTING / RECEIVING / RESPONDING

Take time to process what you've heard:

- Sit quietly, focus on your breath, and move your awareness from your head to your heart.
- How is the Spirit inviting you to embrace true freedom and fullness?
- Respond by journaling:

“I sense the Spirit calling me to...”

“I feel drawn to explore...”

“I am letting go of...”

“I am ready to embrace...”

RESTING

Before concluding, take a moment to rest:

- Take a deep breath, exhale slowly, and rest in the knowledge that true freedom comes from living fully into your divine potential.
- Trust that you are guided by divine love as you seek to embody this freedom.
- Be still and embrace the fullness of who you are called to be.

A Note to Groups: *Consider closing with a prayer where each participant shares a word or phrase that honors their unique experience.*

CLOSING

As you move forward, let these reflections guide you:

- Revisit your thoughts throughout the week, allowing the idea of fullness and freedom to deepen.
- Embrace the truth that you are created to live fully and freely in divine love.
- Remember that true freedom is found not in autonomy, but in harmonizing with the divine presence within you.

Benediction

Allow these words to accompany you as you move from this sacred space into your daily life:

LIBERATING JOY

A Closing Blessing

May you live into the fullness of your divine potential,
embracing the true freedom that comes from being fully aligned with God's love.

May you be guided by the Spirit to live a life of wholeness, creativity, and peace,
knowing that true freedom is the pathway to the deepest joy.

Go forth, grounded in the love that frees and fills you.

Amen.

VIDEO TRANSCRIPTS

Unstoppable Love

Travis / TWOTP

What's God do?

Ilia Delio

That's the big question.

Travis / TWOTP

Yeah. What's your answer?

Ilia Delio

So you want me to start with that question? Sure. Okay.

So the question of God. Oh, wow. You know, I've been reflecting on this question for a number of years. I mean, probably as long as I've been alive on this earth. And probably everyone who's alive on this earth has also been thinking about the same question, because there's something about that name, God, that's deeply tied to us.

And so I think that's the first thing we have to acknowledge, that there's something about us that has this kind of sense of something that's greater than us, that's more than us, that, you know, beyond us and yet deeply tied to us.

Right. The funny thing is, I think when we talk about God, we've objectified this name.

So we have this big being God, and then all sorts of medieval art helped us picture this God as an elderly, sort of a nice grandfather in the sky watching over his children. So God is, you know, an elderly grandfather or male. And I think we've had this image that this grandfather God is keeping a very close eye on what we're doing, you know, and if we slip up, I mean, things are not going to go well with grandpa in heaven. And I think we've lived very, very two things. I think we've lived very, very narrow lives in relation to this grandfather God. And second, I think we actually think that that's what God is.

And, you know, there's a lot of new theology, certainly in the 20th century, as people began to really question, first of all, I take revelation seriously. So I think we can have a grandfather God and Jesus Christ in the same breath. I mean, there's something about this name, God, that's saying something to us in this person of Jesus.

And the first thing is that God does not like to sit at home in heaven. God gives God's self away. Right. And so that's what, you know, we see in this Jesus that there's something about this God that kind of breaks our images. I think Jesus was really an iconoclast. You know, he broke the image, certainly, of how the Jews conceived of God, you know.

And, I mean, the second thing is that, you know, like Jesus said, the reign of God is here, like it's now, like this God that you're looking for is right there within you. You know. And that was shocking. I think it's still shocking to us. I think we really don't think we believe this, that we still have the God up there in the heavens, distant from us, watching over us.

And somehow we can't quite get ourselves to believe that this God has become one of us. There is the good news, you know, and it's scandalous, really. As Saint Paul said, this is just really scandalous and just completely illogical. What kind of God would become one of us? I mean, look at us. We're such a mess.

You know, we get things wrong. We're violent. We don't like one another. So why would a nice God, who is love, enter into a messy world like this? And so I do think, certainly from a Christian perspective, and here I'll speak as a Christian, you know, we have to take the incarnation, Jesus, as the word of God really seriously.

Like, this is what God is. God's not other than this, God's not greater than this. Like, all that we can say about God really is said in this event. And that's like, what? Seriously? And I'm like, either that or Jesus, you know, or we then follow all the heresies of the early church: "Well, Jesus really was a good man.

You know, he probably was the closest next best thing to God. But he's really not God," you know, which was, you know, sort of like what Arius said, you know, or the Gnostics said, "There's no way a good God can enter into a messy world. So, you know, just no, you know, knowledge is salvation." Or the Docetists who said, "Well, maybe God just appeared in the person of Jesus, but God really wasn't there," you know?

And we have all these ideas still floating around today, right? You know, we have the Gnostics and the Arians, and the Christian says, "Nope, really, God is one of us." And you think, well, how is that possible? So what does this name God really mean? If God is one of us, then what is God and what are we?

