

JIMMY SCROGGINS
WITH LESLEE BENNETT

3

CIRCLES

GOSPEL CONVERSATIONS FOR LIFE

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



JIMMY SCROGGINS is the Lead Pastor of Family Church, where he has served since July 2008. He and his wife, Kristin, have eight children—James (Reilly), Daniel (Mary-Madison), Jeremiah, Isaac, Stephen, Anna Kate, Mary Claire, and Caleb. Under Jimmy’s leadership, Family Church has grown to a network of 12 neighborhood churches—nine in English, two in Spanish and one in Portuguese. Family Church is passionate about building families by helping them discover and pursue God’s design while carrying out their vision of taking the gospel to every person, in every family and neighborhood in South Florida. Jimmy is the coauthor of *Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations* and hosts the Church for the Rest of Us

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HOW TO USE

This Bible-study book provides six weeks of content for group and personal study. Each group session includes the following format to help facilitate meaningful dialogue and interaction during group time.

START

Every session contains an introduction to that week's session material, allowing for a natural transition into the biblical content for that week.

WATCH

Each session has a corresponding video to help explain the biblical content. Allow students to write down any notes and questions that may arise from the video and discuss them together before moving to the Discuss section.

DISCUSS

After watching the video, continue the study by moving to the Discuss section and working through the content provided there. The content in this section will expand on what was introduced in the video, offering depth and clarity to the biblical concepts being discussed.

APPLY

Following the Discuss section is the application section, allowing students the opportunity to work through the section of the 3 Circles diagram they just learned about.

PERSONAL STUDY

Each session provides three days of personal study, allowing students the opportunity to move deeper into the session material. With biblical teaching and questions for application, these sections challenge students to grow in their understanding of God's Word and to respond in faith.

INTRODUCTION

Three Circles is a tool to help us understand life and discover our God-given purpose. It is a way to think about life from a Christian perspective. It is a way to talk about life and the hope we have because of the gospel of Jesus. The three realities and three choices pictured on the next page are a way to process life as we know it.

This study will look at how this pattern plays out again and again through the lives of people in the Bible. We will also consider how it plays out again and again over the course of our lives.

The important fact to remember is that God is not asking us to always get it right; He is asking us to repent and keep on repenting. God is asking us to believe and keep on believing. No matter how many times we mess up, God is always offering us a way to recover and pursue His design for our lives.

REALITY #1 GOD'S DESIGN

God has a design for every aspect of our lives, and if we live according to God's design, then we have the opportunity to live in the arena of God's blessing. That is not to say that pursuing God's design exempts us from problems or difficult circumstances. But it is true that living life according to God's design is a better way to live than the alternatives.

CHOICE #1 SIN

God gave mankind a choice: to love God and live according to His design or do life our own way. When we do life our own way, the Bible calls this sin. Our choice is to sin or not to sin—to follow God's design or to pursue alternatives. The Bible points out that every one of us has sinned. We have a built-in tendency to violate God's design.

REALITY #2 BROKENNESS

When we operate our lives in ways that are contrary to God's design, we end up in the reality of brokenness. When something is broken it doesn't work the way it is supposed to work. A sinful life is a broken life. It isn't life the way God designed life to be. All of us have experienced brokenness and the awareness of our brokenness opens us up to the possibility of change.

