CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

Kansas City, Missouri

A SIX-DAY DEVOTIONAL · SUCCESSFUL BIBLICAL LIVING — PART 2

Designed, Then Shaped:

Successful Biblical Living Between Nature and Nurture

ANCHOR SCRIPTURE

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

— Psalm 139:13–14 (NIV)

Based on the sermon by Dr. Stan Archie

Senior Pastor & Co-Founder, Christian Fellowship Baptist Church

WEEK OF OCTOBER 18, 2026

DAY ONE

HARDWARE AND INFLUENCE: NATURE, NURTURE, AND THE MARK

SCRIPTURE READING

PSALM 139:13–16 (NIV)

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Sunday Dr. Archie opened the second part of our series with a confession most of us could make about our bills. People say, "Well, I did the best I can." That is what he once told his utility company—and they cut the lights off anyway. Doing our best has never been the same thing as doing what we were designed to do. Sincerity does not suspend consequences. And that is the burden of this week: successful biblical living requires understanding and accepting God's design for our created nature, and overcoming the influences of nurture that drive us to miss His mark.

Dr. Archie gave us two words to carry all week. Nature is our hardware—the way God built us for His intended purpose, with the capacity to reflect His image embedded in the design itself. Nurture is our capacity to be influenced and shaped, toward right or toward wrong. Nature is what God installed; nurture is what has been running on it ever since. Psalm 139 is a song about the hardware. Before your mother knew your name, God was knitting. Before your first breath, your frame was not hidden from Him. It is workmanship.

> ***"People say, 'Well, I did the best I can.' That's what I tell my utility company. I did the best I can—and they still cut my lights off. The fact that you did your best does not alleviate the consequences of not being what you were designed to be."***
>
> **— DR. STAN ARCHIE**

But notice what the psalm does not say. It does not say that everything poured into us after the womb was good. A beautifully made instrument can be played badly. A well-built house can be furnished with things that rot it from the inside. Nurture is not evil in itself; it is the very means by which God intended us to grow. The trouble is that since the garden, we have been nurtured outside the garden. Families, screens, neighborhoods, and even churches have taught us things God never taught us, and we have learned them so early that they feel like nature.

That is why the word "sin" belongs in this conversation. To sin is to miss the mark. Most of us did not wake up one morning and decide to miss it. We were shaped, a little at a time, to aim somewhere else. The good news of Psalm 139 is that the God who designed the hardware also knows every day written in His book—including the ones that bent us. He is not surprised by what nurture did. He is ready to redeem it.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Space is given below each question for journaling or small-group notes.

1. *When I fall short, how often do I reach for "I did the best I can"? Where has that phrase quietly excused me from asking whether I was actually aiming at God's mark?*

2. *Which habits, reactions, or beliefs in my life feel like "just who I am" but were actually learned—nurtured into me by my home, my neighborhood, or my culture?*

3. *Psalm 139 says God saw my unformed body and wrote my days in His book. What would change in how I treat myself and others this week if I truly believed I am His workmanship, not an accident?*

4. *What is one area where I sense nurture has pulled me off target? Will I name it before God in prayer today and ask Him to begin the work of redirecting my aim?*

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DAY TWO

UNDER HIS AUTHORITY: DESIGN, ORDER, AND THE FINAL WORD

SCRIPTURE READING

1 CORINTHIANS 11:3; EPHESIANS 2:10 (NIV)

But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. … For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Dr. Archie walked us back to the beginning on Sunday. "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). Humanity is the category. Male and female are the two archetypes in which humanity exists. And within each, God has placed enormous individual uniqueness. He did not create two of the same thing. He created two different designs intended to complement one another—and every one of us is a one-of-a-kind expression within that order.

Then he asked a question that quieted the room: are there any circumstances where the head of every man is not Christ? Not in the church? Not in the culture? Not in the home? Most of us answered easily. But Paul places the second clause in the same sentence as the first, and the third clause stands over both: the head of Christ is God. Here is the heart of it. Headship in God's covenants is not a ladder of worth. The Son is not less than the Father because He submits to Him. If submission were degrading, it would degrade Christ. Instead, it is the very shape of His glory. Dr. Archie was equally clear about what this order never means: it gives no cover to anyone who abuses, neglects, or betrays. Biblical headship is measured by Christ, who laid down His life.