Those are two questions I think that arise. And I do think the way Jesus lived his life, as a person of compassion, a person of loving compassion, a person of forgiveness, he really challenged all the Jewish rituals and the Jewish law. I mean, he did things that were really outside the law.

I mean, and I think no one in his own day really understood what he was about, because I do think it's about—think John, for one thing, he says, "God is love." And I think we have to start there, that God is not like a big being, like God is not one of us, but bigger than us.

God is absolute love.

Travis / TWOTP

What's love?

Ilia Delio

Exactly what is love? I think love is the densest, it is the greatest mystery in our midst. We fall in love. We talk about love all the time. We haven't a clue of what love is, you know? And yet Teilhard said, "Love is the most unknown and yet the most powerful energy in the world."

And we're saying that God is that love, and we can't get our heads around it. Right. So the first thing we know about love is, well, it doesn't stay all by itself, right? Love gives itself away. That's what makes it love, right? It goes out of itself to another. And it has an attractive power. It has a desiring power.

It has an "I want to give myself to you" power. You know, and, you know, again, we can't get our heads around why we want to give ourselves to another. But that's exactly—I mean, if we trace that, why back—that's what God is. God is that self-giving love. And so the name God, first of all, is pointing to this ground of active dynamism, which is love.

And so love isn't something God does. Love is what God is. So the first thing we have to know is where there's love, there's God. You know, I mean, that's the first thing we can really say. Second, huge, right? Huge. Second is, like, when we say God gives God's self to us in love, what kind of God could give God's self to love?

You know? Well, you have to be kind of personal. A person can't be just an idea. You know, I think what we're saying is

God is deeply personal because it's persons who love, even particulars. If you talk about love on a non-human level, it's particular to a particular, or center to center. And so God is personal.

God is relational, right? God is not the self-thinking subject, all locked up. God is actually intrinsically relational. And so the word that we use is Trinity. And again, that's a word that—what is it, three persons in one name? Who can get their head around that thing? Right. And all we're saying is God is a person who is absolute self-giving.

You know, what we name as the Father. It's like fountain fullness, this never-ending flow of love. And that fountain flowing as love is expressed in another person that we name Son or Word, you know, and that bond between them is so rich and so deeply personal, it's expressed in a third person that we name as Spirit.

And so what we're saying is God is overflowing love, expressive love in a particular other, and lives in the bondedness of that love in the breath of new life, you know, creativity and newness. And so I think that's what we find, all those things in Jesus. You know, we find the overflow of love. We find that expression of love in a particular other, the way he reaches out to the other and the bond of that love in the richness of creative newness, of future, you know, there's a new community breaking in here, a new unity moving forth.

And so, you know, there's several things about the Christian God that I actually really like. So, I have really put grandfather to sleep, you know, the grandfather God. And I've really begun to reflect on the God of Jesus, you know, the God of this powerful, unquenchable, unstoppable love.

Love is Community

Ilia Delio

You know, so many people ask me, well, if God is love, you know, why is there evil in the world? Why do bad things happen? You know, how could this God of love...right? That's the tip. That's a very reasonable question. First of all, there's two ways to look at that. And that's how we look at the world.

Is this a static, fixed world? Like, did God say, here it is. It's all here. And now look what a mess you made of it. Well, that's actually not what science tells us, right? Science does not say it's all static and fixed. All done with science says. Nope, it has a very, very long beginning that we call the Big Bang.

And that's just a way to describe whatever how our universe came into being. And then science says it is taking a very, very long time for us to get here. You know, I mean, like 13.8 billion years, on this little planet in a mid-sized galaxy which is about 4.2 billion years old and like, whoops, you know, then we're like, what? How do we get our heads around this stuff?

I mean really we're talking evil. We're not talking like all this science is caboodle stuff. And, you know, science is just a way of describing nature. That's all we're doing. We're trying to understand. What are we? This is what philosophers did for eons. And so all the science is saying is it's not really what it appears.

It's it's really a very slow, process that life keeps complexifying. It keeps getting richer in its degrees, its relationships, it keeps moving towards greater unity. Imagine that it's actually moving toward unity. So I think part of the thing is we had this idea that there was, an original garden that Adam and Eve were placed in.

And then, of course, Eve being the weaker of the intellects, you know, Miss, Miss Garden got the cues wrong and, you know, lured Adam into sin, and the whole thing fell in, death entered in, and evil follows, you know, when, in fact, that

was a myth. To really try to understand that was a myth actually concocted in the second century

You know, I mean, to understand, why bad things happen to good people. A myth is a story that may or may not be factual. And I think we have conflated the story with science. And we're all over the place where, as science is saying, it's not so much original sin, so much as maybe a sin of origin.

