

[The sermon begins on page two. This sheet is to be used in conjunction with the sermon. It was an insert in our bulletin.]

The Blueprint for Living

1. If someone followed you around for a week and observed how you spent your time and money, what would they say your top three priorities are?
(Let 1. be the highest priority.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. What activities do you think the Scriptures teach should be the core priorities of your life?
(Again, let 1. be the highest priority.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Sermon Points:

- I. What is your blueprint for living?
- II. What is the biblical blueprint for living?
- III. What is not the biblical blueprint for living?
- IV. How do I move toward the biblical blueprint?
 - A. Pray, Evaluate, & Reflect on the Biblical passages
 - B. Examine & Change...
the Content, the Relationships (Peers, Mentors, & Heroes), and the Habits of your life... these are the human levers.

Scripture References for Section 3:

- [W, N & O] - Matthew 22: 34-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-29; John 4:23-24
[N & O] - Matthew 28:18-20
[N] - Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28; Galatians 6:10; 2 Timothy 2:2
[O] - 2 Corinthians 5:19-20; 1 John 3:17-18; 1 Peter 2:12; Matthew 5:16



The Blueprint for Living.

What is a blueprint for living?

We know what “living” is. Living begins with who we are... and who we are works itself out into what we do.

Living is how we spend our days from the time we are born till we die and meet God. The Trine God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the One who has made us... as you may remember Psalm 100:3 tells us “Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” (ESV)

What is a blueprint?

Technically, a drawing explaining, usually with a high-degree of detail, an architectural or mechanical plan.

I spent ten years helping a friend of mine Dana James build houses. In fact, I participated in building several houses of folks in this church, and I hope they have forgiven me.

Though I guess I had a sense of it before, I really learned the value of a blueprint in building houses.

I can remember Dana and I laying out the foundations of a house after the land or lot had been graded, and how often we had to measure countless times our surveying marks.

For if we got our marks wrong and the foundation ended up out of specifications with the blueprint, then the house would be framed incorrectly, and... well, let me just say, that is not a happy moment, the implications can be costly.

So in the basic sense, a blueprint is a detailed plan of action that guides you... and often it guides you toward something worthy and wonderful.

A blueprint for living should tell us how to live lives that are in sync with who we are and why we were made. It should be a practical help to us.

Does God have a blueprint for living for us?

Since He created us, and created us in His image and His likeness, as Genesis 1 tells us, we would be surprised if He did not have a blueprint for us.

And indeed the Bible serves us as such a guide.

The Scriptures supplement the creation, i.e., the natural world, to give us more specifics about who God is, who we are, and what God has done.

And as most of you know, the Bible has a central theme focused on the person of Jesus of Nazareth whom we have come to believe was, in fact has always been, and still is, God.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The Apostle John goes on to say, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he (that is, Jesus) has made him known.” Jesus the Son has made God the Father known to us.

So we shouldn’t be surprised if much of what a blueprint for living ought to be has a lot to do or everything to do with Jesus.

Jesus Himself in John 15:5 tells us: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Notice there a mention about our purpose being to bear fruit... Jesus says further in verse 8: “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

And again to further make the point, in verse 16, Jesus says: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide...”

A Father-glorifying life is one that bears fruit by being well-attached to Jesus, and Jesus is the One who is orchestrating the fruit-bearer and the fruit.

This gets us started no doubt.

Yet perhaps the clearest and most succinct passage in all of Scripture giving us clear life direction is our main text today, Matthew 22:34-40.

Listen to the Word of God:

“But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered

together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Jesus tells us here that all that has been said in the Old Testament, that is, the laws given to Moses and all the writings recorded from the Prophets are summarized in these two commands.

The same account in the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 12, quotes Jesus as saying “There is no other commandment greater than these.”

And Luke, in Luke 10, has an account where Jesus in responding to the lawyer’s question on how he may inherit eternal life asks the lawyer, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?”

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” And he (Jesus) said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

But he (the lawyer), desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.”

I think you know the rest of that story... that story that Jesus used to show that lawyer what it meant to love His neighbor... what it meant to show mercy... what it meant to be someone who is living eternally in the Kingdom of God.

