

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabile.org.

Date: April 18, 2010

Title: “Why We Have Issues”

Text: Colossians 1:16, 17

Theme: God designed us to have need and dependency so that we would look to Him and lean on Him for our joy.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

Understanding A Gospel-Driven Christian Life

Date: April 18, 2010
 Title: "Why We Have Issues"
 Text: Colossians 1:16, 17
 Theme: God designed us to have need and dependency so that we would look to Him and lean on Him for our joy.

The Storyline:

God made humanity in "his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Because of this they reflect His character and carry out His design (Gen. 1:26). God created humanity with need and dependency. He never intended for them to live independent of Him. In fact, they are created so that they would only feel fulfilled, completed and at rest as they find this in Him. This entire study considers this thought.

The Problem:

We go to the shadow to do for us and be for us what only God can do and be.

Questions:

1. What "needs" do you have that you are attempting to meet in the shadow?
2. How do you find Jesus enough in this life and in the life to come?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know we are designed with need and He is our need-meeter.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Him for the meeting of our needs.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in His sufficiency.

Outline:

- I. We are designed with need and thus dependent

¹⁶ "**For by Him** all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--**all things have been created through Him and for Him.** ¹⁷ He is before all things, and **in Him all things hold together**" (Col. 1:16, 17).

"I designed you to depend on Me moment by moment, recognizing that *apart from Me you can do nothing.*"¹

God designed us to have meaning and significance only as we are aligned with Him. The idea of community and communion exists within the Trinity. **There is no concept of God apart from a Trinity and there is no humanity apart from God.** St. Augustine speaks to this truth in the following manner:

“Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.” – St. Augustine

II. The First Need-Fulfiller Is God

All that we are as immaterial and material beings are met in all that He is. It is for this reason you have the following declaration (Exod. 20:1-6).

¹ “Then God spoke all these words, saying, ² ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³ You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴ You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing loving-kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments’” (Exod. 20:1-6).

Although this speaks to the commandments given to the nation of Israel on Mount Sinai, its weight is found in why it was given. Humanity’s ultimate joy is sourced solely in who God is and what He does. He knows because of design that His creation cannot be “happy” any other way other than in Him. This is what God designed us to be. Nothing else apart from Him works. Life is broken unless it is properly fitted to God.

¹² “Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. ¹³ But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim ¹⁴ --for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God-- ¹⁵ otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, ¹⁶ and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods. ¹⁷ You shall make for yourself no molten gods” (Exod. 34:12-17).

¹ “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1, 2).

“‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty’” (Rev. 1:8).

III. The Problem

When this thought is considered, it makes the open rejection of God in the Garden and his continued rejection of Him all the more brazen. Thus God created us with need and dependency, and His intent is for us to find our need met in Him and for us to live our lives in dependency on Him. Our most fundamental problem is in our turning away from God and turning toward the shadow.

“There are times in our lives when we flee the very thing that will help us. There are times when we run away from God even though he is the source of all life, and can give us anything we need. We must return to God during these times of infidelity, and pray for the grace to see that it is God who is our first love, the one who gives us all good things, the greatest good of all.”²

All of creation is to be enjoyed. God puts in play through creation the means whereby He is seen in His creation. Yet when we look to the shadow to meet our needs and depend on the shadow, we will fail and we will fail miserably. The shadow can never be or do for us what only God can be or do. The shadow can never provide, it can only point.

- A. To “scratch” your “itch” apart from God leads to dysfunction, disease and despair.
- B. Only God can bring wholeness, health and hope to any event or individual.
- C. Unless and until you have your needs met in God you will never find satisfaction in the shadow.

IV. The Story

- A. It is only as you understand **The Story** of God and see yourself in **The Story** that life will have significance.
- B. As image bearers we “crave” and are “hard-wired” for . . .

“Some fascinating instinctual force drives salmon to swim upstream and birds to build nests and humans to seek relationships characterized by unmerited kindness.”³

1. Love
2. Acceptance
3. Forgiveness
4. Favor
5. Service

Put whatever you wish in any of these slots, but the idea is the same. There is something within the human condition that cries out for fulfillment. We are created with need and dependency and the ultimate and only fulfiller of this compelling call is in our triune God.

All that we are as a material and immaterial person resonates in the fulfillment in God. He meets us at our deepest point.

