

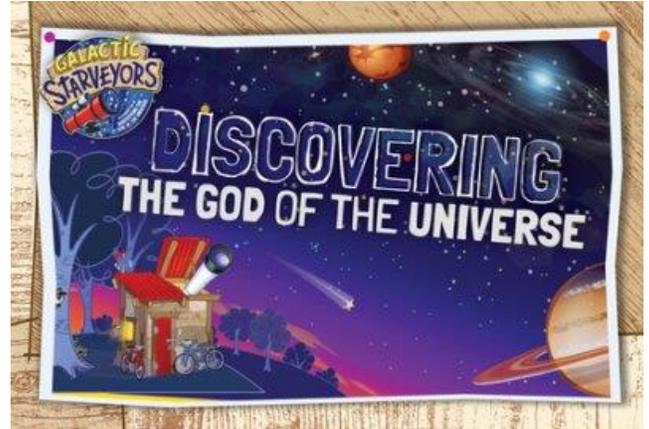


VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

THE BIG PICTURE

Various Scriptures | Steve Lombardo | July 16, 2017



What we did at VBS each day was to go through the relationship we have with God, and that's going to be the message this morning. But the big idea is this: The Bible is God's story of His relationship with man. That's what the Bible is. It's history—it's God's history—and it's how he relates and we relate to Him. We are created to have relationships. If you go to the beginning of the Bible, in Genesis chapter 2, you will see that God creates man. He created Adam and Eve. And God said, *"It is not good for man to be alone"* (Genesis 2:18).

Why is it not good for man to be alone? Before we go deeper into our message, let's start with three reasons that it's not good to be alone.

THERE'S NO ONE TO HELP YOU WHEN YOU NEED HELP

If you were in Yorkville this past Friday and you were in front of our house very, very early in the morning, you would have seen one of your pastors (I won't mention his name) outside with just his shorts on trying to get the garbage out to the garbage man who was coming down the road. I didn't take the garbage out the night before because our garage door broke. The torsion spring was broken and I couldn't get the door up. I heard him coming, and I was hurrying and trying to get outside and trying to open it with one hand. I had to help it because it only had one spring. I finally pushed it up and got the garbage out, and the driver was sitting there waiting for me. I brought it out in my shorts and waved to him and then went back inside. That was terrible—I needed help! When you're alone, there's nobody to help you. Now, you might be one of those individuals who doesn't need help. You're self-sufficient. You can help others, but you don't need help.

THERE'S NO ONE TO STOP YOU WHEN YOU NEED TO STOP

But how about the second reason? A good reason not to be alone is this: There's no one to stop you when you need to be stopped. I learned this when I got married. Before I got married, when I lived at home, I would get up in the middle of the night and make myself a bowl of cereal. Then I would just leave my bowl there. Sometimes I would take it to the sink, but by the next day it was taken care of. I thought there was a fairy that followed me around and cleaned my dishes. And then I went to college and lived with a bunch of guys, and we didn't have dishes. We bought all Styrofoam stuff so we wouldn't have to do the dishes. We just threw them away. And then I got married and left my dishes out. The next morning the fairy wasn't there anymore. I learned that I needed to take care of myself; I needed to do my own dishes. And I'm learning that still, learning, learning.... So, when you get married these things begin to stop and you're saved from yourself. You begin to learn things about yourself that aren't necessarily good or appealing. I talked about something fun, but all of you who are married know your spouse knows the worst about

you—the things you struggle with. That’s a good thing, because it’s not good for man to be alone. When you’re alone, you can get into a pattern of self-reliance, a place of darkness where you are not being stopped in your evil and sin.

THERE IS NO ONE TO PROTECT YOU WHEN YOU NEED PROTECTION

Several years ago, a man by the name of Larry Walters, decided that it would be a good idea to fill up a bunch of helium balloons and tie them to his lawn chair. He was going to go for a little joy ride on his lawn chair. He said that he was going to take his pellet gun up with him, and when he wanted to descend, he would just shoot a few of the balloons and come down for a nice, smooth landing. So, Larry got the balloons and a six-pack of beer and some chips and got into his lawn chair with his pellet gun. He went up to 16,000 feet in southern California, and he entered into Los Angeles air space. He was arrested. He lived, he was brought down OK, he made it. But guess what? Larry was single. No married man is going to be able to do that, right? There’s no one to protect you when you need protection.

