

God's Great Design - The Gospel Applied

REVIEW: The last few weeks we have been looking at God's Great Design. Primarily, this is a series about how God has designed us as men, and women to function. We laid a couple of weeks of ground work, and we have been focusing on the men so far. Don't worry ladies, if you have been feeling left out, we're coming for you!

We have looked at the fact that while biology makes me male, something else has to make me a man. If it were biology alone, little Oliver would be called a man, not a boy. It also has to be something beyond age that makes men, men. Otherwise, we would not all know boys that can shave.

I. Review

A. We first looked at God as our Creator

1. If He created us, He is higher than we are - and life is not about us
2. If He created us, that means He knows how this world should function better than we do
 - a) He is the designer of the machine
 - b) So He knows how to make it function

B. Then we looked at the image of God - imago Dei

1. We have been marked by the image of God and that means we hold a special place in creation
 - a) If we don't have that special place, and you fall on financially difficult times, then between mom, kids and the pets, the decision becomes easy as to who gets thrown out - whoever costs you the most money
 - (1) "Sorry honey. I love you and all, but you just cost me too much money."
 - b) But that is not how we make those choices because we know that people matter more than things or animals
2. It also means that people with any form of diminished capacity - mental, physical, emotional, etc. - are more valuable than the animals, even if you make tons of money from those animals
3. Because we have this privileged position in creation, it means that we are stewards over the rest of creation that does not have this position
 - a) You want to know why cruelty to animals is wrong - it's because we are to care for God's creation

C. Next we looked at man's purpose

1. We talked about male headship (not leadership, because women can be amazing leaders), and we define headship as the unique work of the man, establishing order for human prospering

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- a) Where men refuse to accept this God given purpose, society begins to break down
 - (1) You can look at the economists that will say this (not from a Christian perspective of course)
 - (2) You can look at sociologist that tells us this - where they tells us that men need to be present in the home, the neighborhood, for society to flourish, they are just hitting on the way God designed things
 - (a) I always love reading secular authorities that already tell us what we as Christians have been saying for centuries
 - (b) Sitting on the committee for sex education at the school, and having them all bring their research that says that we can't have "safe sex" it's "safer sex" and that disease is rampant, and they come to the conclusion, "The best, and safest sex you can have is with your spouse and only your spouse." and this conclusion is based on years of study, research and money poured into this, and I'm laughing thinking, "I've been saying that for years - because that is the way God designed it"
 - b) When men pick up this purpose, and will stand in the role God created them to, people flourish
 - (1) Psalm 128:1-4 - This is a great litmus test
 - (2) If you are a man, leading in headship the way God designed, is your wife flourishing like a fruitful vine?
 - (3) Perhaps a question to ask her - or how you could help her do that even more
- D. Last week we looked at areas that trip men up
- 1. We focused on two broad categories
 - a) Selfish passivity
 - b) And selfish aggression
 - 2. This is where we looked to see that the design doesn't match with reality in many areas
 - a) Hopefully it did not feel like a beat down for the men
 - b) Couldn't be too bad because you are back this week
 - c) But we can't fix a problem if we do not identify, specifically what the problem is
 - 3. Unfortunately, these two areas, selfish passivity and aggression, when sin entered the world, became the norm for men
 - a) Which makes them areas that we need to be honest about
 - b) And areas that we need to fight against

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4. So when men refuse to fight against these things, the smell of death lingers, and it infects our homes, our churches, and our communities
- II. This morning, we are going to look at how the gospel gets applied to these areas
- A. A couple of things before we start, first turn to Ezekiel 37 (p. 865)
 1. This passage is actually about something very specific, but I am going to pull it out as an illustration - and I'll explain that in a few minutes
 - B. Second, to our ladies - as we talk about how the Bible addresses biblical manhood, two things should happen
 1. The first thing is your expectations should rise
 - a) The bar should be set higher
 - b) If you keep your bar low, every moron in a five mile radius can cross it, and you don't need that
 - c) You are so valuable - set that bar high
 2. Second, encourage
 - a) Encourage the men in your life EVERY time you see them enter into that biblical manhood
 - b) Wives especially to your husbands
 - c) But this can be to any man - encourage, encourage, encourage
 - C. Ezekiel 37:1-14
 1. First thing is the timing - Basically you had the very first world war taking place
 - a) Ezekiel grew up in a time period in which The Northern kingdom already got whooped, and the Southern kingdom was taking a beating
 - (1) And you are talking about the Assyrians (until they got their tails kicked by Babylon) Babylon, and even the Egyptians were in on all of this
 - (2) For them, it was world war
 - b) Ezekiel is even one of the ones carted off into exile during one of the raids into the southern kingdom
 2. So when Ezekiel prophesies that God will put them back together, this is exceedingly great news
 - a) And this a visualization of the reverse of the destructive force of sin
 - (1) God created us and breathed life into the dust and made man
 - (2) Man sinned and was told, "Now you will return to dust"
 - (3) God gives us the visual of the reversal of punishment
 - (a) Dry bones - very dry - like dead and gone for years
 - (b) God will breathe new life into these dry bones again
 - b) Here is where I use this as a parallel
 - (1) This is a specific prophecy for Israel

