

## TRUSTING GOD'S PLAN, PURPOSE, AND DESIGN

"And God said..."

February 4, 2024

**INTRO.:** Good morning and welcome to our journey through the book of Genesis! I have recently begun rereading J.I. Packer's book, *Knowing God*. I would highly recommend every person read this book and that you take time to go through it more than once. This week I was reading the chapter, "*The Majesty of God*," and Packer begins by speaking of the meaning of the word *majesty* which comes from Latin, meaning *greatness*. None of us can fathom how far God is above us in greatness. He goes on to speak of how we like to speak of God being a personal God, which He is, but we need to remember that He is not like us. We are finite but He is infinite. We are limited in space, time, knowledge, and power. God is not limited like we are for He is eternal, infinite, and almighty. Last week we looked at five words, "*In the beginning God created*," (3 words in the Hebrew) and we looked at what this says about Him. This tells us He is eternal: when the beginning came around, He was already existing. Because He is eternal, He is unchanging, His character will be constant: the same yesterday, today, and forever. He will always be holy, righteous, just, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. Because He is eternal, He is inescapable, and every person will have to face Him. He is self-existent and as such is the ONLY uncaused cause. He is the potter, and we are the clay. He is omnipotent, the all-powerful One. He created the universe out of NOTHING!! I have a hard time creating things when I have all the necessary materials. He is also self-sufficient, He does not need anyone or anything to exist. We need water, oxygen, food, and this time of year, we need heat, just to name a few. Some think that God created man and woman because He was lonely. God doesn't need us but by His grace and mercy He uses us. This should cause us to respond in worship! Those words, *In the beginning God created*, tell us all these things about God!

From there we are going to jump into the description given day by day. Before we do I want to take a few moments to talk about this word, *day*. There has been some debate about the meaning of this word. Is it a literal 24-hour day or is each day a certain period of years? The word in the Hebrew is *yom*, and it can mean a 24-hour day or a period of time (i.e. Day of Jehovah is a period of seven years), but it never refers to hundreds or millions of years.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, "However, whenever the word is used with a number or numeral, it always means 24-hours. Not only is it followed by a numeral, it is also followed by the phrase *evening and morning*, and this phrase also limits it to 24-hours. Furthermore, the Sabbath Law, as given to Israel in the Law of Moses, is based upon six days of creation and the seventh day of rest. Finally, with the fourth day, there is the mention of *days, years, signs, and seasons*, showing that already within Genesis 1 there is the normal system of time in operation."

Last week we saw the greatness of God in creation and this week we see not only the greatness of God, but how He is also a personal God. To do this we're going to look at three phrases, "*And God said*," "*Let there be*" or "*Let there be*," and finally, "*And there was*," or "*And it was so*."

**"And God said:"** We see this phrase in verses 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28 and 29. All but the seventh day begins with this phrase. God spoke the universe into existence. God is the only subject in these verses. As the days are described the beginning description is that God said. This is so unlike all the other false deities; God is actually verbally communicating.

**Psalm 33:6-9** By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. **7** He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. **8** Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. **9** For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

This is once again a sign of His grace and mercy. God did not have to communicate with us, but He has chosen to do so. Before anything came into existence God spoke! There is an emphasis on the words of God, and we have before us today the written word of God. We believe that this book, the Bible, is the very Word of God.

**1 Peter 1:23-25** For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. **24** For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, **25** but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.

**2 Peter 1:19-21** And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. **20** Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. **21** For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

This is why, every Sunday, when we gather, we open the Bible, and teach and preach from it. It should be the first thing a believer looks for when deciding on a church. The Bible is absolute truth and is so important for us to understand that Jesus promises the Holy Spirit.

**John 16:7–15** But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. **8** When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; **10** in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; **11** and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. **12** “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. **13** But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. **14** He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. **15** All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

God’s Word teaches, comforts, convicts, corrects, and exposes us for who we are.

