

God's Great Design - Practical Applications

REVIEW: We have marched through quite a bit of ground in the last few weeks regarding God's design for us as humanity, and more specifically as men and as women. Today we will not have a review of what we have gone over. The sermon, as we apply some specific things will serve as our review.

INTRO: Today I want to take what we have learned so far, and apply it to our lives. This is the time where I want to think through our church, our members, and our situations, and press on the areas in which we need to apply the things we have discussed for the last several weeks. To do that we are going to start in Ephesians 5 - so grab your Bibles and turn there.

Ephesians 5:15-20

- I. "Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."
 - A. What do we make of this phrase - the days are evil
 1. Hollywood and TV have their ideas of the evil days
 2. But the reality is the evil days are here, and the thing is they don't always seem that evil
 - B. Our culture is kind of a meat grinder for those that want to truly follow Christ
 1. The culture we live in is constantly pulling us away from what is right, and toward what is wrong
 2. The ways the culture pushes us play to our fleshly desires do not line up with how God designed us to function
 3. Whether you realize it or not, everyone is a disciple
 - a) You are either being disciplined by the world, the culture, and its values
 - b) Or you are being disciplined by Christ - and that is largely a matter of the time and effort that we put in to seeking Christ
 - (1) So I will remind you again, of the three areas every member of this church SHOULD be doing
 - (2) Church on Sunday morning - non-negotiable - we say no to other things that would lead us away from of spiritual family time
 - (3) A small group where you can be in fellowship and discipleship - a Life Group, the Men's group, and ladies group, the youth group, something where you are being built into and building into others
 - (a) And let me pause and say how proud I am of what I have seen out of the Life Groups
 - (b) I know that several of them have been caring for one another

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- (c) In times of stress, or recovery from surgery, etc., they have been enacting the one another in their groups
 - (d) Which is exactly what we want to be happening
 - (4) The third thing every member should be involved with is a regular form of ministry
 - (5) Those three things - you take that seriously, you view that as your life blood in the Christian life, and it will change your life
- 4. So our culture is set up to reinforce the worst reactions in us
 - a) More of an eye for an eye, rather than a "turn the other cheek" culture
 - b) The culture is not leading us toward God, it pulls us away from God
- C. So because the days are evil, we need to make the most of every opportunity - walking as wise, and not unwise (we just turned the sentence backwards)
 - 1. Jesus laid it out for us in the Gospels - narrow is the road that leads to life
 - 2. Broad is the path that leads to destruction
 - 3. So the verse is saying, "Are you walking as wise people or as unwise"
- II. The verses continue and say (v. 17) "Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is"
 - A. So don't be unwise, but wise - the days are evil so we need to watch ourselves
 - 1. So one path would be the Lord's will, reconciling with our Creator
 - 2. So the unwise path would be the path that does not lead to reconciliation with their Creator
 - B. Now verse 18-20
 - 1. So get drunk with wine is being likened to being filled with the Spirit - an obvious reference to allowing the Spirit to control you
 - 2. Then the verses say we are to speak to one another in songs
 - a) Let's pray this is not the *Sound of Music* we are talking about here - no hills gonna be alive
 - b) No Bye bye birdie - none that
 - 3. I think the better picture here is that people, when they are together with others of like mind, that love Jesus, and have experienced His grace and mercy, there is a gladness of heart
 - a) There is celebration
 - b) When we come in from another week in the world that is evil and trying to pull us away from Jesus, we walk in to church with an excitement because we get to be together, worship God for all that He has done this week

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- (1) Or possibly throwing ourselves on His mercy because the evil has overtaken us this week
 - (2) And we know we need Him
 - c) This is our moment of rest in Him - celebrating together
 - 4. Then there is a mutual submission between the people of God
 - a) When we are filled with His Spirit, we have this rich relational thing going on between us
 - b) And this sets us up for talking about some of these practical applications from God's great design
- III. Applications for God's people, committed to living by His design
- A. If you remember when we started this series, I told you this would be a part of a series of series, leading us to our prime target: understanding church government - especially the idea of eldership
- 1. One of the first steps in doing that was to help us go all the way back to start at the very beginning (a very good place to start - That's as close as I come to speaking to each other in musicals) and understand God's design for men and for women
 - 2. So understanding together that we are created
 - a) We are created by God
 - b) And that means that we HAVE to give up this idea that life is about us - it's not, because we are not the most important thing
 - c) Because we are the creation and God is the Creator - it means He knows how this life is to function far better than we do
 - (1) He designed it
 - (2) The designer - the one that planned and built something is far more likely to know the best way to use that something than us, the users of it
 - 3. Having a better handle on how God designed men
 - a) To work and exercise headship
 - (1) We are designed to work, men. We are designed to be tired
 - (a) We know that a day at the office can be a long day
 - (b) But when we come home, it is not all relaxation time, it is time to engage the family
 - (2) And we exercise headship - which is laying the groundwork for humanity to flourish
 - (a) And that starts in the home
 - (b) It holds true in the church
 - (c) And in our communities
 - b) But we have to fight that natural tendency toward selfish passivity and selfish aggression