So it seems very appropriate to me that in Jesus’ proclamation of the great commandments.. that is to love God and to love each other, we have a perfect framework for very simply stating the blueprint for living.

And it is perfect because it is given by the One who has made us... and because He has made us, He owns us... we are His.

So, what is your blueprint for living?

We organize our work.

We organize our homes, yards, and cars.

We organize our play and leisure. We organize our money. We organize our children's lives from toddler through schoolboy or girl on towards the right colleges. Some of us are quite good and tedious about organization.

But how do you organize your life as a Christian?

What does being a Christian have to do with how you organize yourself and your family?

Well, I hope for myself and you, that being a Christian has everything to do with such organization.

What did you learn from the exercise in your insert?

If you take the time to map out your priorities or if someone follows you around and records how you spend your time and your money, they are going to see your priorities... they are going to have a reasonable sense of your blueprint for living.

The truth is that all of us are living according to a blueprint, some blueprint that we adhere to actually pretty rigorously.

We all have a framework, a set of priorities, a worldview that directs our daily choices, and it is powered by our theology. i.e. our understanding of God, and our anthropology, our understanding of mankind.

And it seems to me that our blueprints, that is all of us in the world at large, fall into what looks like four categories that in reality are probably just two.

Some of us live by a blueprint that in appearance looks random. Life carries us along. We go with the flow. If we are asked what our blueprint is, we would say that we don't really have one or we are at present unsure or in process. If we were filling out this form today, we would fill it out differently tomorrow. We are floaters.

Some of us live by a blueprint that is opposite the guidelines given to us in the great commandments, and we make no bones about it. God may or may not be there. Every Christian we've ever met is a hypocrite or worse. All this love for God and one another that Jesus talks about can't be found in the people that we have met. Christianity is just pretty suspect, and since it is suspect, it has no bearing on

our life and the choices we make. If sin and judgement turn out to be true, that'll be a tough one. Or maybe when we're older and have to settle down our lives a bit because our children have to be reared, we'll give Christianity and its blueprint for living more thought. But not now. We are, in essence, rebels.

I heard these first two alot when I worked with students on campus at UGA; I don't think that has changed.

Some of us live by a blueprint that incorporates some biblical prescriptions but also has mixed in other anti-biblical goals. And it is really a very "in-vogue thing" in our culture at large and our Christian sub-culture.

It's a cafeteria-styled blueprint where we take the things from Jesus that suit us and go reasonably well with the things from the world... worldly things that we see other Christians also digesting with little or no negative impact.

We can even develop finely honed arguments from Scripture to justify our selfish choices when we are challenged from within by the Holy Spirit or from without by over-zealous Christian brothers and sisters.

"Total Truth" author Nancy Percy might say that we've become comfortable with this false dualism of life where sacred and secular or pagan values awkwardly mix... like oil and water. It's a confused blueprint we're living off of. Ugly, really. We could be ignorant or we could just be compromisers.

And then there are some of us whose blueprint is focused like a laser on the priorities of the kingdom of God. The Great Commandments are a starting point for a great building that expands into the Great Commission of Matthew 28 where our lives are intentionally planting and watering the seeds that by God's mercy, grace, and provision will expand the fruit of the Kingdom of God.

By which blueprint are you living?

Really the first three, the floaters, the rebels, and the compromisers are all using a blueprint that God has not given us.

I often see that I myself am a cafeteria-style blueprint Christian... living in a world of cafeteria-style Christians influencing my brothers and sisters to a lukewarm version of Christianity, acting off a confused and disobedient blueprint.

As it turns out, our blueprints bleed over. My blueprint bleeds on to yours. Yours on to someone else's. God has made us highly and thoroughly connected. We are parts of a body. It is impossible to detach ourselves or be broken off.

And I suspect that Jesus is still doing what he did in the early days of His church. He walks among our churches examining our faithfulness. You remember what he said to the former church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:

“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.”

So because He loves me, He regularly exposes my use of a cafeteria-styled blueprint, reprovess and disciplines me, and through His Spirit extends His mercy and gives me grace to become more zealous and repent... in other words, set aside a flawed blueprint that I have fashioned and pick up His blueprint centered on His great commandments.

So what is the biblical blueprint for living?

What terms would I use to describe the duties and responsibilities of Christians that helps them to organize their life so that they are living consistently within the prescribed will of God?

