

TRUSTING GOD'S PLAN, PURPOSE, AND DESIGN

"Be Fruitful...." Genesis 1:26-28

March 10, 2024

INTRO.: It truly is a joy and privilege to welcome you this morning to our series, **Trusting God's Plan, Purpose, and Design**, from the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible. I want to begin by showing you a picture I have hanging on my wall that is extremely meaningful and valuable to me. Why is this picture valuable to me? To me you can't put a price tag on the value of this picture to me. This past week was National Son's Day. We have a group text with all our sons and their wives so I sent a group text saying, "Happy National Son's Day. So thankful for each of you and pray you will always seek the Lord! It is a privilege and honor to be the father of six sons." At the risk of saying we have favorites (which we don't) this is a picture put together by one of our sons after I took him to the Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony for his all-time favorite Dallas Cowboy, Emmitt Smith. We had only lived in the Danville area for less than a year and I was able to get tickets to the induction ceremony and game. I called him and asked him what he was doing on that day because I happened to have a spare ticket if he wanted to go. This picture is valuable because of the gift he is to me and the memory of that weekend. All of our sons are a gift from God. What other gifts do we have from God? This breath you and I just took is a gift from God.

*Forgiveness of sins available only through Jesus Christ is a gift from God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—**9** not by works, so that no one can boast.

*God's discipline when we disobey Him is a gift and a show of His love.

Hebrews 12:5-6 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, **6** because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

*God's presence in our lives is a real gift from Him. Do you know that if you know Christ as your Savior and Lord you never have to pray, "Lord, be with me," because He always is with you.

Hebrews 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

We have been walking slowly through this first chapter in Genesis because there is so much that is foundational to our lives. As we continue this series, We have already seen God as the Creator (in the beginning God created), the One who spoke and it was created (and God said). He is the One who said that what He created was good (it was good). We have looked at the apex of His creation: mankind.

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

Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, in His likeness. This is not said of any other being that was created. Mankind is not just a higher form of an animal! Then, we looked at how God created mankind, male and female, thus tying gender to being created in His image. Immediately after this God begins to unfold His plan and purpose for creating mankind. He begins by stating His blessing on man and woman.

I want us to look at something this morning that most people don't look at as a gift from God. So, let's read Genesis 1:28-31 again. We are only going to look at just the next phrase after God announces His blessing. To do so we are going to read the last four verses of chapter one in unison again.

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish 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.
The phrase we're looking at is, "*Be fruitful and increase in number (multiply).*"

THE PLAN AND PURPOSE OF GOD

What is this phrase, “*Be fruitful and increase in number (multiply)*,” telling us? God is talking about the physical relationship between a man and a woman. He is talking about “sex.”

God created sex. I know that for some people this blows their minds. We did not come up with this idea on our own. This was God’s plan to fill the earth. Sex was not only created by God, but He also commanded it to fulfill His plan and purpose. Maybe, you’re thinking, “Why are we talking about this in church?” Let me ask you this question, “Is anybody else talking about it?” We’re talking about it because God talked about it in His Word, the Bible.

Some people are of the opinion that God blushes when the word is mentioned. You can look through the Old Testament and the New Testament and you will see that it comes up many times. Some people think that God is only telling people not to, that it’s “No, no, no.” Actually, we’re going to be reminded that God says, “Yes, yes, yes,” within His guidelines. God has provided this means to populate the earth but also to join man and woman together as well as for mutual pleasure (read the book Song of Solomon). I also realize for the topic this morning is difficult because as a married couple you have wanted to have children but have been unable. God knows and understands that, and you can still honor God in how you view sex as a gift from Him.

THE PARAMETERS GIVEN BY GOD

Who?

This gift is to be celebrated between a biological male and a biological female. The command, to be fruitful and multiply, is given immediately after God tells us that He created mankind male and female. It takes a man and a woman, the sperm and the egg, to be joined together for there to be a baby born.

When?

Sex is to be celebrated between a husband and wife, two people that are joined together in marriage. We will be talking more about marriage as we look further in Genesis 2 where we read:

Genesis 2:20–25 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. **21** So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. **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. **23** 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.” **24** For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. **25** The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Let’s look at what Jesus says in Matthew 19..

