

According to Our Design

By Linda Rex

April 14, 2024, 3rd Sunday | Easter—Many years ago, I sat in biology class and listened to my instructor talk about how a plant grows. One of the students raised their hands and asked, how does a leaf know when it is done growing? I wondered this too, thinking to myself, how does a leaf know when it is supposed to stop developing? How does the plant know to stop growing that leaf and to start growing another one?

Not being a biologist, nor a teacher, my understanding of these natural processes is quite limited. But the simple understanding I came to that day was that written into the very being of the plant was the blueprint of its design. Because the cells of the plant knew its design, what it ultimately was to be, that is how they multiplied and developed together, to create a plant uniquely like the design written into its very being. As stems were formed, leaves grew, flowers unfolded, and seeds developed, each fulfilled its original design—unless something interrupted or twisted that process. Then the plant would not grow properly and would be flawed.

In the New Testament passage for this Sunday, 1 John 3:1-7, the apostle John says that each and every person on this earth has a unique design—to be the children of God. John says that not only, because of Christ, will we one day be God's children, but that even now, this is our divine design. Created to live in right relationship with God and one another, humans were meant to love and be loved, to live in other-centered self-giving love within the divine fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Just as the unique equal Persons of the Triune God live in oneness and unity, each of us as unique, equal human persons were meant to live together in union and communion with God and one another.

To live in any other way than that in which we were designed to live, is to live in the way the apostle John is describing here when he says "sin is lawlessness." The law of love—for Jesus said this was his command, to love one another as he loved us by laying down his life—is the law we were designed to live. This is our spiritual DNA so to speak. Jesus Christ has lived our life, died our death, and risen again, restoring us to our original design as the image-bearers of God we were created to be. Now we are to grow up into the fullness of who we are in Christ.

In this passage, note that Jesus Christ is the pure one, into whose purity we live. Jesus Christ is the righteous one, into whose righteousness we live. The truth of our human design is found in Jesus Christ—the only human, perfected and holy, who lives in face-to-face intimate communion with our Father in the Spirit, even now. Jesus invites us into that glorious embrace, and gives us his Spirit so that we can participate fully in it even now as we trust in him. It is Christ's life of faith, his life of worship, praise, and prayer we participate in. He is the One we will one day look like, when we see him in glory. What a great hope this is!

Until that day when Jesus returns in glory and establishes the new heaven and earth, our human existence will be in this place where we are fully broken and sinful, but at the same time fully pure, accepted, forgiven, redeemed in Christ—our true life is hidden with Christ in God, as the Scripture says. Caught in this place where, in Christ we are already-but-not-yet all that we need to be, we live each moment in full dependency upon Christ. We are beloved children of our heavenly Father—so we live into that reality, trusting Jesus to finish what he has begun in us by his Spirit.

The good news is that Jesus Christ has done all that is needed for us to live in right relationship with God and one another now and forever. This does not mean that we live however we want. What it means is that we begin, by the Spirit, to live into the truth of our original design. We begin to simply *be* who God, in Christ, has created us to be. We allow God to live in and through

More devotionals may be found at <https://lifeinthetrinity.blog>

Subscribe to Our Life in the Trinity YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@ourlifeinthetrinity>

us, for the sake of others, just as Jesus allowed his Father by the Spirit to live in and through him for the sake of us all. Whatever road this may take us down—and Jesus ended up going down the road to death and resurrection, for our sakes—we follow Christ, and allow his Spirit to finish what he has begun in us. We trust in God’s perfect love, and that what he has designed and forged into our human flesh will be perfected in us, just as it was perfected in Jesus Christ, in his life, death, resurrection and ascension, and in the giving of his Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for including us in your life and love, through your Son and by your Spirit. Enable us to see and know our original design, to be those who reflect your likeness, the other-centered self-giving love you are in your very Being. Forgive us for all the ways in which we corrupt and disrupt this divine design—we receive your cleansing and renewal, in your Son Jesus and by your Spirit, and ask that we may live into the fullness of all you meant us to be as your adopted children. Amen.

“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ...” 1 John 3:1–7 NASB

“Consider the amazing love the Father lavished upon us; this is our defining moment: we began in the agape of God—the engineer of the universe is our Father! So it’s no wonder that the performance-based systems of this world just cannot see this! Because they do not recognize their origin in God, they feel indifferent towards anyone who does! Beloved, we know that we are children of God to begin with, which means that there can be no future surprises; his manifest likeness is already mirrored in us! Our sameness cannot be compromised or contradicted; our gaze will confirm exactly who he is—and who we are. And every individual in whom this expectation echoes also determines to realize their own flawless innocence mirrored in him whose image they bear. Distorted behavior is the result of a warped self-image! A lost sense of identity is the basis of all sin! (... Sin is to live out of context with the blueprint of one’s design; to behave out of tune with God’s original harmony. It is to be out of step with your true sonship! ... The root of sin is to believe a lie about yourself, which is the fruit of the “I am-not Tree”. This was also the essence of Israel’s unbelief that kept them trapped in a grasshopper-mindset for 40 years. ...) We have witnessed with our own eyes how, in the unveiling of the prophetic word, when he was lifted up upon the cross as the Lamb of God, he lifted up our sins and broke its dominion and rule over us! To abide in him in uninterrupted seamless oneness, is to live free from sin. Whoever continues in sin has obviously not perceived how free they are in him; they clearly do not really know him. Little children, do not be led astray by any other opinion; his righteousness is the source of our righteousness.” 1 John 3:1–7 Mirror

See also Luke 24:36b–48.