

## A Better Plan

Pastor Jim Essian : August 2, 2015

### THE PARADOX CHURCH

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*Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.*

*(Genesis 11:1-9)*

For all the technological advancements, for all the cultural work in the world, all that we've done as a people, as a humanity, across history, right, like all the innovation and invention and the movement of humanity, movement of culture, the work that we've done, the things we've created, the things that we've built, the things that we've developed—for all of that, we haven't really changed at all. Humanity hasn't really evolved all that much in the ways that many might think.

And then, when you add that to what's wrong with the world—when you look at what's wrong with the world, when you look at the social ills, the problems, the sufferings, the trials we still face—and none of what we've built, none of what we've accomplished as a culture, as a people, has really, if we're honest, alleviated any of that suffering. Anyone not suffering, ever, anymore? Right? There's still suffering, there's still problems in the world.

And so, for all of our minds and all of the great things that we've produced, we still haven't figured out the problem, right? It still hasn't created a utopian society, pure bliss. There's still suffering, there's still tears. Some of you came in here still banged up, but with this

amazing device called an iPhone—and it can do a lot of things, but it can't take that away. It can do a lot of things, but it doesn't keep you from ever suffering, it doesn't keep you from ever having relational problems, it doesn't do those things. We've accomplished so much, and yet it hasn't really changed all that much. And here's why: we've had the same plan.

Every religion has the same plan. Every religion, every philosophy, every ideology, every way of life, every political party. Every self-help book you've ever read has the same plan. It's packaged in different ways, it's using new terminology, different language, but, in the end, it's the same. And here's what it is—it's man at the center. Man's at the center, everything depends on him. Everything relies on you, everything's based on you, you're at the center, and you are working, you are striving, you are purposing, you are toiling, you are perspiring towards whatever it is you're looking to reach—God, the heavens, enlightenment, nirvana, happiness, the American dream, success. Whatever it is, it's you, in the center, everything is dependent on you, and you are pursuing, working towards your heaven, whatever your heaven might be. That's the same. That's the same across the board.

And then what we've realized is we tend to do that better with other people, and so we start to recruit other people, and to our team. “Hey, my religion is best; come to my religion.” “Hey, my philosophy is best; you can join me.” “Hey, this is the best policy. These are the best politicians. I'm going to recruit you for my team so we can be stronger in numbers.” “We're better. Here's this work in the world that we can do. It'll alleviate all suffering. Here's the answer to the problems that the world faces.” “Here, I need you to help. Come along with me.” And so we do it together and it looks like progress. It looks like advancement, especially if you can get a lot of followers, a lot of people with you, if you can say, “Look— look at the party that I'm a part of, look at the religion that I'm a part of, look at all of these people that are doing what I'm doing....” But in the end, it's all the same. It's all the same.

Mankind can produce and accomplish amazing things. It doesn't ever deal with the problem. It never accomplishes, though—the suffering, the trials, the things in us that make us keep pursuing and moving and advancing and toiling after more. It's really the same plan, just packaged in different ways. Are you happy yet? Are you satisfied yet? Do you have enough money yet? Are you successful enough yet? Do enough people like you? Are you there yet? In all of your pursuits, in all of your striving, in your plan for your life—are you there yet? No.

Okay. Here's my question: what is your plan? What is your plan? What is your plan for your life? What are you trying to do? I mean honestly, what are you working toward? We're all

working toward something. What is it? Is it happiness? Is it peace? Is it a certain position? Is it a certain notoriety? Is it a certain income level? Are you trying to reach God? Do you want just God to love you and be pleased with you? Do you want to go to heaven and so you're trying to be a good person and be very religious? What is your plan? What is your plan? Does it look like all the other plans? Does it look like every other religion and philosophy and all that? Is it you at the center? Is everything dependent on you? Is everything about you? Is everything reliant on you? And are you working toward your your goal, your plan? Is that what you're doing? Is it is like everyone else's?

I want us to consider our plan, and then I want us to consider that maybe our plan isn't a good plan. That's what I want to do. I want us to consider our plan, and I want us to consider that maybe our plan isn't a good plan. Maybe there's a better plan.