Those are funny things, but they’re all true. They’re really listed in Ecclesiastes 4:9–12. Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon, who was said to have been one of the wisest men to have ever lived. God gave him wisdom. Listen to what he said about being alone:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

It’s not good for man to be alone. Two are better than one. And God has created us for relationships—relationships with one another and relationship with Him.

1. THE RELATIONSHIP BEGINS

In the beginning God created all that there is. In Genesis chapters one and two, we see the Creation story, the narrative of the beginning of the age, the beginning of time. It is there that God made male and female, and He made them to have a relationship with one another and a relationship with Him. Now, Christians differ on a number of things when it comes to Creation and the beginning of time and even the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2. There are some who believe in an old earth. There are some who believe in a young earth. Some believe that God created things through the ages. There are a lot of different interpretations of the beginning of time among Bible-believing Christians. But all Christians believe two things about origins, about the beginning of time.

Number one is that God was behind Creation. All things were created by God. The second one is that God created men and women in His own image. So even if some believe that God used the evolutionary process to bring about what we see as natural, we must reject the idea that men and women came from the same stuff as the animals. God created men and women in His image. You’re not just a glorified baboon sitting here. You are a man or a woman created in the image of God Almighty. Genesis 1:27 says, *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”* Now, isn’t this interesting? Jesus was a man. God is spoken of as a male—He, God, Him. But you see that God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). God Almighty does not have a gender. We see that in Genesis 1:27: *“male and female he created them.”* So, there is something in a man that reflects the image of God in a distinct way. And there is something in a woman that reflects God in a specific, distinct way. He said, *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”* (Genesis 2:26).

What does it mean to be made in the image of God? Let me give you four things. There are exceptions to these rules because of sin, because of the damage to creation. There are people who aren’t these things, but they are a minority. These are generally true.

WE ARE RATIONAL

We are rational people. Just like God, we are able to use logic. We are able to use reason. We are able to engage in argument and debate. In the world of theology and doctrine, we can think and reason. In 1 Peter 3:15 we read that we are to set apart Christ as Lord in our hearts, always being prepared for the hope that we have in us. We are always to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that we have in us in a rational, reasonable, and logical way.

William Lane Craig, a Christian philosopher, has outlined five major arguments for the existence of God.

- The cosmological argument from contingency
- The *kalam* cosmological argument based on the beginning of the universe
- The moral argument based upon objective moral values and duties [Because God is the ultimate good, our morals flow from the reality of God's existence.]
- The teleological argument from fine-tuning [if there were just an atom this way or that, we would not have life on this earth.]
- The ontological argument from the possibility of God's existence to His actuality

These are all arguments in philosophy and theology for the existence of God, and they are rational arguments. William Lane Craig says, "These are, I believe, good arguments for God's existence. That is to say, they are logically valid; their premises are true; and their premises are more plausible in light of the evidence than their negations. Therefore, insofar as we are rational people, we should embrace their conclusions." We, like God, are rational.

WE ARE EMOTIONAL

We are also emotional, and sometimes our emotions can impact our rationality, can it not? We are emotional; God is emotional. God loves us, He gets angry, He gets sad. The shortest verse in the Bible is *Jesus wept* (John 11:35). We are also emotional. I realize this more and more each day as I get older. I'm becoming more emotional. I was watching one of the Rocky movies with my kids the other day, and I had tears in my eyes. I really did—I was crying! That might just be my problem, but we'll move on.

WE ARE RELATIONAL

We are also relational. That's what we're talking about today. God's made us to be in relation with one another.

WE ARE VOLITIONAL

We are volitional like our Creator God. That means we can make choices. We can see things in front of us and we can choose to go this way or that way. Our being volitional is different from God's because God is sovereign. God makes choices, He predestines and determines, and that is a different type of volitional choice than we have. Nonetheless, we apparently can make choices. You can choose today to stop at McDonald's or Subway if you want to on your way home. There is an apparent volitional ability that we have that reflects God Almighty.

