

IT WAS GOOD: God's Design for humanity

Genesis 1:26-31

Hello Church Family, as Pastor Alan said, he is out, and **I am grateful for the opportunity to lead us as we open God's word this weekend.** This weekend we continue our series **"It Was Good"** discussing *God's design for the World, Relationships, Sexuality, and Parenting.* Today we will continue in **GENESIS chapter 1:26-31** as we discuss **God's Design for Humanity.** And we will get there in just a second.

Before we get there I wanted to share a little family story. Back when my dad and uncle were kids **the local drugstore was the place to be.** You could see your friends, get a **soda-POP**, and most importantly scan the **rotating display** of comic books. As I talked to my uncle Dave this week he told me how sometimes he would get yelled at by the store clerk because he would take so much time looking threw them, but he told me he was just **trying to make a wise financial decision because comics were expensive... they cost a whole 10 cents!** As my uncle got more and more comics he had a friend that **brought over a book** and showed him that the **#1 superman** was worth **over \$100** back then. That was when he decided **he was gonna keep his comics hoping they would be of some value someday.** He began spending **more and more time** at the drugstore, more time, reading them, more time buying them, and using more space to store them. **My grandma** thought they took up too much of his time, and too much room in the house. As my uncle shares the story, he came home from school and his mom had grocery bags filled with comic books, ready to be thrown in the trash. Apparently, in their **little town in OH, everyone had a 55-gallon drum** and it was where you would burn your paper trash. Wouldn't you know it, his chore was to burn whatever trash got put in the drum. **So that day my Grandma made my uncle burn his own comic book collection.** Her quote to him was **"you don't need those funny books!"** The reason I know that story is because **my uncle has brought it up a few times.** Not just because of the trama of burning something that was **valuable to him**, but because in the collection of comic books was a copy of issue **number 15 of Amazing Fantasy.** **(PICTURE: AMAZING FANTASY - SHOW PICTURE HERE >>NOT BEFORE T<<)** This was the first appearance of a **new teenage superhero named Spider-man!** That might not mean much to you if you don't know comics, but a mint condition copy of that comic **sold last year at auction for 3.6 million dollars!!**

To my grandma, the comic had no value. **To my uncle,** he hoped they would have value someday, but admitted he wouldn't have ever guessed the current value. **But to the auction buyer** - he saw supreme value and was willing to pay an incredible price. **Each of them had a different perspective** of the comics' value, and for each of them, that **changed the way they treated** the comics. **Sometimes we are like that with our own value.** We don't know our value, and it has to do with **not embracing our design.** **In our scripture today we will see that our value comes from God's design for Humanity.**

PRAY

GENESIS 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ... **31** And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Before we dive into our main points, I want to point out **one word.** Our passage starts with the word **"then."** God is coming to the **end of His creation** and prior to this word "then," there has been a **run-on idea** and structure running throughout. **It is almost poetic:**

- **And God said,** "Let there be light," and there was light. **And God saw that the light was good.**
- **And God said,** "Let the earth sprout vegetation..." **And God saw that it was good.**
- **And God said,** It happened **And God saw that it was good.**
- **And God said,** It happened **And God saw that it was good.**

Over and over the same pattern, the same words.

But, with the **creation of man**, the pattern completely changes. As I studied this passage, this word **"then"** really seemed to signify that **God was doing a new thing, something different, something special, something completely separate**. He was still creating, but this last bit of creation is **set apart**.

God goes from filling the earth with creation, to creating humanity to enjoy the creation He has filled the earth with. It's kinda like putting a puzzle together. Any puzzle people? *It's ok, it's nerdy, but I putting myself out there, somebody join me?* Not kid puzzles. I mean like a 500 pc and up. **What's the best part?** The best part isn't finding all the edge pieces. The best part isn't sorting out the different colors that look like they are part of the same area. No, the best moment of the puzzle is putting the last piece in. **Sometimes Jodi and I fight over who get to put that piece in.** There is something so **satisfying and fulfilling about the last piece and finishing something you have started.**

That is why the **"THEN" is so significant**. Four little letters, but it completely shifts the focus to God's **crown of creation. Humanity**. God is about to put the last piece of the creation puzzle in its place. And it is different and separate from any other piece. **It's a big deal**, but it's not a big deal because **we** are a big deal. It's a big deal because God has designed humanity with an **identity and purpose different, special, unique, from all the rest of creation**.

