

My D.E.S.I.G.N. for Ministry

(Part 1)

Disclaimer: The following are Dr. Jeff Stott's sermon notes and manuscript. They have not been carefully proofed for spelling or grammar. They are printed and given "as is." Unless noted, all Scripture quotes are from the New International Version.

Today we begin looking at how God designed you for ministry. We are going to examine how God designs you for ministry today and next Sunday. Then next Sunday night we are going to have a DESIGN Workshop to help you personalize these truths into your life. Once you understand who God made you to be, then you will understand what God made you to do.

The principle under girding these two messages can be stated simply as, "Your ministry is determined by your makeup." What God made you to be determines what God intends for you to do. You will understand the purpose you were created for when you understand the kind of person you are.

God is consistent in His plan for each of our lives. He would not give you inborn talents and a personality, a spiritual gift, and all sorts of life experiences and then not use them. As you discover your design for ministry you will discover your place of ministry.

Here at Southside we are beginning a shift to focus on an individual approach to ministry rather than an institutional approach. An *institutional approach* is when you center it around the church and people are just seen as resources. Most churches act this way. They make up a large list of jobs that need to be done. Then they go find people to fill the jobs whether they match or not. They say, "We've got an institution here and we've got things to do and therefore we're going to fit people into the jobs and they pressure people to take any job in the church" whether they fit or not. They are looking for a warm body.

At Southside we are trying to do something a little different. We are taking an *individual approach*. We center it around people and each person's uniqueness. We don't force a square peg into a round hole. Our goal is not to build a religious institution, but to build

fully devoted Believers serving Christ according to how God designed them. We will still have a list of ministry opportunities through the church, but we want to do our best to help you find a place of service that you are designed for.

To help do that you need to know your DESIGN for ministry. There are six elements to your design for ministry. We will look at the first three today.

D... Desire: What ministry would I love to do?

The first element of how God designed you for ministry deals with your **desire**. This answers the question, “What ministry would you love to do?” As a Believer, God has given you a heart and passion for a specific kind of ministry. This is why you are not interested in every ministry. This is why you have a passion for Ministry A, but not Ministry B. Let me show you why this is.

Look at **Philippians 2:13** which says, “It is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose” (NIV). Notice the word “will.” That refers to your will, your desire, and your choice. It is God who works in you to help you have the passion, the desire, and the will He wants you to have in order for you to get involved in what He wants you involved in regarding ministry. God has a good purpose and goal in mind and He wants to use you in that purpose but you have to have the desire to get involved before you will act upon that good purpose of God. So God does a work in you in order to create the desire and will you need to have in order do what He wants you to do. So “it is God who works in you” to give you the will and desire to accomplish His good purpose. Whatever ministry God wants you to do He is going to give you the will to do it.

Let’s look at another verse. In **Ezra 1:5** we are told that “everyone whose heart God had moved – prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.” God had something He wanted done, so He moved up on some people’s hearts to get it done. God had given some people a desire to build the House of the Lord in Jerusalem. He didn’t give that to everyone. Not everyone had that desire, but some did. That desire was given to them by the Lord. The reason they wanted to build that house was because God stirred their heart to do so. He gave them a desire to do it.

Proverbs 21:1 says, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases.” If God can do that with a king’s heart, then He can do that with your heart. Have you ever wondered why you will hear about a ministry opportunity but it does not grab your attention at all? You are not drawn to it at all? One reason could be that God is not directing your heart and desire toward that ministry. God does not want you to be involved in that ministry, because it’s the next ministry opportunity that will grab your attention and that’s the one God wants you involved in.

Since we are talking about king’s and people in authority and God directing their heart let me add a thought here. Over the years as a pastor someone will come to me or the ministerial staff with a ministry idea or opportunity. We hear the ministry, we pray about it, discuss it and we don’t sense God leading us in that direction. Some people not understanding the “Desire Principle” perceive our decision as if we don’t care about their ministry or them, when in reality the bottom line is God didn’t place it on our heart for whatever reason. So if you come to us with an awesome idea and the leadership doesn’t seem excited about it as you are don’t take it as a personal rejection, it may be that God is not ready for the church to focus on that particular ministry right now.