**Hebrews 4:12-13** For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

**2 Timothy 3:14-17** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Even after Adam and Eve sinned God spoke to them. God did not let them go in their sin and disobedience.

**Genesis 3:9** But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

God doesn’t ask this question because He is unaware of Adam’s location. He gives Adam the opportunity to admit his sin. God then tells His discipline for their sin and the promise of a deliverer and the ultimate doom of the serpent. We should thank God that He brings conviction on our hearts when we sin. Have you ever tried to explain away your sin and rationalize your unwillingness to confess it to God and those you hurt? This happened to me just the other night. I had not responded kindly with my words and as I was laying in bed the Holy Spirit is convicting me of my sin. I’m trying to justify my words, but God would not give me peace until I admitted I was wrong and sought forgiveness.

Am I grateful that God is still speaking today through His Word as the Holy Spirit teaches, encourages, comforts, and rebukes?

**“Let there be” or “Let the”**

This is a command from God. This speaks of His authority, His sovereignty, and His power.

First day: *“Let there be light”*

Second day: *“Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water”*

Third Day: *“Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear”*

*“Let the land produce vegetation: seed bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to various kinds”*

Fourth Day: *“Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth”*

Fifth day: *Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky”*

*“Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground”*  
God commands all of this into existence! What is the result of God’s commands?

**“And there was,” or “And it was so.”**

When God spoke, it happened!!

**Hebrews 11:3** By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

What God says will happen.

**Hebrews 6:17–18** Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. **18** God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

Jesus says this concerning the fulfillment of His Word:

**Matthew 5:17–18** “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. **18** I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

“not the smallest letter:” (*iota*: smallest letter of Greek alphabet or *yodh* for Jewish believers as this is the smallest Hebrew letter which looks like an apostrophe)

“least stroke of a pen:” small marks that help distinguish one Hebrew letter from another, a small projection on the letters

This is so unlike us. Has everything you ever said all come true? We can trust that what God says in His Word will come true. The Scriptures teach that the Lord is coming back and we believe it could be very soon (not setting any dates). They believed it could be soon when Peter was writing his epistles. Some scoffed at them because it hadn't happened yet.

**2 Peter 3:8–13** But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. **9** The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. **10** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. **11** Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives **12** as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. **13** But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

We would do well to know the Word of God for every word of it is true!

There was a popular saying that came out several years ago that sounds good but needs to be altered. It went like this: “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.” How does that need to be changed? “God said it. That settles it.”

Bible reading dropped dramatically in 2022. It is unclear why. Roughly 50 percent of American adults reported opening Scripture at least **three times a year** every year from 2011 to 2021, according to American Bible Society surveys. Then, in 2022, that number declined to 39 percent.

### SO WHAT???

One of the main points of this message is the centrality of the Word of God. In the beginning of the creation account we read, “*And God said,*” that is, God communicates to us about what, how, and who He created. God did not have to speak, but He did! This truly is a sign of His mercy and grace. Not only did God speak but what He said would happen, happened. “*Let there be....*” “*And it was so....*” What is the first thing the serpent said to Eve in tempting her to disobey?

**Genesis 3:1** Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

Then, Eve didn't get it quite right in her response.

**Genesis 3:2–3** The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, **3** but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

\*If I have come to faith in Christ, am I spending time reading and studying the Bible?

## Top 5 Heresies Among American Evangelicals

American evangelicals' grasp on theology is slipping, and more than half affirmed heretical views of God in the 2022 State of Theology survey, released by Ligonier Ministries and Lifeway Research.

Overall, adults in the U.S. are moving away from orthodox understandings of God and his Word year after year. More than half of the country (53%) now believes Scripture "is not literally true," up from 41 percent when the biannual survey began in 2014.

Researchers called the rejection of the divine authorship of the Bible the "clearest and most consistent trend" over the eight years of data. Researchers wrote, "This view makes it easy for individuals to accept biblical teaching that they resonate with while simultaneously rejecting any biblical teaching that is out of step with their own personal views or broader cultural values."