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- (1) We do not sit on the couch literally or figuratively rather than engage and love our family
- (2) We actively engage, we actively set the spiritual tone in our families, we actively pursue the heart of our wives, and the hearts of our children
- (3) We reject behaviors that act out in aggression toward others, be it with words, or with our physical stature
4. We also understand better how God designed women
 - a) The scary part was to stand up here and suggest the idea of "helper" to your husband
 - (1) Yes, we redeemed the understanding of helper
 - (2) God is described as our helper, and the helper is the one that assists the one with the primary responsibility
 - (3) But that still requires submission, and that has become a dirty word in our society - it needs to be redeemed as well
5. So my prayer is that by understanding better the roles that God has designed us for as men and as women, it will help us as we move into more direct talk about elders, and church government
- B. Second, now that we have a better understanding of what God expects of us, we need to fix our eyes on Jesus all the more
 1. Men, living up to being a man, biblically is real an overwhelming call, is it not? (selfish passivity???)
 - a) The call to loving sacrificially, to leading, to setting the spiritual climate in the home and in church, to provide for our family, to come and die - that is a monumental task
 - (1) And this is an expectation that never gets lifted
 - (2) There is not a day that you get to the point and say, "Ahhh, I'm glad I can rest now."
 - b) The reason is because this is the call of God on your life
 - c) Men, we are going to go to bed tired, the call will always be there and it can feel overwhelming
 - d) And that is why we need to fix our eyes on Jesus, or we will give up
 - (1) Selfish passivity and aggression will claim us, unless we fix our eyes on Jesus
 2. Ladies, I can understand any one of you that might struggle with the idea of submission if all you have had in your life are fools, and jerks
 - a) If all you have ever known is men that treat you like second class citizens, or as a commodity, or recreational equipment - how can you possibly understand the beauty of submission to a sacrificially loving man?

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- b) That's why we fix our eyes on Jesus
 - (1) As we do, as we stand up for ourselves and expect that the men in our lives are true, biblical men and not boys who can shave
 - (2) As we fix our eyes on Jesus, and look for those biblical men, we begin to better understand the beauty to which God has called us to in being a helper to a loving, biblical man
- C. Third application, that we would trust the Bible as our authority, and believe that its commands are meant to lead to life and joy
 - 1. If you ever left this church, were on vacation at another church, and you hear a pastor say that they teach the Bible - that's nice, but you need to press further
 - a) College classes teach the Bible
 - b) The question you need the answer to is, where do they stand about the Bible's authority
 - (1) Does the Bible tell us how life is to work
 - (2) Or do we determine how life works and then look for biblical support?
 - 2. Another way to ask this is which are you more skeptical of: your experience or the Bible
 - a) Can God be trusted to lead us to life?
 - b) If so, than we need to read and apply God's Word to life
 - c) Remember, He is Creator, and that means He's going to disagree with us on how things should operate
 - (1) He is eternal, and we are not
 - (2) There will be things that don't make sense to us - But God has it under control
 - 3. In a society that is ever changing, may we as a church submit to God's Word as it is written - as it has been historically understood in orthodox teaching
 - a) May we never be embarrassed by Jesus
 - b) May we never feel the need to give Jesus a makeover to make Him cooler to the culture
 - c) May we understand Him so well, and so deeply, that we can explain Him as He is to our friends and family
 - (1) To change Jesus, is to not hold to the real Jesus
 - (2) There is a time coming, that the church is going to be marginalized - because society is not looking very friendly at the church
 - (3) Take heart - historically, the church has been its strongest when it has been marginalized (Think the Chinese church)

