When a person looks around this amazing world we live in, it is easy to see that it was designed by God.

- The leaves on trees
- Flowers
- The human body

Since I found a feather recently I thought I would investigate the design of feathers. From doing research I discovered

- There are over twelve different types of feathers with perhaps the best known type being the flight feather
- The structure of a flight feather is amazing
  o It has a large **shaft** that is hallow and strong (the shaft is also called the quill or vein)
  o The shaft is curved or bowed slightly back
  o The shaft also tapers from larger next to the bird’s body to smaller at the tip of the feather
  o The shaft has **barbs** coming off it at a diagonal angle toward the tip of the feather
  o The barbs have **barbules** coming off of them
  o The barbules have tiny **hooks** on them that connect to the adjacent barb giving the appearance that the wing is one piece
  o The barbs are thus hooked together making the entire feather function as a single unit
  o Under certain conditions like extremely rough flying weather, the hooks linking the barbs together can come loose so that the bird’s wings are not damaged. The hooks can be reattached when the bird preens itself
The feathers are also designed to give lift to the bird when it flies so the barbs or branches on the leading edge of the feather are shorter than the barbs or branches on the rear of the feather. Flight feathers are designed to allow the air on the top of the feather to flow faster than air underneath the feather creating lift. Feathers are also designed to reduce turbulence in flight. Tendons in the bird allow the bird to do various maneuvers with the wing needed for takeoff and landing. In short the flight feathers of a bird show that birds are perfectly designed to fly.

This brings to mind Romans 1:20. The verse indicates that when people see the world around them and the incredible way it is designed and still reject God, they are without excuse. Listen to Romans 1:20 (NASB), “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

In the same way that God designed things to work well in the physical realm, He divinely designed things to function well in the spiritual realm. To understand this it is helpful to define “a design.” A design is defined by Webster’s dictionary as “the order or arrangement of the components or details of something in accordance with a plan.” In other words to say that God has a design for the Christian life is to say that He has arranged various components and details of the Christian life in accordance with a plan to help Christians be successful. If we bring our lives into conformity with God’s divine design we can be assured that we will function the way God intended us to function.

In this regard, today I want to show you what I call “The Divine Design for the Christian Life.” God’s design is in the form of a cross. Just as Jesus died as a sacrifice for us on the cross, we have the privilege of being living sacrifices for Him.
Romans 12:1 (NASB)
1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Notice that we are to present our bodies to God. If He gets our bodies He gets all of us because our bodies house our spirit, soul, and mind. Where Jesus died, we get to live and become living sacrifices. And not just living sacrifices, but holy sacrifices. In other words whatever we do is to be pure with pure motives and actions.

A cross has a vertical axis representing our vertical relationship with God. It also has a horizontal axis representing our horizontal relationship with one another. We reach up to God and out to our fellow man.

As we look at God’s design, I invite each of us to as the question of ourselves as to how we are measuring up. In other words is each part of the design true of our lives?

Let’s begin with our vertical relationship with God because this is foundational to the Christian life.

Worship
As Christian we are to worship God. There are many verses on worship. Here are two encouraging ones.

Psalm 2:11 - Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling.
Psalms 95:6 - Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.
It is appropriate that the first part of God’s design for the Christian life is to worship Him. Notice that Psalm 2:11 indicates we are to worship reverently. Next we are to rejoice when we worship Him. We are to come before Him with great joy in our hearts for all He has done for us. But the rejoicing and reverence are to be done with trembling; a sense of fear. Even though God is our friend, He is Almighty God. Do you come to worship on Sunday with an attitude of deep reverence, with a joyful heart that is thankful, and do it all with a sense of appropriate fear for who God is. Or do you come with a casual attitude more concerned about the friends you will see rather than the God who deserves your true worship?

The next verse Psalm 95:3 speaks of coming to God in humility as we bow down and kneel before our maker.

We can worship God individually, but we are also to do it corporately. It was the pattern of the early church to gather together to worship God. That is what we still do on Sunday mornings.

I was talking to someone recently who claimed to be a Christian and I asked them what church they attended. They said they didn’t go to church even though they believed in God. I told them that Scripture tells us not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together. I also told them the story about the farmer who had not been in church… After hearing the illustration the person said, ‘You make an interesting point.’

If we want to have a healthy Christian life, we need to be committed to regular weekly worship with other believers. It is at worship:
- Where people can praise God together through song
- Where they can participate in corporate prayer
- Where they can greet and encourage fellow Christians
- Where they hear messages to encourage them in their Christian walk
- Where they can learn about new prayer needs
- Where they meet new believers
- Where they take communion together

Worship is an essential part of the design for the Christian life. If we want to get in line with God’s will, we need to make the commitment to worship God regularly. That is what happens in thousands of churches every Sunday. It would seem this morning that since you are here, you are doing well in this regard.