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- (2) But it is a great illustration that God is not done with humanity, and God is not done with men yet
- (3) He will breathe new life into the dry bones that have been dead because of sin
3. The question is "how...when...I know I'm dry, when do I get breathed on?"
 - a) Genesis 2:16-17 "And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.""
 - (1) If sin enters the universe - death comes with it
 - (a) Death in all its forms - physical, spiritual
 - (2) Where there is sin, it leads to death, and where there is death, there is the smell of death because sin is playing itself out
 - b) This was the whole point of last week - pointing out the broad categories and more specific things in each that lead to death
 - (1) Selfish passivity - When we refuse to worship God, to delight in Him and know Him - death and the smell of death
 - (a) Living in a fantasy world, refusing to engage with your wife, or the kids and go after their hearts (setting the spiritual climate in the home)
 - (b) Silence when words are called for, either to others, or about ourselves
 - (c) The list goes on and on - listen to last week to catch up
 - (d) I promise you will find yourself in the list somewhere
 - (2) But that was not the only list - selfish aggression too
 - (a) Pornography, domestic abuse (in all forms - remember 1 in 3 women have experienced it in some form), nit picking, withholding affection, using our resources to control others, slandering others, violence, even sarcasm can all be selfish aggression
 - (b) When these things are present, instead of the sweet aroma of the gospel, you get the lingering smell of death
 4. So here is one of the great things about God's Word - it never paints a picture that is not consistent with reality
 - a) Turn on the news, and you can find example after example of this sinful, selfish passivity or aggression

D. The created order of this world is broken

 1. Romans 8 tells us that the creation itself is groaning for the day that God will bring reconciliation to the created order

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2. This is kind of an apocalyptic picture - end of the world, "I Am Legend"
"Mad Max" kind of thing
 - a) We, in suburban America, don't always see or feel this because we are sheltered from some of it
 - b) And some of it we hide, and put our masks on that "This isn't happening here"
 - c) But it is exactly into this messed up world that God enters in and begins to put the bones, put the world back together
 3. Go to Ephesians 2:4-5
 - a) So here is where the gospel comes in, in full force
 - b) In Christ, we are made alive
 - (1) Because of His life, death and resurrection, Jesus can say to the dead, "wake up - you are alive again"
 - (2) So we have just been dead, and Christ made us alive
 - (3) But this goes a step further
 4. Go to Romans 6:6
 - a) So first we are made alive with Christ, raised from the dead
 - (1) So that whole list of sinful passivity and aggression that stinks of death - we have been saved and called out from that
 - (a) Called out of death into life
 - (b) The wrath that we faced was absorbed by Christ, and we are given His righteousness
 - (c) So now we are seen by God as positionally holy
 - (2) The icing is that we also receive the Holy Spirit to strengthen us to do these things He called us to do
 - b) So with the Holy Spirit, strengthening us in our inner man, we no longer have to say "yes" to any of the selfish passivity or aggression that had become a part of this world
 - (1) Before Christ made us alive, before the Holy Spirit, these things dominated us
 - (2) Now we have the power of the Holy Spirit alive and at work in us so we can say, "I'm not doing that."
- III. So when it comes to passivity - not engaging when we need to engage, we have not been created for comfort
- A. We have been called to war!
 - B. Sometimes the war for us means going Braveheart, but more often than not, being called to war means:
 1. Getting off the couch and engaging my family - even though you are exhausted from a long day at work

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2. It means managing your budget in a way that reflects the priority of your family
 3. It means setting the spiritual climate of your home by engaging the kids in what is happening with them
 - a) "How was your day? What are you dealing with right now?" And leading them to think in terms of God's Word, and praying with them
 - (1) Praying for their needs, helping them understand their needs in some cases
 - (2) Giving praise to God of their victories
 - (3) Praying with them and showing them grace in their failures
 4. Or sitting with your wife and doing similar things
 - a) "What have you been reading in your devotions, babe?"
 - b) "What has God been showing you or speaking to you about?"
 - c) "Are you encouraged?" "Are you feeling dry in your walk with God? What's happening in your heart?"
- C. It means understanding that we are not called to the couch, but to engage in the battle with and on behalf of our family
- D. And a little secret, men, you will not be able to do this by yourself
1. If you try, you will fail - you will choose not to engage, you will choose the couch over engagement
 2. But because of what Christ has done for us, with the power of the Holy Spirit, we are free to pursue this type of engagement
 3. Perfection is not your goal
 - a) If you think that way, you will eventually stop because you will lose heart
 - b) So get it through our heads, gentlemen, perfection comes through Christ - What God called you to do is pursue
 - (1) And when you fail, and you will
 - (2) Get up again and keep pursuing
 - c) And let me show you the awesome nature of the gospel in this
 - (1) When you fail, when you choose the couch over engagement in the battle, and we realize that we did
 - (2) If you are simply honest with your family, and ask their forgiveness, you are displaying the gospel in those moments
 - (a) "Honey, please forgive me. I know I should have talked with you more last night. How can I help you today?"
 - (3) And this is something that you might need to practice at the beginning
 - (a) If you have been in the habit of not engaging before this, you probably want to lead with this