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- D. Fourth application, that we would take biblical manhood and biblical womanhood seriously
1. So men, look at me, you CAN do this
 - a) God will not ask you to do this and then fail to give you the power to accomplish it
 - b) Even if you think, "You don't know me. I struggle to understand the Bible." "I'm on my 4th marriage now." "My kids are grown and all hate me."
 - (1) You may have to own some of your own sin through those things, and ask forgiveness of people
 - (a) "But what if they don't forgive me"
 - (b) Your job is to own your sin and seek forgiveness - there job is to forgive - and trust me, if they see the difference in you, they will most likely come around
 - (2) But from this day forward, commit to living out your biblical manhood
 - (a) Do devotions with your kids - even if all you do is read the paper word for word
 - (b) Pray with your wife - even if it is awkward at first - it will become normal, if you commit to genuinely seeking her heart
 2. Ladies, you can do this!
 - a) You can build up your husbands
 - b) You can help them become the things God has asked them to be
 - (1) "But Pastor, if I'm honest, my husband's a moron!"
 - (2) Being a man I can say this - you're probably right.
 - (3) But don't doubt what God can do
 - (a) Especially when we submit to His design and plans for us
 - c) Ladies, you can be disciple makers
 - (1) You can help grow your kids in Christ
 - (2) You can disciple other ladies - as Scripture says, the older women can train the younger women (Titus 2)
 - (3) The single ladies - you may not have children of your own that you can influence - but you can influence others
 - (a) Little kids look up to you
 - (b) Leverage that admiration for the glory of God, and disciple and influence those God has given you for His glory
- E. The fifth application - that we would be visibly for one another
1. This plays itself out here in one way that we would have each and every person here involved in regular ministry somewhere

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- a) We mentioned this at the beginning, but it is one very obvious way in which we display how we are seeking to be of service for one another
- b) So we choose an area of ministry that God has called us to, that is near and dear to our hearts
 - (1) Which by the way, it is interesting that ministries God calls us to, normally are near and dear to our hearts
 - (2) And we make that our ministry - we see it as our way to serve Christ's Body - our brothers and sisters in Christ
- 2. But this also plays itself out in visible and verbal support for each other
 - a) I am very excited for the mission trip in 2016 as we will have people from the church that have never experienced a trip like this before
 - b) I have told you many times in the past that one of the greatest things that helped the youth group on the trips was the "bead ceremony"
 - (1) The ceremony forces us to think about our brothers and sisters and see how God is growing them
 - (2) And then, it forces us to talk to them, not about them
 - c) This is something I think would be of great benefit for us as a church
 - (1) To regularly encourage one another by speaking to each other, "Hey, I can see how God has been growing you in..."
 - (2) "I see your maturity in Christ getting stronger"
 - (3) "Thanks for the way you serve our church body by..."
 - d) Just taking note of these things and encouraging one another all the more
 - e) We have come a long way as a body that is becoming known for being a loving church family
 - (1) Learning how to intentionally encourage one another would just take us as a church to yet another level of encouragement and intimacy
 - (2) A level that is a testimony to what Christ is doing in our church
- F. The last application: that the husbands and wives of our church would shine to a lost and broken world the hope that is in Christ
 - 1. There can be no doubt that even this small bedroom community to greater Detroit, that there are many who are facing difficult, even broken marriage
 - a) It's just that in places like Detroit, the problems seem a little more in your face
 - b) Out here, we hide behind our masks where people don't think things are wrong

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2. So what if, and I have no doubt that we have people in our church that do this, but what if, men, when we speak about our wives it is positive, and from the heart
 - a) No masks, no pretense - just the deep, visible love for our wives
 - b) No entering conversations of men that don't know Christ, that spout depraved ideas
 3. And what if our ladies, when they are with other ladies who are running their husbands down, had nothing but praise for the manner in which their husbands love them, and lead their family well
 - a) There will always be things to complain about
 - b) No husband is perfect
 - c) But what if you were an expert not in what was lacking, but in what great things he was doing for you and your family
 4. What we are talking about is displaying this idea of complementarianism to the world
 - a) We said before that the world might be able to attack the idea
 - b) But when they see it lived out, even if it is not lived out perfectly, they will not have anything bad to say
 - (1) When they see a man who sacrificially is giving his life for his family - not just in work, but in seeking their flourishing
 - (2) When they see a woman supporting her husband because he is loving her so well
 - (3) When they see children thriving under the love and care of their dads and moms -
 - (4) People will crave it
- IV. May we as a church, and as individuals take seriously our commitment to God's calling on our lives
- A. If there is sin in our lives that make seeking God's will in these ways more difficult, may we seek forgiveness and help
 - B. But may we desire to fulfill God's great design
 1. Even if we do so imperfectly
 2. Even if we feel overwhelmed at the thought
 - C. May we fix our eyes on Jesus, and trust that through the Holy Spirit we will have the power to live up to our high calling