

04/22/12

## Getting to the Core #2 - Figuring Out Why You're Here

- some of the most mysterious and admired government employees are members of the secret service...
- especially because one of their duties is to provide security for the president when he travels to foreign countries...
- their character and capabilities have to be at the very highest level...because the reputation of our country and the life of our president are at stake...
- that's why it was so disappointing to learn this week about the scandal which allegedly involved secret service agents and members of our military who were preparing for the president's trip to Columbia...- one report said it this way...

*ABC News has learned exclusively that the Secret Service officials accused of misconduct in Colombia revealed their identities by boasting at a Cartagena brothel that they worked for President Obama. Partying at the "Pley Club" Wednesday night, eleven members of the president's advance team allegedly bragged "we work for Obama" and "we're here to protect him." The officials spent the night throwing back expensive whiskey and enlisting the services of the club's prostitutes, according to a bouncer at the club and a police source. ...The men paid for the sexual services in advance but when it came time to settle the bill, there was a dispute over the charges. The group became belligerent and the police were called. The argument between the officials and the bouncers from the club escalated and ultimately spilled onto the street, according to several eye witness accounts. The police have since been directed by U.S. authorities not to comment on that night or the scandal surrounding the Secret Service, according to a senior police official in Cartagena.*

- here's a group of men who were supposed to be representing our country and preparing for the arrival of the president...but somewhere along the line they forgot why they were there...or they put their own pleasure ahead of the accomplishment of their purpose and responsibilities...
- now please connect that with a letter to the editor that was published in our newspaper this week from a member of our community who said...
  - **A recent column on April 15 asked: What's wrong with kids today? I say nothing to begin with. At birth they are all innocent little beings, not knowing right from wrong. I like to think of them as computers that have not been programmed and the curiosity and memory from their first experiences is phenomenal. Correct guidance from an early learning age is highly required.**
  - **I really like kids - well-behaved ones that is. If you have ever been in a family restaurant and had your meal ruined by a disorderly child who screams and throws tantrums and the parents either ignore it or are at a loss as what to do, you have an idea of a parent who is on the way to losing control of their offspring or already has a hopeless case on their hands.**
  - **Yes, I am insinuating the parents are, for the most part, directly responsible for the actions of their offspring, for they will be the guiding influence for the child up to and including adulthood. All children have a natural tendency to rebel against authority, and this rebellion, if not redirected early, will soon become irreversible and the teen years can be the most trying times.**
- if we connected those illustrations, would we conclude that the reason the secret service agents made the choices they did was due to the parenting failures of their parents?
- and I'm not suggesting that parents has nothing to do with it – but is it possible that there's something more sinister at work here?...resulting in the tendency to forget why we're here, and what we're supposed to be accomplishing?...

- now, can I ask you a harder question...are the secret service members the only ones guilty of forgetting why we're here?...
- and is there something deep inside of each of us – far more significant than any flaws of our parents, working to derail us from accomplishing the purpose for which we were designed?...
- with that in mind, let me invite you to open your Bible to Genesis chapter 1...that one shouldn't be too hard to find...but just for the person who might be brand new to all of this – Genesis is the first book of the Bible so if you're using one of the Bibles under the chair in front of you, you'll find Genesis 1 on page...[anyone want to guess]...page one of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- we're in the middle of a series right now entitled **Getting to the Core -- Six Weeks to Focus on Things That Matter Most...**
  - last week we've worked on- **Figuring Out What You Believe**
  - This morning we're going to tackle ...**Figuring Out Why You're Here**
  - that leaves - **Figuring Out Who You Are**
  - **Figuring Out Who You Love**
  - **Figuring Out What You Want**
  - **Figuring Out Where You're Going...**
- if we really believe what we studied last week...then it would make sense to open the pages of Scripture to try to answer this morning's question...and what better place to start than listening to what God said at the very moment humans were created...
  - read **Genesis 1:26-31, 3:1-15...**
- Let's organize the rest of our time around **Three aspects of the purpose of man.**
  - what does Scripture tell us about why we're here...and what does that look like in practical terms in daily life today?...

- first of all, we're here...

### **I. To Display God's Character**

- this passage makes some unbelievable statements about the nature and purpose of man...right out of the blocks we read that we are...

#### **A. Made in His Image.**

- there is no other part of God's creation that receives that description...
- in his Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem says,
 

**When God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26), the meaning is that God plans to make a creature similar to Himself. Both the Hebrew word for "image" (tselem) and the Hebrew word for "likeness" (demut) refer to something that is similar but not identical to the thing it represents or is an "image" of. The word "image" can also be used of something that represents something else (Grudem, Systematic Theology, pp. 442-442).**
- if you want to see additional verses in the Word of God that use those same 2 terms to justify Grudem's conclusions, there are a couple of very helpful footnotes on page 442...
- But the bottom line is – God designed you, and gave you all the equipment necessary to be His representative in your family, in your neighborhood, at your job, in our community, in our world...that's why you have a mind...that's why you have a

will...emotions...a heart...everything about you was provided so that you could represent the Lord well...