V. The Shadow

A. If we do not **first** find it in God, we will seek it in the **shadow**.

B. The shadow cannot **provide**, it can only **point**.

The shadow is void of substance. When the shadow is **looked to** for the meeting of needs, it rings hollow, like echoes in an empty valley. When the shadow is **leaned on** for support, it crumbles like thin ice incapable of bearing any real weight. The shadow is not wrong, but when used outside its design it will prove unsuccessful. Any time we turn to the shadow to do for us what only God can do for us we will destroy the shadow.

The issues we have as individuals and then in relationships are designed by God to push, pull and compel us to look to God. The issues are designed by God to speak to our dependency on Him. Thus, issues are not necessarily wrong. They become wrong when we seek to address them outside of God. It is not the issue that is wrong, but the means and manner in which we address the issue.

“Sin is a violation of God’s moral will, and grace is God’s decision to forgive our sins through the life and work of Jesus. I still hold to this view, but I am gaining new appreciation for the relational context of the Christian story. It’s not that God comes up with arbitrary rules and then rewards or punishes us based on our compliance. Rather, God is relational, and created us to be relational. The tragedy of sin is the breaking of our relationships with God and one another.”⁴

What are our “issues”? We might speak of our “issues” as the desire to receive love without condition, acceptance without requirement, forgiveness without limit, favor without merit and service without reward. I believe our issues are those “base needs” we believe exist in everyone everywhere at all times. Regardless as to how the “issues” are described, they are those innate cravings that make us distinctly “image bearers”. And whatever those issues are, they can only be properly addressed in God. When we look elsewhere, to the shadow, to meet our “needs” it will result in our demise.

All of my “sin” is simply a way of speaking to my needs and dependency. Every form of idolatry speaks to the meeting of our needs in an inappropriate manner. Every form of idolatry is an open rebellion against and rejection of God. Whatever that “thing” is you turn to for the meeting of your “felt needs” is a rejection of God. If you turn to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, work, family, relationships, ministry, extreme sports, etc., if those “things” are looked to for the meeting of your needs and dependency, then you are rejecting God. This does not negate the shadow, but it does cry out that the shadow can never be or do for you what only God can be or do and any time you turn to the shadow to meet your needs you are rejecting God.

VI. The Application – marriage

- A. A picture of the relationship Jesus Christ has with His church. It is a **SHADOW**.
- B. Your marriage can never be or do for you what only God can be or do for you.

³¹ “FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. ³² **This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church**” (Eph. 5:31, 32).

- C. If you do not find your love, acceptance, forgiveness and favor **in God first**, and you seek to have those needs met by your spouse, you will place on them a burden they were never designed to bear.
- D. You will **destroy your marriage**.
- E. **After addressing** those needs in God, **if you do not seek** to cultivate/nurture that same relationship with your spouse, **you will go outside** the marriage relationship to “scratch” that “itch” and you are placing yourself in a position of **compromise/temptation**. The threat against you is real. **Sin will be “crouching” at your door**.

In General:

Our frustration with others is largely the result of thinking too highly of oneself or of the other individual. What others (and we) are, are shadows and a shadow can never do or be what only God can do or be.

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But desire fulfilled is a tree of life” (Prov. 13:12).

I have not always understood this truth, but looking back as a Pastor I have seen this play out time and time again. I’ve seen men and women look to the pastoral staff as a means of speaking to their needs and dependencies and in every case, we “failed” them. The failure of the relationship was inevitable simply because they looked to the shadow to be and do for them what only God can be and do. This “perceived failure” creates their reality and they leave embittered.

We cannot place on the shadow a burden it was never designed to bear.

- F. I personally believe we have local churches to protect us from sin and enable us in the pursuit. When it appears the marriage shadow fails, then seek it in the local church without ceasing the nurturing and cultivation of your marriage.

God first and foremost, only and alone, must be the one to whom we turn for the meeting of our needs. After we've turned to God, He then has put into play the shadow to cultivate and encourage our dependency on Him. The shadow enables us to have a foretaste of His ongoing goodness and grace. Friend, we have been designed with "issues". **May we always turn to Him first and then may we savor the shadow only as it reflects Him, but never replacing Him.**

Shepherding the Sheep: (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. Right now allow the Holy Spirit to show you your need and dependency of Him.
2. Right now turn to Him to meet your needs.
3. Learn to rest in Him.
4. Learn to enjoy the shadow.

¹ [emphasis hers] Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling*, 108 [April 13].

² Chantal van der Plancke and Andre Knockaert, *15 days of prayer with Saint Catherine of Siena*, 110.

³ Mark R. McMinn, *Sin and Grace in Christian Counseling*, 9.

⁴ Mark R. McMinn, *Sin and Grace in Christian Counseling*, 12.