



God's Design



SALLY MICHAEL *and* GARY STEWARD

“An essential resource for Christian families.” —Candice Watters

God's Design



Making HIM Known

God's Battle

God's Design

God's Gospel

God's Names

God's Promise

God's Providence

God's Wisdom

God's Word

God's Design

BY SALLY MICHAEL
and GARY STEWARD



P U B L I S H I N G

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Dedicated to John and Lorinda Donaldson,
examples of godly headship and joyful submission.

May God bless your ten children:
Jack, Caroline, Elizabeth, Wesley, Samuel,
Josephine, Abigail, Elijah, Simeon, and Benjamin.
May they be men of courage and faith who lead,
protect, and provide, and women of grace
and faith who nurture and help.



So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

. . . And God saw everything that he had made,
and behold, it was very good.

—Genesis 1:27, 31

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Preface

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.
—Proverbs 3:5–6*

Gender confusion has increased exponentially in recent years, along with the normalization of homosexuality in the entertainment industry and the legalization of homosexual marriage. Now more than ever parents need to talk with their children in age-appropriate ways about God’s good design for manhood and womanhood. Parents also need to talk with their children concerning how many ideas about manhood and womanhood—egalitarianism, feminism, homosexuality, gender blending/bending—go against the beautiful design of gender complementarity.

Children are encountering a confused and distorted message about gender at increasingly younger ages. Discussion of gender roles and identity can no longer be taken for granted or put off until adolescence. Children need to understand, before their teenage years, how God created men and women to be equal in personhood, dignity, and worth, and yet different regarding the roles He designed them to have. God’s Word has a great deal to say about this and is more than sufficient to instruct us in this area.

Hopefully this book can serve as a springboard for further interaction between parents and children, not just about manhood and womanhood, but about God and the gospel. May the Lord bless you as you inoculate your children against the Devil’s lies by speaking truth from God’s Word, and may your children grow up to be godly men and women who spread the light of the gospel and live out God’s design for men and women in a dark and needy world.

Introduction

How to Use This Book

This book was written to give parents an opportunity to present solid truth to their children and to encourage real-life application of that truth.

Relational

Children receive more encouragement to learn when truth is presented by a trusted individual. Your positive, relational parent-child commitment will be a real benefit when you sit down together to read this book. Your time together over the Word should be positive, affirming, and loving.

Interactive

There is a greater impact when an individual *discovers* truth instead of just hearing it presented. Many questions have been incorporated into the text of this book to encourage your child to wonder and think critically. The process of discovery will be circumvented if you don't give your child adequate time to think and respond. After asking a question, wait for a response. If your child has difficulty, ask the question in a different way or give a few hints.

Questions and responses can be springboards for more questions and discovery as you interact with your child's mind and heart. The Holy Spirit is the real teacher, so depend on Him to give both you and your child thoughts and truths to explore together, and to bring the necessary understanding. Take the time to work through each story at a leisurely pace—giving time for interaction and further dialogue. The goal should be to get the material into the child, not just to get the child through the material.

Understandable

These stories have been written with attention given to explaining difficult or potentially new concepts. Some of these concepts may take time for your child to digest. Allow your child to ponder new truths. Read the story more than once, allowing the truth to be better understood and integrated into your child's theological framework. At times, have your child read parts of the lesson, giving an opportunity for visual learning.

Because vocabulary can be child-specific, define the particular words foreign to your child. Retell difficult sections in familiar wording, and ask questions to be sure your child understands the truth being taught.

Theological

More than just acquainting your child with an understanding of biblical manhood and womanhood, this book is building a theological foundation for your child. As your child begins to correctly understand who God is and who man is, your child will begin to see the beauty of God's ways, the ugliness of sin, and the blessing of redemption.

Because the Word of God has convicting and converting power, Bible texts are quoted word for word in some parts. Some of these verses may be beyond the child's understanding, so you may want to explain unfamiliar words or thoughts. Even though clear comprehension may be difficult, the Holy Spirit often uses hearing the Word itself to encourage faith in your child (Romans 10:17). Do not minimize the effectual influence of God's Word in the tender souls of children.

Since the Word of God is living and active, allow the child to read the actual Bible verses as much as possible. Also, encourage your child to memorize some of the verses so he or she can meditate on them at other times.

Essential gospel truths are presented throughout the book. Use this as an opportunity to share God's work of grace in your life and to converse with your

child about his or her spiritual condition. Be careful not to confuse spiritual interest with converting faith, and take care to avoid giving premature assurances. Fan the flames of gospel-inspired conviction and tenderness toward the sacrificial love of Jesus without prematurely encouraging your child to pray “the sinner’s prayer.”¹

Application

Understanding the truth is essential, but understanding alone is insufficient. Truth must also be embraced in the heart and acted upon in daily life. Often children cannot make the connection between a biblical truth and real-life application, so you, the parent, must help bridge the gap.

Consider the following quotation by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

We must always put things in the right order, and it is Truth first. . . . The heart is always to be influenced through the understanding—the mind, then the heart, then the will. . . . But God forbid that anyone should think that it ends with the intellect. It starts there, but it goes on. It then moves the heart and finally the man yields his will. He obeys, not grudgingly or unwillingly, but with the whole heart. The Christian life is a glorious perfect life that takes up and captivates the entire personality.²

Spend a few days or even a week on each story. Reread the story, discuss the truths, and follow the suggestions in the Learning to Trust God section. Most importantly, help your child to see that God is who He says He is, and help him or her to act in response to the truth. Point out God’s design in creation, and specifically in creating us male and female, and thank Him for His wisdom.