And so Genesis chapter 11, look at this famous story—Tower of Babel. We've all heard at least of the Tower of Babel, and maybe have a little bit of an understanding of what's going on here. Let's look at Genesis Chapter 11, starting in verse one and see their plan. *“Now the whole Earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.’ And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.’”*

So Genesis 11, it actually—if you were here last week—it comes before Genesis 10 chronologically. So Genesis 10 was telling us how the nations were spread across the Earth, how there came to be all these different languages. Genesis 11 is going to tell us why that occurred. So Genesis 11, Tower of Babel, actually came before Genesis 10.

And what we've seen is that the people, after the flood, began migrating east. Now, anytime you go east in the Bible that's symbolic of distancing yourselves from God, being far from God. The farther east you go, the farther that—I don't even know if this is east, I just keep going this way. That's not east, is it? It might be. It is east. Yes! And the farther east that you go, the farther away you are from God, right? Adam and Eve, they were cast out out of the garden to the east, right? East of Eden, right? And any time you go east, it's just bad, right? If we were to go east, where do we end up? Dallas. Yeah. The Devil's city. This is God's city. And if you go farther east, it's East Texas. It doesn't get much better. It's always better to go West. The

West is godly. You go West or you stay in Fort Worth, where the West begins. This is where God is. Amen?

And so they start migrating east. I sounded like the greatest Republican with a big King James Bible ever there. And so they start migrating east, and they drop their water, and they begin to—they're in the plane of Shinar, right?—and they begin to congregate there, they begin to migrate there, they begin to settle in this land of Shinar. And then one day, they're kind of chillin', they're hanging out, they're probably drinking a Shiner Bock, and they come up with a plan together. It's a plan.

They have an idea, and this is their idea. Look at verse 3. Their idea is, "*they said to one another, 'Come let us make bricks.'*" And then in verse 4, "*'Come, let us build ourselves a city.'*" They have an idea. They're going to build a city. They're going to make bricks. They're going to build a city and they're going to build a tower. That's their plan. That's their plan.

Now, they say, in the beginning of verse 3, "*they said to one another,*" they begin to speak—this is language, right? In verse 1, they had one language, and the same words. Language and words in this text is a big idea. It's a big theme that we have to look at. When it says in verse 1 that had the same language and the same words, what it means is they don't just speak the same language, they had the same idea, they had the same mindset, they had the same mission, they had the same plan, they had the same worldview, they had the same purpose and passion. They're going to go after the same thing. They're very united. They're very united. That's what that means.

They're going to have the same plan, they're going to go after the same thing because they have the same language, but also the same words. See the same language, the same words, it allows us to have a shared framework, a shared language, a shared community. It allows us to have intimacy and friendship, right? You have shared communication and shared language. You can congregating together, you can be together, you can go after things together, you can have the same mission, you can do things together. And if humanity can do great things, it can do even greater things together. And so they join together, they begin to speak to another, they begin to have the same mindset together. And it's really great because when you have the same language, you can have those things.

If you don't have the same language, you don't have those things, right? If you ever go to a foreign country and you don't speak the language, it's very uncomfortable, it's very

difficult. You can hardly get your basic needs met. It's very difficult sometimes because you don't speak the same language. And when it says same words, it also means more than just the language that they're speaking, but also the dialect, the nomenclature, the insider language, the inside jokes. It's that too. Like they're almost of one mind is what it means, that they're so united that they're almost of one mind. And for an outsider to come in, you wouldn't understand it, you couldn't take part in it unless you learned the language, unless you learned, unless you knew the plan of what they were going after.

Have you ever been in a situation where you didn't know that kind of insider language—right, the inside jokes—how uncomfortable that was, how you didn't understand what was going on. But if you do understand what's going on, everything is funny and everybody knows what everybody else is doing, and you can accomplish much more. That's where they are at, that's what they have.

Words have always been a big deal to God. He communicates to us in words, and there's a particular kind of language in which God speaks to us, and He shares with us, He communicates with us things all the time. And in the very message of Christianity is the gospel, which means good news—it's a word. So language and words are a big deal in what we are trying to accomplish. God uses words to accomplish His plan as well.

And the Babylonians, they begin to speak to another, communicate to one another. They have the same plan, the same mission. And then, their mission is, their plan is, to build a city. A city. Now, cities are a big deal. Cities are a big deal in the Bible. The first cities were cities of refuge. The first cities were cities of refuge. It was where you went to be safe. Now it seems like sometimes we get out of the city to stay safe, but in biblical times, the first cities were cities of refuge and that's where you went to be safe. See, if you didn't have a city, if you were out in the wilderness on your own, you had to fend for yourself, and defend yourself, and protect yourself. And you were alone, you were out on your own with your own tribe or your own clan. But in a city, the city was protected by a wall, and the city had protection in numbers, and you could be safe in the city.