> ***"It ain't Stan's opinion. So whenever you say, 'I don't agree with Stan,' switch Stan for God: 'I don't agree with God on this issue.' Now we can have the real conversation."***
>
> **— DR. STAN ARCHIE**

What makes this teaching uncomfortable is not finally a question of opinion. Some people come to a pastor and say, "That's just your view." Dr. Archie's answer was simple: the Word of God is the final authority, and no pastor has the power to amend it. If the head of every man is Christ, then no preacher can go to Christ with a petition from people who disagree. When we find ourselves resisting a clear word, the honest move is to stop putting a person's name in the sentence and put God's there instead. That is where the real conversation is.

Ephesians 2:10 adds the promise underneath the order. We are God's handiwork, created for good works He prepared in advance. He designed the assignment before He designed you to carry it. So God will never call you to become something that contradicts His design or His purpose for your creation. If a call pulls against the way He made you, Dr. Archie put it plainly: whatever phone call came in was a wrong number.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Space is given below each question for journaling or small-group notes.

1. *Where in my life do I most resist being under authority—God's, the church's, or the covenant order of my home? What does that resistance reveal about whom I am really trusting?*

2. *Is there a clear teaching of Scripture I have labeled "just somebody's opinion" so I would not have to wrestle with it? What happens when I put God's name in that sentence instead?*

3. *Christ submitted to the Father without becoming less. How would my marriage, my workplace, or my ministry look different if I practiced authority and submission the way Jesus did—through humility and self-giving love?*

4. *Have I answered any "calls" that contradict the way God designed me? What "wrong number" do I need to hang up on this week so I can hear the assignment He prepared in advance for me?*

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DAY THREE

SECURE AT THE ROOT: THE ATTACHMENT STAGE

SCRIPTURE READING

PHILIPPIANS 4:11–13 (NIV)

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Dr. Archie described our developmental journey as a series of windows that open at different seasons of life. Miss what you were supposed to learn in third grade, he said, and you will struggle in seventh grade until you go back and take the remedial class. The first window opens before we can even speak. From birth to about three years old, we are in the attachment stage, building the foundational capacity for trust, safety, emotional connection, personal worth, and confidence that others will be available to us.

He painted the picture of birth itself: the waters break, the world shakes, someone lifts you into cold light, and you feel things you have never felt before. Then you are placed on your mother's chest, and the one thing you recognize is the rhythm of her heartbeat. Something in you settles: this is strange, but I must be safe. That is attachment. And here is the tender warning he gave every parent: a child that young should never come to believe they are responsible for keeping the connection. When a little one concludes, "Mama didn't come because of me," the wound goes in before there are words to name it.

> ***"He didn't know the secret from birth. He didn't know the secret from the way he grew up. He learned the secret. The secret was not what was happening externally—it was a security in him that said, 'I can do all things through Christ.'"***
>
> **— DR. STAN ARCHIE**

Those wounds grow up with us. They show up in adults who cannot rest unless circumstances cooperate, who need a title, a relationship, or a balance to tell them they are worth something. That is why Philippians 4 matters so much. Paul could be content in plenty or in want, well fed or hungry. Dr. Archie remembered growing up in a generation that did not know it was poor; everyone brought home the same commodity box, and the only difference was whose mama could cook. Security was not in the box. It was somewhere deeper.

Then he pointed to the word we skip: Paul says, "I have learned the secret." He was not born with it. He did not inherit it from his upbringing. He learned it. That is remedial discipleship—the Spirit going back into the third-grade lesson and teaching us what we missed. The secret was not what was happening around Paul. It was a secure attachment to Christ that said, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength." Whatever your first heartbeat taught you, there is a steadier one now.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Space is given below each question for journaling or small-group notes.

1. *Developmental question: Can I remain secure and content without depending on others or my circumstances to establish my worth? Where is my honest answer "not yet"?*

2. *What did my earliest years teach me about whether people would be there for me? Where do I still feel responsible for keeping every connection alive, as if love depends on my performance?*

3. *Paul said he "learned" contentment. What would it look like for me to enroll in the Spirit's remedial class this week—to practice resting in Christ when plenty or want tempts me to measure my worth?*

4. *Is there a circumstance right now that I have allowed to define my value—a bank balance, a relationship, a role? What will I say to God about it today, and what will I release?*

DAY FOUR

FREE, NOT UNGOVERNED: THE EXPLORATION STAGE

SCRIPTURE READING

GALATIANS 5:13–14, 16–18 (NIV)

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." … So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

The second window opens somewhere between two and eight years old. Dr. Archie called it the exploration stage—the season when words begin to make sense and a child starts developing independence, initiative, self-control, an understanding of limits, and respect for the rights of others. It is the season of "share," and of a parent's quick hand pulling small fingers back from the electrical outlet. Boundaries are learned here, or they are not learned at all. Many of us who missed that lesson, he observed, spend adulthood trying to change the world around us rather than letting God change us.