Let’s look at one more Scripture about God giving us the desires we have. **Psalm 37:4** says, “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” This does not mean that you get what you want, but God gives you the want that you need. As you delight yourself in the Lord your desires begin to change. You are no longer wanting this, you are now wanting that. Your desire for this has now changed to a desire for that. You are no longer interested in this, but you are now interested in that. Now why? Because as you have “delighted yourself in the Lord” over the years your heart, mind, passions, and desires begin to change and line up with what God wants you to have. You begin to desire the things that God wants you to desire.

This can happen in your ministry. For example, let’s say you have been serving in the student ministry for years. You loved it. God has used you abundantly over the years, but recently your desire for the youth ministry has begun to change. You are not as interested in doing youth ministry as much because God has given you a desire to minister in the Senior Adult ministry. Ten years ago you might have said that would never happen because you loved serving in the youth ministry, but now you have a heart and

desire for the Senior Adult ministry. When you delight yourself in the Lord, God will give you the desire He wants you to have including in the area of ministry He wants you to serve in. If God wants you to serve in the children's ministry, then He is going to give you a desire for it. If He wants you to serve in CenterCross ministries then He will give you a desire for it. He wants you to be a missionary then He is going to give you a desire for it.

So my question is, what ministry would you love to do? Whatever ministry you are excited about and would love to be a part of is a strong indication of where God may be leading you to serve.

What are some implications from all this:

1. **Not everyone will desire the same ministry.** You might be excited about the choir ministry while someone else is excited about the counseling ministry.
2. **Don't be offended when someone else does not care about your ministry as much as you do.** It may be that God has not placed it on their heart because He has a different purpose for them.
3. **Your desire for ministry may change over the years because God is moving you from one ministry to another.** Sometimes God will remove one desire and replace it for another. Just because you have been doing something for twenty years does not mean you are suppose to do it for another twenty.
4. **If you have a strong desire to serve in a particular ministry it may be an indication that God wants you to serve there.** If you have a desire to serve in a Disaster Relief Ministry and that would excite you to serve others in that way, then pay attention to that because God may be leading you in that direction.
5. **Don't rely just on your desire,** there are other factors to consider such as your spiritual giftedness, the personality God gave you, the experiences God's has allowed you to encounter, your current level of maturity, and the natural abilities and skills God has allowed you to acquire. Which we will look at all of those by the end of next week.

Questions to consider:

Some questions you need to ask yourself and pray about are...

1. What would I love to do the most in God's kingdom?
2. Who would I love to work with the most (age, type, race, social, etc.)?
3. Church issues, ministries, and possible needs that excite or concern me the most?
4. If I knew I couldn't fail, what would I attempt to do for God with my life?

The answers to those questions will give you insight to where God may want you to serve or to start a ministry. Your answer to those questions will reflect the kind of desire you have for ministry.

E... Experiences: What has God guided me through?

When it comes to ministry and working in the kingdom of God we have seen that God will give you a desire for a certain area of ministry. As you delight yourself in the Lord, He gives you a desire for where He wants you to serve. Not only should you be aware of your passion for ministry, but you need to look at what you have experienced.

This brings us to our next factor regarding our design for ministry. **Our experiences**. This answers the question, "What has God guided me through?" What has God allowed in my life good and bad, easy and hard that He wants to use in His ministry through me?

Does God use your past and what you have been through in ministry? Yes He does. Let me show you God's Word on this subject? Let's look at **Romans 8:28** which says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." One of the truths in that verse is "that in all things God" is able to pull everything together "for the good of those who love Him." He is able to synergize and mix together the good times of your life and the bad times of your life and produce something wonderful in you and out of you. Because God is God, He is able to take all those bad times in your life and all those good times in your life and use them for your good. That means God never wastes a hurt. He never squanders a pain. He does not

fritter away your grief or sorrow. God works for the good of those who love Him “in all things.”

Let me show another Word from God on this. Look at **Philippians 1:12**, “Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.” What happened to Paul? What is Paul talking about here? He is talking about being placed in prison. At this time Paul was not in a dungeon, but under house arrest. However, he did have a Roman soldier chained to him 24 hours a day. He had no privacy when he ate, when he slept, when he wrote, when he prayed, or when he taught about Jesus when people came to visit him. This went on for two years, but at the same time it made it impossible for the Roman soldiers guarding him to avoid hearing the gospel and witnessing Paul’s remarkable Christlikeness which resulted in some of them coming to know Christ.

