

**We are a piece of work!
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**The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and
breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living
being.**
Genesis 2:7 NIV

**For we are God's workmanship; created in Christ Jesus to do good
works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do.**
Ephesians 2:10 NIV

We are a piece of work!

Depending on who we ask and when, we will get varying opinions of what people think about us. If living, loving, working and/or being with us is fairly easy and a joy most of the time, then we will hear nothing but glowing reports. But if, on the other hand, we work everyone's nerves, making excessive demands on the relationship as well as the person, then what we might hear is that we are a "piece of work".

Being a "piece of work" in our colloquium means that you can be difficult to deal with, you are a handful and you know it. Being a piece of work means that it takes work to be with you and like I said, that designation could be given to any and everyone of us. It just depends on who you ask and when.

Being labeled a "piece of work" is clearly not a complement from a human perspective, but from God's viewpoint, being called one lets you know that you are somebody special. You are crème de la crème, the cream of the crop!

It is from the creation story in Genesis, the book of beginnings, that we are first made aware that each of us is “a piece of work”.

You know the story, in the beginning, God “barah”. God created the heavens and the earth and everything in it. The verb “barah” is used to talk about that which is created out of nothing, but it cannot be limited to that understanding as we shall later see. This verb is also only used in scripture with God as the subject.

God is the Creator; nothing exists apart from God. God brought everything into being. **Psalms 19:1,**

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of God’s hands.

God spoke and it was so. Psalms 33:6,

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of God’s mouth.

The solar system, the galaxies, the moon and the stars are all the works of God’s hands. But in the words of R. Kent Hughes “as awesome as the cosmos is, it is not God’s best work.”

Indeed, all of nature radiates the incomparable glory of God. The birds and the bees, the flowers and the trees, the mighty oak, unbeaten and unbowed even in the fiercest storm, the tall slender pine, the voluptuous Bradford pear with its array of warm colors in the fall; the dogwood or cherry blossoms, who both give the pear tree stiff competition in the spring.

The purple mountain majesty, the waves of the ocean crashing against the coastline, the white sandy beaches sparkling in response to the rays of the hot tropical sun, invite us to swim with the dolphins and watch out for the whales. The polar bears coming out of their caves, the lion king roaring in the jungle as the lioness keeps watch over her feisty cubs! All of this is

absolutely breathtaking, and it leaves one speechless. Even God saw all that had been made and that it was “good”!

Nevertheless, this was not God’s best work. There was one last piece, the crowning touch. What in the world could this be, when anyone would agree that God’s dream world appeared complete. Not from God’s perspective. God was not yet finished. God had to put the icing on the cake, as my grandmother would say.

The Bible declares that humans are the crown jewels of God’s creation. God saved the best for last, making us distinctive! This is made clear in a number of ways.

On the sixth day, the day humans were created; there was a holy huddle, a divine deliberation between the persons of the Godhead, “Let us make man in our image and likeness, they said. The word used for “man” here is Adamah. It is used most often to refer to humanity in general and not just maleness. Male and female, God created them!

Being created in the image of God first and foremost relates to a unique social or community concept of God. God is three persons in one – The Trinity. So, when God created humans in his image and likeness, God couldn’t create a single individual, “it is not good for man or woman to be alone”. God created us male and female, corresponding to the community aspect of God’s nature.

Out of the first pair came a people of the most amazing array of colors, cultures, races and languages, all of the one human family. We are social beings created for relationship. We need one another! Though we sometimes, struggle with our diversity and wonder what to do with one another; we are one! It is our diversity that makes life together exciting!

Every one of us is created in God’s image and likeness. Though the scriptures do not spell out specifically all that it means to be made in the image and likeness of God, the word “image” refers to being a representative of and “likeness” talks about being similar to. Like God we have a personality, we can think, reason, plan, discern, and make decisions. We can relate to others like ourselves, loving and being loved, feeling a wide range of emotions and giving expression to them.

We were created for relationship first with God. We are spiritual beings, created for intimate fellowship with God. We have the privilege of walking and talking with God, sharing our innermost thoughts, needs, cares and concerns, though you and I both know, we don’t always avail ourselves of the privilege. I suppose that is what prompted the songwriter to pen.

O what needs we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.

We were created for relationship with God and one another.

Not only did God create us after divine deliberations, God created us by design.

When God made humans, God got God’s hands dirty. Genesis 2:7 says,

God formed the human from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the human became a living being.

God took great care in creating humans. The God who created everything else formed humankind by special design. The word “formed” is also the verb “bara”. This time it describes the work of an artist, fashioning or making something out of existing matter, like a potter shaping an earthen vessel from clay, creating something “new and perfect” So, God formed

humans from the dust of the earth. We are God's workmanship, a piece of work.

