

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

Kansas City, Missouri

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

It's the Alignment

Returning to God's Original Design for Men

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

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DAY 1 — IT'S THE ALIGNMENT: TREATING THE DESIGN, NOT THE SYMPTOM

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 1:26–27 (NIV)

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

When a sharp pain settles into your shoulder, the most natural thing in the world is to attack the pain. You put heat on it, then ice, then a painkiller, and when none of that works you start collecting advice from everyone who has ever ached. But a good chiropractor does something strange: he reaches past the shoulder entirely and begins adjusting the hip. To the man in pain it feels like the doctor has missed the problem completely. Then two days pass, and the shoulder has gone quiet — not because the shoulder was treated, but because the body was returned to the alignment it was built to hold. The symptom was never the real problem. The misalignment was.

This is one of the most important things a man can learn about himself, and it is the very truth God is pressing on us: the trouble we face is not merely that men are struggling — and men are struggling, often in silence. The deeper trouble is that we keep trying to fix the struggle by treating the symptoms instead of returning to our original design. We say the problem is the drinking, the temper, the lust, the words we cannot seem to control. But those are the ache in the shoulder. They are indicators, not the injury. The injury is that we have drifted out of the alignment God built us to hold. Treat the symptom and it will feel better for a moment; the body will simply find a new place to hurt. Touch the alignment, and the symptom loses its grip.

“Fixing the symptom only relocates the pain. Fixing the alignment is the only thing that ever heals it.”

Genesis tells us where that alignment begins. Before God ever handed the man a single responsibility, He declared an identity: “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.” We were not assembled at random. We were stamped with a design — male and female, both bearing the image of God, both built to a standard. That standard is the hard drive underneath everything else. Every command God gives afterward is simply the unfolding of how an image-bearer was meant to function. When we live aligned to that design, the parts that keep breaking begin to hold. When we ignore it, we deviate further and further from the men we were created to be, no matter how many symptoms we manage to medicate.

Here is the hard mercy in it: God is rarely as interested in your immediate comfort as He is in your underlying alignment. He will sometimes go to work on the “hip” while you are still complaining about the “shoulder,” and you will be tempted to conclude that He does not understand your real problem. He understands it better than you do. The very areas you are most eager to fix are usually not the areas He is most concerned to address. This week is an invitation to stop chasing symptoms and let God touch the alignment — to ask not merely, “How do I make this pain stop?” but, “Where have I drifted from the design I was made to carry?”

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. *What recurring “symptom” have I been trying to manage on my own — a habit, a temper, a pattern I keep apologizing for and returning to? Have I been treating it as the problem itself, or as a sign of something deeper?*
2. *When I am honest, where has my life drifted out of alignment with the design God describes for me — in my walk with Him, my home, my integrity? What is the misalignment underneath the symptom?*
3. *If God began adjusting the “hip” while I was still focused on the “shoulder,” would I trust Him, or walk away convinced He had missed my real need? What would genuine trust in His diagnosis look like this week?*
4. *What is one symptom I am willing to stop medicating this week, so that I can bring the actual alignment to God instead?*

DAY 2 — DOMINION: STEWARDING BEYOND YOUR OWN DOORSTEP

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 1:28 (NIV)

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 ground.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

The first assignment God ever gave humanity was not a task but a trust. “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over...” The word we reach for is dominion, and it is easy to hear that word wrongly. Dominion does not mean ownership; it means stewardship. To have dominion is to be handed something that belongs to God and made responsible for keeping it from deviating from its design and purpose. The man in the garden was not given the earth to consume. He was given the earth to keep aligned.

And the reach of that trust was far larger than he first imagined. God placed the man in a garden — but the garden sat inside Eden, and the rivers that flowed out of Eden reached lands the size of nations. The man’s faithfulness in one small plot would water territory far beyond his own doorstep. That is a picture worth sitting with. God’s design has never been for a man’s influence to stop at the edge of his own comfort. Some men want to skip the home entirely — it feels too close, too ordinary — and pour themselves into impact everywhere else. Other men want only the home and could not care less what happens beyond their own four walls. God’s design refuses both. The assignment begins in the home and then flows outward, like the rivers of Eden, into the community and the culture around us.

“Dominion is not ownership — it is stewardship. And the rivers of your faithfulness reach further than your own front door.”

