

## LESSON

# 1 Does God Really Have a Design?

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So many things seem to happen by chance! In Egypt there are great monuments called pyramids. These are immense and have stood firmly for thousands of years. Their building stones fit each other so perfectly that often mortar was not needed to hold them in place. Could they have been built by just piling stones together? No, we know it did not happen like that.

Somewhere there was a master builder who knew before he started how the final monument would look. He *designed* it. He planned, made sure the material was there, then directed thousands of men to be certain that each one did his task. No doubt many problems developed as they worked together. Some may have quit; others did not do their part. But the master builder continued until the pyramid was finished.

Imagine thousands of men with huge piles of stones. What would have been made with no design? In this lesson you will learn about God's design of the world and for you personally.

## ***The Plan***

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- A. God Has a Design for Everything
- B. God Has a Design for People
- C. Others Have Experienced God's Design
- D. You Can Experience God's Design

## ***The Goals***

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- 1. Give examples of God's design.
- 2. Describe the basic characteristics of God's design for people.
- 3. Identify God's design in the lives of biblical people.
- 4. Describe a situation in which God is working out His design in your life.

## **A. GOD HAS A DESIGN FOR EVERYTHING**

### **Goal 1.** Give examples of God's design.

God has a design for everything. He told Job that He had designed how deep the oceans would be, when the sun would come up, and how big the earth would be. He designed the stars and created the lightning. God even designed how animals give birth! He put strength in the ox and majesty in the horse. He made the eagle so it could soar to the highest mountains (Job 38–39).

God designed everything, and humankind was the finest part of His design. He gave special attention to His design for people because He had a special purpose for them.

God made human beings more like himself than like the animals. God wants fellowship; He made us so that we could enjoy fellowship with Him. God thinks and plans; He made us so that we could think and plan. God loves; He made us so that we could love. God has choice; He made us so that we could choose.

God has a design for each person, but not everyone has chosen to do what God has planned. Actually, the Bible says that each one has chosen to do what he wanted (Romans 3:23). But even this has not changed God's plan! You have learned in your own experience that God has given you and all people the opportunity to be part of His great design through His salvation. We can cooperate with Him and one day be like Him.

## ***Application***

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In each of these application sections, the questions or exercises will help you review or apply what you have just studied. Follow the directions given for completing each one. When you are directed to, write your answers in your notebook. If you need to, review the section entitled How to Answer Study Questions at the beginning of this study guide.

**1** Read Genesis 1 in your Bible. Name two things God designed which are described in that chapter.

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**2** We know that God has choice. Describe a choice you have made which shows that you are like God in having the ability to choose.

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Check your answers with those given at the end of this lesson.

## **B. GOD HAS A DESIGN FOR PEOPLE**

**Goal 2.** Describe the basic characteristics of God's design for people.

A design for something has certain features or characteristics. For example, the design for a house includes plans for it to have walls, windows, doors, and rooms. We

have said that God has a design for people. What are the characteristics of His design?

### God’s Design Begins With Knowledge

David was one of the leaders of God’s people. He wrote many of the Psalms in the Bible. In Psalm 139 he said that God knew both his actions and his thoughts. God even knew what he was going to say before he said it. God had made David and formed him in his mother’s womb.

### *Application*

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**3** Read in your Bible each verse given in the references below. Beside each reference, write what the person said that God knew about him. God knows these things about you too.

- a) Job 23:10 .....
- b) Psalm 31:7 .....
- c) Psalm 103:14 .....
- d) Psalm 139:16 .....



God made not only David; He also made you. He loved David even though He knew everything about him. He loves you in the same way. He planned for your birth, your salvation, your life, and even your eternity. If you will cooperate with Him and choose to follow His plan for your life, He will effectively and actively guide you (Philippians 2:13).

### God’s Design Includes Diversity

Humans belong to many races and nationalities. Think of the variety of hair, shapes of eyes, and color of skin. And within each race we look different from one another. We have different ideas; we like different kinds of food. Isn’t it good that God made us as individuals?

Even in a family sometimes the children do not appear to be related to each other. Some are thin and others are heavy. Some

may have dark hair; others have light hair. But these differences are not important to the parents if they love their children. The important thing to the parents is that the children belong to them.

God designed the differences that we see. He planned us to be individuals. This is one of the wonderful things about His design. When we feel sometimes that no one else is exactly like us, it is because that is true!

## ***Application***

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**4** Name a way in which you are different from one of your friends.