You know, we begin in a state of chaos. That is how the Big Bang is. In a sense. It's the state of mass energy. And, you know, elements kind of dispersed all over. But given amount of time, you know, and and maybe, you know, maybe the presence of God at the heart of it, it's moving towards something. So maybe we might think that Teilhard thought that - Teilhard de Chardin was the Jesuit, of course, you know, the paleontologist - who was deeply immersed in Ignatian spirituality, so very much devoted actually to the sacred Heart of Jesus and saw this power of love at the heart of the universe, even from a spiritual perspective. His idea as well, sin is sort of part of being an unfinished universe.

I mean, we're bound to get things wrong because we're not yet complete. It's like a kid, like a child, you know, if you put the kid in a playpen and, you know, you ask the kid to, you know, come up with a blueprint for a house, they're going to just scribble all over the place, right? Because they're not yet fully formed.

And I think the same is true on on the human level and on the cosmic level. We're not fully developed, and it's hard for us to get our head around that because we're pretty sure we're fully developed and just keep screwing things up. And this is not to explain away evil on the moral level. You know, there is something about the humans, you know, that we do acquire language capacities.

We do acquire the ability to reflect on things. We acquire the ability to know what's right and what's wrong. Evil is the privation of the good. It's where we stripped something of its of its inherent goodness, and we create a negative energy. We find things out. It's like taking a hammer and smashing something that's whole to pieces. And that's what evil does.

It's the hammer of rejection. It's the hammer of denial that smashes the whole into pieces to say, I don't want to be whole. I don't want to be on this developmental path to some kind of unity. I hate unity, I hate wholeness, clogs the flow. And that's a that's a very, I think, a very isolated ego, a very a person could be deeply injured, a deeply wounded in their lives.

There's all sorts of reasons why people do bad things. It doesn't it doesn't justify their actions by any means. But at the same time, to think that you know, evil is something that's inherent to our condition is misguided. There is the inherent, you know, of our condition is that this is a God saw. It was good. And that means love is I mean, the whole reason for Jesus is love, not sin, really.

And that's, I think, what we're beginning to realize more and more that God is love. And God so will to express that love in a finite way, that he willed the Christ in a sense, ever before sin entered the world. And imagine if we were to think of this universe as based on original love, and that it's love that's seeking to become more love, you know, and that we do get things wrong.

Right. And I think evil comes about when we fail to help one another to live in love. You know, we reject others. We don't have time for others. We don't have time for the poor or people who don't think like us or look like us. And I think that's problematic. You know, that's problematic in terms of, we are part of the we are part of the violence of our age as much as we are part of the unity that seeks to flow in our own time.

So we're not just innocent bystanders. And I think, a third factor here is we kind of anesthetize ourselves, you know, from the fact that we are intimately bound to the future of the world and the future of the cosmos. We kind of dismiss ourselves from it, saying, oh, no, you know, that stuff is all hokey pokey. And like...

Travis / TWOTP

Uhhh, Unity... I was taught the private responsibility of working hard and about personal salvation. What am I missing out on that path?

Ilia Delio

Yeah, well, there's one there's one fundamental problem there, and there's no real I. Yeah, I think the whole thing of individualism is the greatest delusion that we have in our.

Travis / TWOTP

How do you win if there's no "I"?

Ilia Delio

There's no I. Right. The only I exist in about the only I exist in a source of the I and that is God. And where there's God, there's no anus, there's only weirdness, there's only community. I mean, that's what we realize that God is one and there's no I without the one. And so I think this I thing which emerge, you know, you know, in a few centuries ago, it's really been our greatest downfall to think that I live as an independent, autonomous, self thinking person.

Ilia Delio

I'll make my decisions, you know, I'll take the blame for my wrongdoing. And I'm saying there is no I. In fact, science, quantum physics tells us today, oh, no, there really is no I, you know.

Travis / TWOTP

What does that have to do with Jesus and what does quantum physics have to do with salvation?

Ilia Delio

What does quantum well, quantum physics is, is probably the best description of what matter is, you know, and if God became matter, then we better know a little bit of quantum physics. Mathematics and matter matters to God. Right. And so that's the thing. And quantum physics says, you know, this actually this is a whole and like what we call matter is an entangled fields of energy, holes within holes within holes.

Ilia Delio

And if you were to just trace, you know, everything.

Travis / TWOTP

That's "w" wholes. Not "H" holes?

Ilia Delio

Right, right. And you know, without the holes. That's an interesting. Yeah. Without the W, I think a black hole may be equivalent to what evil is, right? It sucks everything into it. And I think the kind of wholeness that quantum physics is about the energy of life, we can say, is the hole that, you know, that radiates, that expands and unifies because itself is so entangled with everything.

