

In Genesis, God creates the Earth, creates the man, tells the man to subdue the earth, puts him in Eden, it's all really cultivated and uniform. And then He tells the man to cultivate the earth and make it look like Eden. Then it's very clear that a suitable helper wasn't found for the man. And so God puts the man out, pulls out a rib and forms Eve. She's not named Eve at first. In fact, when Adam wakes up and sees her, he names her "woman," the Hebrew for "mine." So he actually doesn't give her a name at first; he just says, "That's mine." And then in Genesis 3:20, after the fall has occurred, he does name her and gives her the name Eve, "because she was the mother of all living." Now the interesting part about calling her a mother in Genesis 3:20 is it's not until Genesis 4:1 that she actually has children. So in Genesis 4:1, you'll read that Adam knew Eve and they conceived and bore a son. So Eve was considered by God a mother before she had children. So motherhood is more than just having children, bearing children and raising children. It's actually a feminine essence that God gives to the woman where she is a nurturer and a shaper of all things through that nurturing. So what we celebrate today is not just mothers, although there is a special place in all of our hearts for our mothers who took care of us, cleaned up after us, told our fathers to beat us when they got home, provided for us, loved us, counseled us and nurtured us. And we're celebrating the beauty of God found in the soul of woman today. So thank you, mothers, for loving, caring and shaping. Thank you, sisters, for loving, caring and shaping. Thank you, daughters, for loving, caring and shaping. I mean not to take away from mothers at all, only to define it biblically and then celebrate God in it.

I want to finish "The Great Cause," which is this sermon series we've been doing for the last five weeks. We talked on Easter that the cross of Christ saved us from sin, but the resurrection of Christ saved us to what the Bible calls "the ministry of reconciliation." So we haven't just been saved from, we've been saved to. And then we talked about what the pinnacle problem in human beings is. It's sin. And we talked about how that's solved by God in the cross. Then we moved on and talked about what our corporate philosophy in regarding this mission that we've been put on by God. And today, I want to talk to you about what this personally means for you. I love the gospel. I love it. It's what I want to talk about, it's what I want to preach about and it's what I always want to bring it back to. If all I give you is a list of moral things to do and not someone to see and put your trust in, I haven't done you a favor. So I love the gospel, and for me it makes sense of everything that is. Like you have to do something about beauty. This past week, it was terrible. I had to go out to La Jolla, which is in San Diego, and teach. What a dump. While I was out there, I had an opportunity to eat at a restaurant called George's, which sits right on the Pacific. So I sat up on George's, I had a great glass of ____ and a fish. And I sat there and watched the sun set on the Pacific. And I told you last week that we were designed to herald. So I heralded the best way I knew how. I took a picture of the sun setting on the Pacific and sent it to my wife who couldn't go because she's too pregnant. With the picture I sent her a text, "Check this out. What are you doing?" She replied, "I'm raising your children." Sure, they're my children now. You have to do something with beauty, you have to do something with the fact that it exists. And I just refuse to believe that beauty, love and meaning are simply chemicals firing off in our brain. There's more going on in that. That takes me back to Genesis 1 and 2. God created things, and He created them good and beautiful and right and rhythmic and with purpose and without collateral damage. So I got to sit in that moment, and I got to see that beauty and that power. And although there are results of the fall all around me, there was in this moment just this picture of beauty that reminds me that there's something behind all of this.

And then at the same time, I can clearly see the results of the fall of man, that something happened in the middle of this rhythmic beauty to fracture this, to taint if not destroy all of it. And so, where the Bible tells us in Genesis 1 and 2 that He created everything rhythmically and beautifully, Genesis 3 tells us that the fall entered into that beauty and

fractured it. And I know the narrative is that there was a piece of fruit that was eaten and then Adam's just standing there staring at the sky instead of helping his wife like he was supposed to, she gives it to him and he eats it. But pay attention to what the tree was called. The tree was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Which means God designed everything and said, "Listen to Me. If you'll follow in the way that I've created you to live, if you'll walk with Me intimately, if you'll trust Me, if you'll follow Me, then all the shalom, all the goodness, all the rhythm, all the beauty is yours." And then what did they do? They said, "No. My way." That was this cataclysmic event that fractured everything. It was mankind going, "Forget Your way, forget how You designed it to be, forget how You designed it to work, forget how You designed things to function. I'll do it my way, I'll handle it my way and I'll go my way." And it fractured it and ruined it all.

