



Lesson Guide

Lesson 7 - Sociology: The Divine Imprint

Introduction

During the course of Tour 5 we took a good look at a few of the miraculous ways in which the physical universe declares the glory of its Maker. Now we turn south to consider some of the amazingly detailed reflections of God's nature inherent in the *social* order. According to Dr. Tackett, the evidences of the divine imprint that we see in this realm are even *more* awe-inspiring and *more* indicative of the heart of the Creator than the marvels of DNA replication or the complexities of the blood-clotting system. But for this very reason they also stand closer to the focal point of the *Cosmic Battle*.

Themes

We begin where we left off in Tour 5: with the voice of nature making loud and unmistakable statements about the nature and character of God. "Ask the animals, and they will teach you," says Job, "and the birds of the air, and they will tell you" (Job 12:7, 8). In this case, *order* is one of the overwhelming messages with which creation bombards us. From the atom to the solar system, from photosynthesis to the cleansing tides, from the human body to the design of a chicken egg – everywhere we look we see obvious indications of purposeful design in the things God has made. This, of course, is a serious problem for those who argue that the universe is the product of "random, mindless forces."

The same element of *order* is apparent in the *social systems* God has instituted. Dr. Tackett lays out six that he see in Scripture: family, labor, church, state, community, and the relationship between man and his Maker. But the order we detect in this area is not simply an expression of the Lord's creative design. Instead, it flows out of His very nature. It is a reflection of *who He is*. As Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Triune God embodies *in Himself* the ultimate resolution of the old philosophical problem of "the one and the many." He exemplifies *diversity* within *unity* and the answer to *why* it is "not good for man to be alone" is bound up in the Triune Essence. Relationship, union, communion, intimacy, fellowship, love, and community – these things have existed from all eternity within the economy of the Godhead. Accordingly, they serve as the basis for the smooth and ordered functioning of creation. It is for this very reason, Dr. Tackett argues, that basic social institutions such as marriage, family, and church have come under such heavy attack in our day: just as the world, the flesh, and the devil hate the Creator with a fervent and undying hatred, so they inevitably stand opposed to the social order that bears the imprint of His divine nature.

As this tour unfolds, the principles of order and relationship will be examined specifically as we find them manifested in three of the social systems designed by God: the family, the church, and the union between God and man ("The Intimate Three"). During the course of this discussion, Dr. Tackett will explain how the threefold Trinitarian pattern is reflected in and fundamental to

the internal functioning of each of these spheres. Special attention will be given to the subject of the family and some of the pathologies associated with disregard for the divine plan in this crucial area of human life.

Points to Watch For

Statements from video interviewees poignantly highlight the pain, confusion, and deep emotional reactions connected with almost any examination of family life and family-related issues. Similar emotions are almost certain to arise during group discussion. The video segments also present a broad range of popular definitions of “family,” a subject that has the potential to stir up equally diversified reactions from group participants. In addition, Dr. Tackett and his students fearlessly broach the often troublesome topic of *authority* and *submission* within the context of marriage, the church, and other aspects of God’s social design.

Discussion Questions (Pick 3 or 4 for your discussion time.)

(Make these questions your own. That is, don’t just “read” them, but become familiar with them so that they don’t appear as simply an item to get through. Go through them yourself before your group meets and ponder them.)

1) Opening Question: (this may be the only question you need to ask).

- A. Ask your guests to list what they saw on the tour. Here are some of the key items:
The heavens, the skies, the animals, the birds, the earth, the fish are all declaring and teaching us about the glory of God and the work of His hands; listening to a chicken egg; God is a God of order, not disorder; the problem of order; order baffles the blind; physical systems and social systems both designed by God; the Divine Pause: "It is not good ...", pragmatic or ethical?; the Triune nature of God; the Divine image stamped upon social order; it's all about relationships; one defines aloneness; two: relationship and intimacy; three: community and fellowship; aloneness contrary to God's nature; the six social systems; the intimate three; authority, submission and unity within the Trinity; authority, submission and unity within the family and church; responsibilities of husbands and wives; love and respect; the cultural attack upon the family; the serious view God has of breaking His design.
- B. Ask your guest to point out the ones that were particularly interesting or striking to them and why.
- C. Ask if this particular area struck anyone else as well.
- D. Ask if there were other items that they saw that stood out to them. (You may want to read back through the list if you need to.)

