

MATT CHANDLER

a
beautiful
design

GOD'S UNCHANGING
PLAN FOR
MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD



Resources



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THE AUTHOR

MATT CHANDLER serves as the lead pastor of teaching at The Village Church in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. He came to The Village in December 2002 and describes his tenure as a replanting effort to change the theological and philosophical culture of the congregation. The church has witnessed a tremendous response, growing from 160 people to more than 11,000, including campuses in Flower Mound, Dallas, Plano, and Fort Worth.

Alongside his current role as lead pastor, Matt is involved in church-planting efforts both locally and internationally through The Village, as well as in various strategic partnerships. Prior to accepting the pastorate at The Village, Matt had a vibrant itinerant ministry for more than 10 years that gave him the opportunity to speak to thousands of people in America and abroad about the glory of God and the beauty of Jesus.

Matt is also the author of *To Live is Christ to Die is Gain, Mingling of Souls*, *The Explicit Gospel Bible Study* (LifeWay, 2012) and a coauthor of *Creature of the Word* (LifeWay, 2012).

Other than knowing Jesus, Matt's greatest joy is being married to Lauren and being the dad to their three children, Audrey, Reid, and Norah.

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a woman?

In our society today, there is a massive amount of confusion about manhood and womanhood. Is there any difference between them? If so, what is the difference? The answers our culture offers only further serve to muddy the water. Is there a clearly defined picture? If so, where can we find it?

In *A Beautiful Design*, Pastor Matt Chandler will show us how the Bible speaks clearly to this issue of manhood and womanhood. We'll understand that God has created us with a purpose in mind, and it is a beautiful design—an unchanging plan. A life lived within His design flourishes. Psalm 16:11 says, “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Let's not miss the path of life and beautiful design He has planned for us.

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS STUDY

1. Attend each group experience.

- Watch the video teaching and complete the viewer guide.
- Participate in the group discussions.

2. Complete the content in this Bible study book.

- Prayerfully interact with all learning activities.
- Be honest with God, yourself, and others about your experiences.
- Apply the principles.

3. Commit to the experience.

- *A Beautiful Design* has nine video sessions with eight weeks of personal study. Most groups will do this study over the course of nine weeks, but if your group follows a different schedule, that's OK.
- Use the Family Discipleship page each week to help you craft a vibrant family discipleship experience around three key elements: time, moments, and milestones. *Time* will help you build intentional time into the rhythm of family life for the purpose of thinking about, talking about, and living out the gospel. *Moments* will help you capture and leverage opportunities in the course of everyday life for the purpose of gospel-centered conversations. *Milestones* will help you mark and make occasions to celebrate and commemorate significant spiritual milestones of God's work in the life of the family and child.
- Don't rush. Allow time for the Spirit of God to work in you through His Word.



SESSION 1:

IN THE BEGINNING

WELCOME TO YOUR FIRST SESSION OF *A BEAUTIFUL DESIGN*.

Let's begin by taking a few minutes to get to know each other.

Ask each member of the group to introduce themselves by sharing their name, members of their immediate family, and where they grew up.

What was your favorite toy as a child, and why?

There's something to be said for the good ol' days, but let's face it, our world is changing at an ever-increasing pace. Gone are the days of record players, VHS tapes, and even televisions that are not flat-panel. It seems that just as quickly as technology and gadgets change, so does how the world defines what it means to be man and woman. In fact, historical gender norms are being radically reshaped before our very eyes.

But what if the world is wrong? What if there is something else? Something better? Something untouched by time? Something true and perfect?

TO PREPARE FOR THE VIDEO,
READ ALOUD COLOSSIANS 1:15-17:

¹⁵ *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*

¹⁶ *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.* ¹⁷ *And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

COMPLETE THE VIEWER GUIDE BELOW
AS YOU WATCH SESSION 1.

If the church must be anything, she must be a _____ for
the _____ and the sexually _____.

She (the church) must be a _____ of safety and grace for the
weary struggler, or we do not understand _____.

The phrase “in the beginning” means that there was _____
_____ there was time.

God, according to the _____, is the only object that has
no _____.

God is the primary _____ in everything that _____.

Throughout the Scriptures, God _____ in the small, the _____
, and the _____.

The biggest questions of _____, _____, and _____
can now be studied and understood.

We are _____.

You and I, as _____ beings, are not the _____.

Because we are _____, we are not the _____ of it all.

Because we have a _____, that Creator has created us with a
_____ in mind.