Prayer
A second aspect of God’s design on the vertical axis is prayer. We send our prayers up to God. One set of verses which address prayer are the favorite verses of many Christians.

Philippians 4:6-7 - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 - Pray without ceasing.

Rather than being anxious about things we are to take them to the Lord in order to receive His inner peace that surpasses all comprehension. This peace will guard our minds. Indeed we are to pray without ceasing,
to be in an attitude of prayer every moment of every day ready to fire up prayers at a moment’s notice.

Prayer certainly is a vital part of the Christian life. Jesus taught His disciples to pray what we often refer to as the Lord’s prayer or the Disciple’s prayer which includes the facets of:

- Praise – our Father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name
- Progress – Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
- Provision – Give us this day our daily bread
- Purity – And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors
- Protection – And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil
- Praise – For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever AMEN

Prayer is our lifeline to God. Through prayer:

- We get to praise God
- We get to confess sin
- We get to lift up each other’s needs before God
- We get to experience the peace that passes understanding
- We get to ask for things like wisdom and strength
- We get to see God answer our prayers

Prayer is an awesome privilege. Rather than not wanting to hear from us, God invites us to pray. What a personal God we serve!!!

And when we pray sometimes we get the green light and God quickly answers our prayers in the affirmative. Sometimes we get the red light,
where God says no, and does not give us the answer we desire. After all, He knows best. Sometimes we get the yellow light where he says wait. Whatever light we get, God answers prayer.

The Word
Just as we reach up to God through worship and prayer, God reaches down to us through His Word.

2 Timothy 2:15 states, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

We are to present ourselves approved to God as workman who know His Word and handle it correctly. It takes a lot of work to become proficient in the Word. There are no shortcuts. Each person must work hard by studying the Word and meditating on it to know what it says and means.

Psalm 119:11 states, “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.

God wants us to treasure His Word in our hearts. To treasure means to hold something in high esteem; to cherish it. In order to treasure the Word like that we have to get it into our minds first and then transfer it to our heart where our true value system resides.

Not only do we have the privilege of treasuring God’s Word in our hearts, but God’s Word is a treasure. Through it:

- We learn God’s will in different areas of life
We gain great wisdom
Our lives are transformed as we renew our minds with it

The Holy Spirit
Besides sending His Word down to us, God also sends His Spirit. The Christian life is more than worship, prayer and studying God’s Word. Part of God’s design for the Christian life is for Christians to learn to “walk by” which means “to live moment by moment in” the power of the Spirit. After all, as Christians we are indwelt by the Spirit when we ask Christ into our lives. We need to hear His promptings as He works through our conscience and prompts us in the depth of our Spirit to do certain things and not do others.

Galatians 5:16 states, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

When we are controlled by the Spirit we don’t fall into sin by carrying out the desire of our flesh. The Spirit will prompt us in our consciences to do the right thing and avoid the wrong.

The Spirit also produces amazing fruit in our lives that is attractive to others. Galatians 5:22-23 states, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” It is the Spirit who makes us the kind of person that others want to be around. He also gives us spiritual gifts that enable us to serve one another better.

There are four commands regarding the Spirit. Two are stated in a positive manner and two are stated in a negative manner. They help us
obey His promptings. The commands are:

- Be filled with the Spirit – be controlled by the Spirit’s promptings
- Walk by the Spirit - live for Him every step you take
- Don’t grieve the Spirit – don’t make Him sad by disobeying Him
- Don’t quench the Spirit – don’t try to put out His internal fire

Learning to live in the power of the Holy Spirit is an important part of God’s design for the Christian life. One way to help this happen is to pray each day something like, “Lord, help me listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in my life today. Help me obey those promptings whether it is to do something He wants me to do, or to avoid something He wants me to avoid. Help me walk with You.”

Next let’s shift from the vertical axis of God’s divine design to the horizontal axis. The first element on the horizontal is fellowship.

**Fellowship**
Fellowship is the Greek word *koinonia*. In worship believers reach up to God. In fellowship they reach out to one another. Fellowship happens best in a small group setting where people interact, share, pray for each other and build relationships. *Acts 2:42 states,* “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Fellowship is actually defined in this verse as “the breaking of bread and prayer.” The early Christians devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship.” The next phrase in the verse is an appositive which explains what fellowship is. The breaking of bread is where
people share food (perhaps a meal) together and talk to each other to find out how each person is doing; “How are the kids? How’s the job? How are you feeling?” Based on the sharing the next step in fellowship is to pray for each other.