Matthew 19:3–6 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’? **6** So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

Jesus ties together Genesis 1 and 2: “Haven’t you read:”

“that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female”

“a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh”

This physical intimacy was meant to be a gift that you give to your spouse. It is something so valuable that you save it for the one you will marry. There are less people getting married today. Why is that? It’s because more people are living together. Some would say, “Living together is a way to test the relationship out.”

“The Problem with Living Together,” by Jennifer Roback Morse (2001) “The Census reports a 72 percent increase in the number of cohabiting couples since 1990. Unfortunately, research shows that cohabitation is correlated with greater likelihood of unhappiness, and domestic violence in the relationship. Cohabiting couple report lower levels of satisfaction in the relationship than married couples. Women are more likely to be abused by a cohabiting boyfriend than a husband. Children are more likely to be abused by their mothers’ boyfriends than by her husband, even if the boyfriend is their biological father. If a cohabiting couple ultimately marries, they tend to report lower levels of marital satisfaction and a higher propensity to divorce.”

“Cohabitation as a Means to Marriage,” by Amy Tracy (2008) “Couples say that they need to kick the tires a little before settling down,” says Dr. Brad Wilcox, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Virginia, and director of the Marriage Matters Project. “But what they don’t understand is that once you adopt a consumer mentality, you undercut marriage and open yourself up to marital breakup and unhappiness.”

This assertion is backed up by plenty of research, including a 2002 report issued by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics that states, “The probability of a first marriage ending in separation or divorce within 5 years is 20 percent while the probability of a premarital cohabitation breaking up within 5 years is 49 percent. After 10 years, the probability of a first marriage ending is 33 percent, compared with 62 percent for cohabitation.”

In the Bible, having sex with someone who is not your wife, while married, is called adultery. To have sex with someone while single is called fornication. We have given them nicer names like having a fling or an affair or hooking up to name a few. It just sounds better.

What does the Bible have to say?

1 Thessalonians 4:3 It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;

1 Corinthians 6:12–20 “Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything. **13** “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. **14** By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. **15** Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! **16** Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” **17** But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

When you and I come to faith we have a new Master and this body is no longer ours, it is the Lord’s. Jesus doesn’t even stop there. The religious leaders who were really good at checking the boxes and making up laws and rules thought they were okay with this one. They weren’t sleeping with people they weren’t married to, but Jesus goes the next step.

Matthew 5:27–28 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ **28** But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Jesus says that immorality begins in the mind. How many of us can say we’ve never struggled with wrong thoughts? This levels the playing field. We all need to be thinking on the right things.

Philippians 4:6–9 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **8** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

The phrase translated, “sexual immorality” is the Greek word “porneia,” which refers to any kind of sexual conduct outside of marriage. You can see how we get the word, “pornography,” which has done and continues to do all kinds of damage in people’s lives and many marriages. If you are struggling with pornography don’t attempt to overcome this addiction on your own!

You can see how this sin begins in the mind by the example of King David with his sin of adultery.

2 Samuel 11:2–4 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, **3** and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” **4** Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home.

You may be saying, "This is so out of touch with the world in which I live. This so old fashioned." Guess what? Since sin entered the world, this has been a problem. Look at how many people in the Old Testament had multiple wives. God never condones that behavior and there were always problems when there were multiple wives. In the New Testament times a man might have a mistress, slavery (which God did not approve of either) made it easy for him to have a concubine, and there were always the harlots available. Wives were not treated with honor and value. Christianity brought value to women. Husbands, who are followers of Jesus, are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

The city of Corinth was noted for its immorality, and it even infiltrated the church. The church is rebuked by Paul in his letter to Corinth because they said nothing about a man who was living with his father's wife.

1 Corinthians 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife.

This physical relationship is a gift from God to be for a man and a woman who are married. It is their gift to one another. To do otherwise is to cheapen its value. In God's eyes there is no such thing as casual sex. Sexual sin is both a sin against God and against the other person involved.

I do want to say that all sin is an affront to God. Sometimes as Christians we pick and choose what sin we want to highlight. All sin is rebellion with God. Ultimately God is after our hearts and minds, for that is where sin begins. You and I, created in the image of God, were created by God to worship and obey Him. We all are born with a sin nature, a bent for rebelling against God.

To illustrate our need for a heart change let's look at what Jesus says to the Pharisees and teachers of the law who asked this question, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat."

Jesus, response, "Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?"

Jesus then speaks in a parable and Peter wants Jesus to explain the parable. Jesus' response is as follows from Matthew 15.

