

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

"He Created Them" Genesis 1:26-31

February 25, 2024

**INTRO.:** We welcome you as we continue our journey through the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible. This book is foundational in understanding God's Plan, Purpose, and Design. We have looked at how it all started with the first words of this book, *in the beginning, God.* When the beginning came, God was already here, as He has existed from eternity past. If you and I start from the wrong place, we will end up in the wrong place. Some would like to do away with the truths in Genesis because it makes us accountable to the Creator that is described. Then, we looked at the phrase, *and God said.* What did it take for God to create? He spoke creation into existence, making something out of nothing. We really can't totally comprehend this because nobody here has ever done that. The next phrase we examined was, *it was good.* As Pastor John said this reminds us that everything was created by the Almighty, loving God described in Genesis. You and I can trust Him because He is the Creator and He is good. I am called to worship the Creator and not created things. Last week we began looking at the phrase, *in His image.* This is the phrase used to describe God's creation of mankind: man and woman. This is the peak of God's creation! What does this truth mean and how does this affect me?

\*We recognize that we are accountable to God as our Creator and Judge

\*We recognize the need to obey and worship Him

\*We recognize that we are unable to do this apart from a restored relationship with God which is only possible through Jesus Christ

\*We recognize that we are not our own, and that God, both created us and bought us, with God the Son, Jesus Christ, paying the price for our sins

\*We recognize that our value comes from God, being created in His image

\*We recognize that every person has value and worth

This morning, we want to look at what God says next in this truth of each of us being created in the image of God. To begin I want to show you something that my wife made me for Christmas one year. It is a temperature blanket that is intricately designed, and specially made for me. It has great value to me, and it isn't just because it provides warmth. It possesses greater value to me because of the person who made it and why she made it. This is a demonstration of her love for me.

You and I have been intricately designed by God, our Creator. Psalm 139 says that we have been fearfully and wonderfully made by God and this is from the moment of conception. I want us to read Genesis 1:26-31 again, to remind us of the uniqueness of humanity. I want us to look at how God ties gender to being *created in His image.*

**Genesis 1:26-31** Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Gender identity is a big issue today and I have prayed that I would present the truth in love. I know that some struggle with what has been called, *gender dysphoria* (up 1000 percent in the United States and up 4000 percent in the United Kingdom), where there is a deep struggle with their own biological sex. I do not want to make this out to be easy for everyone. I have asked several to pray as we come to this topic and passage in the Bible. So, I want to look at 3 things: The Scriptures, The Culture (how we have come to this place), and Our Response.

### THE SCRIPTURES

When I say the Scriptures, I mean the Bible. This must be the first place we look and the source of my conclusions. Why do we look there?

\*Absolute truth

This is what our doctrinal statement says regarding the Bible.

We believe that the **Bible**, consisting of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is the verbally inspired Word of God (II Tim. 3:16, II Peter 1:20,21) written by men divinely and uniquely inspired, and is therefore inerrant in the original writings (Matt. 5:18), and that it is the supreme and final authority for faith and daily conduct (II Tim. 3:17).

**2 Timothy 3:16–17** 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.

**2 Peter 1:20–21** Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 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.

**Matthew 5:18** 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.

So, what does the Bible have to say about gender?

\*God's Intricate Design

**Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

As I mentioned last week there is a dramatic shift from the language used referring to God creating land, water, plants, sun, moon, stars, sea creatures, birds, and animals to the language used in creating mankind.

"*Let us make:*" this is one Hebrew word but this is a change from "*let there be*" or "*let there be.*" Arnold Fruchtenbaum says, "The change in the form of this word shows that what is about to be described is indeed a momentous event."

"*Let us make mankind:*" This is the Hebrew word "*adam*" which is, of course, the name given to the first man, Adam. It is actually a generic form so can refer to both man and woman. So, we already see that God's approach is different than how He is described in creating the plants and animals. Yet, it doesn't stop there.

"*Let us make mankind in our image:*" the original image or imitation.

Mankind is the only one of God's creations that is referred to in this way. So, in what way is mankind created in God's image?

Humans possess intellect. That is, the ability to think and reason.

Humans can express emotion: sad, joyful, angry, express grief,

Humans possess a will

"*Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness:*" from the Hebrew word, *dmot* meaning "a model" or "a copy." This emphasizes the uniqueness of mankind in creation (Fruchtenbaum).

The next verse uses the phrase *in the image of God* twice more. The writer also uses the word created (*bara*) three times.

So God *created* mankind in his own image  
in the image of God he *created* them  
male and female he *created* them

Why would God have this word, *create*, here three times? There is an emphasis being made here!

Arnold Fruchtenbaum: Here the word *bara* is used three times to make clear that a high point is reached. First, it is used of man's creation. Second, it is used of being created in the divine image. The phrase *image of God* is found only 4 times, all in Genesis: 1:26-27 (twice), 9:6 and 5:3. Third, *bara* is used in that man was created in two sexes, and both sexes were created on the sixth day, and both have the image of God.

God ties us being *created* by Him *in His image* with *male and female*. Who is doing the creating? God is the creator.

Gregg Allison, professor of Christian Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: “Every cell in a woman’s body has an XX sex chromosome. Every cell in a man’s body has an XY sex chromosome.”

Samuel D. Ferguson, “According to Scripture and as attested by biology, God shapes our gender into our bodies. Biology and sex cannot be put asunder.”