This is why the man’s failure in the garden did not stay in the garden. When he fell, Eden fell, and the whole reach of those rivers was affected. Influence is never neutral, and it is never contained. The way a man stewards his own house quietly waters or poisons everything downstream of it — his children, his neighbors, the culture he touches. You were not made merely to survive inside your home; you were made to be a source of life that flows out from it.

The weight of that can feel crushing, until you remember the order of it. God did not ask the man to fix the whole earth before tending the garden. He started him in one place — “to work it and take care of it” — and let the faithfulness there extend its reach. You are not responsible for everything; you are responsible for what God has

placed in your charge, beginning closest to home and flowing outward. Dominion is not a license to dominate. It is the daily, often unglamorous work of keeping what God entrusted to you aligned with what He intended it to be.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1. Do I treat the people and responsibilities in my life as things I own and can use, or as a trust God has placed in my care to steward? Where does the difference show?*
- 2. Am I a man who skips the home for impact elsewhere, or one who hides at home and ignores the world beyond it? Which way do I tend to drift, and why?*
- 3. What would it look like this week to tend the “garden” closest to me faithfully — knowing the rivers of that faithfulness reach further than I can see?*
- 4. Where is God asking me to take responsibility for something downstream of my own life that I have been treating as someone else’s problem?*

DAY 3 — THE GUARDIAN OF TRUTH: KEEPING THE WORD STERILE

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 2:16–17 (NIV)

And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Right after God gave the man dominion, He gave him something even more dangerous to hold: truth. “And the Lord God commanded the man...” Before Eve was ever formed, the man was made the keeper of God’s word — the conduit through which the truth of God would pass to those in his care. Notice how God framed it. He did not say, “You cannot eat.” He said, “You are free to eat from any tree... but you must not eat from this one, for when you do, you will certainly die.” God handed the man enormous freedom and one clear boundary, and then He left the choice in human hands. Free will was not an accident or an oversight. God gives the freedom to be wrong, the commandment to be right, and the dignity of choosing — because a love that cannot be refused is not love at all.

But the man who carries truth carries something that must be kept clean. Picture a surgeon who has scrubbed in. The very skill and sterility that will save the patient’s life can also kill the patient the moment it is contaminated — one careless touch, and what was meant to heal becomes lethal. God’s word is like that in a man’s hands. He says, in effect, “I have given you the truth. Keep it sterile. The moment you contaminate it with your own opinions, your convenient edits, the loudest podcast you heard this week — you will wound the very people you were meant to protect.” Adam did not keep the word sterile. He let it be edited, and the contamination did not stay with him; it reached the whole world. And we have been helping him ever since.

“Keep the word sterile. The moment you contaminate it with your own edits, you wound the very people you were meant to protect.”

This is the quiet failure of so many homes. A man will insist that his family “do the word” while he himself merely talks about it, and the people watching him conclude that it must not be that important after all. If the one entrusted with the truth treats it casually, no one downstream of him will treat it as life or death. But the reverse is just as true: when a man handles God’s word as something holy, sterile, and serious — when his children see him obey it before he ever asks them to — the truth becomes believable in his house.

God’s instruction to fathers has not changed since Deuteronomy: “Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road.” You are not merely supposed to know the truth;

you are supposed to guard it and pass it on uncontaminated. The question is not whether you will hand something down — you will. The question is whether what you hand down will be the clean word of God, or your own edited, contaminated version of it.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. *Whose voices are actually shaping my understanding of truth right now — God's word, or the most convenient or entertaining sources I happen to consume? Where have I let the word get contaminated?*
2. *Is there a gap between the truth I tell others to live by and the truth I am actually living myself? What would the people closest to me say they have learned from watching me, not just hearing me?*
3. *What would it look like this week to handle God's word as something sterile and serious — to obey it before I ask anyone else to?*
4. *What is one truth God is asking me to recover, keep clean, and faithfully pass on to those in my care?*

DAY 4 — BECOMING THE COVERING: HOLINESS AND THE WASHING OF THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING

Ephesians 5:25–27 (NIV)

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Paul writes something that ought to stop every husband in his tracks: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her — to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” The standard for a man’s love is not affection, or provision, or even faithfulness in the ordinary sense. The standard is Christ — who loved by giving Himself up, and whose aim was holiness. Scripture says the head of every man is Christ, and a man stands under that covering precisely so that he can be a covering for those entrusted to him. This is not about superiority. It is about responsibility. The covering is the one who takes the weight.

