

090719 – God’s Design Plan For The Family - III

Back in 1964, before there was AIM, or iPhones, or dirt; Paul Simon wrote a song called “I Am A Rock.”¹ In part it says:

I am a rock, I am an island. I’ve built walls, A fortress deep and mighty, That none may penetrate. I have no need of friendship; friendship causes pain. Its laughter and its loving I disdain. I am a rock, I am an island. And a rock feels no pain; And an island never cries.

Good poetry, perhaps, but a lousy philosophy of life.

In January 1964, Barbra Streisand released the song “People”. It became hugely popular, quickly reaching top 40 status.² Part of that song reads:

People, People who need people Are the luckiest people in the world ... Lovers Are very special people They’re the luckiest people in the world With one person, One very special person A feeling deep in your soul Says you were half, now you’re whole.

The poetry isn’t quite as good, but it resonates more closely with our us, don’t you think? Just think about all the songs that have to do with “somewhere out there,” and “can you feel the love tonight,” and “are you going away”. Whether you’re a real people-person who gets energized by a room full of people, or whether you’re sucked dry by people – everyone needs others from time to time. Dying alone, living alone, being alone – alone is a really hard word to swallow.

Well, there’s a reason for that. God has not only designed us to be in relationship with Him, but also with each other.

God has designed us to be in relationship with each other and this is true to two ways, both generally and specifically. Generally, because God made us as a reflection of his attributes, so it follows that we are relational, as God is relational. And then specifically, God has made us to especially express his attributes in marriage. Let’s take these separately.

GENERALLY:

Generally speaking, relationship is built into the nature, not only of humans, but also of all creatures. Animals reproduce, plants need to be pollinated, and the prairie vole is monogamous for life! Relationship, in these various ways, is an absolute necessity for all of creation. And this makes sense from a Biblical perspective, because *the heavens are telling*

¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Am_A_Rock. Regarding loneliness, see the 1958 Harry F. Harlow essay “The Nature Of Love,” based on research done with infant monkeys.
psychclassics.yorku.ca/Harlow/love.htm,

serendip.brynmawr.edu/biology/b103/f01/web3/arima.html, violence.de/tv/rockabye.html

² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_(1964_song)

*of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.*³ Everything God has made points a finger to His sovereign perfections.

But only humanity is the one creature that is made to express His likeness and image truly. We cannot say that a mouse is reflecting God's holiness. We aren't able to observe the fruit of the Spirit in algae. Concepts like "ethics" can't be attributed to rocks. An awareness of time and eternity isn't present in flowers.

In Gen 3, we have a tantalizing picture of something. It's right after Adam and Eve are tempted to eat of the tree, of which God had said: "do not eat."

*They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"*⁴

It was the custom of God to greet His highest form of creation in the midst of this special place that God had made for them – walking with them in the garden. But this time, they hid themselves from God, something that they couldn't even have imagined doing before the fall. Note that God is concerned for relationship. "Where are you?" he wants to know.

When we begin to deal with the fall next week, we'll see that this question: "Where are you?" is, in some ways, may be basic question that God has been continuing to ask us since that event. Much of the maneuvering we do in life is also a reflection of that same question: "Where are you?" So basic is the relational nature of God, that it's also basic in us. We're always trying to discover about others: "where are you with respect to me?" "Do you like me?" "Do you respect me?" "Can you help me?"

This means that broken relationships indicate a broken nature.

*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry ... anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed ... after the image of its creator.*⁵

Here are all sorts of things that break our relationship with God, and also with each other. The destruction of relationships with each other is a way of denying one of the most fundamental purposes and aspects of our nature: to be in relationship. So put those things off and put on the new self in Christ that is to look more and more like that for which you were designed. It's a way of saying: "You were designed for better things!"

There are other examples⁶, but I'm sure you get the picture – speaking of images.

SPECIFICALLY:

³ Psa 19.1

⁴ Gen 3.8-9

⁵ Col 3.5-10

⁶ See also Eph 4.22-24, 2Co 3.17-18, Rom 8.29.

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."⁷

Not only has God designed us for relationship, both with him and with other humans in general, but God especially expresses His likeness and image in a particular kind of relationship with other humans and that is in the relationship between husband and wife.⁸ *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*⁹

Notice the wording very carefully. The word for 'man' in these texts is the word *adam*, which also happens to be the name of the first male. The word means *mankind, humanity*, the whole human family. That is: God created *adam* – mankind – in his image. And that image is reflected in the fact that he created *adam* as male and female.