Even in that moment, you start getting pictures of God's grace. He goes to the man and says, "Because you did this you're going to work. You've always worked, but now it's going to be by the sweat of your brow. You know how men were called to cultivate? Now everything you try to cultivate will war against you. Business sometimes is not going to be a joyful experience. Being married sometimes is not going to be a joyful experience. Raising children sometimes is not going to be a joyful experience." He just goes, "Now what you were meant to cultivate is going to war against you." And then He turns to the woman and says, "Hey, your pain in childbirth...through the roof." But here you start to see His grace. He starts to explain what's going to happen between the serpent and mankind. He says to the woman, "The serpent is going to strike at the heel of your offspring and He'll crush his head." It's the first messianic prophecy we have in the Scriptures. And do you remember what happens next when they betrayed God? They immediately felt naked and ashamed and went and hid in a bush. And God, giving them what they want, went, "Okay, you don't want to live in Eden? You don't want to live in shalom?" And He sends them out, but before doing so He clothes them. He covers their shame.

And I say this all the time. There are two ways to view this book. Some people think that this book is really about us. So they'll say things like, "It's the road map to life." And I always say it's a really cruddy road map. Because it won't answer direct questions. Like, "Should I go to college here?...Should I marry Lauren?...Where should we go on vacation this year?..." Now I don't want to be too hard on them because I will point out that there are maps in the back. They're just not necessarily the road maps to life. In the end, the Bible is about the gospel of God. It's about God reconciling the world to Himself. It's about God reconciling all of creation back to Himself. And if you'll follow the story of the Bible, it's what that story is. Even after Adam and Eve are sent out of the garden, the world gets very, very dark, unbelievably dark. Eve gives birth to Cain and Abel, and it ends badly. And then from there it only gets worse. It gets so bad, so dark, so depraved that God laments the day He made human beings and He floods the earth killing all of them, except Noah and his family. So there's grace, mercy even in the middle of wickedness. You see this picture of God saving. And then if you watch National Geographic, Noah crashes his boat on a mountainside in Iraq (apparently we know where it is, we just can't get to it) After that, He forms this people and leads them out of slavery. And when they get out of slavery, they commit the same sin that Adam did when they said, "Okay, not Your Law; our way." And they make a golden calf. There's this constant cycle going on of man saying, "No, my way. I'm going to do it my way, I'm going to live my way. I don't care about Your way. We'll get to shalom our own way. We'll get to fulfillment our own way. We'll get to peace our own way. We don't need Your way. We don't want Your way." And in God judging that, coming in and saving in the middle of that, that's the story of the Bible. And it gets us to Jesus Christ who is God in the flesh who walks among men and shows you the kingdom that is to come. What you see in the life of Jesus is what God is going to do on earth. He's not burning this whole thing up. We're not going to get sucked out of here (sorry, LaHaye). God's going to restore all things to Himself, and Jesus is a model of what's to come. What do I mean by that? He flexes over all creation. He shows you His absolute authority over all creation. He calms the wind and the rain, He has dominion over every mental illness, every disease. And I don't know if you noticed this, but Jesus hates funerals. He doesn't go to them, not even His own. He shows up to Lazarus' funeral and does what? "Ah, this really isn't My scene. Lazarus, come out." He walks up to the centurion's daughter, "She's not dead; she's just sleeping." They laugh at Him. "Okay, why don't you guys get out, dummies. Get up, little girl." And she gets up. You see, Jesus wasn't a big fan of death; He was showing you how He designed it to be

– there should be no disease, there should be no death, that those things are parts of the fall. He says in Revelation, “I make all things new.” There is this day coming where there is no more death, there is no more disease. Everything will be put back into shalom. And really we’ve been saved from sin into God reconciling all things to Himself. I love this story. It is *the* story of history.