Look at how the creation of man and woman are detailed further in Genesis 2.

**Genesis 2:7** the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

**Genesis 2:22** Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

What was God’s conclusion at the end of Genesis 1? After He had finished creating this is what is said.

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

Samuel D. Ferguson, “Our identity—who we truly are—is God-given, not man-made. God grants people the honor of living out and cultivating their identity, but not license ultimately to design and create it. Gloriously, Genesis 1 also reveals that the foundation of human dignity and worth lies not in biological sex, gender, ethnicity, or performance but in the fact that all people are made in God’s image. This means that the process of living out our identity—though at times frustrated in a fallen world—is ultimately the unwrapping of a “very good” gift from God: “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).”

Some make the claim that all this changed after Adam and Eve sinned. Yet, God’s emphasis on the distinction between man and woman continues.

**Genesis 5:1–2** This is the written account of Adam’s line. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them “man.”

God’s design of us is intricate:

**Psalms 139:13–16** For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. **14** I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. **15** My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, **16** your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

This includes our gender.

\*God’s Purpose

God ties gender with His purpose in Genesis 1.

**Genesis 1:28** God blessed them (man and woman) and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

We see this uniting together again in Genesis 2.

**Genesis 2:22–25** Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Further on in the New Testament we see the distinction of gender. The religious leaders come to Jesus, attempting to trip Him up.

**Matthew 19:3–5** Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” **4** “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’

5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?

## THE CULTURE

How did we get to where we are today? We could say that this could be for many issues and challenges we are facing today.

\*There is no absolute truth

When we take God out of the picture there can be no absolute truth. There has to be someone above us if there is going to be a standard of absolute truth. Otherwise, it is a battle of opinions and what makes one opinion better than another?

Along with denying absolute truth there comes a low view of Scripture. I can pick and choose what I want to accept in the Bible. There is also a tendency to take what is said in the Bible out of context which is exactly what Satan did when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. He challenged Jesus to throw Himself down from the highest point of the temple. Satan quoted Psalm 91:11-12.

**Psalm 91:11–12** For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; **12** they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Jesus responded with Scripture in the right context.

**Deuteronomy 6:16** Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah.

Satan wants us to doubt the Word of God for he is the *father of lies* (John 8:44).

He got Adam and Eve to doubt God's word to them.

**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'?"

**Genesis 3:4** "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman.

Samuel Ferguson, in his booklet, *Does God Care About Gender Identity?*, shares the following as Core Beliefs of the Transgender Movement:

\*I get to determine my identity

The problem: This puts one in the place of God. There are many things you and I don't get to determine: our parents, our race, our nationality.

In the Bible God is referred to as the potter, and we, as humans, as the clay (Isaiah 64:8). God has made every one of us unique and special, in His image, for His purpose and glory. This includes our gender.

\*My feelings, not my body, determine my gender

This is not to make light or trivialize our feelings but the problem with this is the difficulty that arises when I allow my feelings to control everything. How many times have following our feelings gotten us into trouble? Didn't Eve follow her feelings when she said the fruit looked good?

**Genesis 3:6** When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

For example: I feel like I don't need a driver's license, so I drive without one. I have a job, but I don't feel like going to work multiple times. There are consequences to such decisions.

Feelings need to be evaluated in light of the Word of God.

\*We find wholeness through external, not internal change

Some of the solutions include puberty blockers, hormone treatments, surgeries

There is hope that through these procedures there can be inward healing.

In the Bible we see the work of God in a person's life begins with the heart and moves outward to change our thoughts and actions.

What do we know about our heart?

**Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV) — 9** “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

So, God wants to change our hearts. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were all about making up rules and laws and ignoring the heart.

**Matthew 23:25–26** “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. **26** Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

**Romans 12:2** Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

### **OUR RESPONSE**

So, how are we to respond?

\*Love others where they’re at

We don’t make fun, ridicule, or demean those struggling with gender dysphoria.

We live in a culture that has equated disagreeing with someone’s life choices or lifestyles as hatred. With this in mind I believe those who know Christ as their Savior and Lord need to take even more opportunities to love others. We need to love people even if they never respond to the gospel. People will know if they are just one of your projects or if you really care about them.

\*Listen to people

Is this a place where people can be honest about their struggles?

Are we willing to walk a long journey with people? Do others know we care enough to listen? This doesn’t mean that we agree.

\*Share the truth of the Word of God

While loving and listening, share the truth of the Word of God. To not share the truth of God’s Word would be unloving. Am I willing to continue to share the truth of Scripture and why I believe it to be true?

By the way, we shouldn’t be surprised that those who don’t know Christ as their Lord and Savior, don’t agree with what the Bible has to say. Sometimes we won’t get the response we had hoped for but don’t give up.

Do I truly believe people need the gospel? People need a heart change! After coming to faith in Christ they need to be disciplined and mentored in the faith.

**Romans 10:17** Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

\*Pray

**Ephesians 6:18–20** And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. **19** Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Who am I praying for as I share the truths of the Word of God?

### **SO WHAT????**

\*Thank God that He has designed me for His plan, purpose, and my good

\*Be willing to share my struggles with mature believers (seek Biblical counseling)

\*Reach out to those who have yet to come to faith in Jesus: love, listen, share God’s Word, and pray

\*Be a student of the Word of God living out my faith

\*Make prayer a priority: set a goal for my prayer life