So I think, you know best quantum physics today tells us your anus is a weakness. And, you know, even your thoughts belong to the entire cosmos. There's nothing and there's nothing private about any of us. It scares us, right? It scares us to think what? There's nothing private. Are you kidding? And what? What we're saying here is that God is in our midst.

That we're deeply entangled with one another, that even our thoughts affect one another. That if I think I really hate that person, that hatred, a thought of hatred in terms of the fundamental quantum levels could actually have negative effects, you know, on, on places around the world, we don't even think that we could be involved in the wars of Iraq or Afghanistan.

We don't think that we would have any part to play in the mass migrations of of the poor, you know, in parts of the world,

like here we are in lovely, you know, North America. What do what does this have to do with us? And the question is, the thing is everything, you know.

Travis / TWOTP

So like the fruit of the spirit isn't something that you learn on a felt board, but in order to, like, stay in line, like they could actually be energies that are part of right, making things whole?

Correct. And I think, you know, what we're realizing, I mean, the work of David Bohm, I think is really of interest here. He was a physicist, a contemporary of Einstein, who really posited that, that there's an implicate order, that there is a what we call a holism. You know, that's not a new idea. That's in a sense, what he was observing from his description of, of quantum, of quantum physics and the quantum field.

And he said the explicate order, which is the order in the external world, is really in a sense, the implicate order now expressed on the outer level, so to speak. And in his view, we are holes within holes within holes. And he said, you know, it looks like we're separate, which is something that Einstein said. It looks like we're separate.

But in our cosmic roots we're part of an indivisible whole and share in the same cosmic reality. And I think if we in that cosmic reality, if I were to trace that back to its ultimate roots and depth, is God. That's what we're saying. God is, as Anselm said, that which no greater can be thought than which. No, no further than the human mind can go.

You know, God transcends, every aspect of our limits. So what, you know, Bohm and Einstein are saying is unless we realize our wholeness and our belonging to a whole, and to realize that God is seeking to become empowers, that whole and seeks to become, you might say, known as the whole within the whole, we're on a path of destruction.

We're on a path. It's downward. It's a downward spiral. Look, we either come to a real reality of the world in which we live, or we're in denial. We're in extreme denial. And that's really symptom of something that's of a deep illness. The evolution is simply the best that science tells us. This is how life moves it complexities.

It flourishes given the changes in the environment, given the conditions that change. And, you know, life moves from simple to complex. You know, from cyanobacteria to home to your kitty cat and dog and to Mozart and Gandhi. I mean, and it's not a straight line of continuity. I mean, there are definitely there's complex levels all along the way.

And we're saying God is quite at home in that, you know, in fact, God, God thought it was good enough to keep going. And and so we've had this idea that God creates a fixed universe when God is really quite at home with chaos and unknowingness and openness and future, because I think God enters, you know, God loves, the spontaneity of newness.

The Fullness of Union

Ilia Delio

There's good chaos, but bad chaos. Good chaos, in a sense, is where things are disrupted and there is an openness to a new order emerging up ahead.

Travis / TWOTP

There's co-creation in chaos?

Ilia Delio

Yes. Good chaos? Yes, I think that's true. I think there's a co-creation. By the way, I think Jesus was very chaotic. If you

think of what he did in his own time, he by no means brought order to his milieu. Just the opposite. He was what I would call a strange attractor.

He was a faithful Jewish boy in a Jewish milieu. And then he overturned everything Jewish, right? And so he was like a basin of attraction within an established system. But his chaotic behavior began to disrupt that system and pull it into a new pattern of behavior or a new order that we call Christian life. Christian life is like a fractal, right?

You can call it crystal fractals. They keep adding up over and over again into something new. Someone once described Jesus as a mutation. There was something about him that was so radical in love. Like, he was a faithful Jewish kid, and yet something was not quite right here, something different. To be a Christian, you have to be a mutation, a strange attractor. You have to be willing to live in radical newness because that's what God is. Meister Eckhart says God is the newest thing there is. Love is always new. Love is not old. We know that when love gets old, it's stale. It dies.

Love is always new. Even people who have been married forever and ever are constantly falling in love in new ways. It's not static at all. You see something in the other you never saw before, even after 40 and 50 years, or something awakens in the other that was there all the time, but you never attended to it. It's new. God is the ever-newness in love. The newest thing there is, Eckhart says, the youngest thing. And when we're united to God, we become new again.

If we could focus our attention on several things: one, the deep immersion of God in our midst, in our lives, in our own beingness, in the lives of others. I don't think we do what we do to one another to any significant degree if we could recognize that the God in me is also the God in you. We are united on a deep level of divine love, whether or not we're aware of it. Second, the fact that God is in love with everything—trees, flowers, stars, even earthworms and snowflakes—everything. There's that love of God within it. And what do we do? What we do to one another and to the things of the earth...

