

## Topic 6: The Kingdom Mandate: Man's Mission in God's World<sup>1</sup>

Genesis 1:1 opens with order and beauty. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." God filled the world with land, life, and abundance. And each day unfolds with precision and purpose. But who would rule this glorious world on God's behalf?

On the sixth day, God created man in His image and likeness and entrusted him with a royal task. As seen in the previous session, man was created both as a son in relationship with God and as His representative ruler on earth. This dual identity lays the groundwork for what is often called the "kingdom mandate." This is God's original commission for humanity to reflect His character and extend His rule and will across the earth.

*God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:28)*

This is not one biblical truth among many. It is foundational. It defines why mankind was created, what our mission is, and how God intends to complete His purposes on the earth.

Yet this truth is often overlooked, especially in modern discussions that focus narrowly on individual spiritual salvation. Person redemption is vital. But before sin entered the picture, and before there was any need for salvation, God gave humanity a royal commission. Man was to represent Him by ruling over creation with wisdom and care.

This truth must be grasped, or the Bible's Storyline will be misunderstood. Understanding this royal commission also shapes how we view the created world itself.

Creation, though declared "very good," was not static or finished. It was full of potential – abundant, wild, and waiting to be cultivated. Genesis 2:5 hints at this forward-looking design:

*No shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.*

Man's task is not passive. To rule meant to steward the earth with authority and responsibility. To subdue meant to harness the world's potential, to shape, order, and develop it in ways that reflect God's wisdom and bring human flourishing. The world was not to remain as Eden alone; it was to be filled, formed, and expanded through human labor, creativity, and community.

This royal commission shows that all of life matters to God. This includes work, family, creativity, and culture. God cares about what we build, grow, and do in the world.

This royal calling is practical. It means working the soil, rending garments, naming animals, building homes, crafting tools raising children and forming societies. Humanity is to explore the

---

<sup>1</sup> The series content is from Michael Vlach's book, *The Bible Storyline: God's Unstoppable Plan to Defeat Evil, Restore Creation, and Establish His Kingdom on Earth*, available for purchase in our Resource Center.

richness of creation and bring forth music, architecture, agriculture, education, craftsmanship, and law. All of these are meant to reflect the beauty and justice of the Creator. Even physical labor like plowing fields, shaping stone, and gathering grain is dignified. It mirrors God's own creative work.

Genesis 2:15 offers further detail:

*Then the Lord took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.*

Note that Adam's mission was twofold. He was "to cultivate" and "to keep." Adam was to draw out the land's fruitfulness while also guarding its order. His role was both creative and protective. He was not merely a gardener; he was a guardian. The garden was a sanctuary, and Adam stood in it as a kind of priest-king, preserving its beauty and defending it from intrusion.

Psalms 8 looks back to this original dignity given to mankind:

*You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of your hands.*

Though written after the Fall, these words echo Eden. They remind us of what man was designed to be and point forward to what he is destined to become again.

Adam's commission was clear: to fill the earth with image-bearers, to rule and subdue it under God's authority, and to extend the beauty and order of Eden outward. This was not a temporary arrangement. It was the foundational purpose of humanity, a mission rooted in sonship and stamped with royal dignity.

Sin will soon disrupt this calling and the task will become strained and frustrated. But the commission itself is never revoked. From Genesis to Revelation, this kingdom mandate remains a central thread. It will ultimately be fulfilled by Jesus, the Last Adam, who will restore what the first Adam lost and bring the earth under the dominion God intended.

So here, at the dawn of creation, the human story begins with a noble calling. Man is to reflect God and rule His world in fellowship with Him.

This sacred commission was joyful, rooted in communion with God and overflowing with the delights of life in the world.

***Storyline Focus – Humanity's original calling is to fill, subdue, and steward the earth as God's royal representatives, a mission never revoked.***

## Topic 7: Created for Delight: Flourishing in Eden

Before the Fall, life was overflowing with joy, wonder, and delight. In Eden, man didn't merely exist; he flourished. He was in communion with God and in harmony with the vibrant, beautiful creation.

Man was made to walk with and love His Maker; his highest joy and deepest satisfaction. And as he lived in this fellowship, God intended for him to thrive in every part of life: his work, his relationships, and his engagements with the world around him.

God did not view Adam's delight in the created order as a threat to His relationship with Adam. Quite the opposite. He was pleased by it. Like a father giving a child a Christmas gift, God rejoiced in Adam's joy. The pleasure and exhilaration that Adam found in the world pointed back to the Father who is the Giver of all good gifts.

So God's desire for man wasn't mere survival or work for its own sake. It was abundant life, full of meaning, joy, and purpose. The blessing of God included delight. Genesis 2:9 tells us:

*Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food.*

"Pleasing to the sight" implies that Adam's eyes were stirred by the lush colors of trees, plants, and flowers. God gave food that was both nourishing and delightful, a sign man was made to enjoy the world.

Notice that beauty and sustenance went hand in hand. God didn't just provide what man needed. He gave what would bring joy. The fruit of the trees was not only nourishing; it was also satisfying. This delight wasn't a passing moment. It was built into the fabric of creation.