God doesn't _____.

If there's not a fixed _____, there is no way to know _____
you're actually going.

DISCUSS THE VIDEO SEGMENT USING THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

What statement or idea stood out to you as you watched the video? Why?

What views does our culture embrace when trying to explain the creation of the world? How are these views different from God's beautiful design given in Genesis?

If the world is "ever changing," what is the benefit of orienting ourselves around God?

What areas of life do people tend to look to the world for direction rather than looking to God?

Do you struggle with accepting God's good design for the world? If so, what aspect of God's design do you struggle with the most?

In what ways has orienting your life around God's good design been a blessing to you? What areas of your life feel out of line?

Matt said, "If the church must be anything, she must be a safe place for the gender-confused and the sexually broken. She must be a fortress of grace for the weary struggler."

What could you or your group do to facilitate that kind of environment in your church and for one another?

COMPLETE THE PERSONAL STUDY FOR SESSION 1
BEFORE THE NEXT GROUP EXPERIENCE.

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

God calls the family to play a vital role in discipling the next generation. We encourage you to use the language of time, moments, and milestones as a framework for family discipleship.

TIME: Build intentional time into the rhythm of your household this week to sit with your kids and talk about Genesis 1:1. If your kids are younger, take time to memorize this verse as a family. If you have older kids, initiate a family discussion about the difference between what our culture deems as important and what God has told us is important.

PRAY: Lead your family to pray and thank God for His goodness in designing the cosmos to work in a rhythm that brings us joy and gives Him glory.

MOMENTS: Capture and leverage moments in the course of everyday life to point out God's beautiful design in each other and in creation. Consider going for a walk around your neighborhood or head to a local park with your family and reflect on the handiwork of God.

IN THE BEGINNING

Before time began, God was. Everything that is was created by Him. His design for the universe is perfect and timeless. Because God designed the universe in good order, we can be sure that orienting our ever-changing lives around God's unchanging design will result in our good and His glory. When we look to an ever-changing world to discover who we are and what our purpose is, we receive a multitude of ideas and opinions. When we look to God's Word, we find a steady answer to these questions. God's design points toward a divine purpose for humanity: to reflect our Creator.



1.1

ORIGIN: WHO AM I?

At times, we have a tendency to overlook the small and familiar. Think about it: If you have carpet in your home, there are probably a few small stains that you don't even notice anymore. Your car surely has several rock chips or dings that you don't notice. Unless you are extremely particular, you don't think about them regularly, and they almost certainly don't evoke emotion in you.

What is something that is small and familiar that you have a tendency to overlook?

Genesis 1:1 is one of the shortest and most familiar verses in the Bible, and unfortunately, we have a tendency to look over it like that stain on the carpet. In spite of its familiarity, this short verse is packed with a wealth of truth.

In this one verse, you have answers to questions that philosophers, theologians, and scientists have been asking for centuries: *Who am I? Why am I here?* and *How do things work?* The biggest questions of origin, purpose, and design can be studied and understood.

Which one of those questions resonates most with you? Why?

During this week's Bible study, we are going to focus in on each one of those questions. Let's begin with the question of origin: *Who Am I?*

Read Genesis 1:1 aloud several times emphasizing different words each time.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

GENESIS 1:1

What stood out to you as you read this verse? Why?

Let's unpack Genesis 1:1 a little further:

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD

Solomon was king of Israel during a time of great peace and prosperity. He was also known as the wisest man in the world. Out of the riches of his God-given wisdom, he wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes. It could almost be a commentary for that first phrase of Genesis 1:1. Let's look at a few verses.

Read Ecclesiastes 1:3,9. What phrase is repeated? Write it below.

The phrase *under the sun* appears 29 times throughout Ecclesiastes' twelve chapters. Why do you think this phrase is repeated so much?

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-11. In a poetic way, Solomon described how everything we do in our lives can be understood in terms of time. What "time" is it for you?

Our lives are bound by the confines of time. Almost any question we ask is seen through the lens of time. For example, if we ask someone the score of a ballgame, they are going to tell us the present score, but with the passing of time, that could change. If we ask the type of car someone drives, the answer will be defined by the time designated. The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us what Genesis 1:1 says: We are finite—bound by time. God, however, is infinite, beyond the sun. He always has been.

Take a moment to ponder that God has always been. Circle the emotions that truth evokes in you.

Awe Excitement Wonder Joy Confusion Humility Fear

CREATED

When it comes to the account of creation, it's easy to get lost in the weeds of the hows and whens. We often have more questions than answers.

