

## **Sermon Series: TRANSFORMATION**

### **Sermon: Life by Design**

**Text: Genesis 2; Romans 13; Acts 2**

#### **Discussion Questions:**

Let's begin today by talking about following directions.

We all know the old adage: Women ask for directions. Men don't!

- Is this true for you?
- Was this true for your parents - or in your own marriage?
- Why do you think this is?

And how about reading the directions that come with something you need to put together?

- Are you the kind of person who would rather just dig right in - figuring things out yourself - and not taking the time and effort to read and follow the printed directions?
- Does age and wisdom come into play here? Have you learned over time that many mistakes can be avoided by taking the time to read and follow the directions?
- Do you ever get frustrated by whoever it was that actually wrote the directions? Does it ever seem to you that the direction-writer never actually built the thing you're working on?

Take this conversation, and apply it to the Bible.

- Do you view the Bible as God's "Owner's Manual" for how we are to live our lives?
- How does the world around us view the Bible in this respect?
- Thinking of the Bible as "the directions for how to live our lives" - does God seem like a cosmic kill-joy? Do His directions seem out of date? Is God's Word relevant to our lives today?

#### **Examination:**

Read **Genesis 2:18-25**.

This is a text most people are familiar with - at least in basic concept. I want us to read it today through the eyes of God's PURPOSE for marriage - and for the institution of the family.

- God had made a paradise of beauty and life. There was pristine nature and animals of all kinds. There was no death, or pain - or sin! Everything was "Good!" except for one thing. It was not good for man to be alone. What does that tell you about our "hard-wiring" as humans? Why wasn't it good? Why do you think God made us to "need" companionship?
- The next phrase in verse 18 is: *"I will make a helper suitable for him."* Break this down and discuss it. What can we glean from the fact that God "made" a helper? Note that it doesn't say that God made a "companion," or a "partner" - what do you make of the fact that God called Eve a "helper"? What does it mean that Eve was "suitable" for Adam?
- Have you ever given much thought to the fact that God had "formed out of the ground" all the wild animals (vs. 19) - but Eve was fashioned from a rib of Adam's? Eve wasn't

made from dust (although she would have been, like Adam, made OF dust). It could literally be said that Eve was “bone of Adam’s bone”! What does this say to you?

- Verse 24 is the foundational verse for marriage. Note that this PURPOSE for marriage and family was given before the fall - and before there was even such a thing as a “father and mother” (Adam and Eve didn’t have a mother - or a bellybutton). This plan was in place before sin entered the picture. How does this verse lay the foundation for the institution of the family? How does this lay the foundation for bringing children into the world?

Shift gears now, and read **Romans 13:1-7**.

We see the foundation for the institution of the family way back in Genesis 2. Paul is describing here in Romans 13 the institution of the government - or governing authorities.

- Some may wonder if the government is actually an “institution” initiated by God - or perhaps something that we humans have devised as a means of controlling others. In this light, what do you make of verse 2, where Paul tells us that to rebel against governing authorities is to rebel against “what God has *instituted*”?
- Go back to examine verse 1. We see that there is no authority except that which God has established - the authorities that exist have been established by God. Do you really believe this? Can this be true? Is this true of Nazi Germany? Is this true of North Korea today? Was Paul including the “evil empire” of Rome in his thinking - which would include Nero who actually beheaded Paul a decade after he wrote this?
- Verse 4 tells us that “the one in authority is God’s servant for your good.” What is the “good” that we receive from governing authorities?
- Is the real clue as to why God created the institution of government found in verse 7 - “If respect, then respect; if honor, then honor”? Might God be using this institution to teach us humility and respect - even it seems humanly impossible to honor those who are persecuting you?

The third institution created by God is the institution of the church. Read **Acts 2:42-47**.

- Based upon these six verses, what are God’s PURPOSES for the church?
- Does God intend for each of us, today, to be a part of a local church?

### **Application:**

What if God designed the institutions of the family, the government and the church to make us HOLY - and not HAPPY! What if God’s greater purpose is that we learn how to love unconditionally (within the context of a family); learn how to submit to authorities humbly (within the context of a government); and learn how to live out our purpose in life in the context of the family of God (within the context of a local church)? Take some time this week to ask God to help you love others unconditionally, submit to others humbly, and seek to fulfill your God-designed purpose of making disciples faithfully.