Scripture later echoes Eden's joy. Solomon, reflecting on life's meaning, affirmed that enjoying food, work, and daily life is a gift from the hand of God. We don't create delight. It flows from the Giver (see Ecclesiastes 2:24-25). Even simple pleasures are a way of seeing God's goodness in our labor and in our lives (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13). Work, food, and joy are not distractions from spiritual life; they are part of the life God made.

Man was gifted with five remarkable senses to experience the richness of God's world. Picture what Adam encountered. He heard the rustle of leaves, the gurgling of streams, the soft footsteps of animals, the roars of lions, the songs of birds. Together they formed a joyful symphony. He tasted sweetness in fruit and the coolness of pure water. Every sense stirred delight and pointed back to the Creator.

Psalm 104 echoes this as it praises God for causing grass to grow, wine to gladden the heart, and oil to make the face shine. The joys of the earth are not just physical; they are echoes, reminders of the Giver behind every gift.

And this desire for wholistic human flourishing didn't disappear after the Fall. John's words in the New Testament reflect the same longing seen in Eden. He writes,

*I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.*  
(3 John 2)

That prayer mirrors the heart of the Creator Himself, a God who delights in the wellbeing of His image-bearers.

Yes, the Fall is coming, and distortion will follow. But the original design was filled with satisfaction. To be human was to walk with God and rejoice in what He made.

To enjoy His world as He intended is part of what it means to be truly human.

***Storyline Focus – Life in Eden overflowed with joy, beauty, and communion with God – showing that human flourishing is part of God's design.***

### **Topic 8: Male and Female: Partners for Glory**

God did not create a featureless humanity without distinctions. While all people share the same human nature, God designed two complementary sexes: male and female. They are equal in value, yet different in form and entrusted with distinct, God-given roles. Together, man and woman form a beautiful union of difference and harmony that reflects God's image in the world. Genesis 1:27 declares,

*So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

This unity and diversity within the human race mirrors God's own nature. He is one in essence yet three in persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Triune God exists in eternal relationship, and His image is reflected in the relational unity of male and female.

Male and female are physically distinct, and their God-given design goes far beyond biology. Their complementarity is not a cultural construct. It is rooted in creation and reflects God's intentional purpose (see Genesis 1:27; 2:18-24). Together, male and female display the image of God in a way neither could alone.

Being male includes embracing manhood and the responsibility to lead, provide, and protect. Scripture calls men to servant-hearted headship in the family, marked by strength, courage, and initiative that is grounded in God's character (Ephesians 5:23-25).

Being female includes embracing womanhood and the distinct strength that comes through nurturing, helping, and bringing life and beauty into relationships and community. Scripture

honors women as essential partners who are wise, relational, and life-giving (Genesis 2:18; Proverbs 31; 1 Peter 3:4-5).

Masculinity and femininity express the wonder of God's design. Both are essential. When men and women embrace their identity as God intended, families flourish, societies thrive, and the image of God is reflected more fully in the world.

It's no surprise that in a fallen world, the beauty of this design is often distorted or denied. Claims that gender is changeable or self-defined reflect a deeper rejection of the Creator's authority and wisdom. This view treats the body as if it doesn't matter, like your physical design can be changed just because you feel different inside. But when we reject the divine design built into our very bodies, we work against ourselves and against the One who made us.

Our physical design is both intentional and meaningful. Each person's biological sex/gender is a gift and an objective, unchangeable, embedded part of who we are. To be a man or a woman is not a role we choose; it is a gift rooted in creation itself. When this design is embraced, people flourish. When it is rejected, confusion and disorder follow.

God's original design shines. Male and female are distinct yet equal. Each reveals something of their Maker. And together, they reflect the glory of God in the profound harmony of distinction and unity that echoes the nature of the Triune God.

***Storyline Focus – God designed male and female as equal yet distinct, reflecting His image through the harmony of difference and unity.***

### **Topic 9: Male and Female: Created for Relationship: Marriage, Family, and the Human Bond**

In Eden, God gave mankind the first sacred bond. Formed by His hands and designed for unity, joy, and fruitfulness, marriage became the foundation of family and human society.

Shortly after God made men, He declared,

*“It is not good for the man to be alone.”* (Genesis 2:18)

Adam was formed by God in a sinless, pristine paradise. Yet something was still missing. God desired for man to have a relationship, not just with Himself, but with another human being. So God gave Adam the gift of human companionship. From Adam's rib, God formed Eve – his helper, partner, and counterpart. Upon seeing her, Adam exclaimed:

*“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.”* (Genesis 2:23)

This first marriage became the foundation for all human fellowship, with the intention that it would lead to the multiplication of families and the filling of the earth with other image-bearers. Eve was Adam's partner in relationship and in the unfolding of civilization. In this union, the man is to leave his father and mother, be joined to his wife, and become one flesh with her (Genesis 2:24). This union is designed to reflect the relational nature of God Himself.

