

Dumb Things: God Has a Blueprint for Your Life

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, March 26th. My name is Kent Dixon, and it is my joy to be the lead pastor here. It's always nice when I close my eyes to pray, and then I open my eyes, and I see people who appeared while I was praying.

That's cool. Very cool. No guilt. Just cool to see. So a few pastoral announcements that I wanted to share. So, Good Friday. So in the past, I was reflecting on this this week.

It has been quite a four-year journey of Easter services for me, because we had a relatively normal one. Then we've had several online.

We had a relatively normal multi-church one again last year. And this year, all the pastors kind of went, whew, I think I just need to do my own thing in my own church.

So that is good. So that's what we will be doing. So if you are looking for your Good Friday service, there's the info. So Friday, September 7th, and we said 11 a.m.

[1 : 05] And I've had a few people say to me, oh, it should be earlier, it should be later. 11 is when we have church. It's just easier to remember, right? So here, Good Friday at 11.

We're having a sandwich lunch. Sherwin looked at this picture this morning as the pre-service loop was going, and he said, man, that sandwich looks good, right? I said, I'll make you one right now if you want.

So we're having a sandwich lunch April 16th after the service. And you might be thinking, well, we just had a lunch. So we can eat again, can't we? So also, the Braemar development team has a, we're being a little sneaky here.

People like to eat, and then once you're at the table, we're going to keep you at the table for conversation because we need your insight again. So February 22nd at our AGM, we formed the Braemar development team, and that was the congregation in favor of doing that.

So there's four of us, David Hall, Sherwin Ganpat, Vern Castle, and myself. We have, I'm going to say, been working very diligently, and I can't believe it's only been about a month, but folks, God is good.

[2 : 18] So these table sessions, so we will eat sandwiches. Then we will gather people around tables, and we're going to get your input, your dreams, your thoughts, your prayers, what God has laid on your heart for what could happen here.

And I don't just mean here on Sunday morning. I mean here at our site. So if we were to dream big, what would that look like? And we will lead you in those conversations, and we just want to hear what God has laid on your heart, what God has inspired you to think about, and we're going to gather that info because we need to include it going forward.

I believe the plan is also for us to give you a more comprehensive update on what we've done since the AGM. So David and I will probably do that.

I said to him, I'm going to be busy with something called Easter weekend, so I might need your help. And he said, yeah, no problem. Got your back. So there you go. So there's a few updates.

And so please come for lunch. Please stay for lunch. Please stay for that conversation because we need your input. We really do, and we're looking for it. So this morning we're continuing in our sermon series called Dumb Things, Smart Christians Believe.

[3 : 32] Through this series we've been looking at just a few of the dumb things, the incomplete or mistaken concepts, that some Christians have come to believe over time.

And I've shared with you that I include myself in some of those misconceptions of things that I've come to understand. And those things often happen with the best of intentions.

We have no reason to doubt what someone may have told us. We have no reason to doubt or question what we might have heard or been told by others over time. So let's catch up a little bit on

some background because Steve was here last week, and so let's just a quick refresher. We have come to recognize that belief actually involves two important factors. One is perfect, Carol. Nice. And so trust in the source of information. We're trusting the person who has conveyed this information to us. And the other thing that's required in belief is faith.

[4 : 31] Thanks. So faith that any part of what you can't see, any part of what you can't fully understand, can still be trusted. And so we've dug into Scripture together, recognized that the Bible says two things about belief, and these are longer, harder to memorize.

So first, to believe in the sense of having faith means trusting in, having security in, who Jesus says he is, who God the Father says he is, and then by association who we are as a result of that. So then second, to believe in the sense of having faith means to believe that Jesus Christ and God the Father, a connection with them, a relationship with them, then opens the door to the eternal security of salvation.

And we've considered some of the things that we may have believed to be true, and then we return to the ultimate source of information, the Bible, to confirm or correct, maybe, tweak our beliefs with actual truth.

And that's critical. As we begin this morning, I have a question for you, and you can raise your hand if you feel brave, or just nod your head, wiggle your nose, wink, and I won't divulge your answer.

[5 : 57] If you believe, here's the question, do you believe either partly or enthusiastically that God has a blueprint for your life? I see hands.

