

Week 5 “God made them male and female: A Fresh Look at Biblical Personhood”

Kevin Wilhite, OBC Senior Pastor

Word of the year (4): By, or, “standing beside” ἐκ (ek) 'out from' of, out of; from, away from. Spatially: extension from a space to a goal outer in reference, separation; logically: the means or source of an activity, disassociation or separation

This 6-week sermon series will explore the concept of personhood as God designed it in the Bible, examining how it relates to sex and gender, race, roles and responsibilities, marriage, family, and the various pursuits and passions that shape our lives. Each week will build upon the foundation of God’s creation of humanity, focusing on specific aspects of biblical personhood in a holistic, culturally relevant way.

Week 5: “Pursuits and Passions: Living a Life of Purpose in God”

- **Scripture:** Genesis 2:15-17, Colossians 3:17, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Matthew 6:33; Psalm 8:1-9
- **Main Focus:** How to align personal pursuits, careers, and passions with God’s design for our lives.
- **Key Themes:**
 - The purpose of work, hobbies, and ambitions in the context of biblical personhood.
 - Balancing career, calling, and the pursuit of passion with obedience to God’s greater mission.
 - Rejecting the pursuit of success or status as ultimate goals; prioritizing Kingdom values over worldly achievements.
 - Seeking first God’s Kingdom in all pursuits and passions.
- **Application:** Encouraging individuals to evaluate their lives and align their pursuits with God’s will, finding joy in serving Him.

(SLIDE 1)

Opening

If I were to ask you "What is your purpose in life?", would you be able to confidently answer with a clear answer? This is a very important question and one that many people have offered answers to through out history.

The meaning of life (joke)

On the first day, God created the dog and said: 'Sit all day by the door of your house and bark at anyone who comes in or walks past. For this, I will give you a life span of twenty years.'

The dog said: 'That's a long time to be barking. How about only ten years and I'll give you back the other ten?' So God agreed.

On the second day, God created the monkey and said: 'Entertain people, do tricks, and make them laugh. For this, I'll give you a twenty-year life span.'

The monkey said: 'Monkey tricks for twenty years? That's a pretty long time to perform. How about I give you back ten like the Dog did?' And God agreed.

On the third day, God created the cow and said: 'You must go into the field with the farmer all day long and suffer under the sun, have calves and give milk to support the farmer's family. For this, I will give you a life span of sixty years...'

The cow said: 'That's kind of a tough life you want me to live for sixty years. How about twenty and I'll give back the other forty?' And God agreed again.

On the fourth day, God created man and said: 'Eat, sleep, play, marry and enjoy your life. For this, I'll give you twenty years.'

But the man said: 'Only twenty years? Could you possibly give me my twenty, the forty the cow gave back, the ten the monkey gave back, and the ten the dog gave back; that makes eighty, okay?' 'Okay,' said God, 'You asked for it.' So that is why for our first twenty years we eat, sleep, play and enjoy ourselves.. For the next forty years we slave in the sun to support our family. For the next ten years we do monkey tricks to entertain the grandchildren. And for the last ten years we sit on the front porch and bark at everyone.

Here are some modern takes on the historic question.

(SLIDE 2)

1. **There is no meaning or purpose in life:** In *Better Never to Have Been*, David Benatar argues that life is inherently filled with suffering and that non-existence is preferable to existence. Benatar is an antinatalist and argues that it is better to have never been born.

(SLIDE 3)

2. **The meaning of life cannot be defined rationally:** In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Adams humorously proposes that the "Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything" is 42, reflecting the absurdity of seeking a single, definitive answer.

(SLIDE 4)

3. **The meaning of life must be created:** Jean-Paul Sartre, the French existentialist philosopher famously posits that "existence precedes essence," meaning individuals must create their own

meaning through choices and actions.

(SLIDE 5)

4. **Meaning is found in suffering:** The Austrian Jew and holocaust survivor Victor Frankl believes that meaning and purpose are found in suffering and that the power of our will, while shape our purpose.

(SLIDE 6)

5. **Meaning and purpose are found in relationship:** The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* summarizes the purpose of human life as “to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever,” which aligns with the idea that living in God’s image means fulfilling His intentions for creation.

Whether someone is a Christian or not, to be human means to be inescapably made in the image of God and as such, our actions are a reaction to God's created order. And we act either in harmony with God's designs for his creation, or we act in discordance with God's creation.

(SLIDE 7)

If you have your bibles this morning, I want to invite you to turn with me to Genesis 2:15-17.

Once you have found the scripture, I want to invite you to stand with me as we read the word of God

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden,

(SLIDE 8)

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."

(SLIDE 9)

Prayer

Main Focus: Aligning Our Pursuits with God’s Design

Scripture Readings

- *Genesis 2:15-17* The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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.”