The question we are trying to answer today is: What is God's design for Humanity? I hope we see that we are designed to bear God's image physically + share His story verbally, fueled by complete dependence on Him, within Godly community. So let's dive into that. MY FIRST POINT IS...

We are designed to bear God's Image

GENESIS 1:26 "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

Kent Hughes in his commentary on Genesis says this about this scripture, *"Here the narrative slows down during the sixth day (like slow motion), because it is here with the creation of man that we come to the apex of the narrative."*¹

What does it mean to bear the image of God?

Looking into **the word IMAGE**, one definition is to be **cut out**. I think of a **sculptor chiseling away** at a piece of marble. Creating something new out of what was. Those **SCULPTURE** point to the **SCULPTOR** behind them. **Michelangelo's David didn't just happen**, rain and erosion didn't slowly make the statue. In the same way, all of humanity's intricacies point to a creator as well. **I think that plays out in 2 ways:**

We are the physical representation of God

Pastor Matt Chandler "Our presence on Earth is akin to the ancient near East when rulers and authorities that ruled over distant lands, there would be statues - called an icon - put in place so there would be an image of the Reign and Rule of that King. You and I, as mankind, as human beings, are that icon, we are that image of God that shows that there is a Creator that is raining and ruling."²

That is what it means for us **to be the physical representation of God**. We are **cut out**, we are made in the image, in the likeness **of the ruling and reigning king**, and we are **placed as a proclamation of our God**. So **when the world around us that doesn't know our God, sees us**, *Our character, our actions, our understanding of right and wrong, our care for others*, these things should point people to see **that beyond us there is a king that is ruling and reigning - and that He deSIREs to be in relationship with his creation**.

In that **Amazing Fantasy** comic book, that features Spiderman, it says, **(PICTURE: WITH GREAT POWER..)** "With great power, there must also comes great responsibility." So, we physically represent God and take on His character and qualities, we see further in scripture that we **like Spiderman, have a great responsibility to be...**

We are the VERBAL representation of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

¹ R. Kent Hughes. *Preaching the Word: Genesis*. pg 35

² Matt Chandler. [*A Beautiful Design: In His Image*](#). 13:35-14:05

Going back to the idea of an **earthly king or Emperor**; a king would have had an **ambassador**. That person would go out to **proclaim the king's message**. That could be a **declaration** of war or **negotiating** a trade. No matter the business, one thing that was understood, **the ambassador's words were to be treated as if they were the actual words of the king**. It was like the king himself said it. **That is who we are as image-bearers, we physically + verbally represent our creator God.**

When we grasp the idea of being the Image of God, we understand our value

Later in the creation story, we see, a **more detailed depiction of God creating man** and it says in

GENESIS 2:7 "then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature."

[EVERYONE TAKE A BREATH WITH ME - IN, OUT] That breath we just took, that's God's, He owns that breathe, he gave that to me. God creates life with breath, and he sustains life with breath. **Isaiah 43:4** *I am he, I am he who will sustain you.*

DAILY HE IS GIVING YOU BREATH, WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH IT?

Have you ever heard the expression **"don't waste your breath?"** It is usually used in a negative light. Like "oh, they're never gonna listen, don't waste your breath." **OR LIKE ME "Why do I waste my breath around this house."** But what if our worry wasn't about "wasting our **own** breath," but instead, we woke up with the thought, **"Ok Andy, God has given you this breathe today. It's His, Don't waste His breath."**

How do we not waste His breath and image God?

1. We image God by connecting with God through repenting of sin, believing in Jesus and living in an ongoing relationship with God.
2. We image God by submitting to godly authority and ultimately to God's authority.
3. We image God by serving him in ways that advance his kingdom.
4. We image God by respecting all human life; particularly the weak, oppressed, sick, elderly and unborn.
5. We image God by refusing to live autonomous lives and by contending for community.
6. We image God by suffering well for the glory of God.

When we embrace God's image we understand the value of OUR breath, that value must translate to OTHERS as well.