I love the Psalmist David's poetic depiction of how God formed him and indeed all of us, as recorded in **139:13-14**,

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

What a word to hear when you are wondering if your life even matters anymore, especially now that you are older and feeling less agile and vital than you once did. What an affirmation, when you are struggling to believe that God could ever make anything good out of your life. You've had so many rough places along the way, so many bad things to happen that just weren't fair by anyone's estimation. You can't help but believe that it's because there something is fundamentally wrong with who you are.

All of us have gone there at some time or another, whether we want to admit it or not. Abandonment by parents and others who we thought should have kept us and given us a sense of belonging, a lack of approval from those who we wanted to affirm us, harsh criticism from those we needed to validate us. The fact that we are still single, never married or find ourselves single again by death or divorce. The fact that you didn't get the promotion, just lost your job, may lose your home to foreclosure. The reality that your marriage isn't working; your children are out of control, life has not turned out like you thought it should. All of this and more causes us to struggle with feelings of defeat and question, "what's wrong with me? Am I not good enough; smart enough. Am I not worthy?"

You need to know that when you were created, you were designed with divine intentionality. You are custom made, top of the line, there is no one in the world quite like you. This is what the Psalmist meant when he proclaimed in prayer.

You knit me together in my mother's womb! We were made by design, like a fine piece of embroidery, or a handmade knit, every fiber of your being carefully woven together to create a perfect you. All of this speaks to your uniqueness! A handmade knit is one of a kind, it cannot be duplicated. You are a person of great worth and dignity!

God created your inmost being -- shaping you emotionally, intellectually and spiritually for a specific purpose. You were shaped for significance and made for ministry. You have the personality in line with the purpose for which you have been created. You are intellectually equal to any task great or small. You are gifted beyond measure.

Researchers estimate that each of us has between 6 and 700 different gifts that can easily be referred to as frozen assets. No matter what age or stage we happen to be in life, you haven't begun to tap into our full potential.

Too many of us are guilty of living beneath our privilege and potential, when we are capable of so much more. Lest we forget, capacity and ability require accountability and responsibility. We dare not become comfortable or complacent thinking we have achieved all we were created to achieve and be pleased to live on a level of existence lower than that which God has made it possible for us to live.

When we think about how God has made us, we have a reason to praise and glorify God not only with our lips but with our lives. The Psalmist says, I will praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully

made. God is worthy of praise, glory and honor. We were created to praise God, to make God's praise glorious!

All we have to do is think about God's goodness to us starting with our creation. We are "fearfully and wonderfully" made. The Hebrew word for fearful is yare' and it means to be feared, to be revered, to terrify, to make afraid. Here you are feeling insecure, unsure of yourself, afraid to step out of the rut you are in, afraid to even try to accomplish what is in your power to accomplish, settling for less than God's best! It is obvious that you do not understand the extent of your power and possibility.

You don't understand how "fierce" you are.

Not only has God made us fearful! He has also made us wonderful, marvelous. The Hebrew word from which marvelous comes means "**to be distinguished, to be extraordinary**". There is nothing ordinary about us. Though there are still some things that need to be worked out in our lives, we are still God's awesome creation.

After God formed man, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, the spirit of life, transforming his form into a living being, literally a living soul. God gave us life!

God created humans after divine deliberations and by design to have dominion over the works of God's hands. Once creation was complete, God entrusted God's perfect world and all God had made to us as his representatives on earth expecting us to be good stewards over it. God placed humans in the garden to "work" it which literally means to "serve" and to take care of it. The garden was lavish with rivers flowing through it and trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden there were the tree of life that promised to preserve and promote life for Adam and Eve in their blissful state and the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil. They were free to enjoy it all, but they specifically told not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For God said once they ate of the fruit of that tree they would surely die.

The garden was a perfect setting to test human's willingness to represent God through obedience and service. And you know that humans flunked the test. When given the choice to be obedient to and serve God only, they chose to serve their own desires and eat the forbidden fruit.

The consequences were tragic. Death came and it was inclusive of human's total existence, spiritually, morally, socially, relationally and ultimately physically. The whole world was devastated by that one act of sin. Sin shattered humans' relationship with God and one another. The world that started out whole was now fragmented!

But God was not caught by surprise; God knew the choice that humans would make and already had a plan in place to redeem lost humanity and save the world.