CHOICE #2 REPENT & BELIEVE

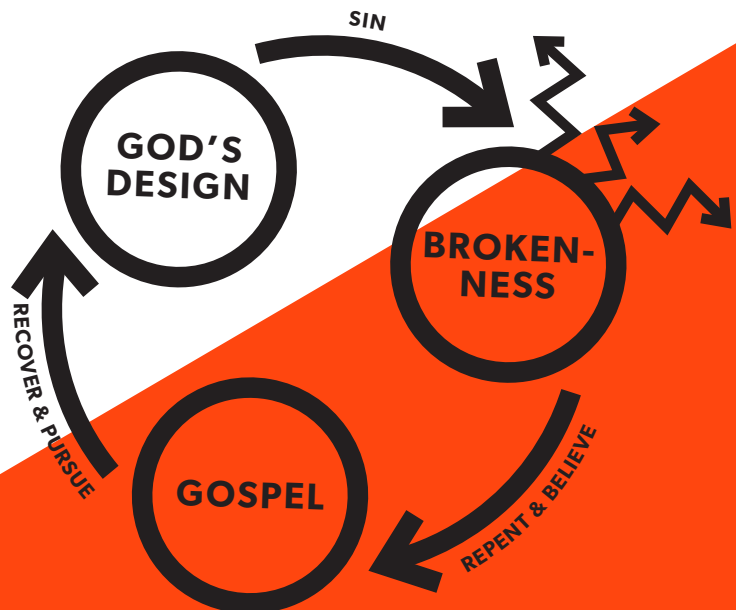
Instead of trying to fix our own brokenness, which inevitably leads to failure and discouragement, the Bible offers us the solution as to where lasting change is found. The Bible explains that ultimate change comes about when we turn away from the sin that created the brokenness we feel, and we turn towards Jesus who can forgive our sins and heal the broken places in our lives. According to the Bible, repentance and belief (faith) go hand in hand. We turn from sin (repentance), and we turn to Jesus believing He can heal our brokenness.

REALITY #3 GOSPEL


The gospel is the only solution to our brokenness. The gospel is simply this: Jesus died on the cross for our sins, He was buried, and God raised Him from the dead (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Every person is invited to repent and believe the gospel. If they do, they will be forgiven for all of their sins, Jesus will come into their hearts, and He will begin to heal the broken places in their lives. The Bible also promises that everyone who believes the gospel will have a home in heaven.

CHOICE #3 RECOVER & PURSUE

From the moment we believe the gospel, God gives us the power to recover and pursue His design for our lives. God does not change our past, He does not always change painful circumstances, and He does not always remove difficult consequences of our sinful choices. God does make a way for us to be reconciled to Him through the gospel (2 Cor. 5:21). We have the opportunity to recover and pursue God's design from where we are "right now." Some parts of our lives may be healed immediately, some may be healed over time, still others may not be healed until we get to heaven. But whatever the case, we find that pursuing God's design is a better way to live.



SESSION ONE



**GOD'S
DESIGN**



START

Our study starts with the reality that God has a design. In fact, we can clearly see from Genesis 1-2 that He has a design for all of creation. He created all things on purpose and for a purpose.

What was the last item you purchased that came with instructions? Did you read the instructions, take a quick glance at the pictures, or toss the instructions aside? Explain.

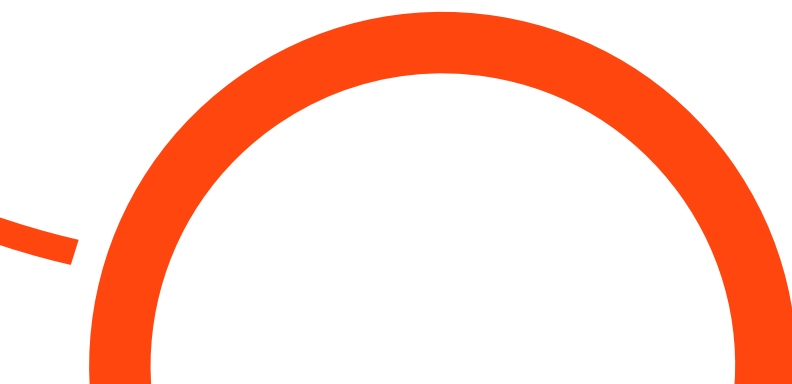
Is there any difference between the instructions for a simple Lego® set and the instructions on how to rebuild a diesel engine? If so, what is different?

What are some things with sets of instructions where not consulting them would be disastrous?

Some of us may wish for a detailed set of instructions on each aspect of our lives, no matter how small. But the truth is, our lives don't come with a detailed, step-by-step set of instructions. However, there is a manual—a set of instructions for how to live and relate to God and others. It explains God's purpose and design in creating us. It isn't simple like Lego instructions. Instead, it is more like that of the diesel engine—more involved and complex. But why shouldn't it be? We are, after all, complex persons who live in a complex world involved in complex relationships. Yet, God has not left us in the dark. God has a purpose and design for each of us, and that purpose and design is discovered through His Word.