As well, even now, you have people that are a part of cities because there's safety in the city, there's protection in the city. Most subcultures that find themselves maybe ostracized, or oppressed, or ignored by other cultures find themselves in the cities. The majority of the homosexual culture community is in the city. The majority of singles reside in the city. The

majority of ethnic minorities live in cities. Why? It's safer there, there's more options there, there's protection there. Cities are a place of refuge, and they were for the Babylonians as well.

They wanted to build a city. And we see that in the city, like typically happens in cities, the technological advancement begins to occur. In verse 3, “*Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.*’ *And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.*” This is a technological advancement. There weren't quarries where they could dig out rock and build up this city. They were in a plain. And so they had nothing to build the city with, nothing to protect themselves with, nothing to build buildings with. But they saw, they observed that, wow, sun is hardening the clay, and maybe we could build rocks or bricks in that way. And so they did.

And most inventions, that's how they get started—very simple observation of the world, and then somebody's like, “Oh look, look at that, I bet we could do that.” And then they do that, and we have so many of the things which we have. And so this is technological advancement. Like, it's a big deal, right? Brick—we still use brick. They're using brick. And they're using brick to build this great city, and to build this great tower.

Humanity's abilities are unbelievable. Think about all the inventions. Think about the symphonies. Think about all that we've produced and all that we can do. Humanity can do and accomplish great things. And when you have a city, usually you have more of that production, more of that innovation, because you have more people together sharing their ideas. And they have the same plan, the same mindset, the same goal. And so in cities, you see a lot of this, and we see that in Babylon as well.

Now, here's the thing—they begin to build a tower also. Now, most of us, when we think of the tower, we just think of this really really tall building, and it would be like any sort of high-rise in a city. It's where business is. That's not what this tower was about. This was a temple they were building. This was a spiritual building. They were building this tower—they thought that maybe we could reach the heavens or maybe we could get high enough and the gods would come down to us. They were spiritually disconnected. They were spiritually dry. They were far from God.

There was a spiritual aspect to the city as well and to this community. They thought, “What if we could reach God. What if we could get His attention. What if we could make him notice us.” There's a spiritual depression, a spiritual depletion, a spiritual dryness in us—“Maybe God will see us, maybe He will come down, maybe we can make sacrifices and we

can please Him.” And so there's this communal aspect to their plan, right? We want to be together, we want to be of the same mind and the same language. There was this production, urban development idea, to their plan. “Hey, let's produce, and let's achieve, and let's accomplish, and let's do great work.” But then there was also a spiritual aspect to their plan. Any ideology, any philosophy, any religion that you find yourself in—there's going to be a spiritual aspect. There's a spiritual dryness. The human heart has not changed. It has not changed. And so there's these aspects to their plans, and it's very much like our plans today.

Now, here's what's most telling, here's what's most important, and that was their motivation for building the city. Their motivation, their reason for this plan is the most revealing and the most telling—and I think the most revealing of our heart as well. Look at verse 4 and see if your heart is revealed in verse 4. “*Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves.’*” Why are they building this tower? To make a name for themselves.

Why are they building it? Why do they have this plan? Because they don't have an identity yet, they don't have value yet. They don't know what value they have, they don't know what their name is, they don't know what their purpose is, they don't know if they're important, they don't know if they're unique. They don't know what their value is. They have no identity. Let's build this so that we might “*make a name for ourselves.*” The human heart is still the same, right? We still work, and strive, and toil, and pursue, and try to accomplish all that we do for the same reasons—that we would have value, that we would have a name, that we would have an identity, that people would validate us, that maybe God would take notice, that maybe that we would be filled. And whatever emptiness we feel, it would be filled, it would be taken care of, it would be alleviated. We do the same things.

They're building the tower to make a name for themselves. Why are you building your tower? Why is your plan your plan? What is your plan? Why? Why is that your plan? What're you doing? Why are you building your tower? What motivates you when you go to work? What compels you when you study for school? What's driving you? What are you wrestling with when you look at your bank account? What are you wrestling with when you look at your closet and you look at your clothes? What're you wrestling with when you look in the mirror? What are you wrestling with when you look at your stuff—your car, your house? What're you wrestling with?