You may ask, what about free will? Isn't God in control and determining everything? It's kind of like the couple who were going into premarital counseling. They sat down together to fill out a questionnaire. They read the questions together. The first one was for the young man and was, are you entering this marriage of your own free will? He just looked and looked at the question, and finally his fiancée said, "Just write down yes!" So, yes, I have free will. I have no choice but to have it. (Some of you got that—good.)

2. THE RELATIONSHIP IS BROKEN

God, who made Adam and Eve in His own image, who had a relationship with them, walked and talked and communed with them. They were naked and unashamed the text says. The big idea about being naked and unashamed is not about the bodies. It's about what that symbolizes. They had nothing to hide. They had nothing to hide with one

another; they had nothing to hide with God. But then something happens in Genesis 3. The devil, in the form of a serpent, tempts Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the one tree that God had commanded them not to eat from. In Genesis 2, God is giving them instructions as to what not to do. There was one thing not to do. Here is what God says: *"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"* (Genesis 2:16, 17). Then in chapter 3 the serpent shows up. *"Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"* That's not what God said. The devil is deceiving and distorting the truth. He lays the temptation before them, and Adam and Eve sin. Some say Eve sinned. And she did. But isn't it curious here that the woman is there and the man sits back and he waits to see what happens to his wife. They enter into their sin together. And the relationship is broken, the relationship is changed. Adam and Eve sinned after being deceived by the devil, and their sin has historical consequences. Everything changed. Sin came into the world, and because of that sin, God pronounced several curses. There are many different things there in Genesis 3, like the man having to work the ground for a harvest. There's the curse of the serpent. But the big one that stood out to me because of sin was this: *"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children"* (Genesis 3:16). So, there's going to be pain in childbearing. I think whether there was sin or no sin in the world, there would be pain in childbirth. I don't think it's really just the child**birth** part, it's the child**bearing**, as in the child **rearing**, the child growing up part. Now that sin is in the world, you have to raise your children in a place that wants to devour and defeat and destroy them. That's painful. How many parents have spent sleepless nights crying because of a son or daughter who has lost their way and praying that God would bring them back? That is the result of the curse. The relationship with God is broken.

EVEN FORGIVEN SIN HAS CONSEQUENCES

Here is an application point. Sin has consequences, even forgiven sin. Would you agree with that? God forgives us all of our sin through His mercy, by His grace, but there are still consequences to our sin. I was talking to a man two weeks ago who was unfaithful to his wife. She forgave him and took him back, but he had to sleep on the couch for six months. She forgave him; shouldn't everything go back to normal? No, sin has its consequences. He had to sleep on the couch and he had to prove his devotion to her, to prove that he was repentant and had changed his ways. He had to prove to his family that he was a one-woman man again. Those things take time. Sin has its consequences.

Billy Sunday, the baseball player turned preacher, said, "We treat sin as a cream puff when we should treat it like a rattlesnake." So many of us, even in the church, just kind of wink and smile at sin. I know in my life it's so easy to do my own thing and to presume upon God's grace that I will be forgiven and not treat sin as the horrendous thing that it is. It's the reason we are broken, why our relationship with God is broken.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP IS PROMISED TO BE RESTORED

Now we start hearing the good news again. That which was broken, damaged seemingly beyond repair, is promised to be restored. This promise comes through a man named Abram. Abram, later named Abraham, is called by God in Genesis 12:1-2. God says to Abram, *"Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation..."* The promise comes through Abraham, a man, and then through a nation. God raises up the nation of Israel to be a light to all of the world of the goodness and the glory of God. The Israelites are charged with this task, to bring God's glory to the nations, but they fail and falter and sin. The promise then comes through a royal lineage, the house of King David. Jesus the Messiah is promised to be born.

I read this week that there are over three thousand verses concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament. Jesus had been promised; there was a promise that was to come. Hang in there. Things are bad now, but a day is coming when the Messiah will come. In Luke 24, after He rose from the dead, Jesus appears to two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus—not two of The Twelve, but two of His greater disciples. They don't know it's Jesus. They are walking along,

and Jesus says, *“What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?”* (Luke 24:17). This is the Messiah, crucified but now risen, walking with His disciples. They don’t know it’s Jesus.