God will allow some bad experiences to happen to good people knowing that those bad experiences will actually result in advancing the gospel. God can and will take your present experiences and past experiences and use them to minister to others and promote the good news about Jesus Christ.

From Romans 8:28 we have seen that God can take all your experiences and pull them together for your good. From Philippians 1:12 we have seen that God can take a bad experience in your life and turn it around for the advancement of the gospel. Now remember, we are looking at how God designed you for ministry. We are looking at how God uses your experiences to minister to others. To really nail this down I want you to look at **2 Corinthians 1:3**, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, (4) who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” Since our greatest life messages come out of our weaknesses and pains, not our strengths and successes, we should pay close attention to what we’ve learned in the “school of hard knocks.” God never wastes a hurt! He never throws away a pain! There is always a purpose in your past and there is always a message in the misery. God can take those ugly times in your life whether you caused them or someone else caused them and use them to comfort others in your life.

God will allow you to go through some difficult times, face problems, and various valleys of heartache. During those times God comforts you in all those troubles. He gives you strength. He gives you hope. He gives you wisdom and encouragement through them all. Once you come through these experiences God wants to use you to bring comfort to those who are going through troubling times. God wants you to take the comfort you received from Him and pass it on to those who need it now in your life.

Here is what this looks like in real life.

- A parent who lost their child a few years ago comforts the parents who lost their child yesterday.
- A young man who was raised in an alcoholic home encourages the teenager who currently lives in an alcoholic home.
- A young lady who becomes pregnant out of wedlock is strengthened and given hope by an older Christian lady who went through the same thing when she was young.

This list is endless. God has brought you through some things and allowed you to go through things that He intends to use in your life to be a blessing and a source of strength to others.

The experiences that God allows into your life become a part of your divine design for ministry. They become indicators of how God wants to use you.

We see this in Biblical examples like **David**. Before David faced Goliath God allowed him to face and defeat a lion and a bear with that sling shot. Before **Moses** was used to lead the Israelites out of Egypt God brought him up through the educational system of Egypt and then taught him humility and how to have a closeness with God as a shepherd of sheep in the desert.

Some implications:

1. **Not everyone has the same experiences, so not everyone is equally suited to minister in all circumstances.** In most cases, the best person to minister to a recovery alcoholic is someone who has already recovered by God's grace. Many

times the best person to minister to someone who is grieving is someone who has gone through the same kind of grief.

2. **Some believers, who are still deeply wounded by past experiences, still need time to heal and grow before helping others in similar situations.** Some people are not ready to talk with others yet and share their story. This may be because of fear, shame, embarrassment, worry, or anger. God has some things He still needs to teach them through it before they can effectively use it in ministry.
3. **The difficult experiences you have gone through have helped prepare you to minister to others who are currently facing similar trying circumstances.** Consider those hard times you went through or the hard time you are going through as preparation for a ministry that God will use you in.

Questions to ask:

1. What is your **salvation experience**? What is your story regarding coming to Christ? What type of person do you think would be encouraged by your testimony?
2. What are some of your **painful experiences**? How did God guide you through them? Who in your life could benefit from knowing your story and the lessons you learned?
3. What are your **educational experiences**? How does God want you to use your education for the kingdom?
4. What are your **ministry experiences**? What ministries has God allowed you to be involved in? How did you grow from them and what does God want you to do now based on what you learned?
5. What about your **family experiences**? What did you learn growing up in your family? Good or bad? How can you use this in Kingdom work?

The answers to these questions can give you insight to how God has designed and is designing you for ministry. Your experiences can be an indication of where God wants to use you.

S... Spiritual Gifts: What am I gifted to do?

To understand how you have been designed for ministry by God it is helpful to understand what the Bible says about your design. One component to your unique design is your desire. What are you passionate about when it comes to ministry? Another indicator of how God wants to use you is your experiences. What has God brought you through that He can use to comfort others with? **A third element of your design includes your spiritual gift.** This answers the question, “What am I gifted to do?”