- isn't that amazing that God would call people like you and me to that kind of a task?...and give us everything we needed to fulfill it?...
- after I graduated from high school...I worked for a summer building in-ground swimming pools as a laborer on a construction crew...
- and I totally enjoyed that kind of work for a lot of reasons...
- at the end of the summer, the owner's son came to me and said – next year we want you to have your own crew...so just hire some of your friends from college, and we'll set you up so you can be on your own next summer...
- I'm still amazed that he would have given that kind of trust to a group of guys who were 19 years old...
  - but I'll tell you this – that's one of the reasons we worked so hard for him the next summer...
  - because we realized that we were representing the company...we were the face of that company that the homeowner was going to see...
  - and we wanted to do everything we could to represent him well...
- that's the same purpose God has given you and me...

**B. To give others a better understand of Him.**

- that's what theologians mean when they talk about "glorifying God"...
- perhaps you've heard of the **Westminster Shorter Catechism** which says that "**The chief aim of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.**"
- **Isaiah 43:7 - Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.**
- Jesus said it this way in **Matthew 5:16 -- Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**
- that's one of the reasons our church family engages in as much community outreach ministry as we do...we are trying to live in such a way that others have a better understanding of who God is and what He is like...

**C. To subdue creation instead of being subdued by it.**

- **Genesis 1:26 - Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."**
- **Genesis 1:28 - God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."**
- had the secret service members chosen to walk away from that temptation, they would have been choosing to subdue creation instead of being subdued by it...and thereby given others the right opinion of...not just every other employee of our government who sacrifices and does the right thing in defense of their country...but also the right opinion about the holiness of God...it comes down to understanding why you're here...

**D. That's why the fall of sin was such a tragic event.**

- both Adam and Eve were given the opportunity to live in a way that was consistent with their design...
- to represent their God well even though He was not personally present at the time...
- to glorify Him – to give the right opinion of Him and be a "dominion haver"...to subdue creation instead of being subdued by it...

- and they chose otherwise... and all of a sudden, their lives were off the track of the purpose of their design...and that same sin is what's beating in our breasts...our biggest problem is not what our moms/ dads did or did not do...
- Paul said it this way...**Romans 1:21- 24 - For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.**
- that's what happened to the secret service men...and that can happen to you and me as well..

#### **E. That's also why we are so thankful for our Redeemer**

- even in the Garden of Eden, God was already talking about a way where we could get back on track with the purpose for which we were created...
- **Genesis 3:15 - And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.**
- that phrase "her seed" is the beginning of the gospel message which eventually culminates in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ...
- one of the many marvelous effects of trusting Christ as Savior and Lord is that we now have the opportunity and the ability to live as Paul put it, to "the praise of the glory of His grace."...
- that phrase occurs three times in Ephesians chapter 1, and it is crucial to answering the question we're posing this am...
- **Ephesians 1:4-6 - ...In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**
- **Ephesians 1:12 - to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.**
- **Ephesians 1:14 - who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.**
- what we could never do in our own strength, regardless of the quality of our parents or the lack thereof, we are now able to do in and through the redemptive power of Christ...to live to the praise of the glory of His grace...
- now, we're at a very important point in this discussion...because a key emphasis in Scripture is that we have opportunities to do this all the time, in even the most menial details of everyday life...that was one of the key emphases of the Protestant Reformation...
- **The Reformation reclaimed the Scriptural teaching of the sovereignty of God over every aspect of the believer's life. All of life is to be lived to the glory of God...In contrast to the monastic division of life into sacred versus secular...the reformers saw all of life to be lived under the Lordship of Christ. Every activity of the Christian is to be sanctified unto the glory of God (fivesolas.com).**
- so what does that look like for you and me?...
  - let's say someone you work with made some kind of a mistake...let's say an accounting mistake...
  - nothing purposeful, it wasn't embezzlement...they just messed up...
  - and now you have to decide how to respond...
    - and there may be any number of temptations rising up in your heart...