WATCH

Watch the video "God's Design," before transitioning to the Discuss section.



DISCUSS

REALITY #1 GOD'S DESIGN FOR ADAM AND EVE

Read Genesis 2:7-8,15-18,24-25.

What do these verses tell us about the kind of relationship God originally designed for us to have with Him?

What was God's design for how Adam and Eve would relate to each other?

God interacted directly with Adam and Eve. He literally formed them with His hands. He talked to them. He even gave them jobs. He instructed Adam to work the garden of Eden and watch over everything in it. God wanted to have a close, personal relationship with Adam and Eve with no shame and no fear of rejection.

Likewise, Adam and Eve were made specifically for one another. They were alike and yet different. They were attracted to one another. They were immediately committed to one another. They were designed to have a close, personal relationship with no shame and no fear of rejection, providing the model for all future human relationships. Their lifelong union and commitment to one another, as well as their fellowship and intimacy with God, was a big part of God's plan and design for them. The first couple would face a choice.

CHOICE #1 TO SIN OR NOT TO SIN

Read Genesis 3:1-6.

What were God's instructions to Adam and Eve? (Look back at Gen. 2:16-17.)

Have you ever chosen to sin even though you knew you were violating God's design? How did you rationalize your decision to go against His design?

Satan, in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve to doubt the goodness of God. Adam failed to intervene in the serpent's deception, and Eve encouraged him to eat the forbidden fruit like she did. In this series of choices, Adam and Eve violated God's design. They violated the

relationship they were designed to have with God because they disobeyed His clear and loving instructions. They violated the relationship they had with one another because they failed to treat one another with trust, integrity, and honor. Finally, they violated the design for their relationship with creation because they ate from the tree that was forbidden to them. This series of sinful choices led to a series of painful consequences.

REALITY #2 ADAM AND EVE'S BROKENNESS

Brokenness is something with which we can all identify. Brokenness feels like guilt, shame, and regret. Brokenness hurts. If you have ever had a broken bone, you know that it hurts until it can be set right and begin to heal. If you have ever had a broken relationship, you know that it hurts until the relationship can be made right again. We experience brokenness when we sin and when others sin against us. Brokenness is a byproduct and a result of sinful choices.

Read Genesis 3:7-13.

Based on these verses, how did Adam and Eve react when they realized they had sinned?

What words or feelings would you associate with the brokenness you have personally experienced?

The story of the first sin is what theologians call "the fall." It is the moment when humans made the choice to disobey God. It is the moment when sin entered the world and distorted our relationship with our Creator. Instead of relating to God directly and intimately, Adam and Eve hid from God and were afraid of Him. Instead of honoring and trusting one another, Adam and Eve blamed one another. And for the first time, they were ashamed to be naked. Instead of relationships characterized by love and trust, the relationships in the story became full of fear and suspicion. Everything that was once declared good has now been broken. God responded by pronouncing a curse on the serpent and on mankind (Read also Gen. 3:14-20). Our relationship to God is broken but it isn't broken beyond repair. God made a way back to Him. It is a way foreshadowed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament through the person and work of Jesus.

Read Genesis 3:15.

This is the first place the Bible points to the coming of Jesus. God is speaking to the serpent, who is Satan, about the "seed of the woman," who is Jesus. Satan will motivate people to crucify Jesus, yet it is through His death, burial, and resurrection that Jesus will crush Satan forever.

CHOICE #2 **FIXING ADAM AND EVE'S BROKENNESS**

Remember back to how Adam and Eve felt shame in Genesis 3:7. Adam and Eve saw their nakedness, felt shame, and sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. This was man's first attempt to fix his own brokenness.

What are some ways people today try to cover their guilt, shame, and regret?

REALITY #3 **GOD COVERS ADAM AND EVE'S SIN**

Read Genesis 3:21.

The fig leaves weren't adequate to cover Adam and Eve's sin. The change, forgiveness, and healing they were looking for required something much more painful. Someone had to die in order to make things right (see Gen. 2:16-17). But God, in His mercy, allowed an animal sacrifice in the place of the physical death of Adam and Eve.

How does this foreshadow what we know about Jesus' death on the cross (see also Matt. 26:26-28; Heb. 9:22)?