A couple of weeks ago at Easter, **Pastor Alan** looked at 3 little words from the beginning of **2 Corinthians 5** *"From now on,"* and he said, ... *"From now on we are different. From now on I see and think **differently about the world**, I see and think **differently about myself**, from now on I see and think **about people** different than I used to, I see and think about **my past** different than I used to. **From now on everything is different.**"³*

If we truly grasp that humanity is **made in the image of God**, **This too makes everything different**. We see ourselves differently and we see the world around us differently. **Why?** Because no longer is that **co-worker** just annoying when they chew with their mouth open, no longer is that **cousin** just a jerk when politics come up, no longer is that **neighbor** down the street just lazy because their lawn doesn't look as good as yours (**that my lawn by the way**), **but they are part of humanity that God has designed and created in his image.**

We are a **Southern Baptist Church** and If you stop by **FirstNaples.org** and **check out our very freshly updated, super cool-looking, redesigned website (shameless plug - great job Taylor)**, you will see our **"who we are" page** that takes you to **"what we believe."** This page shares our beliefs on Scripture, God, Humanity, salvation, and a number of other doctrines - much of which is taken directly from the...

BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE listen to what the BFM says about humanity: *"The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love."*

This means that **every life**, from conception, is **created in the image of God**. Every life, regardless of **skin tone, pigmentation, age, gender, abilities, shoe size**, or anything else... every life is highly valuable to God and must be protected so...

³ Alan Brumback. [Easter at First: Jesus' Victory: He won the war I could never win.](#) 14:32-15:04

As a church, and as Christians, THERE ARE THINGS WE ARE AGAINST

We are against **abortion** and we believe that life begins at conception, We are against **Euthanasia** and believe that all life has meaning and purpose until God calls us home, We are against **Gender discrimination** and while the bible talks about specific roles there is no superior gender, and We are against any and all forms of **racism** and believe that the people of God should reflect heaven which will beautifully include every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.

Albert Mohler speaking specifically about abortion says in his book *The Gathering Storm*, "The pro-abortion movement has sown a culture of death. It attempts to destroy and to deny the sanctity of life, and the consequences are now clear to see. This is what happens when a society jettisons the moral code based on the truth that every human is an extension of God's common grace., and a bearer of God's image. Unless this march to death is reversed, the headlines will only become more horrifying and even deadlier."⁴

If what **Dr. Mohler** said is true and we live in a "culture of death," how do we impact that culture.

What if **First Naples** didn't just say what we are against, but **SHOWED** what we are for! **And not like your for Chick-fil-A waffle fries over McDonald's fries.** What if we served at **Pregnancy Resource Center** and encouraged young mom's who are choosing life, what if we went to the **Flordia Baptist Children's Home** and cleaned toilets or did whatever else they needed, what if we visited **nursing homes** and **assisted living facilities** to love on (and learn from) those who are often forgotten, what if **Love Naples** was an automatic on your calendar and a priority for your family, what if we got plugged into **Protected Harbor** and were present for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, what if we financially supported those who are walking through the **adoption** process - or even prayed about **adoption or foster care** ourselves.

WHAT IF WE WERE SO BUSY DOING WHAT WE ARE FOR – THAT WE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO ARGUE ABOUT WHAT WE ARE AGAINST – AND WHAT IF THOSE THINGS WE ARE DOING – SHOWED THE WORLD THAT WE ARE FOR LIFE IN ALL WAYS. But we can't do this in our own strength, WHICH LEADS TO MY NEXT POINT...

We are designed to be completely Dependant on God

GENESIS 1:28 "And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply..."

This is an incredibly revealing part of this passage. "God SAID to them..." Man and Woman. This is the **first time God speaks to any of His creation** and establishes an **identity and purpose for humanity**. From the very beginning, God sets up and established a **unique relationship with us**. When we are dependent on God we find **2 important things**:

We find identity through dependence

Paul Tripp "Immediately after creating Adam and Eve, God talks to them. He didn't do this with anything else he created. He simply rested and moved on... **Why did God talk to them?** God knew... they couldn't figure out life on their own. They were created to be dependent. God had to explain **who they were** and **what they were to do** with their lives. They didn't need this help because they were sinners. They needed help because they were human. This is the first instance of personal ministry in human history. The Wonderful Counselor comes to human beings and **defines their identity and purpose.**"⁵

And can I tell you, **that same wonderful counselor is still defining identity and purpose for humanity today!!** We are created to be dependent. "God said" but we have to listen. We best display the image of God by **constantly going back to him, cultivating that relationship, and allowing Him to speak to us**. We listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We trust God even when things don't make sense. Without dependence on God to define our identity and purpose, **we get lost** - we get lost **to a world that can't define itself** and is **constantly changing** what it thinks **your identity should be**. When we aren't focused on whose we are, it's no wonder we can so easily lose sight of who we are.