Matthew 15:16–20 "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. **17** "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? **18** But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' **19** For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. **20** These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.' "

Have you given your heart to the Lord? This is the only way that we can follow the Lord's commands in any area of our lives. God, first and foremost, wants your heart which leads to a changed life. (When we don't get our heart right, it's like sweeping our sin under the rug. The sin is still there, we're just trying to make it look better.)

We see the plan and purpose of God, the parameters given by God, and lastly:

THE PROMISES OF GOD

*God's commands have purpose

Josh McDowell, many years ago, highlighted the fact that God's commands were to provide and protect. God didn't come up with arbitrary commands to ruin our lives. In this area, when we follow God's commands, He provides us a clear conscience, a gift to give to our future spouse, opportunity to have a better marriage (if we marry), and ongoing fellowship with Him. He protects us from disease, pregnancy when we're not ready to have a child, more difficulty when and if we marry, and guilt caused by our sin.

*Disobedience brings consequences in every area of sin. We realize this in other areas but sometimes neglect the consequences when it comes to this area. When I lie to someone what are some of the consequences? Trust is broken, doubt is brought upon what I would say in the future.

When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he had to attempt to cover it up and ended up having Bathsheba's husband sent to the front line of battle so he would be killed. David's son died, relationships in his house were wrecked,

and he had ongoing trouble with his sons. His son, Solomon, ended up having many wives and concubines which led to him adopting their worship of false gods. Ultimately the kingdom was divided when Solomon's son became king.

*There is forgiveness

It begins with salvation. Recognizing I am a sinner, that my sin has separated me from God, and that I am under the rightful judgment of God because of my sin. Immorality isn't mankind's biggest problem. Our biggest problem is separation from God caused by our sin. I need to turn from my sin (repent) and seek God's forgiveness only available through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, giving my life to Him.

Some people think, "Well, I've failed in this area so there's no hope for me." Some say, "I've started down this road, I might just as well continue." God says there is forgiveness available.

When David recognized his sin in this area this is what he said.

Psalm 51:1-4 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. **2** Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. **3** For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. **4** Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

David recognized that his sin was first and foremost against God. He could not hide his sin from God. His sin was also against Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah.

When we come to God, turning from our sin, and seeking His forgiveness, He promises to forgive. The following verse is written to the believer. When we sin as a follower of Christ, it breaks our fellowship with God. We don't lose our salvation.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

You can start new! I also want to mention that if you are pregnant from sex outside of marriage, please protect the life of the baby and don't seek an abortion.

We are not here to look down on others who are living together outside of marriage. We are attempting to share the truth of God's Word knowing that it is the best way to live. Everyone here is a work in progress, looking to become more like Jesus through His power and strength.

SO WHAT???

*Do I know Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord? Have I gotten my heart right with God? When I do, I am giving my life over to God, knowing that I am no longer my own. I now belong to God.

*Am I willing to trust God's Word when it comes to EVERY area of my life, including sex?

Knowing God by J.I. Packer: "Wisdom is, in fact, the practical side of moral goodness. As such, it is found in its fullness only in God. He alone is naturally and entirely and invariably wise.... God is never other than wise in anything that he does. Wisdom, as the old theologians used to say, is his essence, just as power, and truth, and goodness, are his essence—integral elements, that is, in his character."

Someone once said, we shouldn't take down a fence until we know the reason it was put there in the first place. God has a fence around sex for very good reasons! God wants to keep things out that would do harm and keep things in to protect it.

Another author compared it to a fire in the fireplace. Anyone here have a fireplace in your house? Why do you have it? You put wood in there and start a fire. To provide some warmth, a nice place to go and sit in the winter, a good place to read and think. The fire wouldn't be so good if you started it outside of the fireplace. Outside of the fireplace a fire can cause a tremendous amount of damage and even be life-threatening.

By God giving the command to be fruitful and multiply he is saying that He created sex, and that it is good within His parameters.

*Am I willing to commit to filling my mind with those things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy?

*Am I reading, studying, and memorizing the Word of God?

*I may need to seek Biblical counseling

*I don't know where all of you are at in this area this morning but if you are not following God's direction in this area, I ask you this question. "Am I willing to, by God's strength and power, to turn from that, seek God's forgiveness, and start new today?"

God says yes when we follow His guidelines. When we are particularly careful about how we treat something, we place a high value on it.