*God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:27)*

In this we see both unity and distinction. Man and woman are equal in essence, both bearing the image of God. Yet they possess distinct role and responsibilities. Paul cites Adam's creation first as the foundation for male headship in the family and church (1 Timothy 2:13). And Eve's creation as helper affirms her essential, life-giving strength, a role that blesses both home and community.

Marriage brings these differences into harmony as the man expresses headship through servant-hearted love, strength, and wise leadership. Together, husband and wife mirror the joy, creativity, and fidelity found in God's own relational nature.

But marriage was not the only expression of God's relational design. His desire for community extends beyond the family to friendships, fellowship, and society. As humanity expanded from the first couple to families, tribes, peoples, and nations, the godness of shared life continued to echo throughout history.

So the declaration, "It is not good for man to be alone," is not just a marriage principle; it is a human truth. God wants His people to experience the joy and richness of human relationships. Whether in marriage, friendship, neighborhoods, or the gathered people of God, meaningful human interaction reflects His relational heart. That is why we are told:

*"This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you."*  
(John 15:12)

*Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together. (Hebrews 10:24-25)*

*The one who loves God should love his brother also. (1 John 4:21)*

Human relationships do not compete with our relationship with God. They flow from it. God's heart has always been for people to walk together in unity, love, and mutual care.

Marriage also plays a vital role in God's plan for the multiplication of human life – children. "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Through the family, God's purpose to fill the earth with His image-bearers continues.

In all these things, we glimpse the heart of a God who delights in relationship: with Himself, with us, and among us. Marriage, family, friendship, and fellowship all reflect different facets of His relational design.

Human connection in all its forms remains central to what it means to bear His image. From the first marriage in Eden to every faithful marriage and human bond today, God's design still stands: sacred, beautiful, and good.

And just as God created us for connection, He also gave us a moral framework to guide those relationships. The Story now turns to that foundation.

***Storyline Focus – Marriage and human relationships flow from God's design, revealing His relational heart and forming the foundation of human society.***

## **Topic 10: Guardrails for Life: The Moral Order Established at Creation**

Creation was not merely physical. It also was moral. The personal, wise, and good God embedded His righteousness into the very structure of the created order. His expectations flow from His perfect character and are woven into both the fabric of our nature and the world around us.

Because humans are made in His image, our hearts are wired for what is good and true. We possess an inner sense of right and wrong, a moral compass pointing back to our Creator. As Paul would later write, “the work of the Law [is] written in their hearts” (Romans 2:15).

No person can escape accountability to the Creator's will. As Romans 1:20 declares, “His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” This is part of what makes all people accountable to Him. No one is exempt from what God requires.

Thus, even before sin entered history, morality and a sense of right and wrong were built into the way things are. When he was made, Adam didn't need a theological argument to know who was in charge. The Creator-creature distinction was self-evident. God is the Creator. He is the standard for what is right. And the creature is always accountable to the Creator.

Alongside creation's self-evident design, God also gave direct instructions. His voice clarified what was already visible. He spoke. He gave clear commands, guardrails for life in His world. These were not the restrictions of a tyrant, but the wise instructions of a loving God who desires the best for His people.

For example, God gave Adam meaningful tasks: to fill, rule, and subdue the earth (see Genesis 1:28), to cultivate and keep the garden (see Genesis 2:15), and to abstain from one tree (see

Genesis 2:16–17). These commands were clear, purposeful, and life-giving. In all this, Adam was called to trust and love God, not merely in behavior, but from the heart.

To live rightly in God's world means listening to His voice. Obedience is the path to joy, peace, and purpose. Jesus would later say, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

Even in Eden, volition, the ability to choose, was essential. Adam had to decide whether to trust and obey or to rebel. His freedom affirmed both his moral responsibility and his accountability before God. This volitional aspect of morality—what we choose to love, trust, and obey—is essential to what it means to be human.

This moral reality will not disappear after Eden. It continues, expanding in clarity through covenants and laws. Later in the Story, the Ten Commandments and Mosaic instructions given at Sinai echoed the moral truths already grounded in God's character and the created order. Commands like worshipping God alone, honoring parents, remaining faithful in marriage, and being content with what you have were now written down with great clarity. Yet they reflected principles already present in Genesis 1–2.

This moral order continues into the New Covenant era, is expressed through the Law of Christ (see Galatians 6:2; Romans 13:8–10), and is especially evident in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7).

Ultimately, morality stems from God and from creation realities. These are not cultural constructs; they are fixed moral truths embedded in the Creator's design of the world.

But when God's moral order was rejected, the consequences quickly followed. When Adam and Eve disobeyed, they did more than break a rule. They failed to love and trust their Maker. Cain violated the sanctity of life established at creation. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah rejected God's moral design for sexuality and society. None of this was morally neutral. All of it defied the good order God had built into His world.

In a fallen world, sin distorts our moral compass. But the imprint of God's truth remains. Conscience may be dulled, but it is not destroyed. God's commands remain a light for the path (Psalm 119:105), guarding what is most precious—our lives, our relationships, and our calling.

God's commands are good. They reflect His goodness, preserve our joy, and guard the sacredness of creation.

***Storyline Focus — God wove a moral order into creation, calling humanity to trust and obey His good design for life and joy.***