I will not divulge. Who raised their hand? Interesting. Oh, someone else raised their hand. Perfect. So, let's start with a basic understanding. You can just back up one, shall I?

That's okay. You can stay there for a while. No worries. So let's start with a basic understanding, with a definition so that we're all on the same page, pun intended. What is a blueprint?

Well, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a blueprint as a photographic print made with white lines on a blue background, and it's used especially for copying mechanical drawings, maps, architectural plans, and things like that.

And I was going to be able to look over at David and go, right? Am I right? Am I right? So the first blueprint was developed in 1842 by a man named John Herschel, and he was an American, this is weird, chemist.

[7 : 05] He was a chemist and an astronomer and a photographer. And so Herschel's blueprint process was called cyanotype. And if you catch it in there, cyan is a shade of blue.

So the cyanotype blueprint process eliminated the hassle and expense of hand tracing original drawings. Can you imagine that? We're going to build a building.

Bob, can you redraw some copies for these people? What a nightmare. So the expense and the time and effort involved in that would have been huge.

So this process also allowed rapid and accurate production of an unlimited number of copies of drawings. Made it easier. So the process of creating a blueprint, this is cool, I think, began with drawing on semi-transparent paper.

And then that paper was weighted down on top of another sheet of paper. So the drawing was then placed over another piece of paper, which was coated, doesn't sound easy at all to me, but it was easier than hand drawing, I guess.

[8 : 16] Another piece of paper that was coated in a specific, special chemical compound. And there's the chemist part of it. So when these two papers were exposed to light, the chemical reacted to form an insoluble colored compound, which was blue.

Except where the blueprinting paper was covered. Where the light was blocked by the lines of the original drawing. So those original lines created a negative impression on the blue paper.

So after the paper was washed and dried to keep the lines from exposing, the result was a negative image of white against a dark blue background.

So the resulting image was therefore appropriately named a blue print. So there's your how it's made for this morning. Did you know that? I did not know that.

David probably knew that. But that, to me, that's fascinating. So you likely have some idea from that point what blueprints are used for.

[9 : 23] Right? I look at, I look at Bryson. So even if the term tends to be used in a more broad sense, we know what the idea of a blueprint is.

I think we can recognize that blueprints provide a precise and specific process that needs to be followed to create something. Right? That's what a blueprint is.

Have you ever tried to assemble Ikea furniture without the plans? Hashtag nightmare. And I've tried it. I can't find the plans.

I'm a man. I can, no. Ikea creates plans for a reason. And also, if you lose those wood pegs, you're in a world of hurt. So if you suggest to an engineer or an architect that a blueprint is basically just instructions or directions, you're just being fancy, they might passionately, probably will, passionately disagree with you.

It's not just instructions. So in a basic sense, that might be true, but blueprints also suggest a level of detail and expertise and precision that's required to reach a very specific outcome, a very specific result or product.

[10:39] A blueprint doesn't suggest I'm going to wing it. So would you think that blueprints are important? Would you think that they serve a specific purpose, especially in specific circumstances?

It's partly rhetorical, but I see some nods. So I believe there are certain things we can likely agree that a blueprint suggests. A blueprint suggests that there is an ideal way, possibly the best way even, or at times the only way things fit together or function.

A blueprint suggests that each step in the process has already been predetermined and established, that nothing is left up to choice.

Maybe you're starting to see where I'm going here. A blueprint also generally suggests that there is no room for missed steps. There is no room for mistakes or missed opportunities or anything that sidetracks from the blueprint itself or it will fail.

Beginning to see the problems that take shape from the view that God has a blueprint for your life. So let's consider this for a moment.

[11:57] What does it mean to suggest that God has a blueprint for our lives? Well, I think it suggests, as we've already explored a little bit here, that everything has already been planned out.

That God has it all sorted out before we take our first breath when we're born to our last when we die. It's all mapped out. Can you see that kind of way of looking at it?

And I think the idea of a blueprint for our lives also suggests that every decision, and Steve Roadhouse and I talked about this last week, we talked before the service about Calvinism and Arminianism, and I won't go there at all this morning, but I'll touch on it a little.

It suggests that everything has been predetermined. Every choice has already been made, at least as far as God is concerned. Do you know what a choose-your-own-adventure book is?