And here is the part that exposes us: a man cannot wash his household with a word he is not soaked in himself. If he does not believe the word with his whole heart, his whole commitment, his whole life, the people watching him will quietly conclude it is not worth believing either. Many a man stands over his family demanding that they “do the word,” while his own life broadcasts that the word is optional. He is trying to drive his household toward holiness from the outside, while his own interior is unaligned. It does not work. You cannot cleanse anyone with water you refuse to stand in.

“You cannot cleanse anyone with water you refuse to stand in. A covering is only as clean as the man beneath it.”

There is a sharp edge to this in the old car-lot picture. A dealer would wash the cars every Thursday until they gleamed, then sell them Saturday morning to buyers who never looked under the hood — and the sign read “as is.” Drive it off the lot, and whatever breaks is yours. We laugh, but it is a parable about how we choose and how we are chosen. We are dazzled by the external and inattentive to the engine, and then we are surprised when what looked good in the driveway frustrates us for years. The call to holiness begins long before the wedding, in choosing wisely; and it continues long after, in the patient, sacrificial work of washing with the word rather than nagging with our preferences.

But before this becomes a sermon about everyone else, turn it inward. The covering is only as clean as the man beneath it. You cannot make anyone holy that you are not pursuing holiness yourself. The most powerful thing a man can do for the people in his care is not to demand their alignment but to model his own — to be so visibly soaked in the word that holiness becomes believable, even attractive, to the ones watching him. Christ did not cleanse the church by lecturing it. He cleansed it by giving Himself up for it. That is the shape of a covering.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1. Am I trying to drive the people in my life toward holiness from the outside, while my own interior life is unaligned? Where is the gap between what I require and what I model?*
- 2. What does the word I claim to believe actually cost me — in time, habits, sacrifice? Would those closest to me say I am soaked in it, or merely quoting it?*
- 3. What would it look like to love the people in my care the way Christ loved the church — by giving myself up for their good rather than demanding they meet my preferences?*
- 4. What is one area where God is asking me to pursue my own holiness first, so that I can actually be a covering instead of just a critic?*

DAY 5 — LEGACY: CARRYING WHAT GOD GAVE YOU BEYOND YOUR OWN LIFE

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 18:18–19 (NIV)

Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

“Be fruitful and multiply” was never only about children. Multiplication is a responsibility — the call to carry what God has placed in you beyond the boundaries of your own life. And nothing reveals God’s heart for legacy more clearly than the reason He gives for choosing Abraham. Read it slowly: “For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord.” God did not choose Abraham because he was impressive. God chose him because He knew Abraham would be a faithful father — one who would hand the way of the Lord down to the generations that followed.

There is a lesson tucked into that for how we evaluate one another, and ourselves. Character is not hidden; it is already on display, written into the pattern of a man’s life long before any promise is fulfilled. We are tempted to ignore the evidence and hope a man will somehow drive better once we own him — the cute car with the ruined transmission. But God did the opposite. He read the evidence, saw a man who would build rather than abandon, and entrusted him with a nation. Notice, too, that God made Abraham wait. He gave him no children until late in life, because Abraham’s fatherhood was never about producing offspring — it was about producing legacy, and legacy requires a man present and intentional enough to direct what comes after him.

“Legacy is not what you leave when you die. It is what you are pointing your household toward while you still live.”

This is why scattering yourself is so costly. A man cannot build a legacy in six directions at once. The genealogies of Scripture — “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob” — are God’s record of the men He held responsible for those who came after them. They are a sobering reminder that we are driving a truck, and the direction we choose determines what happens to everyone riding behind us. Legacy is not what you leave when you die; it is what you are pointing your household toward while you live.

And here is the dignity of it: you are not in this generation by accident. Like Abraham, you were known before you were born and placed precisely here, in this time, for this assignment. The systems around us may be shaking, but

God is still looking for men who will carry the seed forward — who will direct their children and their households to keep the way of the Lord. That is the legacy God is after. Not a monument with your name on it, but a generation that walks with God because you did first.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1. When I look honestly at the pattern of my life, what legacy am I currently building — what would those who come after me inherit from the way I am living right now?*
- 2. Where have I scattered myself in ways that make it harder to direct and disciple the people God has actually entrusted to me? What is the root of that scattering?*
- 3. What would it look like to be present and intentional enough this week to point my household — my children, my family, those who look to me — toward the way of the Lord?*
- 4. What is the one thing God is asking me to carry forward and hand down faithfully, rather than letting it end with me?*

DAY 6 — THE PRINCIPLE OF REPAIR: RETURNING TO THE SOURCE

SCRIPTURE READING

2 Chronicles 15:2, 4 (NIV)

“The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.” ... But in their distress they turned to the Lord, the God of Israel, and sought him, and he was found by them.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

After six days of looking at the design, we arrive at the only question that finally matters: how do we get back when we have drifted? The prophet’s word to a nation in turmoil is the whole principle of repair in a single sentence: “The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.” We cannot drag God wherever we want to go, like a dog on a leash. He is not with us based on where we wander; He is with us when we are with Him. And He is found — reliably, certainly — by those who actually seek Him.