As awesome as the original creation of humans was; it still was not God's greatest work. It is in the second chapter of Paul's letter to the saints in Ephesus, after talking about how humans plummeted to the deepest depths as sinners and then were rescued by God in Christ and taken to the highest heights through the amazing grace of God, Paul proclaims,

**For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do
Good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

The word **“workmanship”**, is the Greek counterpart of the Hebrew word “formed. It is the word “poiema” and refers to a” work of art, a masterpiece, a piece of work. F.F. Bruce translates this phrase **“We are God's work of art, God's masterpiece, we are a piece of work.”**

Notice that Paul attaches a qualifier to workmanship by saying,

We are God’s workmanship, “created” in Christ Jesus”.

God’s greatest work, the ultimate workmanship of God is a human being who despite having been dead in transgressions and sins has now been made alive in Christ Jesus. He or she is the subject of two creations. We are twice born, born again, created and recreated in Christ.

Our very existence is due to the work of Christ Jesus. Paul says in Colossians 1:15,

He is the image of the invisible God the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have supremacy.

We owe our first and second birth to Christ. We were created the crown of God’s creation by Christ. And when Sin marred the original work, Jesus came to earth, took on our flesh, died in our place, shed his precious blood to pay the awful cost of sin we owed. Those of us who have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior have gone through a second creation in Christ.

We are God’s new creation in Christ. If anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come.

Just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit collaborated on the first work, even so they were united in this second creation. This second one cost them everything because it involved, in the words of R. Kent Hughes, “the unparalleled power of the resurrection to raise us up from the dead.”

Even as the spirit was breathed into our lifeless form the first time, it was the Holy Spirit that regenerated us, raised us from the dead, giving us life abundantly and eternally. Be clear, we are no overnight wonder, all we

shall be has not yet been manifested, God is still at work in us to conform us into the image of His firstborn, remaking us into a greater version that we were before the fall.

The Spirit also baptized us into one body, the body of Christ on earth. We are the church, God's representative on earth. Paul made a point of saying,

We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Our original purpose in the world has not changed. God formed us and placed us in the garden to "work" it and take care of it. As God's new creation, we are in the world to "work" it or "serve" this present age.

Now I know that you know that we are not saved by works. We are saved by the amazing grace of God so that no one can boast, but now that we are saved, our works are the evidence of that we are God's workmanship. We are saved to serve. Paul says in Titus 2:14,

Jesus Christ gave himself to redeem us from all wickedness and to Purify for himself a people eager to do good works.

We are called to serve God by serving others, doing good works in the world.

The world in which we live is filled with broken hurting people. People live daily without hope, struggling to keep their heads above water as the life and now the recession robs them of their jobs, their homes and their dignity. 47 million people live without healthcare and cannot afford to even get sick much less go the doctor. 10. 3 millions households are food insecure. People are struggling to survive.

We live in fragmented world. Relationships are frayed as the divorce rate climbs, battering increases, children's lives become more and more

expendable and violence is the means by which people settle their differences and take out their frustration.

People are looking for peace, looking for love in all the wrong places, looking for meaning in meaningless ways, living restless and sometimes useless lives. They are looking for satisfaction. They thought they could find it in positions, status, building bigger homes, buying finer cars, only to be sadly disappointed. They don't know like we know that there is a God-shaped hole in their souls that only God can fill.

People are looking for an end to the madness of life; they are looking for answers to life's difficult questions.

We have the answer. We know that Christ is the answer for all the world's needs. Christ is the way, the truth and the life. Christ loved us when no one else would, saved us when no one else could. Christ is our peace! Jesus is the Center of our joy! He has healed our hearts, picked up the broken pieces of our lives, our relationships, and put them back together again. He keeps on making a way out of no way for us.

We have the answer for the world's needs personally and collectively.

I know that some of us are tempted to struggle with our identity and question our usefulness in the world, as Disciples, given our aging and declining membership, and decreasing resources - impacted even more by this recession. Particularly, in this post-modern world, technologically savvy and media-sophisticated world, we wonder if we have what it takes to reach its people effectively for Christ.

What do you mean!

We are God's workmanship! The body of Christ on earth!

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we are here on assignment to welcome all to the Lord's Table a God has welcomed us.

Numbers aren't important; it is what we do with them that count. Whatever the size of our congregations, our Regions, our General Unit, we have to use what we've got!

We have everything we need. All we have to do is rally the forces, employ the gifts and graces of the members, venture out beyond our comfort zones, take ministry to the street to where the people are, embracing the power of the Spirit and flowing with it.

That's what a movement does. It isn't stagnant, confined to one location, one mode of operation or way of doing things. A movement is fluid, it is free, unhindered in anyone. It flows, it frees, it fills, it consumes everyone who is apart of it and sets them on fire for the work. A movement shows us wherever there is a need!

We are a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world

We have everything we need to transform the world.

We have been saved to serve,

blessed to be a blessing.

Gifted to give

Healed to give healing,

Loved to give love

The world will know that we are who we say we are by our love!