Read Genesis 1:1–2:2 in your Bible. Circle each mention of God’s name.

The point of the Genesis account of creation is not to answer all of our questions about creation. Rather, it reminds us that the infinite Creator God is responsible for it all.

Read Psalm 19:1-6. Why did God create? What does creation say about God?

Read Colossians 1:15-17. How does it impact your life to know that all things are created not only by Him, but also *for* Him.

How often do you remember that you were created for God?

Rarely					Constantly
1	2	3	4	5	

How would you live your life differently knowing you were created *for* Him?

THE HEAVENS

Have you ever thought about the size of space? Do a quick Internet search and you’ll see some fascinating information. If we were to travel at a velocity so fast that it pushed the human body to its limit, it would still take us millions of years to travel to the end of space. The sheer immensity of space is absolutely mind-boggling, and our Creator God simply spoke it—all of it—into existence!

Read Psalm 147:4. Recall a time when the sky was so clear and visible and stars were so numerous that it almost didn’t seem real. Picture that moment. Now write down the first thought about God that comes to mind.

AND THE EARTH

In the middle of this vast universe, on a planet in one of the smaller solar systems, God placed the crown jewel of His creation. He created man and woman to rule and reign on the earth. In this setting, the greatest drama to ever be known in the universe would be played out. (More on that next week.) God not only created it all in good order, He continues to hold it in place. In fact, if the axis of the earth changed only a few degrees here or there, the world would no longer exist as we know it.

What part of God's creation is the most awe-inspiring to you?

- The beach
- The mountains
- A sunset
- A waterfall
- Other: _____

If we'll take a moment to meditate on the vastness of the universe, we might feel a little fear. The magnificence of this creation could cause us to feel smaller than we like to feel, but there is something behind that magnificence. There is *Someone* who told that magnificence to exist simply because He was able. The realization of that truth produces an exponential reverence and awe.

PRAYER

As you conclude this section of Bible study, take a moment to thank God for His goodness in creating a world with such immensity and beauty for our joy and His glory. Ask Him for the grace to recognize His majesty and goodness as you observe the handiwork of His creation. You may choose to write your prayer in the space below.

1.2

PURPOSE: WHY AM I HERE?

We've talked about the fact that God is the origin of all things. Since we know that God created the heavens and the earth in good order and for a purpose, we can rule out any and all competing philosophies and belief systems. A few are listed below. Under each one, write why you believe it cannot be true. (Hint: Look back to Genesis 1:1.)

Dualism: Good and evil are two competing forces in which the victor is unclear.

Materialism: The idea that all that exists is the matter we see. This is not the same as capitalistic materialism.

Polytheism: The belief in more than one god.

Hedonism: The belief that the pursuit of pleasure should be the aim of man.

Existentialism: Man wills and determines his own reality.

Pantheism: The belief that all of nature is one with God.



"I believe in the cosmos. All of us are linked to the cosmos. So nature is my god. To me, nature is sacred. Trees are my temples and forests are my cathedrals. Being one with nature."¹

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

Which philosophy does this quote reflect?

Do you live each day like you were created with a purpose? If yes, jot an example below. If no, why not?

If someone were to ask you today, "What is God's purpose for your life?", what would you say?

In Romans 1, the apostle Paul gave a clear description of the wrong choices we can make when we look for value, meaning, and purpose in things other than Creator God.

Read Romans 1:18-25. In the space below, summarize these verses, paying special attention to verse 25.

Write one area where you consistently look to the world (created things) for purpose or meaning. What would change if you began to look toward God and His good design in that specific area?

Read Ephesians 2:10. Paul uses a very specific word to describe us humans. Write it here:

PRAYER

As you conclude your study today, thank God for creating you with purpose. Ask God to help you clearly see the good works He created you for.

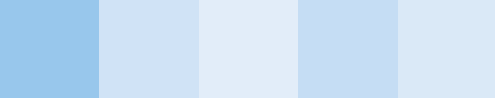
1.3

DESIGN: HOW DO THINGS WORK?

A tool can become useless or even dangerous when it's not used for the purpose it was intended. For instance, a leaf blower is very similar in design and function to a hairdryer. However, if you used it to style your hair, you'd be in serious need of some detangler—and a hairdryer would be very ineffective at clearing your driveway. A grill brush and a toothbrush have similar features. The toothbrush wouldn't do much damage cleaning charred food off your grill grate, but the grill brush would surely send you to the ER if used to clean your teeth. Everything was created for a purpose and with guidelines for use. When those guidelines aren't followed, destruction—or at the very least frustration—will ensue.

