

find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him – for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work – this is a gift of God (Ecclesiastes 5:18-19).

A man can do nothing more satisfying than fully surrender his life to God's plan and design for him. All of the desires and ambitions that lead us away from God are dead end streets – many lead through dry deserts, others over the side of cliffs. Why not commit your heart to the way of the Lord and revel in the joy and contentment only He can provide?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Look up the verses in the section, "Design or Chance?" and carefully consider these questions:

- To whom do you belong?
- Does anything happen outside of God's will?
- Will we become like Jesus?
- Do our lives unfold by design or chance?

What "chance" is there that the circumstances of your life are chaos rather than by design?

2. Are you living in a Comfort Zone or a Pressure Zone? Do you need to make any changes?

3. Review the list of "methods" of self-examination. Which of these do you currently practice? Which are methods you would like to add? How will you do that?

4. Have you been pursuing a "master plan" of your own or "The Master's Plan"? What adjustments should you make?

Business leader, author, and speaker, Patrick Morley helps men to think more deeply about their lives, to be reconciled with Christ, and to be equipped for a larger impact on the world.

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How to Discover Your Design

Patrick Morley

Adapted from *The Seven Seasons of a Man's Life* and *Two Part Harmony*, Thomas Nelson Publishers

A tiny caterpillar hatches from an egg, eats several times his weight each day, sheds his skin four or five times, then hides himself inside a hard-shell cocoon.

Inside the shell a metamorphosis takes place, and everything about him changes except his internal organs. One day not long after, a lovely butterfly cracks through the shell, dries its wings for a hour or so, then flits about from flower to flower, drinking nectar. As the little creature eats, grains of pollen cling to its body which rub off at the next stop, pollinating the flowers.

It's a wild ride! From the caterpillar's point of view his brief life must look like utter chaos! But we can see something it can't see – we can see that what appears to be chaos is actually a master design God has for the life of that little worm. Our lives are like that, too.

DESIGN OR CHANCE?

What often appears to us as chaos or chance is not. Instead, God is working out His plan for our lives according to a design. God has a master design for each of our lives. Consider these thoughts:

1. *Our lives belong to Him.*

A man's life is not his own (Jeremiah 10:23)

We are like clay in the potter's hand (Jeremiah 18:1-6)

2. *God is in charge, and He is good.*

Everything happens according to His will (Ephesians 1:11)

Not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from His will (Mat. 10:29)

3. *His design for us is to become like Jesus.*

We are being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29)

We should live for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:15)

4. *God will finish what He started.*

He who began a good work in us will complete it (Philippians 1:6)

God works in us to will and do His good pleasure (Ephesians 2:13)

We may not know the specifics of the future, but we do know what we will become. We will become like Christ.

God has “designed” each of us with certain aptitudes, abilities, capacities, and learned skills. Romans 12:6 TLB says, “God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well.”

If you are 5’ 6” tall, have a 6” vertical leap, and can’t dribble, you may want to consider accounting. There are some things God designs us to do, and some things He assigns to the design of others. It is a wise man who settles this issue.

COMFORT ZONE VERSUS PRESSURE ZONE

God intends for us to live in peace with each other, to lead a quiet life, to mind our own business, to be godly husbands, and to rise to our level of competence. In short, God has in mind a *comfort zone* for each of us in which we can love, trust, serve, and obey Him. This is a glorious calling, a place of contentment and fulfillment.

But we often become dissatisfied. Desires battle within us to stretch for more. Our flesh fans our appetites into a roaring blaze of greed and ambition. The culture sucks us into its materialistic, valueless vortex. We are ever striving to achieve the next higher rung. The Peter Principle takes effect: We rise to the level of our incompetence.

If you are 5’6” tall, have a 6” vertical leap, and can’t dribble, you may want to consider accounting.

When we achieve that next level, we quickly adjust our spending and lifestyle to the higher notch, buy a bigger house, take a bigger mortgage. But we don’t have the natural ability and learned skill to support our new rank.. We feel the pinch. We begin to feel the pressure. Our pride persuades us we cannot lower our lifestyle, but neither are we able to easily sustain it. We have borrowed our way into a pressure cooker. The only two ways to support our lifestyles are *income* and *debt*. Now the debt payments add to the pressure we were already feeling. We have moved from the *comfort zone* into the *pressure zone*.

When we live in the *pressure zone* we lose our inner peace, damage our fellowship with God, poison our relationships with our fellow man, and risk bringing our marriages crashing down. Wouldn’t it make more sense to learn and accept God’s design? How can we discover God’s design?

Here are two suggestions:

SELF EXAMINATION

First, self-examination is a valuable tool to help us discover God’s design. How do we actually “do” self-examination?

Cultivate an active mind. Read, think, file interesting ideas, teach others, and write or journal about what you learn. Synthesize and internalize.

Several of the best “methods” of self-examination include:

1. Having an Active Church Involvement
2. Having a Consistent Quiet Time
3. Belonging to an Organized Bible Study
4. Being in an Accountability Group
5. Going on a Private Retreat
6. Regularly Attending Conferences/Seminars
7. Reading and Underlining Books/Workbooks

THE MASTER PLAN VERSUS THE MASTER’S PLAN

A second key issue for all men is whether or not they will fully surrender their lives to God’s plan for them – to the plan for which the Master “designed” them. Many men pursue a *master plan*, but not the *Master’s Plan*. Here’s the difference...

<i>a master plan brings:</i>	<i>The Master’s Plan offers:</i>
accomplishment	Accomplishment
comfort	Comfort
contentment	Contentment

Why settle for “lower case” living? Learn – and accept – God’s design for your life. You are God’s crowning achievement. You are His most excellent creation. You are the full expression of God’s creative genius. God was at His very best when He made you.

Too often we’re interested in the success of our *goal*. God’s interested in the success of our *soul*. We need to reorient our priorities so that we value the things that are important to God. How good it is to be able to accept our lot in life, concentrating on God’s design for us:

- So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him? (Ecclesiastes 3:22).
- Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to