CHOICE #3 **ADAM AND EVE RECOVER & PURSUE GOD'S DESIGN**

Adam and Eve sinned, and their sin had consequences. It had consequences for them and for all of humankind for all time. Yet God is a gracious, merciful, and compassionate. He made a way forward for them. Adam and Eve had to leave the garden, but they and all of their descendants (including us) are still able to recover and pursue His design for their lives.

Read Genesis 3:22-4:2.

How did Adam and Eve recover and pursue God's design for:

- **Their relationship with God (see also Gen. 3:21)?**
- **Their relationship with each other (Gen. 4:1)?**
- **Their relationship to creation (Gen. 4:2)?**

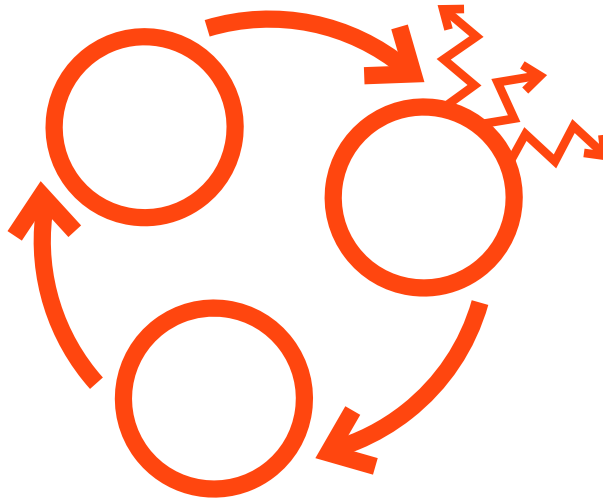
God took the initiative to cover Adam and Eve's sin in a way that allowed them to reestablish their relationship with Him. God still allowed them to be fruitful and multiply by giving them

many children (Gen. 5:4). God allowed them to work the ground and care for the animals. Although they were forgiven and God began to heal their brokenness, their sinful choices still had serious and lasting consequences. After the fall, everything became more difficult for Adam and Eve and all of humankind. It is only because of God's love and mercy that we are able to recover and pursue God's design.

What are some ways you see God's design coming together in your life?

APPLY

Fill out this diagram with the three realities and three choices mentioned on page 7.



Partner up and practice explaining the concept of God's design to your partner. (You might want to start with: I have come to believe that God has a purpose and design for our lives.)

GOD'S DESIGN FOR YOU

NOTES

We've seen how God had a design for all of creation. Out of nothing, He created everything. God created the heavens and the earth. He created the sun, moon, and all the stars. He created every living creature. When you stop to ponder the vast number and wide variety of God's creative acts, it's easy to think that God is too far away and far too busy to be concerned about you. Then we read the following Psalm penned by King David as he pondered God and His relationship to His people.

Read Psalm 139:13-16.

Knitting is a bit of a lost art. It requires meticulous attention to detail and laser focus on the part of one doing the knitting. Here, David draws an analogy to how God knits us together, making us into the exact person He wants us to be.

Circle the words (verbs) in Psalm 139:13-16 that describe God's intentionality in creating each person and write them here:

Verse 13 _____ and _____

Verse 14 _____

Verse 15 _____ and _____

Read Psalm 139:16.

*"Your eyes saw me when I was formless;
all my days were written in your book and
planned before a single one of them began."*

We see how God created, knit, made, and formed us in advance to do all He planned for us to do. Eric Liddell understood this. Raised by missionaries in China, Liddell evacuated to Scotland when he was just boy. He grew up to be a great runner who won a gold medal in the 1924 Olympics. In the Oscar-award winning movie, *Chariots of Fire*, Liddell says this to his sister who

GOD HAS PLANS FOR YOU

NOTES

If you come across a watch laying on the ground, you instinctively know that the watch is not just a random, natural collection of springs and gears. In other words, you know it didn't just come into being from nothing or by chance. When you see a watch, you know it has been designed. Moreover, you know it was designed to do something—tell time. In addition to fulfilling its purpose, watches are also made for style. They are made out of certain materials to look a certain way and make a particular statement. A watch is never designed or assembled on accident. A watch is always designed and assembled for a purpose. So were you! God had to teach a young man named Jeremiah that he was made for a purpose.