Galatians 5 says we were called to be free. Dr. Archie reminded us how many people are free on paper and still in jail—jailed by debt, by a lie that has to be maintained, by a secret no one can know. Freedom that cannot govern itself becomes its own prison. Paul's point is that liberty was never given for self-indulgence. It was given so that we could serve one another humbly in love.

> ***"He didn't say stop desiring the desires of the flesh and you will be able to walk in the Spirit. That's not what he said. You can't fix your sin by fighting it. Do the right thing, and the wrong stuff will fall away."***
>
> **— DR. STAN ARCHIE**

Then came the line that may be the most freeing of the whole sermon: Paul did not say, "Stop desiring the desires of the flesh, and then you will be able to walk in the Spirit." He said the reverse. Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the flesh. We cannot fix our sin by fighting it on its own terms. When we say, "I'll go where the temptation is, but I won't give in," we are assuming our early lessons about boundaries were perfect. They usually were not. The way forward is not white-knuckled resistance but redirected steps.

The flesh and the Spirit are in conflict, Paul says, so that we are not to do whatever we want. That is not a restriction on joy; it is a rescue from a self that was poorly trained. Our desires will win by default unless we are intentionally walking with the Spirit. So this week, do not just guard the door. Choose the path. Go where the Spirit leads, and let the wrong desires lose their footing because you are no longer standing where they live.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Space is given below each question for journaling or small-group notes.

1. *Developmental question: Can I manage my freedom responsibly, respecting appropriate boundaries, without allowing the desires of the flesh to govern my life? Where does my honest answer fall short?*

2. *What "jail" am I sitting in even though I call myself free—debt, a secret, a habit, a lie I have to keep maintaining? How did my early lessons about limits contribute to it?*

3. *Where am I still trying to fight sin by standing next to it—going to the place, opening the app, keeping the contact—while promising myself I won't give in? What would walking by the Spirit look like instead?*

4. *Who in my life has paid a price for my unmanaged freedom? What is one concrete way I can use my liberty this week to "serve one another humbly in love" instead?*

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DAY FIVE

FROM TEAM TO COVENANT: BELONGING AND PAIR BONDING

SCRIPTURE READING

ROMANS 12:3–5; 1 CORINTHIANS 7:3–4 (NIV)

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. … The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

The third window, the belonging stage, is where we learn friendship—cooperation, acceptance and rejection, reciprocity, social roles, and how to keep a sense of self inside a group. Dr. Archie reminded us that this is what neighborhood games were really for. Jacks on the corner, double dutch, a ball game in the street: none of it was about becoming a star. It was about learning that there is a position for everybody on the team. There is no "I" in team, he said, though this generation has found a way to put several there.

Romans 12 is Paul's belonging lesson for the church. Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought. You are part of the body, not the whole of it. And because the members do not all have the same function, there is no reason to compete with one another. When one group in the church does something well, mature believers do not scramble to prove they can do it too; they pray it draws that group closer to God's truth. Our concern is not our stats. It is our team.

> ***"There's no room to compete if we're designed to be something different. Your concern is not your stats—it's our team."***
>
> **— DR. STAN ARCHIE**

The fourth window is pair bonding—the capacity for enduring intimacy built on vulnerability, mutual trust, emotional regulation, commitment, and shared responsibility. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7 are not permission for appetite; they are a description of covenant duty. Husband and wife give themselves to one another under the umbrella of fulfilling what a husband and a wife are called to be. Dr. Archie turned it around so we could not miss it: intimacy belongs only where those covenant duties are being fulfilled, because the covenant is what intimacy was made to strengthen.

Here is why the stages matter together. They stack. An insecure attachment leads to unsteady exploration, which leads to unsteady belonging. And when we skip learning healthy friendship and rush into romance too young, we carry unfinished lessons into the covenant itself. Marriage, he reminded us, is about managing that covenant. Whatever window was left open in you, the Spirit can go back and close it well.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Space is given below each question for journaling or small-group notes.