Dependence is at the very center of our being, but that is **not a culturally accepted norm**. The world sees dependence as **weakness**. BUT WHAT IF WEAKNESS WASN'T A BAD THING...

⁴ R. Albert Mohler Jr. *The Gathering Storm*. pg 40

⁵ Paul Tripp

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **10** For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

If Paul can understand his weakness... how can I keep going through life in **my own strength**. How can I hide my faults and failures, **I CAN'T. AND NEITHER CAN YOU!** The truth is, **sometimes** bearing the image of God **isn't just looking like Him**, It is **showing the world your personal need for him**... I try not to sin, I try not to fail, but I have found there is a beauty in realness. And being able to proclaim, "I am weak in that area, and I know you saw it. But that doesn't discount my God. It only proves my need for him!!" **So, we find our identity through dependence and...**

We find purpose through dependence

WE'VE ALL HEARD THE QUESTIONS: **Why** am I here? **What** is the purpose of life? **Is** there something more than this? MAYBE THAT'S YOUR QUESTION... We all have this longing within us to answer that question. Why?

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says *He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, God has also placed eternity* – a sense that life continues beyond this present existence – in OUR hearts

WE WERE DESIGNED TO SEEK ANSWERS TO THOSE PURPOSE DEFINING QUESTIONS. Because God has given us an **eternal awareness** and if we depend on the word of God, we will find that purpose.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works...**
You were created to do good works to show God's glory!

1 Peter 2:9 you are...a people for his own possession, **that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you**
You were created to tell about how awesome God is!

Colossians 1:16 all things were created through him and for him...
You were created for NOT your own pleasure and purposes, but for God to enjoy!

Isaiah 43:7 Everyone who is called by my name, **whom I created for my glory**, whom I formed and made."
You were created to glorify God in all that you think, say, and do!!

John Piper "when God says he made us for his glory, he does not mean he made us so that he could become more glorious in himself. Instead what Isaiah 43:7 means is that he created us to display his glory, that is, that his glory might be known and praised."⁶ **We have an incredible purpose when we depend on God to define it!!** That purpose is best fulfilled when we do it together, WHICH LEADS TO MY LAST POINT...

We are designed to live in Godly Community...

Because God exists in community. In the opening sentence of **verse 26** it says *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*

In this statement, we see **hints of the trinity**. Some have tried to explain the **"us"** and **"our"** as a conversation with angels, or a plurality of majesty, but those arguments fall short as angels are not created in God's image and majesty is not the focus of the verse. **This is Divine inner Dialogue.**

If you go back to **THE FIRST 3 verses of Genesis** we see all 3 parts of the triune God. *"In the beginning, God"* **God the Father**, *"And the Spirit of God was hovering"* **God the Spirit**, in verse 3 creation starts with, *"God said"* which we know from John 1 - **Jesus was the word of God**. Now as the focus of creation shifts to humanity. God within Himself had an inner dialogue that **shows God's triune community**.

⁶ John Piper. [*God Created Us For His Glory*](#).

JD Greear says this about being created in **God's Image of Community**: "Because we are created in the image of a God who exists in love, our lives will never be complete until we are living in love and community with others. The path of godliness always leads toward community – The path of godLESSness always leads toward isolation – The path of godliness leads toward relationships + commitment in things like small groups... God created our hearts and lives to work only when we are in deep community with others...And this is why your life will never be complete until you are in that deep committed community."⁷

My experience with godly community: It's hard. It's messy. It's time-consuming, but that is why we need community. Like everyone else, I've got junk in my life. I've got things that are trying, things that are overwhelming, things I struggle with, and **I've got kids that don't know how to clean up after themselves**. If I'm not in community (if I'm isolated like JD Greear said), That all just festers inside of me, and **I can hide it pretty well. AND SO CAN YOU. until someone cuts you off Immokalee - then watch out!! If we want to live out our identity and purpose by being image-bearers we will be** committed to real, transparent, open community where you walk through the highs and lows of life together, pushing each other towards righteousness. **EX**: When God called me and my family into ministry, we didn't know exactly what that meant... a salary cut, + moving in with another family for 6 mths. Through that season we had community that walked alongside us in prayer, encouragement, and even finances. **So why do we do this**, if it's hard, if it's messy, why? **Because it's good too! AND WE ARE CREATED FOR IT.**

Being committed to community helps us TO THEN best bear the image we are made in.

