

The Fundamental List - Sin and Humanity

I really enjoy making things, building things, and creating things. Lately, I have really enjoyed getting back into fly tying. Sometimes I tie an especially difficult fly, and it turns out great and I'll just sit and admire my work. The icing on the cake is when I take one of those flies I tied and go out and catch a beautiful fish. Something I created, doing exactly what I created it to do. It is a great feeling. It is fulfilling.

All of us have experienced that kind of satisfaction on some level. Whether it was a project at work or school that you completed, a project on your house or maybe even baking that amazing batch of cookies and watching your family devour them like animals. It brings satisfaction and fulfillment.

We feel this way because of who we are by default. We're self-aware. We use our intelligence to bring us what we want and what will bring us pleasure, not what will bring us pain and loss. We act intentionally, not randomly or without purpose.

Even things we think have the least significance, we do intentionally.

- We brush our teeth because we don't want cavities or bad breath.
- We get up because we want to keep our job (or even better, because we have something fun to do).
- We turn left instead of right because we have a place to go.

God is the same way. God does what he does to enjoy what he's done.

God didn't create humanity because he lacked something.

He wasn't lonely, as though he was incomplete or needed company. God needs nothing because . . . well . . . he's God.

He created things in order to enjoy the work of his own hands, so to speak.

And the things he cares about most are those he made to be like him, "in his own image."

That would be you and me.

Series - The Fundamental List

Wk 1 - What you believe about God and what He has done will determine how you live your life.

Wk 2 - What do we believe about the Bible?

Wk 3 - What do we believe about Jesus?

Wk 4 - What do we believe about Humanity and Sin?

Gen 1:26

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.

When we ask the question: **What do we believe about humanity and sin?** The first thing the Bible says about us is that our story begins with the understanding that

We were made by God.

Our story begins with the biblical idea that we were made by God. Even though we can't wrap our brains around that idea, the bottom line is that we're here because God wanted us here. God doesn't act randomly. He acts with purpose. And when he created humankind, he wasn't trying to fill some void in himself.

Given the fact that he didn't need us but still made us, there's only one explanation for why he created us. God wanted us to exist in order to enjoy us (and to have us enjoy him in return).

Because God created us, the Bible refers to him as our "Father" and people from Adam onward are his children. That's why the Bible uses the language of **family** to describe God and his relationship to us.

We are God's human family. (One of these days we will talk about angels and demons and God's heavenly family, but for today we are talking about His human family.)

Genesis begins with creation. God had done a lot of creating by the time the story gets to Him creating humanity. God first creates plants, insects, flying creatures, and land animals.

None of those creations was capable of having a relationship with God. They could not talk with Him. They could not share their thoughts with Him or express their appreciation to Him.

As amazing as plants and animals are, they weren't His children. They weren't family. That's what God really wanted. He needed to create something like himself.

And that is the second thing we see about humanity and sin is that

We are imagers of God.

Gen 1:27

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

The "image of God" is an important concept in the Bible. Human beings were created to be like God.

If you think of the "image" of God as a verb you're on the right track to understanding the idea. We were created to image God, to be his imagers—to represent him on the earth. What does it mean to image God?

Gen 1:28

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth."

God could have taken care of the earth just fine without humanity. He's God. Nothing is beyond his ability. But instead, God created an earthly family. His children would take on the role in managing and maintaining his creation. They would be understudies and partners.

Imaging God means being God's representation on earth. God tasked humans with doing a job he could just as well have done himself. But he wanted his children to participate. God's business would be a family business. Eden was not merely God's home; it was God's home office. We were created to be God's

co-workers. God made sure the people he made could do the job of imaging him on earth.

He shared his attributes, character qualities, and abilities, with them—things like intelligence and creativity. The Bible tells us that humans are a lesser version of who God is.

Here are a few things that we know about what it means to Image God.

Imaging God means ...

- We are co-laborers with God.

He made us to be like him so we could participate with him as co-rulers and co-caretakers in his new world.

1 Cor 3:9 describes us as co-laborers with God.

This is a part of our identity. God wants to partner with you to accomplish His will on the earth. God's original desire was that every human being would be his child and partner. That is how God looks at people, and it's also how we ought to think of people.

- We are brothers and sisters.

God wants every one of us to consider each person a sibling. We all have the same status as imagers of God whom God wants in his family. Racism, violence, manipulation, and coercion were not part of God's design for humanity. They are the evil result of rebellion and sin. God hates what sin has done to his human family.

- There is a purpose for our lives.

Being God's imagers also gives us purpose. We have a mission. Every person, no matter how small or weak or short-lived, has some role to play in someone else's life. Every task we set our mind to that honors God and the people around us is a part of our calling.

How we live our lives either blesses or curses our brothers and sisters. What we do matters—and most of the time all of this happens in small, seemingly insignificant ways.

God wants a relationship with you. He wants a family. He wants co-workers. He wants you to know who you are and why your life has value to him.

But something happened to ruin God's vision for our world and His human family. The heartache it caused God would be so great that He almost gave up on humanity.

One of the characteristics that God gave his human family is freedom. He gave his human family the ability to choose.