Well, if one starts with the Great Commandments of Jesus... and adds His Great Commission in Matthew 28... and looks at the church-expansion narrative in Acts... and the prescriptions of the apostles in the New Testament as they gave advice to churches and leaders in the church... and then simplifies that down to three major thrusts, I think you can say it as Worship, Nurture, and Outreach.

On your insert, you have a graphic that explains these three thrusts and you can fill in the words from the top down as Worship, Nurture, and Outreach.

This is not a perfect idea or perfect graphic, but I hope you find it helpful. Let me comment briefly on the graphic in general.

And you'll notice on the insert in the bottom left, I have listed some Scripture references that coincide with the emphases of Worship, Nurture, & Outreach.

So, our lives begin and end from the core of Worship... love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Jesus in John 14 tells us that "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Loving God is about obedience to that which He has commanded. Obedience as in the Ten Commandments begins with honoring God the Father for exactly who He has revealed Himself to be... for honoring God the Son and God the Spirit, for exactly who they have revealed in Scripture they are. Obedience starts first in the vertical.

Worship is about getting our understanding and appreciation for who God our Creator is correct according to the Scriptures.

And then practicing that understanding and appreciation through our whole life and activities, both in formal and informal moments and in every aspect of what we have been given and what we do.

Therefore, we take our theology, our understanding of God entirely seriously and strive to get His revelation right. Dare we get God wrong? It would be a dreadful dishonor and deadly business if we were to do so.

We also honor God by taking every thought, every activity, every endeavor that we involve ourselves in and intentionally present them to Him as an act of worship.

The Dutchman Abraham Kuyper put it this way:

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'"

We worship God in our vocations and in the gifts that He has given us, those practical and spiritual. As Christians, He gives us our interests and gifts for His and our pleasure... and ... for the building of His kingdom into which He has called us. When we utilize these things for His purposes, then we are fulfilled and feel His pleasure as Eric Liddell put it in the movie "Chariots of Fire".

And God has prescribed and Jesus has patterned for us personal, family, and corporate worship... specific times to honor God for who He is and what He has done.

The “quiet time” of Bible reading and prayer is really about personal worship.

I wish that I had picked that up more clearly early in my Christian life. I think I was too concerned with trying to get perfect as quick as I could, trying to get over my problems, and trying to look “saintly” among my peers.
I should be thinking about just honoring God.

Does your family as a family honor God? Few really do. Few take the time.
I wish I was a better example here. I got frustrated too easily. Keep persevering.
Keep it simple. Keep starting over.

By the way, have I told you the secret of the Christian life?
I’ll just mention it in passing, this little secret. Keep starting over.

Admit sin. Ask forgiveness and start over. That’s the Gospel, the good news for sinners.
God’s mercy through the death of Christ for you got you started in the Christian life.
God’s grace through the work of the Holy Spirit keeps you going.
Such grace will see you through to heaven. Romans 8 spells it out clearly.

Our job is to keep starting over. So start over today.
And if you are not a Christian, do not delay.
Submit your life to Jesus and ask Him in prayer to make His infinite sacrifice applicable to your sins so that you might have peace with Him and be restored to a right relationship with Him.

You see, God made us to be worshipers of Him as our Creator. We disobeyed and broke faith with Him.
And when He brings us back to Himself which He has done in many of us, He turns us from despisers into worshipers again... as we once were before the Fall.
So worship becomes the core of our life. It is the essence of our relationship to God.

But God then points us out horizontally to each other.
We love Him when we love each other.
From the core of worship, we move to nurture and outreach.

Nurture starts with our personal growth in relating to Jesus as His disciple and then continues with our making disciple-makers in His pattern.

We must grow in the knowledge of God.
We must develop Jesus-like character.
We must develop the skills of a disciple.

“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”, Philippians 2:12-13 tells us.
We certainly do not earn our salvation.
But we have a clear responsibility to take the initiative in our personal growth.

Let me say again that this church wants to do everything it can to help you grow as a Christian.
Pray that we might be enabled to do for you what we earnestly desire.

Then, from being serious about our personal growth, we move out into being intentional in our relationships. We must be fed in order to feed.