If we had an awakening, an attention, or a consciousness that what God is about is to be God for us and to be with us, we wouldn't act as we do. But I think because we've had this idea of God in the sky, the big guy in the sky, we feel like a lonely, stranded group here on the planet, and we don't know where to go. I think we feel overwhelmed. I think consumerism has done a really fine job of transplanting religion, or you might say, co-opting it.

As many writers tell us now, the mall has become the new church. I go to church, I can't quite get the connection with everything, but I can go to the mall and feel drawn out of myself by everything that's new because we love new things. We love to buy. Purchase power is a type of ritual. Instead of going to church and having rituals, now we go to the mall and have rituals. What's the problem? I like to shop. Don't get me wrong, I like things. But with consumerism, it's the 'ism.' It's the taking in of everything.

We are commodifying everything. Everything is just an object for exchange of some sort, including religion. We commodify religion itself. I was talking with my students last week about how we're not even conscious anymore of the stuff we're buying and where it's coming from. Several years ago, there was a huge discussion over the Nike sneaker factories in Indonesia, where workers were being paid barely enough to buy the basic necessities for the day, \$1.50 a day for churning out 8 to 10 hours of work. That sneaker goes through the realms of the economic cycle into the capitalistic world and is sold for \$90 to \$100. We are so removed. We're not even conscious of the Indonesian worker or the conditions under which they're working, sometimes in slave conditions.

We're not even aware that when we buy our bananas at the grocery store or our blueberries, where they are coming from. I looked at my blueberries this morning. They're from Peru. Are we even aware of what's going on in Peru? Their economic conditions, the workers, the conditions they are working in? Consumerism has so detached us from the roots of anything. And I think because we don't have a religious rootedness, that God is rooted in us, we are disconnected from God. We're disconnected from one another. We're disconnected from the things of the earth. And so we buy and buy and buy and take in for ourselves to try to make ourselves feel good, to fill in the empty hole within us.

And it's not working. We're not happy. We're not happier than before. We feel more isolated. Depression is on the rise, suicide is on the rise. So, from a diagnostic perspective, we are not doing well. The patient is definitely sick collectively.

Travis / TWOTP

And yeah... there's some people that instead of going to the mall or to church are just going out to their backyard because there's something that's life-giving and not so saturated in consumerism like the mall or church can often be... I get why folks go to both of those... So, what needs to be remembered? What is the role or the goal of Christianity? What's the role of the church?

Ilia Delio

Yeah. I mean, that's a great question. How do we bring back a sense of the wonder and awe, a sense of the sacredness within life, within the universe, within life in our communities, within our own lives? I think one thing is religion—and here I would say all religions, not just Christianity or the Christian denominations—all religions need to come to terms with modern science.

They are all in backwater cosmologies. It doesn't work anymore. I know they are very rich traditions, with some great values, but I think we've commodified religion. I'm not even sure we're really attentive to the roots of the traditions themselves. So that's the first thing. And by updating with modern science, I mean there's a lot about religion that really needs to reformulate some of its doctrines, like the doctrine of God or the doctrine of salvation.

What are we aiming for in an unfinished universe? I still have students who think heaven is a place above that we're going to. We have no sense of heaven as the openness of the earth to the fullness of life in God. That God creates a new heaven and a new earth, not a new heaven without earth.

We have all sorts of platonic notions. We have a lot of Greek metaphysics still imbued, I would say, in all the monarchies. It's sort of enmeshed. It's seeped through. Yeah, it's filled to the brim. We're filled to the brim with Greek metaphysics, and we just can't get over it.

We have a Greek problem. We have a substance abuse problem in religion, in the churches. We can't get over substance, and science is saying you need to get over it because that's not what we're about at all, really.

Travis / TWOTP

And don't be afraid. It's good news.

Ilia Delio

It is good news.

God has given us the gifts of the intellect to know. Saint Augustine says, "Faith seeks understanding," and we understand so as to deepen our faith. Somehow these two things get really dismembered from one another. We have this kind of faith in something that we're imagining or projecting onto God—our hopes and dreams.

But truthfully, the only way to really know God is to know God in the things of God, which, if you go back to Genesis, would be the creation story, right? Creation is a book and a mirror. Creation is not an abstract term. It's what nature is telling us. And nature, in a sense, is described by science.

That's all we're saying here. It's really kind of simple. You don't have to kill yourself trying to figure it all out. The truth is, I think all the monotheistic faiths, in fact, it doesn't even have to be monotheistic faith. Any person who goes out to creation, whether you are at a beach and see a beautiful sunset, you are drawn beyond yourself towards something that's more than yourself. You know that the human person did not create the beauty of that sunset. There's no way we can do that. We can't even mimic it online. As much as we try, although we are doing quite better with artificial intelligence.