That is precisely where men go wrong. We are always seeking something. We chase manhood through movements and fraternities, through podcasters and athletes and entertainers — through every source except the One who designed us. But you cannot learn how to be a man from people who have abandoned the design themselves. If your Mercedes broke down, you would not reach for a Toyota manual to fix it. When a man breaks down, the answer is not found in a handbook written by someone running from God; it is found by returning to the Maker. The reason so many are looking and never finding is not that God is hiding. It is that we are looking everywhere He is not.

“God is not hiding. The reason we keep looking and never finding is that we keep looking everywhere He is not.”

Israel learned this the hard way. For a long time they were without the true God, and their days were marked by distress — it was not safe to travel, nations crushed nations, turmoil touched everything. But Scripture says, “in their distress they turned to the Lord, the God of Israel, and sought him, and he was found by them.” There is a pattern here as old as the book of Judges: God delivers, we drift, distress comes, we return, and He delivers again. The mercy is that the door home is never locked. The warning is that we often will not walk through it until the pain is sharp enough — and sometimes a man is simply not hurting badly enough yet.

So God built His people a rhythm of return: “Three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose.” It was never about the gathering itself — the fellowship and good times, as good

as those are. It was about presenting yourself before God and giving an account of what you had been doing for His agenda since you last met Him. That rhythm is still the cure. The repair of a man — and through him, a home, and through homes, a generation — begins when he stops trying to fix his own symptoms and deliberately returns to the source, again and again, before a throne that is still occupied. The systems we lean on may be shaking. But God is still on the throne, still asking the question He has always asked, and still found by everyone who genuinely seeks Him.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1. Where have I been seeking direction for my life and my manhood — and how many of those sources have actually returned me to God, rather than carried me further from Him?*
- 2. What is the “distress” God may be using right now to turn me back to Him? Am I willing to return before the pain has to get worse?*
- 3. What would a deliberate rhythm of returning to the source look like for me — a regular, intentional appearing before God rather than a desperate, occasional one?*
- 4. What is God asking me to bring back to Him this week — not a managed symptom, but the real alignment of my life laid open before His throne?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, You made us in Your image and stamped a design into us before we ever drew breath. We confess that we have spent far too long treating our symptoms and far too little time tending our alignment. We have iced the shoulder and ignored the hip. We have managed our habits and missed our hearts. This week You have turned us back toward the design, and we come now asking You to do the deeper work we have been avoiding.

You gave us dominion — not to own, but to steward — and we have too often shrunk our responsibility to the edge of our own comfort. Forgive us for the gardens we have neglected and the rivers we have let run dry or run bitter. Make us faithful in the place closest to home, and let the influence of that faithfulness flow outward, watering everyone downstream of our lives.

You entrusted us with Your truth and told us to keep it sterile, and we have so often contaminated it with our own edits and excuses. We have demanded that others do the word while we merely talked about it. Cleanse us, Lord. Soak us in Your word until it is believable in our homes again. Make us coverings who take the weight rather than critics who only assign it — men who pursue our own holiness before we ever require it of anyone else.

We think of those who come after us — our children, our households, the ones who are watching whether we know it or not — and we tremble at the legacy we are building. We have scattered ourselves in directions that cannot bear fruit. Gather us. Make us present and intentional, like Abraham, willing to wait and willing to build, so that we direct those behind us to keep Your way.

And so we come back to the source. We admit that we have looked for You in a hundred places You were never to be found, and we have grown weary in the searching. We live in a season when the systems are shaking and the protections we trusted feel uncertain. But You are still on the throne — high, exalted, holy — and Your voice is still asking the question it has always asked: Whom shall I send? Here we are, Lord. Not with our symptoms managed and our images polished, but with our true alignment laid open before You. Realign us. Send us. Use us to repair what is broken in our generation.

We surrender it all to You — our homes, our households, our legacies, and our very design — and we trust You to make us into the men You created us to be. In the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.