Being dedicated to nurture means discipling Christians intentionally and discipling them with a specific end in mind.

What’s that end?

Paul tells Timothy to make disciples in a certain manner in 2 Timothy 2:2:
“and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

In other words, don’t make disciples. Make disciple-makers.

We start with relationships with Christians because we are told to do good especially to the household of faith.

But then we move farther out as the graphic suggests in loving our neighbor to the unbelieving world, to non-Christians, and we love them in two ways:

We love them with our words by proclaiming the Gospel of grace by faith in Christ’s work and answering their questions about the faith and the Scriptures. This activity we often call evangelism and apologetics, but it is still love.
We are loving them with speaking to them the Truth.

We also love them with mercy, with deeds of kindness, even when our kindnesses are dismissed.

Think back to how Jesus had to spell out the degree to which we must love by the

giving of the story of the Good Samaritan.

The law has to spell out to us that loving our neighbor must be as thorough as the way we love ourselves and our own bodies.

What is not living by the biblical blueprint?

We have said that it is being a floater, a rebel, or a cafeteria-style compromiser.

And let me mention two other ways that we compromise or contaminate our blueprint.

One, and you may remember this from the sermon on Romans 12:1-2, we conform ourselves to this current world and culture.

We chant and apply the world's false and destructive mantra of:

“There is only opinion, there is only stuff, and there is only me and/or mine.”

Francis Schaeffer, almost 40 years ago now, began to point out that Christians were living for personal peace and affluence and that living by such a blueprint would injure us and the church.

Notice how it is a vicious cycle.

“Perhaps God is not there. I need security. I must pursue wealth so that I can have security. My growing affluence allows me to be less dependent on people which gives me peace.”

You see that the pursuit of affluence and personal peace feed off each other marginalizing people in our lives more and more.

It's like answering the question, “How's the church?” with “Oh, Jesus is great, it's just the people that I can't stand.”

Christ saved you and me so that we might start loving again first Him and then people that He has created. When that realization hits our cynicism, we will be humbled... and then we will be healed and changed. And then we will start turning our back on affluence and personal peace for the sake of each other, for the sake of His bride, the sake of His Church.

A second way we contaminate a biblical blueprint is we pick among the three components the ones we like or with which we are the most comfortable.

“Well, I’m more of a nurturer than an outreacher. I’m uncomfortable around non-Christians never mind that I once was one.”

Or, “I have little interest in discipling somebody when there are so many who have never heard the Gospel.”

Or, “I’m so busy doing ministry Lord that I just don’t have time to worship you privately or with my family. But I will make it to church where the saints can see me.”

I hear me... in these copouts. Do you hear yourself?

I am arguing this morning that we fulfill the commandments of Scripture when we tune and balance our lives along the goals of Worship, Nurture, and Outreach.

So, in closing, how do I move toward the biblical blueprint if I’m not there now?

First, pray through, evaluate, and reflect on these passages listed below. Ask God to show you where you need to balance you Christian life.

Second, if you need to make changes, pay close attention to three areas which I call the human levers of change, places where we humanly can make choices that impact our character and then our activities.

1st,

Look at what kind of content you feed you mind and heart. Content like music, books, TV, movies, the Internet, and conversation.

Garbage in, garbage out.

2nd,

Look at your relationships. Examine the quality of who influences you... your peers, your mentors, and your heroes. Balance your life heavily with godly influences and then keep reaching out to non-believers.

3rd,

Look at your habits. Keep breaking bad ones, sinful ones. Keep starting healthy ones. By God’s grace, never give up. Never.

Let’s end on a really high note.

In God’s mercy, what if we as individuals were becoming more and more disciplined in living out the virtues of worship, nurture, and outreach?

What effect would it have on this church? What effect would we have on each other?

What effect would it have on Oconee County and the greater Athens area?

I'll tell you.

We would be glorifying God and enjoying Him together in a most profound way.

Pray with me, will you?

Beautiful Father of Light, Jesus the Son of God and our Shepherd, and Holy Spirit,
Enabler, Guide, and Comforter,

Bring it all to pass.

Make us what we once were not and what we deeply desire to be, your creatures
who worship you, nurture each other, and reach out to a fallen world as we once
were.

For your honor, in the name of Jesus,

Amen.