But when you go to the mountains, or stand in the midst—I was in Muir Woods a few weeks ago in California—there are these trees standing stately and tall, hundreds and hundreds, maybe thousands of years old. Could we create them? Are we in charge here? Absolutely not. So that's what we're saying. Creation is a book. It tells us something about us and our limits, but it also tells us about the one who is the source of those limits that we name God.

Reclaiming Thisness

Travis / TWOTP

You say creation is patterned on the Christ... When is creation gonna stop moaning?

Ilia Delio

Yeah. So, creation—just to get the terms right—I take creation as existence or nature in relationship to God. So creation always points to the Creator. And so creation is everything from the rocks, the stars in the sky, to the sand on the beach, to the water, to the little animals, to us.

We're all part of this creation. And when we say everything is Christic, we're really saying that the incarnation or God loving the world is God loving every single aspect of the world, every single quark, lepton, grain of sand, little butterfly. God loves everything into existence.

How? Because everything is expressing God. Everything in some way expresses something about—even a quark expresses something about God. You think, what? You know, because we're so used to thinking of Jesus. But Jesus—let's have a real-time take on Jesus. If Jesus is truly human, then we have to admit that Jesus also comes by way of evolution, right?

God is at work in evolution all along the way, and I know that's been really hard, if not scandalous, for a lot of people to accept. But either we accept it, or you've got to get rid of all your modern equipment because it's all come about by evolution, right? You can't parcel out some things and then want to keep others.

So when we say that everything is Christic, what we mean is: How does love become incarnate? What does that mean? And, you know, again, we have no real understanding of matter. I think matter is a form of energy—well, it is, that's what science tells us, right? Matter is a form of energy. And what if, from all eternity, these energy particles, these energy particulars, have been entangled with God from what we might say in the mind of God forever and ever?

And then God freely decides to express that idea or that particular in this point, in this time. I mean, it's a mystery, and I never want to resolve the mystery of God creating into a logical, analytical answer. But all we can say is that when God creates, God loves. God enters into creation. And so I think all along the way, God incarnated is the Christ, right? It's that wholeness and love, that unity and love.

Gerard Manley Hopkins had a great sense of what we call the *haecceitas*—Duns Scotus, the Franciscan theologian, really helped us appreciate what he called the “thisness,” right? This person and this leaf bear the love of God within them.

The mystic, the crucifixion, or the Christ. Imagine if we had a culture or society of “thisness,” where people are not algorithms, not numbers, not statistics. We're actually unique, uncountable expressions of divine love. I mean, could you imagine every poor person, every homeless person, every Muslim, every black, white, Asian—whatever you want—every gang member being seen as a unique, uncountable expression of the love of God?

Would we do what we do to people? Because what we do is we say, no way that person can be the love of God. I mean,

they're just wicked people, and we should just get rid of them, you know, or replace them. Maybe we could have a robot in their place. We don't need them anymore, you know?

And that's where institutional religion has not helped, by the way. It has not really come... I think there's no Christian church that has really taken the incarnation as the starting point for understanding who God is.

Travis / TWOTP

Say that again.

Ilia Delio

There's no— from the point of Christianity—there's no institutional religion that has taken the human person as the starting point for who God is. But that must be our starting point because there's something about us that bears an unimaginable depth and breadth and love. Look, see, and respond, not judge.

Travis / TWOTP

What do you mean by respond?

Ilia Delio

Respond in love, right? What's the response in love? You would never want to say, "Well, I'm going to kill you because really, you're just..." I mean, if someone truly loves someone, they're not going to say, "Truthfully, you are just one block to my entire life. I'm just going to eradicate you."

Travis / TWOTP

Maybe not everybody's created in God's image? Maybe you're just a little too hopeful?

Ilia Delio

Yeah, right. We are the worst judges. We are so harsh in our judgment. I mean, humans are the worst, and I really think, in all honesty, we're the problem to this whole planetary life because we're hard on one another. We're hard on ourselves.

We doubt, we're suspicious, we're critical. We have no sense of love at all. No sense of a deep, attractive power at the heart of our life. So we don't respond in compassion. We don't respond in a sense that respects the other, even if we disagree with them, even if we don't see things the same way.

If people don't agree with us, we just eradicate them, whether it's verbally, psychologically, or physically. I think what we have created is a society of deep loneliness, deep isolation. I look at some of the horrendous violence, gun violence in our own time, and I ask what has driven these people to such despair that the only alternative is to take up a gun and exterminate people? What has unraveled in the human mind? Do we have a part to play in that? I think we need a little humility here. We need to own up, maybe because we don't tend to the love that is in our midst.