What's in you, what's driving you, what's motivating you? What's the driving force to your plan—what you're after? What is it? Why are you building your tower? What motivates you

to build your tower? Is it to make a name for yourself, like the Babylonians? Is it to find value? Is it to be unique? Isn't that the same thing, the same plan, as every other religion in the world, and every other philosophy in the world, and every other political perspective in the world? That man is at the center, it depends on us. It's on us, and we have to pursue, and achieve, and accomplish. Isn't that the same plan? Is that your plan?

I wonder how high your tower needs to be for your plan to be accomplished. I wonder when your plan is done. Like, when is success enough? When is people loving you enough? When is good-looking enough? When is having enough money? When is being smart enough? When is being known enough? Like at what point is your plan accomplished? I wonder if it's a good plan.

See, their motivation was to make a name for themselves. At its very essence, that is pride. Alright? That's pride. Make a name for yourself—that's pride. Augustine, he wrote this famous work called *The City of God*, and he is juxtaposing the city of God with the city of man—in his day, it was Rome. And it's this beautiful, amazing book looking at this tale of two cities, basically. And he looks at pride, and he looks at it broadly. He looks at it greatly, but defines it very simply in this way. Here's what he says—this is what pride is, and this is, at its essence, what it means to want to make a name for yourself and what you do. Here's what he says: this is pride, “when the soul abandons Him to whom it ought to cleave as its end, and becomes a kind of end to itself.”

He's saying that pride happens when we abandon God, in whom is all of our end, who is ultimate for us, or should be ultimate for us, and instead we begin to find an end in ourselves—that we begin to live life in such a way that what's final, what's ultimate, is “how does that make me feel?” and “how does that make me look?” and “does that make much of me?” and “will people celebrate me?” and “will that make me look awesome?” If I say this, if I do this, if I wear this, if I go do that.

Pride, it becomes self-importance and self-exaltation, and self-focused—you start noticing yourself. That's what pride is. You start noticing yourself, and that's an end in and of itself. “How does this make look?” “How does this make me feel?” “Does this give me a name?” It's making a name for yourself—that's exactly what pride is, and pride's plan is always the same. Pride's plan, pride's purpose, is to gather for himself people that perpetuate this idea that you are awesome. That's all pride is doing. That's its plan. In the end, it's this kind of

self-revolving, “how does this make me look and feel?” It never ends, which is why pride is always self-destructive. It's a really bad plan.

Some of you are like, “Why's it such a bad plan? Pride is a virtue in our culture, pride is great. Everybody else is, you know, worried about themselves, I've got to be worried about myself, then. Don't I have to, pastor? What's the big deal if we're about ourselves? What's wrong with the American dream? What's wrong with making a name of ourselves? Is there something wrong with accomplishing things?” No. But to do those things, in order to make a name for yourself—it's destructive, and it's kind of pitiful, and, to be honest, it's kind of boring.

See, when you're prideful, you don't actually do something for the something that you're participating in. You don't actually enjoy the life that you are in. You don't do anything for the sake of others. You don't participate in the world for the thrill of it, for the joy of it, for the good of others, maybe for the glory of God. You're always looking at it in terms of what it will give, and so you're never really happy, you're never really satisfied, you never actually get to enjoy anything. You can't actually enjoy people because you're constantly thinking, “What are they going to say about me? What're they going to think about me? Will they applaud me? Will they celebrate me? Do they like me?” How can you enjoy them? You can't. “How does this money make me look,” and “how do these clothes make me look,” and “what does this make me look like?” And you never actually get to enjoy any of those things. Pride, it's kind of pitiful. It's a bad plan.

And at the essence of a plan that says, “It's on me, it's determined by me, I need to do this, I need to make a name for myself, I need to find value, I need an identity”—at the essence of that plan is pride. It's pride. And pride is devastating. It's not a good idea. Look, I'm going to prove it to you. Look at the second part of verse 4. They say, “*Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves*”—there's pride, and here's the second thing—“*lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.*” So their motivation was pride, but it was also fear. They were afraid. They're afraid. Pride and fear always go together. And if that's the motivation to your plan, that's always together—pride and fear always go together. They're afraid.