And it’s what you find yourself caught up in. And here’s what I pray for you. Here’s how I think this needs to personally work itself out. The first way is I pray that you would cognitively understand the gospel, that you would understand it. Let me show you what I mean. Look in Romans 12:1, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...” Now this is not talking about information. I believe this is a common Evangelical mistake. This not just a reference to simple information. He says here that you are transformed, not conformed, by the renewal of your mind. So information is not our problem. What I mean by that is it’s everywhere. For goodness sake, you’re in the Bible Belt. Information is not the issue. How God works is not the issue. You could find that online in a second. What he says here is not just that we would have the right information and the right facts, because I have met some of the most narcissistic, pride-filled, arrogant pieces of chaff that I have ever met that know the Bible forwards and backwards. This is not about information; it’s about a renewed mind.

Here’s how I would put it. The mind wars against spiritual realities. It’s a part of the fall. Let me prove my point. Have you ever noticed that your mind can sharpen and you can pick up things until it comes to spiritual realities and then all of a sudden your mind starts to war against you? I know how it works better in men because I am one. Have you ever found it amazing that you can memorize the Mavericks’ lineup, know where everybody went to college, know where they came from before they got to the Mavs, know what they averaged in college, but the second you open up your Bible your brain shuts down on you? With business, have you ever noticed that you can see business, you can dissect it, you can lead companies? In certain arenas, have you ever noticed that your brain just works and works and works, but the second you try to meditate on, think on, dwell on, read on, focus on anything otherworldly, your brain wars against you? You will immediately think of something else to do. Have you ever noticed that it’s real easy to plan for most things, but the second you try to turn any piece of your mind onto spiritual realities, it wars against you, it betrays you? Am I talking to myself here? Am I right? Here’s why. The book of Ephesians says that the mind has a spirit, that it is depraved like the rest of us and the last thing it wants to do is exalt God and Christ as primary. And so it wars against us. So Paul here says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind ...” The mind needs to be renewed. It needs to be disciplined, it needs to be disciplined. In 2 Corinthians, Paul would say, “Let us take every thought captive.” “Let’s grab hold” is how it’s actually translated. Let’s put it in a head lock.

Okay, so how? You’ve got to know where I’m going here. I think you need to be in the Bible and not eat off of someone else’s plate all the time. You’ve got to be in the Bible, and not to just get information. We don’t go to the Bible just to get information. We do at times, but we go to the Bible to feast on and see. There’s a way to read the Bible to get information and regurgitate, and then there’s a way to read the Bible in the hope that you might experience and see God. You read it slowly. You meditate and think on the perfections of Christ, what the text reveals about Jesus. And my big prayer for you is, in having a renewed mind, you’ll start to see Him in everywhere. So back to La Jolla. I’m sitting at George’s, glass and food and setting, and there were two things racing through my mind. The first was that there’s something behind all of that. There’s just something raging behind all of that. And then I thought of a quote from Augustine, who was the bishop of Hippo in northern Africa. He said centuries ago as he watched the sunset, “If these are the pleasures afforded to sinful men, what does God have in store for those whose hearts are His?” So that moment was just dinner at George’s, but it was very holy and it stirred up in me gratitude. You see, when the mind is renewed you begin to see through different lenses. Last night I get into bed and my wife who is very great with child gets into bed and she just leans over and kisses me on my neck. For some crazy reason she loves me. And here’s what I know. The Bible says “He who finds a wife finds a

good thing." You've probably picked this up, but I'm a little bit gangly, a little bit of an ADD spaz. Most women don't find that attractive. But for some reason, this very beautiful, godly, talented, smart woman loves me. That's a gift. God gave me that to me despite who I am. And this morning, we got up to make mama breakfast, and we made more of a mess than we made breakfast. In that moment there's this reminder that in the Bible it says that children are a blessing from the Lord, that God loved me enough to give them to me to really reveal my own selfishness and to push me to Him. It's the same reason He gave me a wife. And there's this really beautiful meaning there at breakfast this morning. You see, with a renewed mind, you start to see Him everywhere.

