

Engaging the Master Designer
Psalm 139: 1-18

Dr. J. Howard Olds
August 24, 2003

In the academic mecca of Athens, the Apostle Paul sat down one day to discuss with pagan philosophers the nature of the Unknown God to whom the town had built a monument. This is what he said: *“The God who made the world and everything in it, this Master of sky and land, doesn’t live in custom-made shrines or need the human race to run errands for him. He makes the creatures, the creatures don’t make him. Starting from scratch, he made the entire human race and he made the earth hospitable with plenty of time and space for living, so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark, but actually find him. He doesn’t play hide and seek with us. He is not remote; he is near. For in him we live and move and have our being”* (Acts 17, The Message).

It has been said that Americans are incurably religious. There are hungers in our souls that no success can satisfy, no accomplishment can quench, no achievement can abate. We are made by God and for God and our souls are forever restless until they make peace with God. So if you want to build a life that really matters, it makes common sense to engage the Master Designer, our Maker, our Lover, our Lord, our Friend. That’s what I invite you to do today. Let God take charge of your life!

WE ARE GOD-DREAMED.

Before you were a fetus in your mother’s womb or a twinkle in your daddy’s eye, you were a dream in the heart of God. There may be accidental conceptions but there are no accidental births. Your siblings may have wished you were never born, but God had a plan of His own. Even if your mother should abandon you, said Isaiah, God will not forget you. You’re always on the mind of God. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Some of us need to know that and settle that way down in the depths of our hearts.

Over the years I’ve been a part of building one house, one retreat center, one retirement center, and four church additions. I don’t proclaim to be a builder. But one thing I’ve learned the hard way is you want to get your plan on paper before you pour it in concrete. Architects are expensive, but they are essential.

Life is not a do-it-yourself project. Life is not self-advancement, self-appointment, self-seeking, self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, self-esteem. Self-help is not where it’s at. Life is about surrender to the One who thought of you in the first place. What a relief! It’s not all up to you. You don’t have to think it all up or work it all out. A person weary of life’s pressures once lamented, “Sometimes I wish someone else were the captain of my fate and the master of my soul.” Guess what? Somebody else is.

This Master Designer, this Divine Architect, is more interested in working with you than you are in working with Him. We talk about searching for God, but that is hardly the reality. Our search for God is, at best, our feeble rising to open the door to One who has been knocking for a lifetime. Peter and Paul were not searching for God when Jesus called; they were busy making a living. Matthew was collecting taxes. Paul was happy killing Christians. God had a better idea. The Master Dreamer already has you on his mind.

The Psalmist says, *“When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body.”* You’ve always been on the mind of God.

WE ARE GOD-DESIGNED.

With this set of blueprints, we will build a building. With this set of blueprints, the Bible, you can build a life. Are you willing to follow the instructions?

When our boys were little, we bought a backyard gym set, complete with swings, rings, monkey bars, slide, ladder—the works. Of course, some assembly was required. We hauled the thing home in a box, scattered it over the whole backyard, and four hours later as darkness settled in, the children were crying, I was steaming, and Sandy was complaining, “Don’t you ever bother to read the instructions?”

Life’s blueprints are in the Book. Mark Twain once said, “It’s not the parts of the Bible that I don’t understand that cause me concern, it’s the parts that I do understand.”

Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
Love your neighbor as you love yourself.
Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.
In all your ways acknowledge God and He will direct your paths.

God said to Jeremiah (29:11), *“I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.”* Plans **I** have for you—Whose plans are you building under? Whose design are you hoping to become? It’s one thing to get out of bed in the morning and pray, “Lord, bless me today. I have so much to do, so many places to go that I need your strength and energy to accomplish my goals today. Bless me, Lord. Bless me real good.” What if we found another way to pray? What if we started our prayers with, “God, what have You got going today that I can be a part of? You love this world. You loved the world to life. You have hopes and dreams beyond my imagination. Make me a blessing, Lord. Make me a blessing to someone today!”

God’s plans are for our good. *“Plans to prosper you and not to harm you.”* God is not an enemy to be feared but a friend to be followed. You can trust Him and not be afraid. How is it the best loved of all hymns, Amazing Grace, says it?

The Lord has promised good to me,

His word my hope secures,
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

God's plans include hope and a future. God wants you to live, not merely survive. He wants you to invest, not merely spend. He wants you to put in more than you take out, to leave things behind a little better than you found them when you came. God wants you, in the span of a lifetime, to live life fully, help others freely, enjoy God eternally. God has a plan for you—plans to give you hope and a future.

WE ARE GOD-DEVELOPED.

In a couple of weeks, my health permitting, I plan to attend my 40th high school reunion. To be honest, I have some mixed emotions about going. I'd like to go strong, healthy, and happy. Instead, I'll limp in sickly, struggling, and weak. As a couple of us were planning this little get together, I pulled my yearbook off the shelf and read again something I had written as a life motto forty years ago. It was a quote from Romans 8:28 KJV, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*" I am glad I went far enough in seminary to learn a better translation of that verse. "*We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*"

Everything that happens to us is neither for our good nor the intentional will of God. Everything does not happen for a reason. Some things just happen. We don't get cancer for a reason. Parents don't bury children to learn something. Teenagers don't need war to grow up. The homeless weren't meant to be hungry. The elderly weren't made to be lonely. It's not God's plan for children to starve.

Into every blueprint some trouble comes and things don't go as they are planned. In buildings, alternates and change orders are expensive and exasperating. But, I've never built a building without some.

The Master Developer is not fooled when the best of plans fail to work. While God would never design disease, divorce, disaster, and despair into your life plan, God is not helpless when the dark dogs of the night are nipping at your heels.

In all things, God is at work. I believe that with all my being. So I get up each day and talk to my Lord. I say something like, "Lord, I am weak but you are strong. Sometimes it's even hard for me to hang on. But, O Lord, I don't want to let this trouble go to waste. Redeem it by your grace. Fill it with your mercy. Work it and weave it, mold it and make it for the good of others and the glory of God. In my life, Lord, be glorified today."

WE ARE GOD-DESTINED.

If our birth is not an accident, neither is our death. The same God who dreamed

us up can lead us home. The Psalmist said it best: *“Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”*

Seventeen-year-old American poet, William Cullen Bryant, was pondering the future of his life as he walked on a December day through Massachusetts in search of a job. He wanted to be a poet, but felt compelled by the need to make a living to try law. As he walked along he saw a wild duck flying swiftly southward. He watched the lone wanderer until it was lost in the distance, as he asked himself from whence it had come and whither it was going. Later that night Bryant wrote these words in the poem, “To a Waterfowl.” The last stanza goes like this:

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

Indeed, God leads His dear children along.

We are Christians under construction, seeking to build a life that really matters! What do you need from the Master Designer? And always remember: You are on God’s mind, in God’s plans, empowered by God’s grace, and headed safely home.

Amen.