Why are pride and fear always together? They go together. You're afraid that you aren't going to be validated. You're afraid that you will not accomplish it. You're afraid that you won't be made much of. It's a Bible verse, right? Pride goes before the fall. And in between pride and

in between the fall is filled with fear—fear and anxiety. “What if I don't accomplish enough? What if I don't do more? What if this isn't good enough? What if I'm not moral enough or religious enough or I don't make enough money? What if people don't like me enough? What if enough people don't like me? What if what I did attain, and did accomplish, and did do, and did pursue—what if I did that and it was taken from me? What happens if I lose it? What happens if I lose it? If I built my life around money, what happens if I lose it? If I built my life on what I look like, what happens if I lose it? If I built my life on my accomplishments, my talent.” What if you lose it?

And so we're in constant fear. Our plan is to pursue this thing, and it's motivated by pride—that it's up to us, and we've got to do this to make a name for ourselves, but we're always wondering if we are. We're always wondering if we are. “Do people value me? Do people love me? Do people accept me? Do I have an identity—what is it?” It's constant fear. Some of you, your whole lives are fear-based. Your whole lives are fear-based. If your plan is built on you, it's built on pride, and pride is always self-destructive. It will always lead to the fall—in between is just fear and anxiety. Do you see that? How exhausting is fear and anxiety? It's exhausting, right? You're just never sure, you don't feel content, you don't feel safe, you don't feel on steady ground, you don't know if you did enough. It's exhausting. It's exhausting.

And so you have this people, they're doing amazing things and they're building a city, they're building a tower, they're advancing technologically, they're accomplishing things culturally. There's a spiritual pursuit to them, there's a communal pursuit to them, there's a urban development, urban planning, engineering pursuit to them—advancement. And yet they seem pretty insecure. They're trying to make a name for themselves. They seem kind of needy. It's this great people that can accomplish great things, but they don't even know who they are.

Now God enters the scene. God begins to speak. God begins to show up. And the first five words are key here, and they're actually kind of funny. Here is God's response to all of this. “*And the Lord [God] came down*”—circle that. Like, “*And the Lord [God] came down*”—five words. “*And the Lord [God] came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built.*” So God's response is that He has to come down, right? So they did this great work of building this great tower, all the way up, and God's like, “What are you guys doing down there? What is that? Hey, I've got to go down and see this.” Right? “This is the best they had, this is the best they could do? All their accomplishments and innovation, and their shared mindset, and all these people, and their intelligence, and ability, and beauty, all that they have, and all that they have—this is what they can produce?”

And God's response was, "Oh, this is so cute. Look at this. Look Jesus, Holy Spirit, come here, look at this. Look at this." Like God put it up on his refrigerator in in heaven, like a four-year-old's art. He just kind of put it up there. And that was His response—"Oh, this is nice." God has to come down to even see it. We have such a small God. We think the things that we do are so great, and they are. We can do great things. We can do great things. But we do these wonderful things, these amazing things—we do these things and we don't realize how big God is, how big the world is, and how small we actually are.

Look, pride is really really easy when you think you're big and God is small. It's really easy. It's really easy when you compare yourself to other people instead of comparing yourself to the God of the universe. Yeah. He looks down. "That's cute. That's nice." It's a funny response. And so God, He has to come down. He comes down to see this. He comes down, and here's His assessment of their plan.

In verse 6, this is His assessment to their plan: "*And the Lord said, 'Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.'*" God is affirming their abilities—"You can do great things. I made you in my image. I gave you great purpose in the world to build and cultivate and you're doing it, but I need to stop you because the plan that you have is wrong. It's evil. It's going to lead to destruction."

That's all we've seen in Genesis so far—humanity destroys itself, right? That's all we've seen. Humanity corrupts itself, destroys itself, rebels against God. That's all we've seen. And so God says, "You're doing this great work and you have this plan, but it's the wrong plan. I've got to stop you. I've got to stop you." That's what He's doing here. He's affirming humanity's greatness, He really is.

See, the problem isn't your ability. The problem isn't what you could accomplish. The self-help books are partially right—you're amazing. You're amazing. It's not your abilities, it's not the beauty that you possess or don't possess, it's not that thing—you can do great things. The problem is that mankind and rebellion to God that tries to build a tower and a city to make a name for himself. He can do great things, but he does great evil. He can do great things, but his plan is greatly wrong, and failed, and flawed, and built on pride, and so it will fall. It will fall.