Robert Jeffress

Think of it this way: If you had the inclination and the know-how, you could program an artificial intelligence robot to bow down to you every hour, on the hour. You could have your invention sing songs of praise written especially for you. You could make it tell you how great you are every time you walk into a room. But what purpose would that serve? There's nothing genuine or heartfelt about a programmed response. For real, meaningful worship to take place, there must be a choice—an option not to worship. For real, meaningful obedience to occur, there must be an option not to obey. Likewise, God desires a genuine personal relationship with us. But in order for a relationship to be genuine, there must be an option to walk away from it. Otherwise, the relationship would be a coerced arrangement. In other words, there must be free will.

We have free will.

Once God created humanity with free will, you all know what happens next.

Gen 3:1-7

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?"

2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. 3 But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’ 4 “No! You will certainly not die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

If you read Gen 1-3 and you put together a list of the things God told Adam and Eve not to do in the garden, you want to hear the list? Here it is.

Don’t eat from the tree in the middle of the garden.

That’s it. One thing. They had one job.

Everytime they walked past the tree and did not touch or eat from the tree, they honored God with their obedience.

But Adam and Eve chose instead to trust the word of the serpent over the word of their Creator.

In that moment, humanity switched its allegiance from its Father to the father of lies, Satan.

Rom 5:12 (NLT)

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

When they did that, when they rebelled, disobeyed and chose to hitch their horse to Satan’s wagon instead of God’s wagon, sin and death entered the human story. There was no death before Adam and Eve’s sin. But now, every human born from Adam on suffers the curse of Adam and Eve’s choice. And this is the place in the story where God loses His family.

The family He created in His image, to co-labor with, betrayed Him by sinning.

What is sin? Sin is more than just disobedience and rebellion. Sin is betrayal.

This is important to understand because we often have this casual attitude toward sin. We think, well, Jesus died for that, I'm forgiven, so, no harm no foul.

Or if you're Catholic, you go see your priest, confess the things you've done wrong, say a few Hail Marys and you're good to go. We have this attitude that as long as I do more good things than bad things, I'm okay.

Or we do this with our sin: we assign levels of badness to our sin. We think gossip, is probably not good but not too bad, not compared with cheating on your spouse, now that's really bad.

The reality is that all sin is betrayal.

When we sin, we are essentially saying we trust what the enemy says about our lives over what God says about our lives. When I sin, I choose to trust the word of the enemy over the word of the word of the God who loves me.

For example. God says, do not lie. But then I choose to lie. Maybe the lie makes me look better, maybe the lie helps me avoid trouble, or maybe the lie gets me something I think I need. Whatever the reason, we lie.

But God is truth, there is no darkness in Him. God cannot lie. Lying is contrary to who He is, so God says, do not lie. When we lie, we are choosing to ignore what God says and instead trust what we think is going to benefit us. But God says, ultimately, the truth will benefit you, Jesus said it is the truth that sets us free. But we don't trust what God says. So we believe the lie, and we lie.

Ultimately, my allegiance lies with the one I trust. That is exactly what Jesus is saying in

Jn 14:15

If you love me, you will keep my commands.

Obedience is the result of our love, our loyalty, and our trust in our Heavenly Father.

When you were a child and your parents asked you to do something what would you often say?, “Why?” What was the frequent response you heard? “Because I said so!”

Or maybe you’ve said that to your own kids. Clean your room, why, because I said so.

Well, God does not say, because I said so, even though that should be enough for us.

God tells us how we ought to live because He is our maker and our maker knows our purpose and when we deviate from our design by sinning, not only is it betrayal, it is destructive.

Sin is destructive.

We were not randomly created, rather we were made by God with the purpose of being His imagers, but sin corrupts and destroys our ability to fulfill our purpose. Sin messes with God’s purpose. It is destructive.

I will tell you, it is my experience, my observation, that the unchanging, always true, rule of the universe is that sin is destructive. Disobeying God’s commands always brings heartache and trouble. Always, always, always. There is no exception.

That is why, if you are walking in open rebellion to God, your life is probably not going the way you think it should. If you thumb your nose at God and knowingly walk in sin, the result is always the same, heartache and trouble. This heartache and trouble is not punishment from God it is simply the result of sin.

God loves His human family, sin wrecks His human family and so God hates sin. He can’t tolerate it.

That is why we study God’s Word. That is why spending time in God’s Word is so important to the Christian life. We don’t read the Bible because that’s what

good Christians do; we study because it shows us God's heart for our lives. It shows what is right and what is wrong, what is sin and what is obedience.

Paul says to the Romans in 6:23 that the wages of sin is death. Not just physical death but spiritual death. John describes that death in

Rev 20:12-15

I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books. 13 Then the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; each one was judged according to their works. 14 Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

That is the ultimate destructiveness of sin. Fortunately, God has a remedy for the betrayal and destruction that sin brings. **The remedy for sin and betrayal is Jesus.**

Eph 1:7-10 (NLT)

7 He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. 8 He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. 9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. 10 And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

From the very beginning, when God created humanity, He knew their freedom will would lead them to choose betrayal, but from that moment, because of His great love for his creation, He had a plan to fix the brokenness that would result in **God getting His family back.**

Next week we will talk more about God's remedy for the problem of sin. Next week we will ask the question, what do we believe about Salvation?

As we wrap up this morning by taking communion together, I want to challenge you to pray David's prayer in

Ps 139:23-24

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.

Some of you, instead of walking towards God, have been walking away from God. But maybe God has been speaking to your heart and urging you to come back home. In Luke 15 Jesus illustrates the Father's heart when you change your direction (the Bible calls that repentance) and come back home.

Luke 15:20-24

20 So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. 21 The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 "But the father told his servants, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast, 24 because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate.