

God's Great Design - The Gospel Applied Revisited

REVIEW: The last several weeks we have been focused on how God designed us - particularly as men and women. Not as male and female - that would make me a biology teacher and this biology 101. This series has been about how God has design men to function and women to function, and how when we step outside those boundaries, lots of negative things can happen.

In the course of the series we have looked at man's pitfalls. We said that they can be summarized into two large categories: selfish passivity and selfish aggression. When men refuse to step into the role that God designed them for, they won't lead, they won't love sacrificially, they won't set up environments for humanity to flourish, that is all selfish passivity

Selfish aggression is lashing out in a variety of ways that hurt or demean women. Violence, abuse, porn, are all examples.

Last week we did the same thing for the ladies. The ladies' pitfalls fall into two categories: comparison and perfectionism. It's not that men don't struggle with these - these just tend to be more women's issues than men's.

I. Review of women's issues

A. Men often times can look at themselves and regardless what they see in the mirror think they are God's gift to the world

B. Where women can look in the mirror, see a tiny flaw and it can ruin everything

1. I just saw, not long ago, one of our college students lamenting the fact they were not as skinny as they were in HS

a) Now this gal is still a slender, healthy, attractive young lady

b) But not as skinny as HS - my question is, "Who is!?"

(1) I weighed 120 lbs when I graduated HS

(2) I don't weigh that anymore

2. Cornell University did a study of one of their tougher classes

a) When the class got really tough during the semester

(1) Men thought externally - "This class is so hard"

(2) Women turned inward - "I knew I couldn't handle this class. I'm not smart enough."

b) Many of the things we looked at last week attest to this that women struggle with comparison

C. Comparison is this disordered desire for approval and validation

1. Before we talk about approval and validation, let's talk about this idea of disordered desire

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- a) Last week we pointed out from Scripture how many things we desire are not wrong - but when they become our ultimate desire, things get out of whack
- b) We talked about this specifically in the area of women feeling that they NEED a man - the man has become the ultimate desire, the woman is trying to get needs met that only God was designed to fulfill - because God should remain our ultimate desire
 - (1) This applies for men and women - we can all raise other things to the ultimate level
 - (2) Our jobs, our hobbies, a sport we play, and I'll say this one at the risk of getting some people mad - even our families
2. Back to approval and validation, this gets deadly because comparison is about competition
3. And with the advent of the "selfie" we get this idealized look at everyone's life
 - a) You never see the 5:00 am alarm clock selfie, right?
 - (1) Hair all nasty, no makeup, guys, haven't shaved
 - b) What we see is, "everyone is pretty, everyone is strong, everyone has life all together"
 - c) So this false mask of life is put in front of us, and there is pressure to have this full life like everyone else
 - (1) No struggles
 - (2) Life is good!
 - (3) Problem is, it is a lie!
4. Flowing from comparison that is based on this false image is fantasy
 - a) You dream of a smaller waist, more money, more friends, you are loved, and everyone is happy
 - b) But it is not reality!
 - c) So instead of being honest about who we are, our brokenness, anxiety, or fear, we just play the part we see set in front of us - pursuing a fantasy rather than reality
 - d) But fantasy always leads to insecurity and discontentment
 - e) Next comes jealousy - because you are not content with what you have or the life you are living
 - f) Then comes coveting, gossip and slander
 - (1) Men tend to intimidate with their physical stature
 - (2) Women use their words
 - (a) They have a gift with language and they can either build up the world around them
 - (b) Or they can leave it in ashes - just with their words

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- D. Then their was perfectionism
 - 1. A disordered desire for righteousness and perfection apart from Christ
 - 2. So here is an honest question: if the standard of perfection is this facade we have created where does that lead us?
 - a) It leads us to despair
 - b) How can you ever achieve perfection that is based on something not real?
 - 3. Because of this perfectionism based on a lie:
 - a) Women are more likely to commit suicide, more likely to have an eating disorder, to cut themselves, to treat themselves cheaply
 - b) And this is not just verses from the Bible, this is research done by people that as far as I know have no love for God or the Scriptures
 - (1) They just agree with the Bible
 - (2) Even though they don't know they are

INTRO: So today, I want to look at how Jesus enters and ministers to women. - Hebrews 12:1-2

- I. Now, as we talk, the things I go over here apply just as much to men as they do the ladies
 - A. The same was true when we went over the gospel applied to men - the things were true for the ladies - we just hadn't gotten to the ladies yet
- II. The first phrase, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses..."
 - A. Ya'll know by now what is going to happen - when you see that first word in the sentence you know what is happening
 - 1. Where do we need to look?
 - 2. Chapter 11!
 - a) The cloud of witnesses is in chapter 11
 - b) Start at verse 32 (32-35a)
 - B. If we were to stop at this point in the chapter, and the next sentence was not there, then I would have a hard time believing the Bible
 - 1. It's all peachy-keen up to this point - lions mouths are shut; they become mighty in war; foreign armies on the run - awesome stuff
 - 2. But if we went straight from this to "We are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses..." then Christians are putting up a front; putting on our masks
 - a) Jesus makes everything better! No struggles, no worries - become a Christian and life is GOOOOOOD!
 - b) But we all know that is not true - yes, life is awesome with Christ, but that does not eliminate suffering

