

## THE BLUEPRINT

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*And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." —Genesis 1:28*

Quick question: What's the first thing God ever tells mankind to do in Scripture? Hint: It has nothing to do with avoiding apples, and if you skipped the Bible verse above, you skipped the answer. The first thing God gives man is a blessing, not a ban, with profoundly exciting and fulfilling implications. In essence: Have sex, have babies, travel, explore, and take charge over all you see.

Most people I know are quite into all those things, so it can come as a surprise to discover that God put those desires there in the first place. He created us with the desire to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. He invented the desire to travel, control our environment, have families, and have sex (and if you don't believe me, read through Genesis and the Song of Songs). Not only did he invent those desires, he actively encouraged us to fulfill them, and they form his blueprint for human beings.

We saw in the last narrative that there was a very good reason for this blueprint. God wanted to fill the earth with his glory, so he made a creature that would bear his image and glory, and then told

that creature to fill the earth. The idea was, as they had sex and had babies and went to the ends of the earth, there would be billions of them, and they would take the image and glory of God with them to Patagonia and Kamchatka and Irian Jaya and Mauritania. In this way, the earth would be filled with the glory of Yahweh, just like the waters fill the sea.

Well, skeptics might say, that plan blew up in his face. The image of God was spoiled through sin, and man started deliberately undermining every aspect of his magnificent blueprint—abusing sex, trashing the earth, killing each other and building cities to avoid spreading out. But that reading of events fails to see the wisdom of God. He let man's foolishness run its course for a while, and then set about restoring the blueprint, through an idol-worshipping pagan named Abram. In several installments starting in Genesis 12, Yahweh blessed Abram, told him he would be exceptionally fruitful, promised him uncountable children, renamed him Abraham, and said he would father many nations and bless the world. The idea was, as Abraham and his offspring had sex and babies, there would be billions of them, and they would take the image and glory of God with them to Patagonia and Kamchatka and Irian Jaya and Mauritania. Within a few hundred years, sure enough:

*But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land [or, the earth] was filled with them. (Ex. 1:7)*

Not that it was plain sailing from this point on. Israel, like the rest of humanity, frequently lived with complete disregard for

their blueprint. As the Old Testament story developed, however, rumors began circulating that the blueprint might be in for another restoration. Jewish prophets like Isaiah talked about a way of somehow possessing nations, and of being fruitful and multiplying, without having any physical offspring.<sup>1</sup> No one knew quite what that meant yet, but it sounded like the image and glory of God might reach the nations without the Jews having to conquer them. Mysterious.

Seven hundred years later, another Jewish prophet called Jesus of Nazareth brought the solution to the mystery. He had never had children or had ever even been outside Israel as an adult, but he stood there on a mountain in Galilee and reminded his followers of God's blueprint for humanity—to cover the earth with his glory by filling it with creatures bearing his image:

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Matt. 28:19-20)*

Do you see? The blueprint hasn't changed! God is still passionately committed to seeing people carry the image and glory of God. But the blueprint is no longer just about having children (although it will include that for many people); it's about going to the children that are there already and baptizing and teaching them. It is no longer just about filling the spaces where nobody lives; it's about filling the spaces where *everybody* lives with disciples of Jesus. In other words, the blueprint is still for human beings to reproduce themselves and travel. It's just that reproducing yourself is now called discipleship, and travel is now called world mission.

God designed you well. So, whether we're having sex or training children or making disciples or going to unreached people, let's do it with thankfulness to the God of the blueprint. And let's do it with the same passion God has: to see the earth covered with his image and glory, as the waters cover the sea.

**Endnote**

1. See Isaiah 54:1–5 (barren women) and 56:3–7 (infertile men).