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## **God's Design Involves a Standard**

Can we think back to the pyramid that we talked about? It is not important for all the stones to be alike. It is important for them to fit together. They all must be made so that they are usable—each one shaped according to the builder's design.

In the same way we must be shaped according to God's design, and this design involves a standard or pattern. Ephesians 4:13 tells us that the standard for our lives is the "whole measure of the fullness of Christ." This is the goal towards which God is leading us through the teaching of His Word. As we allow Him to work in us, He changes us according to the standard and pattern of His Son. After all, we are His children. We should want to resemble Him.

This does not mean that we cease to be individuals. When children grow up they are mature like their parents and even know as much. In many ways they think like their parents. They may even begin to understand why their parents disciplined them, taught them, and often allowed them to face their own problems. But they are still individuals.

If we honestly learn to obey Jesus Christ, one day we will be like Him. All of our present limitations will be taken away, and we will know God in a much deeper and intimate way. We will understand His purpose perfectly; love Him with a perfect love; and have perfect fellowship with Him.

## Application

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- 5** Circle the letter in front of each statement about Christ which contains a *standard* for our lives.
- a) He did God's will.
  - b) He was of the Jewish race.
  - c) He spoke the truth.
  - d) He spent His childhood in a small village.
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## God's Design Brings Togetherness

We are designed to fit together in God's plan. We may be weak where someone else is strong; others may be weak where we are strong. Several pictures are given in the Bible to illustrate this relationship we have with each other. As God's family we take on the characteristics of our Father and enjoy fellowship with each other (Ephesians 2:11–19). Together we are the building blocks of a temple in which God lives by His Spirit (Ephesians 2:20–22). Together we make up the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 21:9). Together we are an army (Ephesians 6:10–18).

It is clear that God's plan or design for people is a plan of togetherness—together with Him and together with each other. It is reasonable, then, to expect that the design God has for us individually will not go against what He plans for others and for the rest of creation.

As we discover what God intends for us, we will see that He always has these two things in mind: 1) our *individual* development with Christ as our pattern, and 2) the development of our *relationships* with others who are in cooperation with God's design.

## Application

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**6** Which of the following is an example of how God's plan for us includes togetherness?

- a)** Juan realizes that God knows everything about him including what is bad and what is good.
- b)** Manuel and Ehab are both believers but belong to two different races.
- c)** Pieta learns how to use her teaching ability to help Jenny lead a Bible study.

**7** Read each Bible verse given in the references below (left side). Then match it to the aspect of God's design it best expresses (right side). Write the number in front of the reference.

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| ... <b>a)</b> John 10:14–15       | 1) God's knowledge |
| ... <b>b)</b> John 17:21          | 2) Diversity       |
| ... <b>c)</b> 1 Corinthians 12:14 | 3) Standard        |
| ... <b>d)</b> Philippians 2:5     | 4) Togetherness    |
| ... <b>e)</b> 1 John 3:16         |                    |

**8** Suppose a friend were to ask you this question: *What is God's design for people?* In your notebook, write a description of the four characteristics of God's design that you could give as your answer.

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## C. OTHERS HAVE EXPERIENCED GOD'S DESIGN

**Goal 3.** Identify God's design in the lives of biblical people.

The Bible tells us about many people who experienced God's design in their lives. Let us consider the accounts of some of these people.

## The Disciples of Jesus

When Jesus was on earth He chose from among all His followers twelve disciples to be with Him (Mark 3:13–15). This was the key to His plan—He would be with them and change them. He chose them carefully, after spending all night in prayer (Luke 6:12–16). He also had a plan: to do the work the Father had sent Him to do (John 17:4).

The final goal in the plan of Christ for His followers was for them to be in perfect unity with each other and with Him (John 17:20–23). Yet when we read the stories of these various men in the Bible, we see immediately that they were not all alike.

Two were known as “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). John, one of these, was also referred to as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23). Peter needed to have more patience shown to him than to the others. Nathanael was spoken of as having nothing false in him (John 1:47).

The men came from different professions and backgrounds—from fishermen to tax collectors. And they kept their individual personalities. Yet being with Christ brought them together. They became known as the “twelve apostles.” And their names are written on the foundations of the city of God (Revelation 21:14).

The twelve apostles went through many experiences with Christ. Sometimes they were comfortable; other times they were tired. On occasion they were fed miraculously; other times they bought their food. They enjoyed great victories and knew frustration. But by their staying with Christ the plan of God was fulfilled in them.