1. *Developmental question: Can I experience belonging and acceptance without compromising my identity, values, or convictions? Where have I traded who I am in Christ to be accepted?*

2. *Where do I compete with others in the body of Christ instead of celebrating their function? What does that competition reveal about my sense of belonging?*

3. *Developmental question: Can I establish and maintain a healthy covenant relationship according to biblical mandates without losing my identity or attempting to control the other person? Whether married or single, what would honest growth here look like for me?*

4. *What unfinished lesson from an earlier stage am I carrying into my closest relationships? What is one step I will take this week—a conversation, a boundary, a confession—to let God address it?*

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DAY SIX

ACCEPT, EXAMINE, SUBMIT: INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

SCRIPTURE READING

ROMANS 6:12–13 (NIV)

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

Dr. Archie closed Sunday by naming three things successful biblical living requires. First, accept what God designed. When we do not like what God made us to be, we usually try one of two things: we pretend God is fine with our edits to His work, or we try to reshape the world around us to accommodate our desires. Romans 1 describes where that road leads—people who "exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator." Acceptance is the opposite posture: "Lord, You made me. Show me what You made me to be."

Second, examine how you are being nurtured by culture. Dr. Archie gave a practical assignment: write down what each game, show, and feed is actually teaching. Some entertainment rehearses violence until it no longer startles us. Some trains us to treat our families with contempt and to blame everyone else for what we will not fix. Our bodies adjust to what we repeatedly experience, even virtually. Nurture did not stop when childhood ended. It is happening on our screens tonight.

> ***"If you're on your own, then you're in trouble. All my answers are right before I turn the test in. If you have no accountability, you fail the test and think you passed."***
>
> **— DR. STAN ARCHIE**

Third, submit to the Spirit to be transformed according to God's purpose. Romans 6 says every part of us will be offered as an instrument of something. Our created nature is the instrument; nurture decides who plays it. We do not become instruments of righteousness by trying harder with the same habits. We become instruments of righteousness by offering ourselves, piece by piece, to the One who brought us from death to life.

And none of this happens alone. The sermon's homework ends with sharing the journey with one person. Dr. Archie described the student who walks through a test certain that every answer is right—until the teacher returns it with half of them marked wrong. All our answers look right to us. Without accountability, we fail the test and believe we passed. So this week, find your one person, open the paper, and let someone help you check your answers.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Space is given below each question for journaling or small-group notes.

1. *This week I will honestly examine my development in the area of _____ (Attachment, Exploration, Belonging, or Pair Bonding). What patterns of thinking, feeling, or behaving have I found there that do not align with God's design?*

2. *If I wrote down what my favorite shows, games, music, and feeds are actually teaching me, what would the list say? Which of those lessons am I living out without realizing it?*

3. *This week I will stop/start _____ to replace an unhealthy pattern with attitudes and behaviors that better reflect God's standard. What will it require of me on an ordinary Tuesday or Thursday?*

4. *I commit to sharing what I have discovered, what I am working to change, and my progress with _____. When will I have that conversation, and what part of myself am I offering to God as an instrument of righteousness?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Designed, Then Shaped — Successful Biblical Living Between Nature and Nurture

Lord, You knit us together in our mothers' wombs. Before anyone knew our names, You knew our frames, and You wrote our days in Your book. We praise You, because we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, and today we choose to believe that this includes us.

And yet, Father, we confess that we have been shaped by more than Your hand. We were nurtured outside the garden. Homes, screens, streets, and even our own choices have taught us things You never taught us, and too often we have called them "just who I am." We have said, "I did the best I could," when what we needed was to become what You designed. Forgive us for missing the mark, and forgive us for the times we have edited Your work rather than accepting it.

We bow beneath Your order. Christ is the head of every man, and You are the head of Christ. Teach us to receive Your Word as the final authority, not as one opinion among many. Make our homes places where authority looks like Jesus—humble, faithful, and self-giving—and silence every call in our lives that contradicts the assignment You prepared for us in advance.

Go back, Holy Spirit, into the windows that were left open. Where our earliest years taught us insecurity, teach us the secret of contentment in Christ. Where we never learned boundaries, lead us to walk by the Spirit so that the desires of the flesh lose their grip. Where we learned to compete rather than belong, make us members who celebrate one another. And where our relationships carry unfinished lessons, heal us so that we can keep covenant with integrity. Enroll us in Your remedial class, Lord, and do not let us drop out.

Give us courage to examine what is nurturing us now—every feed, every show, every voice we have allowed to disciple us. Give each of us one honest person to walk alongside, so that we do not fail the test while believing we passed. And as we leave this week, we offer You every part of ourselves: our minds, our mouths, our bodies, our relationships, our time. Make us instruments of righteousness and not of wickedness, for You have brought us from death to life.

We trust You to finish the work You started in the secret place. In the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

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