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- C. Let's keep reading in verse 35-38
1. Isn't that awesome! Seriously! If it were not for that paragraph, we would be living according to a lie
 2. This is what life looks like - there is suffering, there is pain, life is hard - and the Bible never paints a picture of life being perfect
 - a) In fact, if you give your life to Christ
 - b) According to what we just read, your life may get exponentially more difficult
 - (1) I'm telling you the day is coming for America
 - (2) That is not just Pastor Keith being an alarmist, that is backed by the authority of God's Word - He promises in the last days that life will get very difficult for His followers
 3. Think about how this applies
 - a) Far too many people have bought into this image of Christianity that God is supposed to make life better and I will have no problems, and all will be perfect
 - (1) Where does He EVER say that?
 - (2) If anything it is the opposite - "In this life you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world."
 - b) So this life, this mirage of a life based on comparison, leading to perfectionism, that life has to be perfect, and I have to be perfect is the same thing
 - (1) That life does not exist
 - (2) You will have struggles in this life
 - (3) You will doubt, you will fight and scrap and push - life is not the perfect image that we think it is supposed to be
 - c) Some people have based this perfect life ideal on their faith
 - (1) If I just have enough faith I'll have a fat bank account, and skinny spouse, perfect children that love and obey, and a dog that never pees in the house
 - (2) These folks in Hebrews 11 had faith -
 - (a) Their faith cost them their lives
 - (b) Their faith didn't mean that they died in vain, or died when they didn't have to, their faith said, "I trust God's Word and plan for life more than I am afraid of what you can do to me."
 - d) Faith is a huge factor in this, but it is faith in both the highs and lows of life
 - e) The church should be the place in which we allow it to be okay not to be okay
 - (1) That we struggle together against the veneer of false Christianity

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- (2) That it is okay to struggle, to doubt, and to face fear and anxiety
 - (a) It's okay to reach out and say "pray for me..." "help me"
 - (b) Walk with me through this
 - (3) God is real with us that life is hard - it is not all peaches and cream
 - 4. One other encouragement, these people in Hebrews 11 were described as dressing in sheepskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated
 - a) We would look at that and say that person has failed - there is something there to be fixed
 - b) But the Bible says "the world was not worthy of them"
 - (1) In other words, God met these people in the middle of their trouble - God has walked with them through the suffering
- III. The second phrase, back in Hebrews 12, "...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,"
- A. The author talks about what hinders us, and sin as if they are two different things
- 1. Think of the weight as something that drags us down into sin
 - a) So using comparison as an example, comparison spirals down into competition, gossip, slander, wounding others with our words, etc.
 - b) The Bible is filled with statements about how God hates this
 - c) So that behavior needs to be confessed - but it did not spring up from nowhere - so where did it come from
 - 2. So, you all know, because it is a common illustration that the Bible does not prohibit me or anyone from drinking a glass of wine
 - a) You won't find that in the Bible
 - b) But we all know that there are some people that should stay away from alcohol all together
 - 3. So, going back to this issue of comparison, nowhere will you find in the Bible that Instagram is sinful, or wedding or fitness magazines are sinful
 - a) But if you struggle with body issues, why would you look at those things?
 - b) You are adding weight to your life that does not need to be there
 - c) And that weight, can lead you downward into sin
 - d) True, the Bible does not prohibit you from looking at those things
 - (1) But you have to be smarter than that
 - (2) Just because you are allowed to do something does not mean that it is good for you
 - e) Besides, those magazines and such are airbrushed to no end
 - (1) If you don't believe me, go home and look this up on youtube

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- (2) There is a guy that transformed a picture of a slice of pizza into a beautiful bikini gal
- (3) And if you are thinking, "She's so beautiful!" - remember, she's not real - she's a piece of pizza
- 4. This is really an issue of wisdom - Scripture may not forbid it, but is it wise to continue on this path
 - a) Paul said it in 1 Cor. 6:12 "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything."
- B. So we are to throw off the things that lead us to the sins, and the sins - which sound great but how?
 - 1. Thanks for asking
 - 2. And look at verse 2
- IV. "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."
 - A. The first thing is that we need to get our eyes on Jesus
 - 1. Far too often we have our eyes fixed on ourselves
 - a) Either in pride because we think we are awesome
 - (1) Or we deserve this or that thing
 - b) Or out of frustration, thinking little of ourselves, and so our heads hang down
 - 2. But we need to get our eyes off of us, and on to the pioneer and perfecter of our faith
 - a) The word pioneer literally means "one who originates; one who begins the first in a series."
 - (1) He is the One who originated our faith
 - (2) Let me put it to you simply: Jesus was never lost, so you did not "find Jesus"
 - (a) We were lost and He found us
 - (b) He reached into your life and revealed Himself to you, and when He did, that's when you realized how much better he is that whatever your eyes were fixed on at the time
 - (3) When we realize that He found us, that we are not as awesome as we think, humility sets in
 - (a) But at the same time, confidence
 - (b) Confidence that I can't, but He can
 - B. The second word to consider is "perfecter"
 - 1. It means someone that brings things to a successful conclusion
 - a) So Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega - the One that began our faith, and the One that we see us through to the end
 - b) When God starts a work in you, he will be faithful to complete it

