

A Form of Introduction to the New Kid on the Block – The Forgotten Purpose of Truth

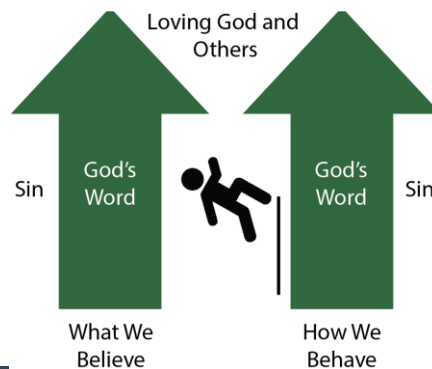
God has given us His Word so that we might come to know Him and His desires for our life and ministry. Could it be that in our efforts to grow and mature in Christ, we are not doing everything we are supposed to be doing with the Bible? Could it be that even in our best attempts at discerning God's truth and working to apply it, we have not done all that we need to do with the Scripture? Could we have missed a critical purpose of God's truth?

The Rational Purpose of God's Truth. We know that Scripture tells us what we should believe and that God's Word is our determiner for what is true, immovable, unchangeable, and eternal. For example, Acts 4:12 tells us, "There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." This boundary of right doctrine lets us know that to claim there is any way to salvation other than Jesus is error or sin. Think of this purpose as DOCTRINE – what we are to believe.

The Behavioral Purpose of God's Truth. Another purpose of God's truth is to guide us in how to live our lives. We know that the Bible gives us commands and principles for how to live a life that is pleasing to God and in harmony with one another. Ephesians 4:29 speaks of not letting any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up. Therefore, to revile, judge, or gossip with our words is to fall outside of the boundary of right living and would be sin. Think of this purpose as MORALITY – how we are to behave.

While these two purposes of truth are critical and essential for life and ministry, they are not sufficient in themselves. Whereas the Bible defines the limits of sound doctrine that serve as boundaries for what we are to believe, and also gives us boundaries for how we should behave, there is another purpose – to direct our journey toward a relationship with Him and with those He loves. The rational and behavioral purposes of God's Word serve as the "rails" that guide us into a deeper relationship with the One who wrote it and with those He calls us to love.

The Relational Purpose of God's Truth.



The relational purpose of truth is this: God's Word was written so that we might have a loving, intimate relationship with the One who wrote it as well as with those He loves.

Many of us get sidetracked on our journey toward a deep, intimate relationship with God. We carefully look to Scripture in order to tell us what to believe and how we should behave, but we miss the opportunity to more deeply know the God of the Bible. As a result, our lives may suffer from a lack of significance and diminished eternal impact for the cause of Christ. Our ministries may be void of relevance and demonstrable impact because week by week, we leave church knowing what to believe and how to behave, but we fail to pursue the journey into a deeper relationship with the God of the Bible. Think of this purpose as RELATIONSHIP – how we are to love God and others.

The Great Commandment

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Created for Connection

Brown Community Group
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Biblical Anthropology

Anthropology is the study of humankind. Who are we as human beings versus the animals, fish, birds, etc. And, how does that understanding of humankind shed light on why we do what we do, that is, why we think, feel, and act as we do. How might our understanding of human nature guide us in our efforts to introduce other people to the God of the universe – their Creator? How does our knowledge of how we are made inform us in our parenting of children? Could it be that a misunderstanding of human nature has led us to miss the mark, at least to some degree, in reaching, teaching, discipling, and sending out people as the Body of Christ. In other words, if our view of human nature is distorted, is that hindering our proclaiming of the Gospel and our equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry. If we don't see people the way God sees people, can we truly love them the way He loves them?

Though this lesson will draw from scriptures throughout the Bible, we will return once again to the book of Genesis for some foundational principles about who we are. The first reference we see to humankind is in Genesis 1. It states unequivocally that human beings are **created in the image and likeness of God**, unique in that regard from all other parts of His creation.

Genesis 1:26-27 - 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.

Secondly, we can see that God gave human beings a role in managing the world He established.

Genesis 1:28 - ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground."

Further, He declared in **Genesis 2:15, 19-21** - ¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁹ Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

And finally, in these passages, we can see that God provided for all that we would need to exist and thrive physically in His world – food, air, water, and a temperature-controlled environment (inferred from Genesis 3:7 ☺).

Genesis 1:29 - ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food."

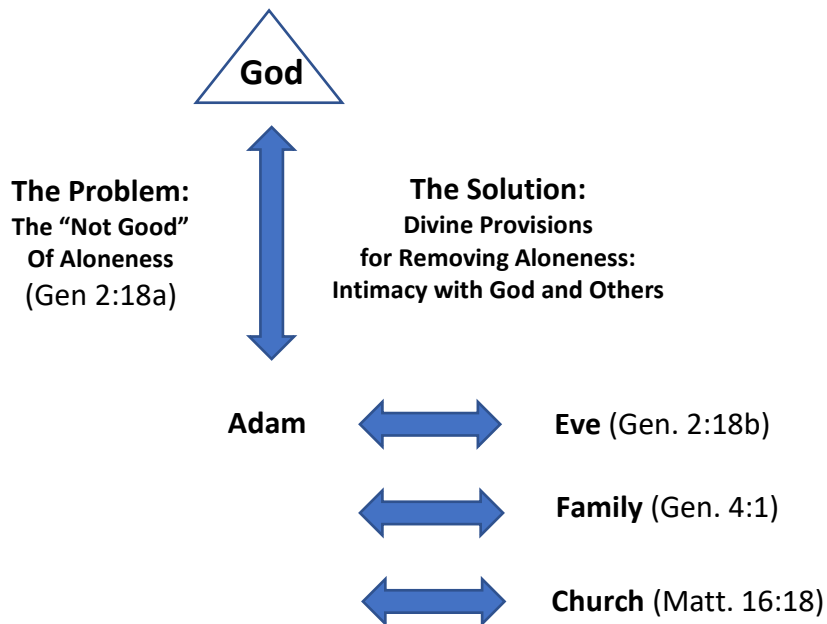
And, **Genesis 2:16-17** - ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