**Hebrews 10:25** states, “Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

This verse applies both to worship and fellowship. Gathering together to encourage one another.

To see if a person is in fellowship he can simply ask himself am I involved in some kind of small group ministry life a Bible study or Care Group, where I am growing together with other Christians. Being in a small group allows a person:
- To build relationships with other Christians
- To share prayer needs and to pray for the needs of others
- To ask questions and get the benefit of group interaction
- To have the need for relationship met. God made us relational people. Often those who don’t get involved in small group ministry don’t stick around the church because they don’t feel connected

**Giving**
Someone might say that this next part of God’s design might go on the vertical axis, but it is something we do when we are in community, so I am placing it on the horizontal axis. Part of God’s plan for every Christian is that they give to the Lord’s work. That’s why we take offerings on Sunday.
Proverbs 3:9-10 states, “9 Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.”

Through giving we honor God from our wealth. Giving is to be from the first of what we get, not from the leftovers. The example in the Old Testament was the tithe, the giving of a tenth. The tithe was instituted before the Law was given, so it is my belief that even though we are not obligated to keep the Jewish Law as Christians, we still are obligated to tithe. We’ll take a closer look at the tithe in another message. Also in the Old Testament was the concept of giving special offerings over and above the tithe when a giver was led to do so. Offering above the tithe were voluntary. A few times a year we challenge the congregation with offerings for special projects. These are not mandatory, but the tithe is something God requires.

2 Corinthians 9:7 states, “Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” This verse encourages Christians to purpose in their hearts to give, not grudgingly or under compulsion. God loves a cheerful giver.

When people give the way they should through tithes and offerings, there is money to maintain facilities, pay staff and support missions. When people choose not to give the way they should, the church has financial challenges.

Giving:
- Gives us the privilege of supporting God’s work
- Gives people a stake in the life of the church
- Opens God’s blessing into a person’s life. God promises to bless those who honor Him with their finances.

Giving is an important part of God’s divine design.

**Service**

The next part of God’s divine design on the horizontal axis is service. We are to serve in ministry, which many times will be in the church. Notice that Galatians 5:13 states, “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

As Christians we are free in Christ, but we are not to turn our freedom into feeding our flesh. Instead out of gratitude for what God has done for us, we are to serve one another.

Romans 12:6 goes on to say, “Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly.”

Simply put, every believer should serve somewhere in ministry through exercising the Spiritual gifts God has given to them.

The next element in God’s design for Christians is outreach.

**Outreach**

Where service is often serving our fellow Christians, outreach is reaching out to those who don’t know Christ in an effort to share Christ’s love and gospel with them in hopes they will place their faith in
Christ. And the great news is that God empowers us to reach out. **Acts 1:8** states ‘but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.’” These are Jesus’ words to His followers that He would send the Holy Spirit to empower them to be His witnesses.

Jesus even gave the Great Commission in **Matthew 28:19**, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit…”

Every Christian should be sharing his faith as God gives the opportunity.

**Final Thoughts**
This is God’s design. Each facet or element is important. On the vertical axis:

- Worship keeps our relationship with God strong. When we worship we acknowledge Him as God and we as His servants.
- Prayer keeps us communicating with God and calling out to Him with praises and petitions.
- The Word keeps us filling our hearts with His truth. It renews our minds and helps transform our lives.
- The Holy Spirit takes the Word that we have planted in our hearts and uses it to prompt us to do or not do certain things.

On the horizontal axis;

- Fellowship builds our relationships with other Christians as we
share and pray for one another.
- Giving helps us fund God’s church so the local church is strong and becomes an oasis in the midst of a difficult world.
- Service allows us to exercise our spiritual gifts as we serve one another in ministry.
- Outreach allows us to reach a lost world with the love and gospel of Christ.

God’s design is perfect!

A person can evaluate his own life, by laying God’s design over his own life to see how he measures up. On the vertical axis a person can ask himself, “Am I worshipping God, praying to Him, spending significant time in the His Word and learning to walk more closely in the Spirit? On the horizontal axis he can ask himself, “Am I in fellowship in a small group, giving to the Lord’s work, serving in a ministry and reaching out to the lost? If the answer is in the affirmative, there is a strong probability that the person has a strong walk with God.

I pray that we will learn and live God’s divine design for our lives that we may be used mightily for the sake of His kingdom.