And that leads to my second hope for you. Not only do I hope that you would be able to understand what the gospel is and see everything through gospel lenses, but that you would also feel it in your heart. Now I'm not talking about youth camp. Do you remember Thursday night at youth camp? It was like everyone was going to get saved as if it weren't an option. The worship leader was like, "Look, we're going to keep singing 'Banqueting Table' until everyone gets saved in here. There's four of you who haven't moved. We're not shutting it down. I don't care if you've already been saved. You can do it again, we're Baptist." I'm not talking about everybody at the altar weeping. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about gospel lenses, that you see the world in such a way that you are constantly aware of your own depravity, the goodness of God despite your depravity in the cross and the grace afforded to you in a thousand different arenas and that that might stir up in your heart biblical things like gratitude, thankfulness, worship. I pray that we might have a heart that's stirred up for Him, that this wouldn't merely be an intellectual exercise.

Which leads me to my third hope for you. My hope is that you would understand it in your mind, that you would feel it in your heart and that you would work it out with your hands. If we're honest, the bulk of us in this room are functional atheists. Here's what I mean. With your mouth you will ascribe, "Oh yeah, I'm a Christian. Yeah, I believe the Bible. Yeah, I believe in God." But when it comes to every arena of your life outside of church attendance, nothing is governed by or influenced by the God that you say you love and serve or His revealed will in the Bible. So it's, "Yes I'm a Christian, yes I believe the Bible, yes I believe in God, but I'll do marriage like I want to do marriage, I'll raise my kids like I want to raise my kids, I'll handle my money like I want to handle my money and I'll live my life like I want to live my life. You give me salvation, and then shut up and leave me alone. The rest of the life is mine." And if we're honest, that's the bulk of us in here that have no intention at any level of submitting to God or His commands. We simply want to be good Bible Belt Evangelicals, which means we know the right answers to the big questions, "Yes there's a God, yes I believe in Jesus, yes I like the Bible, but I have no intention of any application of any of it." You're functionally an atheist. And that gets us right back to Genesis 3, doesn't it? What wrecked shalom was man going, "Forget Your way. I'll do it my way." And that's why you've got such a thin, impotent version of Christianity. Because everybody's a spiritual bulimic.

As I was growing up, my parent's listened to the Carpenters all the time It's probably why I hate country music now. So even to this day, I would get some horrible Carpenters song stuck in my head. It wasn't until years later that I heard the story of Karen Carpenter and how she died. She had anorexia nervosa, where she just starved herself to death. I don't think that's the bulk of us in the Bible Belt spiritually. I think we're the opposite of that. I think we're bulimics, which means we constantly hear truth and then on the way out to the car vomit it up all over the sidewalk before any of it can take root and influence us. And I don't understand it. Do you think you're tricking God? I'm just confused. Do you think you've disoriented Him? "Well, no part of his life is Mine, but there he is at the 9:00AM. I don't know what to do. Jesus, help Me with that. Holy Spirit, group think. What's up with this guy?" Do you really think you've dumbfounded the triune God of the universe? You don't think He knows? Do you think that that's Christianity? Weird times in a weird place and a dumb hobby. So what you get is a lot of people who say the right things but are just as narcissistic and filled with pride as anyone else is out there.