Do we have a part to play? You asked about creation groaning. We're not finished. Creation does groan aloud. I think today, global warming and the increased incidence of tornadoes and hurricanes, and the severity of these natural events, is Earth not only groaning but crying out that we are not loving. We do not love the earth. We don't even attend to the earth. We are lost in a shopping mall someplace, you know, for Black Friday sales. We're inattentive, and we will be our own undoing. If we do blow things up, it will be because we have chosen not to love. We have chosen not to attend to the depth of God in our midst.

It will be our own demise. I do think nature, though, will go on quite well without us. As I always say, nature will be like...

Travis / TWOTP

Trying to protect our religions.

Ilia Delio

Yes, we die trying to protect our religions. Exactly, exactly. And I think nature will be like, well, now, and God will be okay.

Travis / TWOTP

What should we do with the dirt this time?

Ilia Delio

Yeah, exactly. Because God will always be creative, always be bringing about something new. Love will—love can never be conquered or quenched. I do think it will go on for, you know, 10 million more years or however many more years again, for one to grow into a conscious being in love and to respond in love. And that's really what we're called to do.

Fullness and Freedom

Ilia Delio

We are, in a sense, the voice of, in some ways, a voiceless universe. We need to give voice to the heart of love. As this universe, we have the ability to know that love, to respond in love. And that means in, you know, following the gospel, I mean, the Beatitudes, right? To be merciful, to be forgiving, to be compassionate, to be trusting, to live in truth.

You know, and I think it doesn't take all that much, but it takes us to get rid of ourselves so that we can really, really find ourselves in another.

Travis / TWOTP

You have to die to live?

Ilia Delio

You do have to die to live. How many times did Jesus say, unless the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it's just going to remain one single little grain and it's going to die? You know, it will just wither away. I mean, you know, he has many parables, the parable of the seed and the sower. What's the rocky ground if not the hardness of the human heart?

You know, I just can't afford to let any of these new ideas in. I've got my whole, you know, my whole system established. It makes me feel good. I'm not going to budge. Great. Okay, well, you make that choice. And so this is the beauty of God's love: Always freedom. Christianity is really, at the heart of it all, about freedom.

We ought to be growing into freedom. And so if we find ourselves enslaved...

Travis / TWOTP

And conquer it with power...

Ilia Delio

Okay, now you can't conquer freedom. Yeah. You can't even buy freedom, by the way. You can't buy freedom. You know, you can buy all the stuff in the world. You can buy as many houses and boats and cars as you want. You'll be enslaved more and more, right? So freedom can only come from a deep inner place. It's in the heart, right?

Only the heart that knows where its treasure lies is really free.

Travis / TWOTP

You say the way forward is inward?

Ilia Delio

Yes, the way forward is the way inward. And I think that's really being at home in yourself. You know, this is who you are with your gifts, your quirkiness, your bad temper, and your good days. I think one of the things we need to do again is learn to love ourselves, not in a narcissistic way.

To be wholly yourself, to be at home in yourself, you know, and to say, this is who I am, and I'm going to give it my best. All that I have, I'll give to another, right? I give myself to another in the giftedness that I am, because God actually loves you as you are, you know.

And God wants you to grow into what you are, into the fullness of that. Yeah, exactly right. It's really not that complicated. We have made it endlessly complicated and complex. God is really quite simple. That's what the medievals taught. God is utter simplicity. God is utter oneness.

God is utter love. We have broken down God, chopped God into all sorts of ideas, categories, and systems, and it's like, oh my God, it's brain fatigue. But it's very simple: God is absolute love. God loves you absolutely. And God simply wants you to respond in love with the gifts that God has given you, to grow into your own freedom.

That's it. If we could do that, I think our world could actually find a new level of solidarity. I mean, we wouldn't be hoarding things. We would want to share because we would know that we belong to one another, that we belong to the earth. The funny thing is, we have the capacity for this. We are killing that capacity, we're in deep denial of it. We're sure we don't have it, you know? And I know we do.

Because, again, we can walk out onto that beach in a sunset, and we know that there's an other at the heart of our lives, whether or not we want to name it God or whatever you want to call it.

We know that we did not create that beauty. And so, you know, I think Saint Augustine said it so beautifully in his confessions. "I went to the mountains and I called out, 'Where are you, God?' And I looked at the skies and I said, 'Where are you, God?' I looked everywhere." And he says, "You were within, deeper to me than I am to my own self."

And I think that's the part we have to begin to discover. Science has discovered the heavens. We can name all the planets. We can tell you how to build a rocket ship and how to build a robot. But do we even know that we have a soul? That we have something that has an infinite capacity for love, an infinite capacity for God, and that God's love is seeking to love in that soul, to become God here in this world.