- *Colossians 3:17* “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”
- *Ecclesiastes 12:13-14*: “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”
- *Matthew 6:33*: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

These verses teach us that our pursuits, careers, and passions should honor God, flow from our relationship with Him, and align with His purposes. When we put Him first, our desires are reordered, our passions are refined, and we can find true joy in our work and ambitions.

Key Themes

(SLIDE 10)

1. The Purpose of Work, Hobbies, and Ambitions in Biblical Personhood

At the beginning of all things when God created the human person and put him in the garden, God gave him a job to help the man discover his purpose and meaning. The job was to tend the garden and name the animals. It wasn't like God needed help to do those things but rather it is in us as beings who are made in God's image to reflect his creative acts through activity in our bodies.

For us we still see how God created us with unique talents and desires, meant not only for our fulfillment but for His glory. *Colossians 3:17* urges us to do everything “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” which means every action—whether career-focused, family-oriented, or recreational—should point back to God.

Work is part of God's original design. Genesis shows that God gave Adam the task of tending the Garden of Eden, reflecting His character as a Creator. Our work, ambitions, and hobbies can reflect God's image and His creativity, stewardship, and love of excellence. *Ecclesiastes 3:22* also reminds us, “There is nothing better than for a person to enjoy their work.” But enjoyment and purpose in work should not stand alone; they should always flow from our identity in Christ.

(SLIDE 11)

Working together

In the garden God saw that the man was doing all this work by himself and said, this is not good that

the man is alone. It wasn't because the work was hard— that would come after the fall. It was because the man was working alone and he was not meant to be alone in his work. Why? Since God is a trinity of beings, Father, Son, and Spirit living in relationship, so humans who have been made in the image of God are relational beings and we need company. We find our purpose and meaning in relationship as we work together.

(SLIDE 12)

2. Balancing Career, Calling, and Passion with Obedience to God

A key challenge we face is balancing our personal goals and God's calling on our lives. *Matthew 6:33* reminds us to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." This command redirects our motivations—while our work and passions are good, they must not take the place of God's ultimate calling in our lives.

If you teach in a school, you do so to the glory of God. If you work with your hands, you do so to the glory of God. If you heal the sick you do so to the glory of God. If you care for your children, you do so to the glory of God. What ever it is that we do, we must do so to the glory of God

My daughter Elayna loves to dance. She is passionate about it and she does it innocently. But a day will come when she will be aware that her passion for dance is first rooted in God and so she will not merely dance as a passion, but for God's glory.

Too often, society pressures us to climb the career ladder or to achieve a status that may have little eternal significance. The story of the rich young ruler in *Mark 10:17-27* serves as a warning. His passion for wealth and status kept him from following Christ. When we prioritize God, however, even over legitimate ambitions, we are free to fulfill our purpose in ways that honor Him.

(SLIDE 13)

3. Rejecting Success or Status as Ultimate Goals

In today's culture, success is often defined by money, fame, or power. Yet Scripture redefines success. Jesus teaches us that the greatest in His kingdom are those who serve others (*Mark 10:43-45*). Success for a follower of Christ is measured by faithfulness, humility, and obedience to God.

The writer of *Ecclesiastes* examines worldly pursuits and concludes they are "meaningless" apart from God (*Eccl. 1:2*). Ultimately, our worth does not come from accomplishments but from our relationship with Christ. When we pursue our passions with humility and a servant's heart, we are freed from the relentless pursuit of self-centered success. This approach aligns with biblical personhood because it sees each person as a valued image-bearer of God rather than a competitor in the world's eyes.

Story of my friend Rosa Hunt.

Application: Evaluating and Aligning Our Pursuits with God's Will

How do we practically apply these biblical principles to our lives? Here are three steps:

1. **Reflect on Your Motives:** Why are you pursuing your current path? Are your ambitions driven by a desire for personal success or by a heart to serve God? *Psalm 139:23-24* says, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts." Let's ask God to reveal the true motivations behind our pursuits.
2. **Embrace God's Calling Over Cultural Pressure:** Cultural messages about success are often in direct conflict with God's Word. While society may promote individualism or financial achievement as ultimate goals, God calls us to community and service. *Romans 12:2* urges, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Let us look to Scripture as the foundation for understanding our true purpose.
3. **Seek Joy in Serving God Through Your Passions:** When we align our passions with God's purposes, we find true joy. *Colossians 3:23* says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." In dedicating our talents to God, we discover a deeper satisfaction that transcends worldly rewards.

Additional Resources

Week 5

1. Victor Frankl: Man's Search for Meaning. <https://www.amazon.com/Mans-Search-Meaning-Viktor-Frankl/dp/080701429X>
2. Kevin DeYoung [What Is My Calling? \(And Is That Even a Good Question?\)](#)
3. ARVIND BALARAM [What is the Purpose of Life?](#)
4. Lyman Stone, Institute for Family Studies: [Author: Lyman Stone | Institute for Family Studies](#)