So in the 80s, when I was growing up, I loved these books. So it was a little paperback book. They still exist from what Connor tells me. And the way the book works is you read a section and then it will say you choose.

[13:08] If you choose to take this path, turn to page 12. If you choose this path, just turn the page. So every section of a choose-your-own-adventure book includes a choice that you make.

But if you back away from that book, the entire story, every choice, every potential path, every potential decision is known in that story. That, as simplistic as it sounds, is my understanding of God's relationship with us in terms of knowing everything, every potential choice we could make in our lives.

through God's omniscience, he knows every path. And yet, we have the free will to choose paths within God's sovereign knowledge.

Calvinists don't like it when I would say something like that. Arminians go, of course. Because to suggest that God has predetermined our lives and we have no opportunity to choose, where is human free will within that understanding?

It's a question. So there are, as I'm suggesting, significant areas of theological disagreement around this idea. And we won't get into it any more than I did and maybe what I did already was too much.

[14:28] But suffice it to say that some theologians clash over that balance between God's sovereignty, God's omniscience, God's all-knowing nature, and God's control over all things, and human free will.

Could God have predetermined every step in our lives ahead of time? Yes. Could he essentially be puppeting us through our lives? Absolutely he could.

I don't believe scripture suggests that's how it works. So the essential discussion comes down to whether humans actually have free will to choose or reject God's offer of salvation, or if our eternal destiny has already been predetermined by God through his ultimate knowledge of all things. So having recognized some of those things that come as challenges from the idea of a blueprint, why do some Christians tend to live their lives in light of that kind of understanding? Is there any truth to this? Or is there perhaps even a better way to view this? God has a blueprint for your life. Well we've considered how structured and precise the idea of a blueprint is, but ultimately that, I don't feel that does justice to the nature of God, to a sense of his will or his ultimate plan for all things.

[16:00] Instead of being like a blueprint, I believe it's helpful to consider God's intentions for your life as more of a plan or a purpose even.

There's no question that each of us have been created by a loving God who did that with intention and purpose. And hopefully we can also recognize that we're part of, we're even at times agents in God's ultimate plan to restore all of creation, to make all things new.

But as specific as that seems, maybe that's not specific enough for some of us. Maybe we need it locked down more. So maybe that's why we like the idea of a blueprint.

The idea that there are specific steps and plans and details and a path that is laid out to the last detail. Maybe that brings us a sense of comfort, a sense of order.

Or maybe it stresses you out if you're a different kind of person. I don't know about you, and I've shared this before, I am a detail person.

[17:15] And I've shared before that Michelle has referred to me as need-to-know guy. When are we going? What time are we going? What color is the place that we're going? How fast, how slow, how hot, how cold?

At times, not always. Not on vacation, it turns out. I like to know the how, the where, the when, the why. If things allow me to prepare to engage, that helps me sometimes.

But does knowing all the details in advance work out according to how I would like it to? Nope. Sure doesn't. Do I need to adapt and respond to changing circumstances?

Always. Always. ways. So the real danger, I think, of developing a sense that God has a specific blueprint for our lives kind of crashes up against the idea of how we relate to God's will.

I believe that a driving purpose behind believing or hoping that God has a purpose for your life, or a blueprint for your life, can be directly related to wanting to know God's will.

[18:30] Wanting to know or have a sense that you're doing what he wants you to be doing. Does that feel comfortable? Does that feel a little uncomfortable, a little too close to home?

I think a lot of us, myself included, tend to worry at times about God's will, particularly as it relates to us. If you Google God's will for my life, yikes.

If you go on Amazon or another, there are thousands and thousands of books about how do I learn God's will? How do I know if I'm in God's will? How do I, I don't know, God is omnipotent and eternal, so he has no will, not a written one anyway.

Ha ha ha. So how can we know it? How can we know God's will? How can we be sure that we're following it? Does that keep you up at night? How can we be sure we didn't miss it?

Have you ever felt like that? Oh, shoot, if I made the wrong choice there, I'm done. Or do you worry about doing the opposite of it? Oh, God's will for you is this and I did something else.

[19:38] Wow. If we hold to that blueprint idea, we may have a sense in our lives and how our lives are playing out according to the will of God that there's only one way.