You see this even more clearly in the second place this wording is used:

*This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.*¹⁰

This is the book of the generations of *adam* – mankind. God created *adam* – mankind – in His own likeness. And how did He make *adam* in His likeness? By creating them male and female. And male and female together, God calls *adam*. It is confusing? Maybe. Is it mixed up? Yes – on purpose.

What does this mean? That God's likeness and image – especially His relational nature – are expressed best and fullest when male and female are together in relationship. And that's what marriage is!

Jesus makes this point even more clearly:

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and

⁷ Gen 2.18-23

⁸ Consider, then, the implications of homosexuality as being absolutely contrary to one of the most fundamental characteristics of our nature. *You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.* (Lev 18.22)

⁹ Gen 1.27

¹⁰ Gen 5.1-2

*female, and said, 'for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."*¹¹

Divorce is sin because it's a breach breach of promises made between a man and a woman. That's true. Divorce is destructive because it wounds families and individuals, husbands, wives, and children. That's true too. But even more importantly, divorce is sin and wrong, because marriage is supposed to be the best expression of God's own nature. Divorce is sin and wrong, because it rips and tears apart a basic part of how God designed us to be.

You may be saying: "Well, I don't see how this works. In fact, this is crazy. There's no hope of ever really being one with a creature that I barely understand! If men are from Mars, then women are from another solar system." Women, I'll give you fair treatment here. You might say: "yeah, well, if women are from Venus, men are from another species and another galaxy altogether."

Here's a little glimpse into the marriage part of this series. Perhaps – in light of all that has been said – God actually put these two very different parts together on purpose! It's those differences, put together in mutual submission under Christ Jesus that is exactly what's required to make God's fullest expression of his own likeness, image, glory, and purpose known.

One of the favorite books that my wife and I have read on marriage is called "Sacred Marriage." The book happens to have two different subtitles that I've seen. One is this question: "What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?" The other subtitle is this statement: "Celebrating Marriage as a Spiritual Discipline."

APPLICATIONS:

If God has designed us to bear a reflection of his nature and character, his image and likeness – which can be expressed as his relational nature – then we carry in our design that same nature. God is perfect and needs nothing, but in order to reflect his makeup, we NEED to be in relationship. This is true generally, between ourselves and those around us. And it's true most specifically in marriage.

- If this is true, is it any wonder that families are so much under attack? How is YOUR family under attack?
- As we come to the table today, what are your broken relationships? Do they express an aspect of your broken nature? What needs fixing?
- We'll be coming to the Lord's Table today and we'll hear these words: "*Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways: Draw near with faith, and make your humble confession to Almighty God, devoutly kneeling.*"

¹¹ Mat 19.3-7

- I'll remind you of Jesus' words: *Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.*¹²

"You were designed for better things!"

Genesis 1-2 – God's Design Plan III

Relationship With Each Other

1. Review: God has built into the human family the need and capacity for relationship with Him.
 - 1.1. It's built into the "stuff" of what we are. All of our desires, needs, aspirations, passions, skills, talents, interests – all reflect aspects of God's character and attributes.
 - 1.2. He has made us this way → so that we can understand Him → so that we can relate to Him.
 - 1.3. Consider creation as a story/mural, God as the author/painter, we as the audience, but even more, we are participants.
2. Relationship With Others In General Sense
 - 2.1. All of creation expresses God's _____ (Psa 19.1).
 - 2.2. But only _____ can truly express God's image and likeness in relationship, something God himself desires with us (Gen 3.8-9).
 - 2.3. Our broken nature = broken _____ and broken _____ = a broken nature (Colossians 3.5-10).
3. Relationship With Others In Special Sense (Gen 2.18-23)
 - 3.1. *Adam* is not just the first man's name; it actually is the word for all _____ (Gen 1.27, 5.1-2).
 - 3.2. *Adam* – humanity – was made to be whole as an expression of God's image and likeness particularly in the relationship of _____ (Mat 19.3-7).
 - 3.3. Maybe God put two very different parts together on purpose!
4. Applications

¹² Mat 5.23-24

4.1. How is your family under attack?

4.2. What are the relationships that need fixing?

**glory, humans, relationships, humanity,
marriage**