### ***Application***

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- 9** The experience of Jesus’ disciples shows us that in order to know God’s plan the most important thing to do is to
- a)** endure hardships and misfortunes.
  - b)** experience great miracles and victories.
  - c)** continue to remain with Christ.

- 10** Peter's way of responding to Jesus was not like John's way. In regard to God's design, this fact illustrates the characteristic of
- a)** diversity.
  - b)** knowledge.
  - c)** togetherness.
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## Paul the Apostle

The great man of God whom we know as Paul the Apostle was known earlier in his life as Saul of Tarsus. At one time he hated Jesus Christ and anyone who followed Him. He was even responsible for the murder of Christians, for he thought they were blaspheming God. When God finally spoke personally to Saul, he was going to a city with letters that would allow him to arrest the followers of Christ.

Later on, when Paul looked at his earlier life, he called himself the worst of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). If God's process could work in him, it will work in anyone who will submit to it. In 2 Timothy 4:7-8 Paul expresses to his young friend Timothy the confidence he had at the end of his life. He said that he had finished the race and kept the faith. As a result, he was sure that there was a prize ready not only for him, but also for all who would do the same.

## *Application*

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- 11** Following are three comments on Paul's life. Select the best comment about what Paul's life shows us concerning God's design.
- a)** Some Christians have spent much of their lives in opposition to God's design.
  - b)** God's perfect will can be done in spite of a person's past failures.
  - c)** Every believer should realize that it is possible for him or her to experience failure.
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## D. YOU CAN EXPERIENCE GOD'S DESIGN

**Goal 4.** Describe a situation in which God is working out His design in your life.

God's plan for you is as complete and personal as it was for each of the twelve disciples. The same closeness He had with them He wants with you (John 17:21). He is working in the same way in you and your circumstances as He worked in them and in their circumstances. And, as the life of Paul shows, He can fulfill His purpose in your life no matter what failures you may have had.

Once you realize that God has a design for you your outlook will be changed. You will begin to view differently some of the things that happen in your life.

A carpenter changes the shape of wood with a chisel or a saw and he smoothes it with sandpaper. A diamond does not reach its full value until the master jeweler has cut away the worthless part. Maybe God is working on you with special attention! We feel at times that we have been hammered, sawed, and sandpapered. We usually think that these things are happening simply because of "luck," people, or the situation we are in. Our reaction would be different, no doubt, if we believed they were part of God's process in our lives.

Romans 8:29–30 tells us about the process into which the events of our lives fit. Remember we studied the fact that God knows all about us? His plan for our lives begins there.

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. (Romans 8:29–30)

As you continue to study this course you will look at some ways God uses to change us. In particular, you will see how some circumstances can help us know what His will is. But from the beginning keep one thing in mind: God is bigger than

any circumstance. He will use everything that happens to you to reach His final goal if you cooperate with Him (Romans 8:28).

## ***Application***

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**12** Read Romans 8:28. In your notebook, describe a circumstance or situation in your life. Then ask yourself this question: *How could God be using this circumstance to bring about His design for me?* Try to write an answer to the question.

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In lesson 2 we will consider God's next step for you and how He wants to speak to you. Before you continue, read all of Psalm 139 and meditate on the wonderful truth it expresses about God's design in your life.

## Check Your Answers

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The answers to your study exercises are not given in the usual order. This is done so you will not easily see the answer to your next question ahead of time. Look for the number you need and try not to look ahead.

- 7**
  - a)** 1) God's knowledge
  - b)** 4) Togetherness
  - c)** 2) Diversity
  - d)** 3) Standard
  - e)** 3) Standard
  
- 1** Your answers. Genesis 1 names several things that God designed such as these: the light and the darkness (vv. 3–4), the seas and the land (vv. 9–10), and human beings (vv. 26–27).
  
- 8** Your answer should include aspects of knowledge, diversity, standard, and togetherness as described in the lesson.
  
- 2** Your answer. Your decision to study this course shows that you are able to make choices. This is one way in which God made you like himself.
  
- 9** **c)** continue to remain with Christ.
  
- 3** (In your own words)
  - a)** His steps or way
  - b)** His affliction or anguish
  - c)** What he is made of; how he is formed
  - d)** The number of his days
  
- 10** **a)** diversity.
  
- 4** Your answer
  
- 11** **b)** God's perfect will can be done in spite of a person's past failures.
  
- 5**
  - a)** He did God's will.
  - c)** He spoke the truth.

- 12** Your answer. Try to become more aware of what God is doing in your life.
- 6 c)** Pieta learns how to use her teaching ability to help Jenny lead a Bible study.