See, for all of our plans, and policies, and political parties, and for all of our religions, and philosophies, and ideologies, and work in the world, and you-should-be-a-part-of-this-thing, and here's-this-business-model, and this-is-going-to-save-the-world, and this-will-better-everybody's-life—for all of that, for all of that, this kind of utopian bliss that you think you're going to have for you or for others, it will not work. And here's why—we don't realize the great evil that mankind is capable of innately in our very hearts. We think it's an aberration. We think the Holocaust is just a random aberration. We think that the evil in the world is just a few bad apples and we don't realize that humankind together, in rebellion to God, does great evil, and also great things.

See, did you know that there's this technology that does 3-D imaging of babies in utero? Like, that's crazy. We did it with our first baby, Harper. Like, not just a regular sonogram, but like a 3-D. Like you can see a picture of her, right? And it was—my wife really liked it—I thought it was a little gremlin-like, right? There's a little gremlin—like if you've ever seen one of them, it's a little gremlin-like. But she loved it. You could see, we could see Harper's face and we could see—oh, that's mama's eyes, and that's your daddy's lips. And you can see what she looked like. And we could see who she was. And you could see your baby.

It was amazing. It was gremlinly amazing, right? And it was really cool and you're just amazed at this technology. You know what? You can combine that amazing technology with these amazing business plans, with this amazing engineering that produces instruments that rips that baby out of the mother's uterus, avoiding crushing certain organs so that we can sell them for research.

We can achieve great things with great evil. You can take a beautiful woman—how beautiful is humanity? I mean humans are beautiful. And you can think a beautiful woman and you can take amazing technology and you can build a billion-dollar pornography industry. Men have the capability of making amazing amounts of money, and then they use it to oppress the poor. You have people that, with their voices, sing beautiful songs, or they argue persuasively, or they speak with great oratory. They can do that, and then at the same time they lie, they slander, they gossip, and they put down, with their words and with their mouth, their fellow man. We can do great things, but we do great evil. Humanity has great ability. You have great ability. But if it's about you, if it relies on you, if it's dependent on you, it's a plan that will fall. It's a plan that will fall.

And so God, He sees that He's got to stop their plan. He's got to stop their plan. Our plans are self-destructive. Our plans will fail. He's got to stop their plan. And so He stops the plan. Why? Men and women filled with fear, filled with pride and the ability to do great things, is a very dangerous thing. And so what does God do? Look at verse 7. *“Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech.’ So, the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.”* They didn't finish the tower. They didn't finish the city. *“Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.”*

So what does God do? What's God's response to their plan? He frustrates their plan. He's got a new plan. His plan is to frustrate their plan. He stops their plan. The work is not done anymore. They can't understand each other. He scatters them. His plan was different than their plan, and so He said, “My plan is better than your plan. Your plan isn't good. My plan—I'm going to frustrate your plan.” They wanted one language, He wanted multiple languages. They wanted to stay there, He wanted them to spread out. They wanted to make a name for themselves, He wanted them to make much of His name. They wanted things for their glory, God wanted to fill the earth with His glory. Their plan wasn't going to work, God frustrated their plan. That's what God does.

Has God ever frustrated your plan? This is what God does. Proverbs—*“He frustrates the plans of the peoples.”* Proverbs—*“A man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”* Has God ever frustrated your plan? Right? Did you plan to be where you are? Are you frustrated with where you are—the situation you're in, the job that you're in, the marriage that you're in—that wasn't your plan, was it? “I was going to make this much money, and I was going to do this, and this is what my marriage was going to look like, and this is what my relationships would look like.” “I'm not married, I had planned on being married by now. I don't have a kid and I had planned on having kids by now. I had these plans, God's frustrated them. I had these plans, God's changed them. I had these plans, God derailed them.” Has God ever frustrated your plans?

I was going to be a major league baseball player. That was my plan. And I was like right there. I had a shot at it. It seemed to make sense. God's like, “No. No, no, no. You want to play major league baseball and make lots of money?” “Yeah, that'd be nice.” “No, I think you'll be a pastor.” “Okay.” “In Texas.” “Where? I'm a Yankee, God. I don't know if they're going to understand me.” “Yeah, that's where I want you to go.” “Don't you need to like know, you know, theological stuff?” “Yeah, you do. You should start reading a lot.” “Okay.” It's a different

plan. And the first couple of years of that plan was very—like every spring training I kind of went on a one-month-long suicide watch in my home. “Why aren’t I there? Why aren’t I there? Why aren’t I there?” Yeah.