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis talked about “the human machine” and the proper use of it. Here's an excerpt:

“There is a story about a schoolboy who was asked what he thought God was like. He replied that, as far as he could make out, God was ‘the sort of person who is always snooping around to see if anyone is enjoying himself and then trying to stop it.’ And I am afraid that is the sort of idea that the word morality raises in a good many people's minds: something that interferes, something that stops you having a good time. In reality, moral rules are directions for running the human machine. Every moral rule is there to prevent a breakdown, or a strain, or a friction, in the running of that machine. That is why these rules at first seem to be constantly interfering with our natural inclinations. When you are being taught how to use any machine, the instructor keeps on saying, ‘No, don't do it like that,’ because, of course, there are all sorts of things that look all right and seem to you the natural way of treating the machine, but do not really work.”²



How would you describe God? Do you see Him as someone who polices your life to keep you from being happy? Explain.

What Lewis is applying to morality can also be applied to the universe. There is a way we have been designed to work. There is a good, right, beautiful design implemented by the Creator of all things, and when we use that machinery improperly, disastrous things can happen.

Read Proverbs 14:12. Rewrite the verse below in your own words.

This is a terrifying verse. We will face a multitude of decisions and situations where we have to decide what is the right thing to do or the right way to go. And sometimes, what seems to us to be the right way is actually the road to destruction. This is especially true when we try to forge our own way in life. In the end, we wreck the machine.

Can you think of a time when you thought you were going the “right” way, but it ended up leaving you in a bad spot?

There is a difference between existing and living. Just because you’re breathing air doesn’t mean you’re living life to the fullest. What the Bible is saying in Proverbs 14:12 is that God, the Creator of everything, makes known to us the path of life. He says to us, “Do you want to know what manhood is? Here’s the path of life. Do you want to know what womanhood is? Here’s the path of life. Want to know about money? Here’s the path of life. Sex? Here’s the path of life. Children? Here’s the path of life.”

In your everyday life, do you tend to see God’s path as leading to life or leading to constraint?

In John 10:10, Jesus uses similar language. The answers to the following questions are obvious, but let's write it out in black and white so we can really grasp the paradox here.

What does the thief come to do?

And why has Jesus come?

Being the object of stealing, killing, and destroying is not at the top of most of our bucket lists. Life. That's what we want, and we want the best possible one.

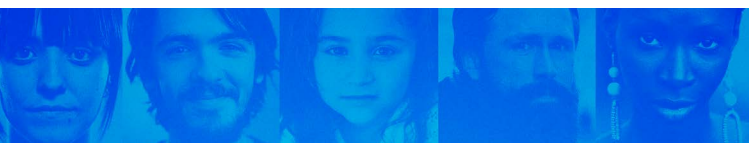
Are you living outside of God's purpose for your life? Are you allowing the thief to steal your joy, peace, and security? Are you walking your own path to life instead of following the Lord's? If so, confess this to Him. Repent and receive His grace, turning your life to walk again in His way. In so doing, may your life proclaim to our fractured, sin-scarred world that God's way is best.

How would you explain the difference between God's good design for the world and its present condition?

Why do you think the world has deviated from God's good design?

P R A Y E R

Conclude this week's Bible study by praying Psalm 16:11. Ask God to make known to you His good design and how you can live it in a way that leads to flourishing for you and the people around you.



AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD.

God created us to function according to His perfect design, and for all of human history, our world has been male and female. But our ever-changing culture faces challenges due to sin. More than ever the church needs to be a safe refuge for the gender-confused, the sexually broken, the single, the married, and the divorced.

In this study, Matt Chandler gives evidence that God's plan for man and woman is the ultimate design. And life lived within this beautiful and unchanging design is part of His greater purpose for humanity and leads to our greatest joy.

- Discover how you were created with a purpose in God's unchanging plan.
- Exchange your broken and weary perspective on life for His beautiful design.
- Shape and influence your church into a safe place for everyone.

ALSO AVAILABLE: *A Beautiful Design* Bible Study Kit includes resources for leading a 9-session group study: one Bible study book and two DVDs that feature biblical teaching from Matt Chandler.

DIGITAL RESOURCES: E-book & video sessions available at www.lifeway.com/beautifuldesign.