And they said to him, *“Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”* And he said to them, *“What things?”* And they said to him, *“Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”* And he said to them, *“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”* And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:19–27).

What a Bible study to be a part of—the Messiah showing Scriptures concerning Himself, the Promised to come.

4. THE RELATIONSHIP IS RESTORED

So, the promise is made, and then the relationship is restored. It comes true. 1 Peter 2:22–25 says:

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

THIS RESTORATION WAS COSTLY

The relationship was restored, but the restoration was costly. It cost Christ His life. Jesus gave His life, He suffered, He was hung on a tree. The Old Testament Scriptures tell us that those who are crucified on a tree are cursed by God. Jesus was cursed. He was cursed and bruised for our iniquities. He was broken and crushed for our sins. But by His stripes we are healed. By the lashings that He took, by the blood that He shed, Jesus Christ makes a way for us to come back to God and to have a right relationship with Him. There’s this thing in between us—we’re not unashamed before God, we’re not naked before God, we hide stuff from God, we hide stuff from others, we hide the sin. But now because of Jesus we can bring that sin to the light and we can receive forgiveness for it because Jesus died in our place. And the punishment that we deserve for our sin was on Jesus Christ, so that those who would believe on Him would have their sin removed and instead have the righteousness of Christ in them. This is the Good News. This is the relationship that’s restored. And it was costly to Jesus Christ. He died for you; He died for me.

THIS RESTORATION CAN BE REJECTED

The restoration was not only costly, but it can be rejected. First Peter 2:4 says, *“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God...”* Rejected by men—Jesus came and He was rejected. Most of His people rejected Him. The high priests, rulers, and religious authorities of the day rejected Him. He came to His own and His own did not know Him, we read in John 1:11. *“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...”* (verse 12).

THIS RESTORATION MUST BE EMBRACED

So, this restoration can be rejected or it can be embraced. First Peter 2:6 says, *“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”* Do you believe? Have you embraced Christ by faith? And this is what we ask the kids [in Vacation Bible School], too. Do you believe? Do you have faith in Christ? This relationship that has been broken because of sin can be restored and made whole. You can be made right with God. You don’t have to fear God. The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge. It’s true. As we begin to grow in the knowledge of God we begin to see Him as our loving heavenly Father who came into the world and

died on the cross for us, in our place, so that we can have a right relationship with Him. Do you believe this? Have you embraced Jesus Christ by faith? If you have, verse 25 is true of you: *"For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."* You've returned; you've come back to the beginning. You've come back to the relationship that began in the Garden. Now you've entered back into that relationship through Jesus Christ.

5. THE RELATIONSHIP CONTINUES

In Matthew 28, we read what is called the Great Commission. Jesus has risen, He accomplished salvation on the cross, He died and rose again, He appeared to the disciples and walked with them. On the road to Emmaus He broke out the Bible and had a phenomenal, awesome Bible study with those guys to show Himself in the Scriptures. And then He stands before His disciples.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. [Just a note—this is the risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, whom these disciples saw and met with and were with. It's amazing to me. They were with Him and worshiped Him, but some doubted, even though the risen Savior was right there.] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [What an incredible claim! That is the authority of the God of the universe, the God Who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth. And Jesus, this man who was more than a man, who was born in Bethlehem but existed before Bethlehem, is now laying the claim that all power, all authority, all in this universe, are under His power.] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:16–20).

"So all authority has been given to Me, I'm the risen Savior and Lord, I am the Beginning and the End, before Abraham was I AM." This man Jesus said with all authority to go and make more disciples. He sends His disciples to make other disciples. He sends you, as a follower of Jesus Christ, to make other followers of Jesus Christ. He send us, Village Bible Church, to make other disciples. All around the Fox Valley area and around the world—go and bring this good news to the lost and the dying and the broken and the ones who have no relationship with God. He sends us, and then He gives us this promise: *"And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."* He promises to go with us.