There's only one right direction, only one right choice, and that can lead to paralysis by analysis. We worry so much about missing it, seeing it, finding it.

As Christians, I believe we can easily over complicate our understanding of God's will. people. And I want us to consider that right now. I want to tell you a secret.

Don't share it. Many of the choices that we agonize over, that we stress about needing God to provide clear direction on, he's not really that concerned about, turns out.

God is more worried about how you work than the job that you have, than the career path that you've chosen. He's more concerned about how you behave as a spouse than you must marry this exact person.

[20:54] That's not to say God doesn't care about those decisions. He absolutely does. He cares about everything we do. It's that he has given us the free will and, interestingly enough, the brains

to make decisions on our own, to make wise choices.

We can recognize the freedom to make decisions in our lives without somehow missing something that God has laid out and predetermined already. Can you see freedom in that?

Can you see a bit of a relief in that? But now I'm going to say, I have a question for you. Do you seek God's will in the everyday mundane stuff of life?

Do you seek to stay within God's will for your life? Do you seek God or ask God for direction in those things? Because if you don't, how can you expect to be able to perceive it in times when our circumstances become more complicated?

If you're seeking God's will, if you're asking for him to guide your steps in the day-to-day things of life that you may just write off as irrelevant to him, how can you expect to be able to discern or sense his will in something bigger?

[22 : 21] So hopefully it won't surprise you for me to suggest that scripture needs to be our guide as we seek to align ourselves with God's will. Scripture needs to be the guide that we consult as we seek to learn what God's will is for people in certain circumstances.

So let's be clear that while God really does allow us to make our own decisions in many areas of our lives, at times the Bible also gives us crystal clear direction for how we are to act, for how we are to speak, to serve, to treat others, to govern ourselves in very, very many situations in our lives. So it's not just generally left up to flip a coin, make your own decisions, in everything. And there's no question that if scripture is clear on something and specifically guides us, directs us in how to act in a given situation, we should do that.

When scripture is clear on something, we should do that. But even if the Bible doesn't speak to a specific set of circumstances, we can come to trust that if we are truly seeking God, and I touched on that a moment ago, if we are looking for God to guide us, if we are asking him, God, point me in the direction that you would like me to go here.

Not agonizing over it, but being open to his leading. We can often just seek to make the best choice that we can with the information that we have, and folks, move on.

[24 : 03] Even if we make a bad decision that doesn't somehow doom us, I think that's where we begin to get trapped. God's grace and forgiveness means that we can always return to him and try again.

God's will. Do those two words strike fear into your heart when you hear me say them? My friends, God's will isn't some hidden truth.

Coming close to Easter, and think of Easter egg hunts. You don't have to hunt for God's will. It is on display. You don't need to dig and strive to find it, agonizing over missing it, or having it somehow pass you by.

The Bible actually spells it out quite clearly. The Ten Commandments? There's a clear indication of God's will.

The directive to love God and love others? Again, a clear indication of God's will. The example of Jesus and how he treated other people?

[25 : 16] Also a very clear example, a very clear guide for us as well. Friends, we need to follow what we know and the examples that we have from Scripture, especially in the way of average things in our lives.

Seeking to be within God's will. Not agonizing about it, but being open to God leading you. And the more that we follow that in the everyday, the more it will just become second nature.

It's like muscle memory if you're an athlete or learning something that then becomes second nature. If you align yourself with God's will and ask him to guide you in the everyday, it'll become second nature to recognize God's will in every aspect of your life.

As we intentionally seek God's will for our lives and resist the negative ways in which the world seeks to shape us, Romans 12, verse 2, gives us a clear sense of the change, the transformation that will happen in us.

And you can read this with me. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

[26 : 50] My friends, God's will for us, the plan and purpose he has for our lives, is not to conform, not to fit in comfortably with the world around us, but to stand out.

when we choose to focus on Christ and his example, when we focus on God's mercy and love for us, when we reject the patterns and expectations that the world promotes as valuable or desirable, then we will be transformed.

transformed. Then we will begin to recognize and live easily, comfortably, fluidly within the will of God. Not according to some sort of structured and restrictive blueprint, but according to the plan and purpose that the God who created us longs for us to experience, to the fullness of his plan for our lives.

Amen.