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- (b) Tell your family that God has been working on you, and you want to engage them more in spiritual matters
- d) This getting knocked down and back up again is why we admire movies like Rocky
 - (1) Not the last 17 Rocky movies, more like the originals
 - (2) A guy with no real skill, but all heart
 - (a) He keeps getting beat down (mostly because if you watch the movie he leads with his face - I'm no boxer but I think that is lesson one for boxing class - don't lead with your face)
 - (b) But no matter how many times Rocky gets beat down, he gets back up
 - (3) You will get knocked down men
 - (4) But with the help of the Holy Spirit, you will get back up again
- E. Now, I keep telling you that you need to pursue your wife's heart
 - 1. Like the bachelor has a clue what that really looks like
 - 2. For that matter, like many men have figured that out
 - a) It's no shock to anyone when I say that men are emotionally stunned
 - (1) I ask you "How are you feeling" and some guys are like, "I don't understand the question."
 - (2) So when I say pursue your wife or your kids hearts many are like, "I don't get it."
 - (a) "I know she likes it when I pick up my dirty socks and underwear, and I did that two days in a row now. Nailed it!"
 - 3. So if you are a confused male (redundant, I know) here is what you do: find a man that loves his wife well - that knows how to go after his wife's heart
 - a) Ask him questions
 - b) Learn from him
 - c) This is what I do with lots of things in life - find someone in the know, and observe, learn, engage
 - 4. Second thing: have a conversation with your wife - asking her questions, and sharing with her how you feel
 - a) If you need a chart to help you understand what you are feeling, ladies give them a chart
 - b) Maybe one of us should make that up and sell it
 - 5. And do this with your kids too
 - a) They might be harder because kids can answer any question with one word
 - b) "Tell me about your day" "Good!"
 - c) With kids, much of this is about consistency

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- (1) And when your kids share something with you, it gives you the opportunity to empathize with them
 - (a) They will remember your empathy much longer than anything else
 - (b) If they have problems with kids being mean to them, don't make up stuff about how those means kids will be serving your kid fries in a few years
 - (c) Tell them about how you know what it is like because you had some mean kids in school too

IV. Wrap up

- A. For some of you here, this may BE quite impossible because you have never given your life to Jesus Christ
 1. So you do not have the Holy Spirit inside of you to guide and strengthen you
 2. That would be priority one
 - a) I will not promise you that everything will be easy
 - b) I have said it multiple times - it will be hard - even with the Holy Spirit - but it is so worth it
- B. Some of you are Christians, but you have not been engaged the way you should
 1. You have sat too long in selfish passivity
 - a) Now is the time to confess and repent of that
 - b) And time to engage
 2. Or maybe you have been involved in selfish aggression
 - a) There are things you need to repent of, people you need to seek forgiveness from
 - b) And then engage in biblical manhood the way God calls you to
- C. So men, I hope that the Holy Spirit is both bringing you down to understand your need of Him, and bringing you up to understand that perfection was accomplished through Christ - you just need to seek to be obedient to God's design
- D. And ladies, encourage your men
 1. Your husbands, your sons, even your brothers in Christ
 - a) Where you see them engaging in pursuing your hearts
 - b) Tell them - "I so appreciated when you check in on me like that"
 - (1) Thank you for this
 - (2) Thank you for that
 2. Whatever you do ladies do not poke your husband and say, "Did you hear what he said in church today! Why don't you do that for ME!"

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- a) Quick reality check ladies, you are wonderful wives, sisters in Christ, Mothers
- b) But you make a LOUSY Holy Spirit
 - (1) The Holy Spirit convicts, you don't
 - (2) You may actually mess up the work that God is doing in your husband/loved ones heart by trying to play Holy Spirit
- 3. Encourage us ladies, and leave the conviction to God
 - a) It's okay to have an honest conversation
 - b) Especially if he asks you for ways in which he can better build into you and your family
 - c) But encourage - conviction is God's
- 4. And I am starting to get off into the ladies sermon, so it's time to end