Read Jeremiah 1:5-10.

Jeremiah was an Old Testament prophet. He lived 600 years before Jesus. He preached against the worship of false gods. Jeremiah was such a strong preacher that other prophets came against him and tried to shut him down. There must have been times when Jeremiah doubted whether or not he was the right person for God to use in this way. Jeremiah felt like he was too young and inexperienced to do big things for God. God made it clear to Jeremiah that he was doing what God created him to do.

God said something similar to the apostle Paul in the New Testament:

“But when God, who from my mother’s womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles...” (Gal. 1:15-16a)

Paul knew that he was called from his mother’s womb to preach the gospel. That truth must have encouraged Paul when he felt inadequate or when his message was not well received. You might be surprised to know that if you are a believer, God says something similar about you. He says:

“For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do” (Eph. 2:8-10).

According to verse 10, why are you “created in Christ Jesus”?

When did God determine the work you are supposed to do?

CHALLENGE OF THE DAY

If you could only finish this sentence with one thing, what would it be? I am created in Christ Jesus to _____.

Talk to a parent, teacher, coach, or mentor and ask them what ways God has uniquely designed you. Ask them how they see God using your unique design in the lives of others.

NOTES

Lined area for taking notes, consisting of multiple horizontal lines.

GOD BELIEVES IN YOU

NOTES

Many people struggle to believe that God has designed them for important purposes. This struggle is especially difficult for students who are in middle school, high school, and college. There are plenty of reasons for many of us to see ourselves as inadequate or unworthy for God's purposes. Some of us struggle with comparing ourselves to others. We see other people who are better looking or more talented or more popular, or who just seem to have it more together than we do. Some of us struggle because we have been criticized or belittled. Whatever the case, many people struggle to believe that God actually loves them, believes in them, and created them for a purpose.

Joseph is a character in the Bible who had many reasons to struggle with confidence in God. You can read his life story in Genesis 37-50. Joseph was belittled and criticized by his older brothers. His relationship with his brothers deteriorated to the point that they kidnapped him, faked his death, and sold him into slavery in another country. As a slave, he was falsely accused of sexual assault and thrown into prison. In prison, he was forgotten and betrayed by people who owed him favors. Even after Joseph was released from prison and elevated to an important political position in Egypt, he still had to operate in a corrupt system and under the heavy influence of a false religion. But instead of allowing criticism, false accusations, betrayal, isolation, and loneliness to shake his confidence in God, Joseph believed that God was at work through it all. And He was.

In *Toy Story 4*, Bonnie's first day of kindergarten is very difficult. She doesn't connect with the other kids and she ends up sitting at a table by herself, isolated and lonely. Given the opportunity to make a craft, Bonnie reaches into the trash can, pulls out a spork, and makes a doll from the spork, using googly eyes, pipe cleaners, and pieces of a tongue depressor. She names her new doll Forky. She immediately loves Forky and wants Forky to be with her at all times. Forky, however, doesn't

understand Bonnie’s affection for him nor Bonnie’s desire to have a friendship with him. Throughout the movie, Forky is always trying to get away from Bonnie and get back into the trash can. In one of the most poignant lines of the movie, Forky says, “I’m not a toy, I was made for soups, salads, maybe chili, and then the trash.”² Through all of the adventures portrayed in *Toy Story 4*, Forky is eventually persuaded that Bonnie loves him and wants him. He begins to believe that he’s not trash after all. The reason this element of the movie resonates is because so many people have similar thoughts about themselves. They think, “I can’t be significant, valuable, or purposeful because I am inadequate or unworthy.” Believers in Jesus need to remember that through the gospel we have been made worthy and we have been given a purpose. God made us and He wants a relationship with us. Awareness of this truth should give us confidence to pursue the purposes for which God created us.

NOTES

CHALLENGE OF THE DAY

Look up the following verses as you seek to combat the following struggles or feelings.

- **Inadequacy: Philippians 4:13**
- **Unworthiness: Hebrews 4:15-16**
- **Comparing myself to others: Galatians 1:10**
- **Criticism: 1 Peter 2:23**
- **Fear of failure: Isaiah 41:10**