Men, do you love your wife like Christ has commanded you to love your wife? "Whoa, let's that's a low blow. Here's the reason why. You don't even know my wife..." I don't care if your wife is bat crazy. That doesn't change anything. "Well you don't know mine. I sleep with an eye open. She's going to kill me." Well I say put a metal plate on and pray. You'll go to heaven, and that will be on her. Do you love her like Christ loved the church? "Well, blah blah blah..." Shut up with that. Everyone can think of reasons to not be obedient. All you're doing is going, "My way." Do you raise your kids like the Bible has asked you to raise your kids? The Scriptures command me to train them up in the way of the Lord and to impart to them the glories of God. Are you doing that? Do you see your life, your children through the lenses of what God has commanded you to do? And listen, I'm not against sports and against letting your kid be the cool kid. I mean, some of that's really silly to me, but maybe it's because my kids are going to be really uncoordinated and not able to play sports. There's probably not going to be a lot of "select opportunities" for the Chandler babies. We seem to be uncoordinated and gangly. But at the end of the day are you raising your kids like the Bible commands? Like at our house, twice a week at least, we have a little family devotional. Why? Because I want my kids to understand the gospel in their minds, to feel it in their hearts and I want them to work it out with their hands. Do you? What about your money? Do you see your money as yours and this life as all there is? Do you spend and spend and spend, maybe beyond what you even make because this is all that is? Or do you understand that all you've been given has been given to you by God, for God and for the great mission of reconciliation that we've been called to? And on and on I could go here. You see, these are weird times, where it's a very easy thing to say, "Yeah I believe in God...yeah I read the Bible...yeah I'm a Christian" and then have no objective evidence of that. Or sometimes you can point to objective evidence. Most of the time it's church attendance. So my prayer is not that you would just understand it in your mind and not just that you would feel it in your heart, but that that might move you to a life lived for the glory of God. So this takes us back to "do not be conformed to the pattern of this world."

I've made it no secret that I think most of church is pretty silly. And I'll tell you why. I think there is this really base idea that we can be cool enough for the world and we can compete with Hollywood or something. Like we can put on a show that's cool enough for people to go, "That's what I want right there." The truth is you don't show the world who Jesus is by trying to be as much like them as possible. It's our otherworldliness that serves as the catalyst to draw people to Himself. It's the fact that the first three years of my marriage were just an absolute nightmare and I used to lay there and think to myself, "Is this the rest of my life?" I don't even know what she was thinking; I've never even asked. I don't want to know. But what did we do? We pressed through biblically, we pressed into one another, we got help outside of ourselves, we let someone speak into our lives, we submitted to what the Scriptures said. And then the last seven years has been this really beautiful thing. Loving my wife even when there wasn't a lot of love back, budgeting our money so that we have money to give away every month, living open-handed with our finances, choosing to drive lesser cars than we could so that we can give to church plants in Philadelphia and Manhattan, this is a life lived for the gospel, this is what I'm asking you.

I really am trying to understand what this is down here. My hope is for us. That's what I've been given charge with, us. So if you're a guest with us and you're going, "Man, is he always angry like this?" No, but I'll try to explain what I'm doing here. I understand from Scripture that when I die I have to give an account for the Village, not just for my own life but for the Village as well. I'm accountable not for your response but whether or not I led in what Paul called "the full counsel of God." So if I see in us a trait that's unbiblical and is going to lead to our own destruction, how foolish would I be to not address it? So what I'm doing here is pleading, for the glory of Christ and for your joy, knowing biblically and historically that most of you will throw this up in the parking lot.

Can you just for a second here take some stock of your own life? Is there an understanding of the gospel? Is it the lens through which you see everything else? Can you feel the weight and the joy of salvation, of grace and mercy of God? And then are you working this thing out with your hands at all? Is there in you a submission to the God of the Bible, God as

He's revealed Himself to us? Every command of God is not about God flexing His power, it's about lining you back up with how He created things to be. So are we in Genesis 2 or are we in Genesis 3? Are we once again going, "No, my way is better. My way of getting there is better." We've got nothing but a few thousand years of history that reveals how that ends. So would you take stock of your faith? Would you take stock of of what you really believe? Would you maybe, by the grace of God, not lie to yourself anymore? The real tragedy is not that you can fool others; the real tragedy is that some of you have actually fooled yourself.

Let's pray, "Father, I thank You for these men and women and for the opportunity to come together and just enjoy You and worship You and be challenged by You. We want our lives to be more and more and more Yours. And so will You teach us that, because I think the bulk of us haven't been disciplined or trained into that? I pray that You would speak to the deep places where there's idolatry and pride. I pray that You would reveal it and destroy it. Help us. We need You. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."

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