Here are five of the most common mistaken beliefs *held by evangelicals*:

**1. Jesus isn't the only way to God.** 56 percent of evangelical respondents affirmed that "God accepts the worship of all religions." This answer indicates a bent toward universalism—believing there are ways to bypass Jesus in our approach to and acceptance by God.

**2. Jesus was created by God.** 73 percent agreed with the statement that "Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God." This is a form of Arianism, a popular heresy that arose in the early fourth century.

**3. Jesus is not God.** 43 percent affirmed that "Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God," which is another form of Arian heresy.

**4. The Holy Spirit is not a personal being.** 60 percent of the evangelical survey respondents believe that "The Holy Spirit is a force but is not a personal being."

**5. Humans aren't sinful by nature.** 57 percent also agreed to the statement that "Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature." In other words, humans might be capable of committing individual sins, but we do not have sinful natures. This denies the doctrine of original sin.

*Source: Stefani McDade, "Top 5 Heresies Among American Evangelicals," CT magazine online (9-19-22)*

Reading guide to read through the Bible.

Good study Bible.

Be accountable to someone.

Journal what you're learning.

Share with another what God is teaching you.

\*Am I encouraging those to whom I'm witnessing to read the Bible for themselves. Don't assume they know the gospel.

This past week I came across the testimony of Guillaume Bignon, a French atheist who came to faith in Christ. I looked up how he came to faith and found an interview on C S Lewis Institute website.

It took months before he came to faith and the interview chronicles his journey. This is the last question that he was asked in the interview.

### **How would you advise Christians to engage with those who are skeptical or even searching?**

Yeah. So there's a couple of pieces of advice that I like to give Christians while engaged in conversations with what could be old atheist self, right? So some of the things that I think worked quite well and that are a really good idea and encouragement. One would be to never assume that the person that you're speaking with actually knows the Jesus of the Bible, so the same piece of advice applies here. Try to point them to the scriptures. First of all, as Christians, we're convinced that the scriptures are alive, so there's actually a spiritual benefit in reading the text. But just to point them to make for themselves a good opinion of what Jesus actually said and did, so to encourage them to learn, just on the historical realm.

And the second is to not assume that they've heard the gospel, so as evangelical Christians, we like to think that this message is obviously the constantly proclaimed truth of the scriptures, that everyone has obviously heard that we are saved by faith in Jesus, that eternal life is not based on our own righteousness, but it's purely by faith in Christ because He died on the cross to pay the penalty in our place. That message that I came to understand and accept as part of my conversion was radically new to me. I had never heard anything like that in over 25 years, and so I don't want Christians to assume that this message is understood and known by everybody, and there's very much a place in the conversation with an atheist to say, "Let's forget a second whether or not it's true. I'm not trying to yet convince you that any of this is true. But do you even know Christianity affirms? What is the message? And I'd be happy to tell you what it says before we can come to discuss whether that's actually true," and to explain that gospel succinctly, and I've done that with a

number of folks, and I found there's plenty of value in simply laying out the account on the table directly to say, "This is the message," and to try to see if they actually understand this. And one test of whether they understand it, I have found, is that very often, right after I've explained this, the first thing that comes out of their mouth is the objection that Paul himself anticipated in Romans when he lays out the gospel. He anticipates somebody's going to say, "Well, if we're saved by faith. If our good works don't do anything, then why not go on sinning just so that we can enjoy this and that grace may abound?" So Paul anticipates this, and I'm hearing this very often when I present this message, which tells me, "Yes. Now they get it." So that's a check where we understand. Now, the message is understood and correctly evaluated. It's a very positive place to take the listener, and then we can discuss the merits of the message, obviously. But I think this is a helpful piece to do.

\*Maybe you are searching today and not sure about who Jesus is or where you stand as far as salvation is concerned. Would you be willing to pick up the Bible and begin reading the gospels? Write your questions down and speak with a believer.

\*If I am asked a question about the Bible that I don't know an answer to seek some help from more mature believers.