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- c) I believe I read that elsewhere, oh yes, Philippians 1:6, "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
- 2. But here is the question no one likes to answer because it takes us to uncomfortable places: How does God form faith in our hearts as believers?
 - a) First, it is done supernaturally by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - b) Second, and here is where it gets uncomfortable, faith is formed through joy AND sorrow
 - (1) When do you find yourself most aware of your need of God: when all is well, or when life is crushing in on you?
 - (2) It's not that God is not near when things are awesome, it's just that when life is awesome we seem to take the credit for that
 - (a) Yes, you might throw in a cursory, "Praise God for the raise I got at work."
 - (b) But most of the time, we believe that it was our hard work that did that
 - (3) The time we cry out after God is when things look darkest
 - (a) I can tell you from experience that God is there in the dark moments
 - (b) I have been wrung out, I have lost my father suddenly, I fought my way through a church split in my last church, I fought my way through the dark days of this church - and it was in those days that God was never more real
- 3. If we do not get our eyes up to look at our Savior, we will never see what he is doing in our lives in moments like these
 - a) Some times the difficulties in life are not there to be solved, but to display God's grace and drive us to Him
 - b) There are realities that we find only in what St. John of the Cross called "The dark night of the soul."
- C. The next phrase, "For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
 - 1. Think of that idea, "the joy set before him..."
 - a) There is nothing about being beaten by whips, having your skin torn and ripped off your body, being spit on, mocked, nails driven through your hands and feet, and suffocating that is joyful
 - b) So what is the joy set before him?
 - (1) Scripture makes it clear that God is pleased with this work because it brings many sons and daughters to salvation

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- (2) It was us, our salvation, the fact that we would be redeemed that brought joy
- c) Let's take this a step further - God feels pleasure toward you
 - (1) Most of us might muster up the fact that God feels patience with me
 - (2) But the fact is that God feels pleasure toward us, right now - "The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." - Zeph. 3:17
 - (3) So God does not love the future version of you more than he loves you right now
 - (a) It is not you at your best that God saved
 - (b) It was you at your worst - God loved you at your worst, and continues to love you now
- 2. "He endured the cross..."
 - a) If you have been here any length of time you know that Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3)
 - b) Turn to Colossians 2:13-14 - this is why that is so important
 - (1) The debt that our sins incur is wiped out
 - (2) So, those things that perhaps you have done in your past that come creeping back to haunt you
 - (a) Those words that you said that you thought you would never say
 - (b) Those things that make you feel condemnation - that is the debt you feel for your sin
 - (c) And according to the Bible, Jesus died to cancel out that debt
 - (3) So think on this, if you have done things, or lived your life in a way to punish yourself for a wrong you have committed, you are trying to pay a debt you don't owe
 - (a) If you ever saw the movie "Seven Pounds" with Will Smith, his character is trying to atone for wrongs committed, and eventually pays for it with his life
 - (b) It really is a sad movie that illustrates how we can often feel like we have a debt to pay
 - (4) But if you have trusted in Christ, that debt is nailed to the cross and wiped away - AMEN?!?!?
 - c) Not only was the debt cancelled, we were redeemed - 1 Peter 1:18-19
 - (1) Not with things that can corrupt
 - (2) But with His precious blood
- 3. He scorned its shame sitting down at the right hand of God

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- a) Jesus turned shame upside down
 - b) What was meant as shameful - the cross - became our hope
 - c) And here's what's even more amazing - what was meant to be shameful for us, when we are in Christ, becomes our strength
 - (1) God delivered us from that shameful issue - whether it was done to us, or we did it ourselves
 - (2) Our shame turns into our hope in Christ
- V. Look, I will make no bones about this, I want you to become a believer in Christ - a follower of Christ - a Christian
- A. If you look around the room thinking, "All these people are such great Christians - I'll never fit in"
 - B. Man do you have another thing coming
 - 1. All of us were broken
 - 2. All of us had to turn our lives over to Christ
 - 3. All of us had to make that change
 - 4. And all of us still struggle with sin - we will until we reach heaven
 - C. The difference is, when we struggle with sin, we are honest, when we get knocked down we get back up, and we continue to trust in the promises God has given us