Acts 2:42 And they **devoted** themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

There were wonders and signs, they met each other's needs, they met together and broke bread, all the while praising God... and through this community, God did great things. God added to their numbers. **It wasn't** because of how great their programs were, how good their social media was, or how great the preaching or even worship was. God did the work through a faithful community. **AND I BELIEVE THAT GOD WANTS TO CONTINUE TO DO WORK HERE THROUGH GODLY COMMUNITY.**

I would not be **the man I am today without the community** of believers that God has blessed me to surround myself with at different times and different seasons. God has blessed Jodi and I with the opportunity to **cultivate community; BUT WE HAVE TO MAKE IT A PRIORITY** My wife shared with the women's ministry **Wednesday night** some reason we avoid community: We believe the lie that we are **too busy**, so we don't make time for it, We believe the lie that **Social Media** is an adequate substitute, so we settle, or We believe the lie of **independence**, and we don't need anybody to help us...

In **GENESIS 2:18** "It is not good that the man should be alone;" **Pastor Drew Hunter** says "God repeatedly pronounced over the whole creation that it was good. Then, when he creates humanity—starting with one person—he says it's "not good." This is ... Before sin has entered into the world. (Which) means .. the first problem in the world was not sin, it was **solitude**. The first problem in the world was not idolatry, it was **isolation**." He goes on to say, "God is not an **isolated being**. He is Father, Son, and Spirit, eternally existing in a fellowship of love. This God made us in **his** image, to be in **rich, deep community** with him and with one another."⁸

In my life **community is where I have found** accountability, encouragement, wisdom, help, affirmation, assurance, council, and as hard as it can be - conviction. God's image is one of community. Because we are created in the image of community we are not complete until we've experienced community.

If you have not gotten plugged into one of our weekend or midweek groups, what are you waiting for? The end goal at First Naples is to not just be an attender of services, but to experience God through community in groups, and help others experience Jesus through service. It's not easy, it takes time, commitment, and realness, but you were designed for it

⁷ JD Greear. [The Whole Story: In The Beginning](#). 20:34-23:06

⁸ Drew Hunter. [Why Sin Wasn't Humanity's First Problem](#).

What is God's design for Humanity? To bear God's image physically + share His story verbally, fueled by complete dependence on Him, within Godly community.

Value changes everything. When you see the value something has, or even its potential value, it changes the way you see it, the way you talk about it, and the way you protect it. **If my grandma or uncle would have known**, that Amazing Fantasy issue #15 comic would one day be worth **\$3.6 million** they would have treated it differently. They would have done everything they could have **to protect it and not burn it in that 55-gallon drum in the backyard.**

It's just a comic book, paper and some drawings... **How do we KNOW that it was worth \$3.6 million? Because that was what someone was willing to pay for it!!**

How do I know that I have value? How do I know that you have value? Because of the price **God was willing to pay!!** He created you to bear His image physically + share His story verbally, dependent on Him, within Godly community, and when we **ran from our identity, God bought us back for way more than \$3.6 million.** He sent his one and only son as a sacrificial lamb, to die for the sins (the wrongs) that we've committed against him, to pay our debt. **Jesus said "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** **Do you believe your value? Do you believe what God has a design for you?** It's a design that is far greater than any promotion, or relationship, or healing, or identity this world can offer.

When we accept the value God gives us, scripture says, ***"we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...!!"***

Maybe you're here today, and you're like my grandma - you see no value in the "funny books" - you're here searching for identity and value, and you need to embrace (maybe for the first time) who God has designed you to be. A CHILD, AN HEIR - AND YOU NEED TO ACCEPT THE GIFT OF SALVATION . Do it today.

Maybe you're here today, and you're like my uncle - you know the comic has some value, but you never think it's as valuable as it is - you're here, you know Jesus, but that's as far as it goes. Maybe today you stop by the **Next Steps** area and find out about our groups and take that step of Godly community, or maybe today is the day you turn over your independence, and you start to depend on God for all things.

Maybe you're here today, and you like the buyer at the auction - you understand your full value, and you're committed here at First Naples... maybe today it's time to **start praying through what it looks like to live that out. We can say we value life all day long, but what are we doing, that shows that belief to a watching world?**

Wherever you are, whatever decision or next step you need to take, do it today, and don't waste His breath. We'll have pastors down here after service who would love to talk with you and pray with you. But you have to embrace that you were created to bear God's image physically + share His story verbally, fueled by complete dependence on Him, within Godly community.

Let's PRAY