- I can make this person look bad...I can take advantage of this...I can get mileage out of this at their expense...I can get the e-mail chain going...I can embarrass them and put myself in a better position for promotion down the line...
  - or you can stop and ask yourself – why was I put here anyway?...to advance myself, or represent my God?...
  - and I'm not suggesting you would cover something up that needed to be reported...
  - but there is such a thing as responding to someone else's mistake – “to the praise of the glory of His grace...”
- maybe you're working on a project – and there's two ways to get it done – the easy way where you cut some corners and do just enough to get by...
    - or you seek to glorify God...even in the way you perform the most mundane details of life...
- if you follow culture you probably recognize this face...
    - this is Hilary Rosen, a political strategist who made the comment recently that Mitt Romney's wife Ann...
  - couldn't sympathize with the plight of working women because she hadn't worked a day in her life...
  - and by the way – this certainly isn't some sort of endorsement because I'm a lot into culture but only a little into politics...
  - **“My career choice was to be a mother. We have to respect women and all those choices that they make. Other women make other choices, to have a career and raise family, which I think Hilary Rosen has actually done herself. I respect that, that's wonderful. ... This is obviously an awesome responsibility to raise children. It's, to me, the most important thing we can do.”**
  - and that's exactly right – it's possible to glorify God...to live in a way that is consistent with our creative design...in what might appear to others to be some of the most mundane activities of life...
  - living to the praise of the glory of his grace...
- one of the guys I went to Bible College with made an interesting post on FB the other day – he said, I'm a guy. I've never been on Pinterest. But I'm glad I get to enjoy the labors of the ladies in my life who are and do.”
  - and that's right...
    - my niece put a picture of a cake she made on FB the other day...I have no idea how she decorated it like that...
    - but using your God given skills and abilities and gifts, assuming your heart's motivation is correct, can be a marvelous opportunity to live to the praise of the glory of His grace...
- can I pause there and ask you a couple of questions...
    1. Have you trusted Christ?...
      - have you allowed Him to put you back on the track on which you were designed to run?
    2. Are you in the habit of asking yourself – before you speak, before you think, before you act...
      - why am I here?...why was I created?...what would be consistent in this situation with the purpose for which I was made...and in Christ, remade...
      - isn't that what the sanctification process is all about?...

- **Romans 8:29 - For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;**

- now, on that foundation, how else would God's Word answer our question?...to display God's character, and...

## **II. To Enjoy God's Fellowship**

- something you may have noticed was that Adam and Eve...

### **A. Walked with God in the garden.**

- prior to the fall, Adam and Eve had the kind of personal relationship with God where he taught them the truth they needed to know to fulfill their purpose...
- it was the kind of relationship that the NT would refer to as fellowship...a warm, intimate relationship with the very God of heaven...
- that's why it was so tragic that one of the consequences for their sin was that they were driven out of the garden and their relationship with God was forever altered...
- but this purpose too is redeemed through the gospel....

### **B. This also was restored by the blood of Christ.**

- **Ephesians 2:13 - But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**
- the apostle John would later say this... **1 John 1:3 - what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.**
- does that amaze you this morning – that one of the primary reasons you're here is so that you can, as was said of a man in the OT named Enoch...so that you can walk with God...

- and to add to the amazement, it's even possible

### **C. God can actually delight in you.**

- there are far more passages than we can possibly talk about this morning...Isaiah speaks about the day when...
- **Isaiah 62:3-5 - You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken," nor to your land will it any longer be said, "desolate"; But you will be called, "My delight is in her," and your land, "married"; for the LORD delights in you, and *to Him* your land will be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so your sons will marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you.**
- **Zephaniah 3:17-18 - The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.**
- that's what happens when you're trying to live in a way that is consistent with the purpose for which you were designed...
- for example, go back to the person whose co-worker made a mistake...
  - and welling up inside are all those temptations to us that event for personal advantage...
  - but when you subdue that...your exercise dominion over that temptation...you remember that you are here to live to the praise of the glory of God's grace...
  - you find yourself calling out to God...right there in the office...Lord, please give me strength to handle this opportunity well...

- you're talking to Him like He's a real Person, and like you have a genuine relationship...
- and he gives you the strength to obey – and in some mysterious transaction you choose to embrace that strength and make the right choice...
  - and in that moment – your God is delighted in you...
- and what impact does that have on you?...
- D. You, in turn, find yourself delighting in Him.**
  - is there anything better than living in a way that is consistent with your design?...
  - **John 10:10 - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly.**
  - **John 15:10-11 - If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.**
  - **Psalm 16:11 - You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.**
- question – has cultivating fellowship with God been a priority for you?...
  - are you living in a way that is consistent with that aspect of your design?...
  - or have you allowed some lesser idol to steal your affection and captivate your heart...
  - **Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. (C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, pg. 1)**

[to display God's character, to enjoy God's fellowship...]

### **III. To Fulfill God's Mission**

- men and women who choose to live in a way that is consistent with our design accomplish much for Christ...**John 15:16- You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.**