The Bible has a lot to say about spiritual gifts, but let me show you a couple of things that are significant in relation to your design for ministry.

First of all, God wants you to be smart about spiritual gifts. **1 Corinthians 12:1** says, “Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant....” So God wants you to know what spiritual gifts are, how to use them, and He wants you to know what your gift is and how your gift is different from another’s gift.

Secondly, every believer is supernaturally gifted. One may have the gift of wisdom, another faith, another discernment, some have the gift of serving, teaching, encouraging, generosity, leadership or mercy (see 1 Cor. 12:1-11; Rom. 12:3-8). We read in **1 Peter 4:10**, “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” Every believer has at least one spiritual gift. Every believer has a ministry prepared for them within the Body of Christ. But it is up to you to discover, develop and deploy your spiritual gift.

What is the difference between someone who is gifted in one area, but not another? When you study the gifts you realize that all believers can do a little bit of all of it. For example, we all can lead in ministry to some degree. We all can be generous. We all can teach the Bible to some level. We all can show mercy to some extent. We all can encourage in some way. So what is the difference? When God has gifted you at something, like **encouragement**, you find it easier than others to encourage and you do it really well. You seem to know how to say it, what to say, and when to say it. Because you are gifted at it, you excel at it.

Another gift mentioned is **generosity**. We are all to be generous, but those with this gift excel at it. A person with this gift is more eager to give than the normal believer. They will usually see the need before others do. They don't mind going without in order to bless others. They think through the filter of giving more than others. They may even manage their money in such a way as to be able to give more. They will sacrificially give up in order to give away. They just seem to give all the time. They excel at it and they are pros at it.

If you are a believer, God has given you a spiritual gift. That gift is an indication of how He wants to use you in His kingdom. God is not going to give you a gift and then waste it. He will open up doors for you to use that gift.

Implications:

1. **Not every believer with the same gift is at the same level of skill with that gift.** One person may have the gift of teaching but over years God has developed that gift to a higher level of communication as compared to the young man who was saved last year and just discovered he has the gift of teaching.
2. **Don't slip into the error of gift obsession** (your gift is the only gift and the best gift), **gift rejection** (I don't want the gift I have I want that other gift), **gift neglection** (I know what my gift is, but I don't want to use it), **or gift projection** (My gift is encouragement and you should have it as well).
3. **Don't think your gift is the most important or unimportant of all.** Some believers think their gift is the greatest gift to the church while others see their gift as not that important. All gifts are important and have their place in helping the body of Christ be healthy.
4. **Don't refuse all other involvements except for the areas of your giftedness.** Some say no to every ministry that does not fit into their giftedness. There are times you will have to minister outside of your giftedness. You may not have the gift of mercy, but you still need to show mercy. But I would recommend you serve at least 80% of your time within your giftedness. Many believers burn out in ministry when they are serving too long outside of their giftedness.

Questions:

Some questions to ask yourself and to talk to God about that would help you discover your gift and use your gift are...

1. What spiritual gifts do you believe you have? Why do you believe this?
2. If you are not sure of your spiritual gifts, who can you talk to gain wisdom in this area?
3. What does the Bible say about spiritual gifts?

Conclusion

We are discovering your DESIGN for ministry. We are looking at what God says about how He designs people, like you and me, for ministry. We have looked at three elements of this DESIGN.

- We have examined the **desire** for ministry. What are you passionate about and excited about when it comes to ministry?
- We have considered the **experiences** God has brought you through and how they play a role in your ministry.
- We have looked at how your **spiritual gift** can be an indication of how God wants to use you in ministry.

As each one of these unfold and you begin to identify the desire that God has placed on your heart, the experiences He has brought you through, and your spiritual giftedness you begin to see a picture of the kind of ministry God has uniquely crafted you for.

Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” You are “God’s workmanship,” that means God created and made you. But you are also “created in Christ Jesus.” That refers to being saved and born again. Some of you have not been created in Christ Jesus yet. The way that happens is to turn to Jesus and receive His Lordship over your life. The Bible says anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. If you are ready to discover your design for ministry it all begins with a relationship with Jesus Christ.