1. Some excellent resources for parents regarding the salvation of children can be found at www.children-desiring-god.org, including a booklet titled *Helping Children to Understand the Gospel* and two seminars from the 2007 Children Desiring God conference, *How Great a Salvation—“Leading Children to a Solid Faith”* and *“Presenting the Gospel to Children.”*

2. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1965), 61–62.

Prayer

Ultimately, our efforts are effective only if the Holy Spirit breathes on our teaching and quickens it to the heart. Pray not only before going through the stories, but also in the succeeding days, that your child would see the beauty of God and His design and respond to Him in faith.

Knowing the Creator

If someone gave you a new game with a large board, different types of chips, spinners, dice, and colorful cards, would you know what to do with it? Would you automatically know how all the pieces work together and what each one's purpose is? Would you know how to play the game and enjoy it?

How would anyone know how to play the game? The only way is to first think about the game's designer or maker. After all, the game's maker is the one who designed it and made all the pieces work together in a certain way. Thankfully, game designers don't make us guess how their games are to be played. They give us instructions. By understanding the maker's design, you would know how all the pieces work together and you could start to enjoy the game.

The first verse of the Bible teaches us that we have a Designer, too—a Maker who has created us and designed us to work a certain way. The only way we can understand ourselves is by understanding the Designer and His design for who He has created us to be.

How can we figure out God's design for us? Thankfully, our Creator has not left us to figure out who we are and what we were made to do. He has given us His instructions in the Bible so that we can understand who we are and how we are meant to live.

In the Bible, God says we are created “in His image.” Do you know what that means? That means we are created to be like God in a number of ways. By understanding who God is, we are able to understand ourselves, since He designed us to be like Him—“in His image.”

Some people don't want to believe in God or follow His instructions for their lives. They believe they can know who they are and how they should live without following God's design. This is very sad. By not listening to God or receiving His

instructions, they have no way of knowing the reason that God made them or how they were designed to live.

The Bible teaches that those who turn away from God and His truth become very confused. This is what Romans 1:21-25 says about them:

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.



Those who do not honor, thank, and worship God end up confused about who they are and how they are to live. In order to understand ourselves correctly, we must first know God our Creator. We will never understand ourselves unless we start to know, honor, and give thanks to our Creator, for we were made to be like Him.

A great man once said that “man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God’s face, and then [looks at] himself.”¹ We must know and learn about God if we are to know ourselves and how we were designed to live. But how can we come to know God? How can we “look upon God’s face”?

God gave us the Bible so that we can know what He is like and learn to love Him. God sent His Son, Jesus, to show us what God is like. When we begin to know and put our trust in Jesus, we begin to know God. When we put our trust in God’s ways and in His instructions for our lives and say “yes” to Him, we come to understand God’s good design for our lives.

If we try to understand ourselves and our lives without knowing God, we will only be confused and frustrated, for “in [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3).

God has made you to know Him and His good design for your life. He has sent Jesus so you might be saved from the guilt, confusion, and power of sin. Will you say yes to Jesus? Will you put your trust in Him and welcome His design for your life?

Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

1. John Calvin, *Institutes*, I.I.2.



LEARNING TO TRUST GOD

- ✦ Read Proverbs 3:5-6 again. Was there a time this week when you were tempted to depend on your own understanding, instead of trusting in the Lord and choosing His way? How can you acknowledge God in all your ways? What does this look like?
- ✦ What difference does knowing that you have a Creator make for living your life? How would your thinking and behaving be different if you didn't believe that you had a good and wise Creator?
- ✦ **Activity:** As a family, read and discuss Proverbs 12:15: **"The way of the fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice."** Discuss the two paths—the way of the unbelieving fool who is self-confident and does what is right in his own eyes, and the way of the wise believer who has entrusted his life and future to Christ. Make a poster showing these two ways.

Parents celebrate both the sons and the daughters
that God gives them.

It's more important than ever to teach those sons and
daughters to celebrate who God made them, too.

Through this illustrated guide, parents can begin the discussion with both boys and girls about God's wise and beautiful design for them. Wrong ideas about gender identity are lining up to influence our children, and they are no longer too young to learn what it means to be men and women!

Sally Michael and Gary Steward partner to bring a male-and-female approach to the topic of gender roles—one that is united together under the authority of God's plan in His Word. Through examples and stories from Scripture, they present this difficult topic delicately and in a way that even the youngest children can understand.

Don't leave your children to be confused or ashamed of who they are—help them to rejoice in who God designed them to be!



“A user-friendly, Scripture-saturated guidebook for young children, while still challenging older children and even parents to embrace God's plan with joy and thanksgiving. An essential resource for Christian families in an increasingly sexualized and gender confused culture.”

—**Candice Watters**, Author, *Start Your Family and Get Married*

“This wonderful little book brims with wonder at the Lord's creative intelligence. It savors the way that Christ renews manhood and womanhood, calling us all to a better plan and a grander design than the world offers.”

—**Owen Strachan**, President, The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

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