We also learn from Genesis 3, that due to the Fall of Man, when Adam and Eve disobey their Creator God, that all human beings "inherit" a sinful nature that separates them from relationship with God unless each person comes to embrace Jesus as the Son of God and the atonement for their sin. But often, a revelation in Genesis 2 gets overlooked as to its significance in helping us understand our human nature that is a part of the image of God. **We are created for connection – to God and to one another.**

Genesis 2:18 ¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

On the following page, a diagram depicts God's divine plan for creating humankind with an inherent need for an intimate relationship with Him AND with meaningful others in our lives. We refer to this diagram as, "The First Human Crisis."

The First Human Crisis



Adam had a perfect environment, possessed everything he needed to survive on planet earth, and was placed by God in an exalted position relative to other created beings. Yet, His Creator shows up and informs him that something is "not good." Yet, the "not good" was identified by God BEFORE the Fall where Adam and Eve rebelled against their Creator. Therefore, this "not good" had nothing to do with sin, but everything to do with how God WIRED us for relationships.

We come out of the womb totally dependent on others and looking for someone who will relate to us in safe, helpful, meaningful ways. In His plan for how human beings are to come into this world, God assigned the roles of caring for newly born infants to adults who are to love and care for their children, meeting their physical, spiritual, and relational needs. Few Christians would take issue with humans having physical and spiritual needs that a good God has made provision for in His economy of things. But sometimes, it is a bit tougher to convince people that we are created with relational needs that require "boots on the ground" for God's plan to be fully implemented. (We'll go into more depth about these relational needs next week, but for today, we will focus on the need to be **relationally connected** to God and others).

The Still Face Experiment

You can see this inborn need for more than food and shelter in the demeanor and behavior of a one-year old baby in [The Still Face Experiment](#). This video clip can be found on YouTube by searching that title. It shows a Harvard professor, who has studied human nature and childhood development for decades, instructing a young mother to shift from interacting playfully with her daughter as was the norm, to NOT responding at all to the efforts of the child to connect. You can see that the mother is only inches away from the child, in clear view, yet the child quickly becomes distraught and distressed after only a couple of minutes of experiencing the mom's "still face." Notice that the child tries a number of ways to regain the mom's attention and interaction but to no avail. The professor points out that short experiences of this type would be relatively easy for a child to recover from, but if the consistent pattern of parent-child interaction was the "still face," the child would almost certainly develop patterns that would negatively impact her development – relationally and otherwise. Clearly, we are "fearfully and wonderfully made," including the way we come hardwired for connection, looking for someone who cares about us and values engaging with us.

Only Intimate Relationships Remove Aloneness

Simply having other people in your proximity does not remove aloneness. It is possible to be surrounded by a crowd and feel very much alone. For some, even being in a church gathering can be a place of aloneness. That was often the comment I heard from single adults attending churches I was serving. The removing of aloneness is accomplished through relationships that can function at a deeper, more meaningful level of relating. The “acid test” for such relationships is when both individuals can say they feel deeply known or understood by the other person in addition to feeling safe with them.

Dr. David Ferguson, Executive Director of Intimate Life Ministries in Austin, Texas, is my source for much of the material in this lesson. The diagrams and much of the explanations are adapted from materials that may be found on their website: www.GreatCommandment.net. Several decades ago, David searched the Scriptures for evidence of relationships that reflected such intimacy. He found three Hebrew words in the Old Testament that were frequently translated into English as “intimate,” when the context was relational rather than sexual. Here are the words.

HEBREW WORDS FOR INTIMACY

YADA – to know; intimate knowledge of another person

“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.” (Jeremiah 1:5)

“O Lord . . . You know me.” (Psalm 139:1)

Intimacy involves deeply knowing someone.

SOD – to reveal; vulnerable disclosure

“God is intimate with the upright.” (Proverbs 3:32)

Intimacy requires allowing someone to know you.

SAKAN – to be of use, service or profit; caring involvement

“You are intimately acquainted with all my ways.” (Psalm 139:3)

Intimacy must be motivated by the desire to be caringly involved with someone.

Intimacy is deep mutual knowing for the purpose of caring involvement.

RELATIONAL EXERCISE – An Opportunity to Experience Romans 12:15

Who knew you like this during your growing up years? _____

Who would have come to understand what really mattered to you, interested you, or made you anxious and fearful? Who would have entered your world, listened to your point of view, conversed respectfully with you, and encouraged or comforted, or celebrated with you as appropriate?

Next week: Needy by Design – a lesson in God’s plan for his people to interdependently in communities that are live in dependence on Him.