2) What point was Dr. Tackett making with the chicken egg?

(That God’s creation is not only one filled with marvel, but delicate order, consisting of many “systems”. The chicken egg can be seen as one of those incredible “systems”, each of which contains precise elements that work together to fulfill the overall purpose of the system. So, too, will be find the social systems that God has created.)

3) What did Dr. Tackett call the “Divine Pause”? Why?

(This was the “pause” in which God made the statement that it was not good for man to be alone. He then finished the creation by making Eve for Adam.)

4) In Genesis 2:18, God declares that “it is *not good* for man to be alone.” What does Dr. Tackett mean when he says that this is an *ethical* rather than a *qualitative* statement? How does this assertion become important to our entire discussion of the social order?

(Aloneness is bad in an *ethical* sense because it contradicts the nature of God, who is three-in-one: God Himself exists in community and relationship; man, who is made in His image, is supposed to do the same. This concept forms the basis of a true, God-centered understanding of the social sphere. To go against God’s social design is to deny His character.)

5) What do theologians and philosophers mean when they talk about the “Natural Law?”

(The term “Natural Law” refers to an unwritten ethical and moral law which is built into creation and human nature. In effect, this “law” is the stamp or imprint of God’s essential nature or character upon the things He has made [Romans 1:20]. The important point to make in this connection is that social institutions such as marriage and the family are not just a matter of cultural convention. Instead, their shape, form, and function are determined by the “Natural Law” which is rooted in the Trinitarian nature of God.)

6) Dr. Tackett claims to see “threes” wherever he looks in creation or in the human social order. How is this “Trinitarian” pattern evident in the structure and relationships of family, church, and the union between God and man?

(The “Father-Son-Spirit” is revealed in the family as “husband-wife-child;” in the church as “Christ-leaders-flock;” and in the God-man relationship as “Abba-Lord-man who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.” In addition, similar configurations of authority, submission, nurture, and honor are manifested in each of these spheres: for example, Christ *loves* the church as a man *loves* his wife; the wife *submits* to her husband as the church *submits* to its Lord; children *honor* their parents as Christians *honor* their appointed leaders; and so on.)

7) In Malachi 2:16, God says that He “hates divorce.” Why does Dr. Tackett maintain that this is *not simply a practical or pragmatic* statement? What light does the principle contained in this verse cast on *all* of the pathologies associated with the family? With human life as a whole?

(Just as the unity, communion, love, and intimacy of marriage are rooted *organically* in the essence and character of God Himself, so the violent breaking of this bond in divorce is something more than an unfortunate blip in the lives of two individuals – it is an offense against the divine nature and the foundations upon which the entire creation is built. It is a reminder of the fact that “sin” can be defined very basically as a breakdown in *relationships*, whether between God and man, man and wife, or man and his neighbor.)

Note to the hosts and guests: Normally Dr. Tackett includes in each of the tours on social order a lengthy discussion on the pathologies and issues within each social system. Because we had to edit each DVD down to less than one hour, these discussions, unfortunately, were not captured for you. A short discussion of each will be provided on the website. However, the next question will list a few of those issues and pathologies

for this first sphere, the family. Pick one and discuss it. This is usually the fun and lively part of the tour! Remember to practice being winsome! As you discuss an issue, try to focus on God's design, the personal or cultural counter to that design, and the resulting consequences.

- 8) Discuss some practical examples of the intensity of the *Cosmic Battle* as it is being played out in the realm of the social order in our day. How are people in contemporary society manifesting their unwillingness to acknowledge the obvious and look upon the face of God in this area? What should our response be to this situation?**

(This can be an opportunity to review some of the family-related pathologies discussed by Dr. Tackett during the course of this lesson: abdication of male responsibility, radical feminism, "rights of the child," pornography, abuse, homosexuality, and the redefinition of the family. Our response, like God's, should be one of grief, compassion, and renewed willingness to reach out with the healing message of God's plan for the social order.)