Has God frustrated your plan before? Derailed your plan, stopped your plan, hindered your plan, changed your plan? Here’s the big idea, and you’re not going to like it. Here’s the big idea here: God’s plans are the only plans that matter. God’s plans are the only plans that matter. Job, he finally realized this in Job 42 after arguing with God for a long time about his plan. Here’s what he finally said: “*I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.*” He’s saying no amount of human ingenuity, no amount of accomplishment, or thing that we might attain, or thing that we might possess, no amount of planning, no amount of accomplishment, no amount of power can stop God’s plan.

You may not like it, but His plan is the only one that matters. We’ve got to get that mind, we have to have that understanding. You’re not going to like it, but you have to have that understanding. “[God] *frustrates the plans of the peoples.*” “*A man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.*” “*Our God is in the heavens, He does all that he pleases.*” “*The King’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever he wills.*” Proverbs 19:21, listen to this one: “*Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.*” You may have a plan, but I tell you what, it’s the purpose of the Lord that will stand. The only plan that matters is God’s plan. The only plan that matters is God’s plan, which means that all other plans will fall. All other plans will fall.

Now, once we wrestle with that idea, and it’s just a reality—Scripture upon Scripture upon Scripture point to this reality that your plans don’t matter that much. But once we wrestle with that, then we need to maybe realize this: His plan is better. Like, think about their plan. Their plan was, “Let’s build this great tower. Let’s do this great work. Let’s accomplish this great feat. Let’s advance in this technological way. Let’s plan in this urban way. Let’s engineer in this way. Let’s do all this work. Why? So that we can have a name for ourselves.” How insecure. How pitiful. They had no value, they didn’t know their value. They did all the just to be made known. That was their purpose? That was their plan? That’s not a good plan. And if that’s your plan, if your plan is to make a name for yourself, that’s pride. And pride, it will fall. It’s not a good plan because they’re going to fail. Like a little kid, you know, climbing up the slide and the kid slipping down—that’s you and I and our plans.

See, pride's plan is a half-built tower to nowhere. That's your plan if it's built on you. If it's your plan, pride will always lead to the fall, and in between, you're just going to be filled with fear and anxiety. It's not a good plan. We've got to see, we can be frustrated, we can wrestle with this idea that God's plans are the only plans that matter. But in the end, can you not see that His is better than yours? That His is better than yours? If God frustrates your plans, you need to see that it's grace. If God changes your plans, you need to see that it's His grace.

See, when God disappoints us, He's appointing us to something different, to something better, for our joy, for His glory. His plan is better. We've got to see that, then, as grace. God changes your plans? Great, that's God's grace. If God frustrates your plans, that's great, that's God's grace. God's telling you He's got something better, He's got something different, He's got something more for your joy. God is always good to you, I promise. God's plan is better. It's God's grace to change your plans then. It is. It is.

The Christian knows that God's making everything beautiful in its time. The Christian knows that He works together all things for our good according to His purpose. That His plan is better and that if He changes your plan, it's His grace towards you. It's His grace towards you. Yeah. So God opposes the proud and He gives grace to the humble. So humble yourselves into the mighty hand of God.

Okay, so some of you like, "Alright, that might be true, that was a lot of verses." And, "That might be true. I can see that. God's plan is the only plan that matters, but I don't have to like it." Right? Some of you are like, "I don't like it though. I don't like that. You want me to worship this God who just kind of demands His own plan—doesn't want any of my input at all?" Okay. The big question you're asking is can you trust Him, right? If the big idea here is that His plans cannot be thwarted, the second question has to be, "Okay, but can I trust him then? Is He good? Is His plan going to be for me? Is His plan against me or for me? Because everybody else is fighting for themselves, everybody else has a plan for themselves. If I'm going to give my life up to Him, how do I know He's for me?" That's a good question.

How can we trust God's plans? Because His plan was always to come down. Because His plan was always to come down. See, every religion, and every ideology, and every philosophy, and every way of life is all the same plan—it's you at the center, working, striving, pursuing whatever you're pursuing: God, heaven, nirvana, enlightenment, peace, the American dream, success. No matter what religion you are, no matter what your faith is, no matter what

philosophy or political party, that's the plan. It's you pursuing something that will fulfill you and satisfy you. Christianity is a completely different plan.