So I think we're missing out on the greatest opportunities of our lives. And so, you know, a lot of my work is just trying to bring this into a kind of coherent framework that we can begin to turn around a little bit from the very, very unhealthy habits that we find ourselves in and locked into, that we've become, in a sense, socially and culturally autistic, cut off, socially awkward, socially isolated from one another.

And so even the word love strikes us as superficial, something silly to talk about, not cosmic, not something measurable, something quantifiable. Yet, that which is the bedrock of what we are can never be reduced by science to something quantifiable.

It will always elude our grasp. And that elusive grasp is what God's about, right? We know God because God is experienced in those deep levels of love and consciousness. But to grasp God as something that we can control and manipulate and form ourselves—not possible. God will always be beyond anything of our grasp. So it's a great mystery we find ourselves in.

If we could reawaken to the great mystery we find ourselves in—science doesn't like mystery, right? Science likes no mystery. You know, like Stephen Hawking said, "We'll discover all the forces of the great universe, we'll unify them, and then we'll have no need for God."

I'm like, seriously, dude, you're a smart guy. You should know the limits of your own intelligence. Or our own lifetimes. So even artificial intelligence is trying to, you know, the whole transhumanist approach, like, "Well, you know, religion's a failure now. We'll just save ourselves. We'll just make ourselves smarter, live longer, and we'll build ourselves into something better."

Well, really. I think the other thing is we don't want to die because we haven't really quite done what we haven't...

Travis / TWOTP

There's no getting out of here alive?!

Ilia Delio

This is the...

Travis / TWOTP

Oh, my God, I gotta cut this interview and call my kids!

Ilia Delio

Right. This is our other thing. So, two things: we're meant for freedom and we don't want to die. And I think we're doing everything we can to postpone death. Really, everything dies with that. That's our full freedom. I think that's the whole thing. The whole thing is that we're dying all along the way.

We know that, you know, what we are today is not what we were yesterday. We're not even what we are today compared to what we were yesterday. Right. But there's something about death that's so final, and it's so, you know, like, what if I don't achieve the happiness that I long for, and I don't become the great something I want to be?

And then I die, and it's like, well, you might start now to live in this moment as if death is going to be in the next breath. Right? Because that's all we have is breath to breath, moment to moment. I mean, you can walk out into the street, get hit by a car. In our world today, as violent as it is, you know, you can get gas and be gunned down.

So there is no contingency plan here. I do think that, following the great Karl Rahner, the great Catholic theologian, death is our full flowering of who we are. I think we really become truly person in that moment of death. All that we have sought to do, everything, every relationship in our lives, for good or bad, is summed up in that moment of death.

Ilia Delio

And I do think that's where the vessel is broken, and the ointment of what we are is released into that full embrace of God's love as it continues to create. So I think we need to live so that we are ready to die, and we need to be dying in order to really live.

I'm certainly not the first to say this. Many wonderful thinkers along the way have realized this. Centuries ago, the mystics said, you know, that if we die to the self, right, to that selfish self, the egotistic self, then we will never die, right? And that's the beauty of it.

Once we really know that love of God in our lives, we never really die, for we enter into that full flowering of freedom in that embrace of love.

It Is Love that Matters by Ilia Delio

In the end it is love that matters;

all else will pass away.
We need a thoughtful love,
a wisdom that sees and knows more deeply;
a faith that trusts in the power of God
who lives beneath our wings.

Ours is the age of something radically new;
it is more than a reformation;
it is an evolution in love.
It is not simply we humans who are in evolution
but God seeks to evolve—
to become more being in love,
more conscious,
more God at the heart of the universe.

This is the truth that sets us free,
the light that eludes our sight:
we are the privileged bearers of transcendence.

God cannot do for us what we must do for ourselves,
Only when we allow God to be Go for us,
Can God save us.
because divine love can do no other
than make whole.

God's love is unmanageable and unruly;
it is creative,
spontaneous,
and novel.
It slips in between our controlling urges
and dwells in the unbearable wholeness of our being.

What a cunning God this is
who hides in lepers
and appears in a poor carpenter-turned-preacher.

Divine love is beyond
what the human mind can imagine or invent;
it is not logical or predictable.
It has empowered life from the beginning
and promises to stay forever
because love is ever new,
ever more whole.
deepening the rich creativity of life's playfulness.

We all have a part in this unfolding love.
We are wholes within wholes,
persons within persons,
religions within religions.

We are one body,
and we seek one mind and heart,

more personal and unified in love.

This urging toward oneness
is an invitation to evolve the Divine.
We must enfold the past into the quantum moment
and Let us aim toward the future,
for up ahead is the Christ
rising from the dead
in the darkness of night
to become for us the God of the future.