EVEN WHEN WE SIN

This relationship continues when we sin. If you're a believer, but you feel like your sin has caused you separation from God, sin does separate us from God. But Jesus died for our sin. He paid for our sin. First John 1:5–9 says,

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he in in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Do not deceive yourself; you are full of sin. But if you confess your sin, but if you walk in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin. Jesus cleanses us from our sin. Jesus loves us even when we're in our sin.

Some of you have kids that are just learning to walk. This was VBS week and we saw kids in the nursery, kids running around, kids everywhere. There were kids all over the place—there are still a couple in the lost and found box, too, by the way. You might want to grab one. I was watching a little kid beginning to walk, and it reminded me of when our first-born was beginning to walk. "Get the video camera!" When kids start to walk, they start out balancing up against the sofa, and then they step away from the couch. The weight of their giant heads is just leading them forward. (Especially my kids, because I have a huge head.) They take one step after another, and then they inevitably fall. What does everybody in the room do? They clap and say, "Yay! He walked." And then they help them back up, and they begin to walk again.

Sometimes we view our heavenly Father in a way that's not how He is. Sometimes we view Him as the dad who's always demanding better of us and who's there to condemn us when we fall. Jesus said this about God: *"What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent...? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"* (Luke 11:11–13). So, the true picture of God Almighty, when we step away from the couch and we walk and

we're following Him and living for Him, but then we sin and we fall and we falter—He's not the dad who stands over us and says, "Get up! You better be walking. You're six months old for Pete's sake. You should be walking better than that. Get back up." No, He helps us back up. He says, "You can do it again. You can go farther the next time. You can continue to walk; you can walk in the light as I am in the light." This is the picture of our heavenly Father that the Scriptures teach.

EVEN WHEN WE SUFFER

Our relationship continues even as we battle sin and even as we suffer. Some of you are suffering at some level, and in that suffering you begin to question whether God is there. In John 16:33 we read, *"In this life you will have trouble. But take heart; I have overcome the world."* Jesus says you are going to have trouble. Beware of the Christians who say, "Just come to Jesus. Just come to faith and you'll be taken care of. You'll be healthy and wealthy. As long as you give, God will give back to you." Jesus said just the opposite. He said in this life you will have trouble. And some of the time, the trouble comes because you are a follower of Christ. "But take heart," Jesus says. "I've overcome the world." The hardship or persecution or whatever it is that you face—know that Jesus has conquered it. In the end, Jesus wins. In the end, the One that has all authority over heaven and earth lives in you.

EVEN WHEN SATAN BUFFETS

So, the relationship continues even when we suffer and even when Satan buffets. I thought of the hymn, "Though Satan should buffet... It is well with my soul." Buffeting is a fighting against, a raging against; it's an agitation. Satan will do that, especially if you are one who is continuing this relationship with God. If God is using you for His Kingdom, you better believe that you're going to be under attack.

In 1 John 4:4, we read that greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. So once again, the Lord of heaven and earth lives in you. When you are attacked, when you feel that you are under the dominion of the devil, take heart. Jesus Christ lives in you, and He has conquered the devil. The relationship continues.

EVEN IN THE NEXT LIFE

The relationship continues even in the next life. The grave is not the end. Death is not the end. Jesus Christ promises eternal life for all who would believe. What a great privilege and honor it is to think about the new heaven and the new earth where God is our God, and He's wiping the tears from our eyes. There's no more suffering, crying, or pain. "Behold," Jesus says, "I am making all things new" (Revelation 21:5). When the full restoration comes in the new heavens and the new earth and God re-creates all that there is, sin will be gone. The law of sin and death will be over. God will be on the throne and His people will be in the new heavens and the new earth.

This is the big picture of the Bible. This is what our kids talked about in VBS— Creation, to the Fall, to the Promise, to the Fulfillment, and then to the Future. It was a great week at VBS as the kids were challenged to see that we are made for relationships. Remember, God said it's not good to be alone. So, don't be alone. Have relationships with other believers, with other disciples of Jesus Christ. Have a relationship with the God Who made you. He made a way. The promise is in Jesus Christ for us.