Christianity has God coming down to you. Christianity has God at the center, and everything depends on God, and everything relies on God, and He works towards you. You will never get to Him. You will keep slipping and falling like a little girl climbing up a slide. And so He came to you. God's plan is different than every other plan. His plan was to pursue you, to come after you. He came down for you, He loves you. See, their plan was to lift up a tower high to the heavens. God's plan was to lift up His Son on a cross. Their plan, our plans, is to make a name for ourselves. In pride we try to reach up. God's plan is that He humbles Himself; He reaches down.

Christianity and the message of the gospel is a completely different plan than any other plan in the world. Every other plan in the world has us reaching up. Christianity has God coming down. See, our plan is to seek after identity and value. God's plan was to show you your value by purchasing you with the price of His own Son. And when that truth blows up in your soul, you're free because you never need to question your value anymore, you never need to question your identity anymore. When that truth blows up in your heart, you're free, and you won't fear, and you can actually enjoy the world.

See, the reality is, they were going after their name—a name—and the city, but God's plan was to give them a name and give them a city. See, Revelation 3:12, it says this—Jesus is speaking: *“I will write on him,”* the Christian, *“I will write on him the name of my God.”* A name. God wrote His name on you. *“I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God.”* You have a city, too. Did you know that? *“The new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.”*

See, this is a big deal. We don't spend eternity in heaven. You spend eternity in a city. I don't know if you knew that. Read your Revelation, okay? It's crazy, but read it. You get a city. It's a great city. It's an awesome city. It's a safe city. It's a city of refuge. No more tears, no more suffering. You want to know the answer to the alleviation of every problem and suffering in the world? It won't be human advancement or technological achievement—it will be the kingdom of God. And you get a city. And you get the kingdom.

And then Jesus says in Genesis 12:2—*“I will bless you and make your name great.”* Everything they were after God was going to give them. God's plan is better. God's plan is

better. We can trust God because He came down to us. We can trust God because His plan was always to come down to us. And where in Babble He comes down to see their work, in Babble He comes down to see their little puny accomplishments—in the gospel, Jesus comes down to do work for you.

In the Gospel, Jesus accomplishes salvation. He finishes it for you. You're freed up. You don't have to do that work in the center now—it's not dependent on you, it's not reliant on you. Jesus did it. And now we're free. We're free to just do work in the world, and do it for the people's sake, and for God's glory, and for the enjoyment of it. It's a better plan. It's a better plan. What do we do when the truth of the plan of the gospel of God, who sends Jesus down, hits us? To the degree that we believe that will be the degree in which we live in a way that we're called to live.

They were trying to make a name for themselves and they're constantly asking the questions, "How will this make me look good? How does this make me look good?" The Christian can ask, "How does this make Jesus look good? With my job, how does this make Jesus look good? With my money, how does this make Jesus look good?" That's all we care about is making Jesus look good now. That frees us up from having to look good. It's really great. And sometimes when we ask that question, we'll have to do something that will make us look bad, but we don't care because God has written His name on us.

You have immense value. You have an identity. You have a city. You're loved. There's a better plan. This frees us up to live the life that you want to live—this free, joyful life without the encumbering, burdensome pursuit of everything-has-to-rely-on-me. That's an old, tired plan that everybody's tried. Will you try a new plan? It's the God of the universe coming after you in grace. God opposes the proud. You're at war against God if you have pride. So humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, because He gives grace to the humble. Ah, there's so much grace. It's so much better. Jesus came down. It's a better plan.

Father God, thank you so much for this grace to us, this message to us, this word, this language that you've spoken to us through the Scriptures that we would have an understanding of your goodness, your mercy, your plan. Would the truth of your plan to come for us, to save us, to give us all things as an heir of Christ, would that plan and this truth—that your plans will not be thwarted, but that your plans for us are good—would that truth just settle deep down in our souls as a rock-bottom foundational truth that we can stand on. That when you frustrate our plans, or hinder our plans, or change our plans we're okay—we see it as grace; we see it as

grace. God, there are some of us that, we've always been our own plan. We've never known of your plan. We don't believe in you, we don't trust in you, we don't know you. Father, would you show them that your plan was to save them, that your plan was to come after them. And would they believe on you and in your great plan to send Jesus for their sake, that they might know you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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