

# “You are God’s Masterpiece”

Ephesians 2:1-10 & Philippians 1:6

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Who is your favorite artist? I am fascinated by those who blow glass into all sorts of colorful, amazing vessels. They start with a red-hot glob of glass and by blowing, spinning and forming, it becomes a masterpiece. Some people enjoy the painter Bob Ross’ show, *The Joy of Painting*, on PBS. Bob uses ordinary paint and canvas to create a nature scene that invites you to walk into the painting, smelling the pine, feeling the breeze hearing the birds and in awe of God’s creation. Curtis Wyrick is a master home builder. He carefully listens to someone explain their dream house. Curtis creates a blueprint. At first the build site looks worse, piles of dirt, dumpsters, plastic blowing in the wind. From the mess Curtis crafts a beautiful house that becomes a home for someone. On the edge of Abbotsford, sits a metal half circle building, surround by piles of metal and rusty junk. It is home to three generations of artists and named Voelker’s Machine Shop. Numerous times I would bring in a broken metal part from the farm. Dave would look at it, lift it, sometimes chisel at it to determine the type of metal. He would ask how urgent the part was. A couple of times we needed it right away. Dave would go to a pile of junk and with his torch cut of a piece. He gathered several pieces of varies types of metal from piles. Then the sparks flew, cutting, grinding, welding, into the fire, into the water, pounding. In an hour or two he would emerge with the part. Your favorite music took trial and error, writing, practice, tweaking until a delightful harmony vibrated into your ears.

Almost all masterpieces take time and emerge from messy, rough, disjointed raw ingredients. You are God’s masterpiece. Everyone is God’s masterpiece. On earth we are incomplete. Each of us is at a different stage of fabrication. It takes most of us, an entire earthly life to learn how to love and be loved. Did God create the cosmos so that you and I, all people, can have experiences that enable us to discover the joy of loving and being loved?

Everyone is a work in progress. God molds and sculpts, pushes and pulls, carries and sets us free to create each human a perfect loving, joyful masterpiece. God weeps and laughs with us, dreams and tutors with us, explores and rests with us expanding our love. God forgives, heals, and repairs our brokenness. God never gives up on anyone, never throws anyone on the junk pile, never abandons anyone. The Apostle Paul wrote, **Philippians 1:6 “I am confident of this, that God who began a good work in you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.”**

Since all of us are incomplete, imperfect, partially-crafted masterpieces, a lifetime away from being completed, why are we so hard on our self and others? Each of us will make a multitude of mistakes, because God is still crafting us.

Sometimes we do not yet know that what we are doing is a mistake. As a child we learn to not touch a hot stove, run into the street without looking, and cut towards oneself. In time we learn that it is a mistake to withhold love of our self and others.

God grows us, teaches us and inspires us: to delight, laugh, smile, play, work, rest, care and love; to talk and listen, to give and receive, to share, to have compassion; to perceive the wonder in ourselves; to perceive the wonder in everyone; to forgive, let go, mend and heal; to hope, dream and create. God grows us, teaches us and inspires us: to try different things, to explore so we discover our unique gifts, talents and wonders; so we can savor moments of awe, exhilaration and gratitude; so we can become wise, patient and gracious. God gives us life so we can create, love, and rejoice like God our creator who is pure love and joy. This list goes on and on. There is an abundance of facets I cannot express, because I have not yet discovered or learned them.

Since each of us is a masterpiece in progress why are we so critical of our self, others, different groups, different generations when we are all unfinished, merely in progress? Of course, everyone is going to make plenty of mistakes and look messy because until we arrive in heaven we are all incomplete.

Since each of us needs a great deal more fabrication and assembly God gives us an owner’s manual, the Bible, and the gift of discipleship so each of us can always be learning and teaching how to become like Jesus.

God gives us rules, so we can prune ourselves, focusing our energies into that which nourishes us and enabling us to nourish others. Demetrius Dumm wrote, "The Ten Commandments are not ten flaming hoops that we must clear in order to gain heaven! They are ten examples of how to use freedom responsibly; and when they are observed there will be other challenges, because freedom to love is an opportunity that lasts forever."

So why do we beat ourselves up over our imperfections? Each of us is loved by God. You will always be loved by God. Why are we stressed, anxious, and fearful? God promises, guarantees, that we will be purified and glorious for eternity in heaven by the free gift of God's grace. There is nothing we can do, or not do, to mess up our eternal future celebrating with God and all people, savoring every love, cherishing every joy. Why do we get depressed over our pain? Jesus' promises to wipe away every tear, heal every hurt, disperse every negative thought, eradicate every negative emotion, to purify us and fill us with joyful love. Why do we struggle with our questions, our sparse, infantile knowledge? When God finishes you, then you will understand the entire cosmos. Why do we get stubborn, angry, and hateful? God will enable us to fully love our self and God. Why do we feel unworthy of love, forgetting that we are God's most cherished creation? God created a good cosmos for us and filled it with "love you" notes for you. God took on flesh in Jesus to prove to you that you are loved perfectly.

All of us will have these troublesome thoughts and feelings and your personal doubts, burdens, and agony, because each of us is incomplete. Keep reminding yourself that you are loved, that God who created the cosmos with majesty is sculpting more majesty and glory into you. God promises to complete you a masterpiece. Strive to let go of all that drains you, so you can let come God's blessings.

Sin is anytime we fail to love. A lack of loving self-compassion is a sin, it is a sign of our incompleteness. The Apostle Paul explains, **Ephesians 2:1-10 MSG "It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose God's temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, God embraces us. God took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. God did all this on God's own, with no help from us! Then God picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah. Now God has us where God wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all God's idea, and all God's work. All we do is trust God enough to let God do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. God creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join God in the work God does, the good work God has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing."**

God forgives, restores, and will complete each of us despite our lack of love for self, sin, lack of faith, and disbelief that we will become a unique masterpiece of God.

Greg Laurie wrote, "When I look at my life, I don't necessarily see rhythm, orderliness or beauty. And I can guarantee that I don't see perfection. When we see ourselves, we tend to see our flaws. We see so many things that need to change. But God says, "You are my work of art. You are my poem. You are my masterwork." God can look at you and can see what you will become before you have actually become it. We look at ourselves and say, "I don't get it. This doesn't look like a perfect person. This doesn't look like a work of beauty." But you are a work in progress. It is a process that doesn't happen overnight. It is going to take all of your life on Earth. It won't be completely finished until you get to heaven. Then you will see that you indeed are a perfect work of art – God's masterpiece."

Frederick Buechner wrote, "Certain things happened to us once and go on happening. We work and goof off, we love and dream, we have wonderful times and awful times, are cruelly hurt and hurt others cruelly, get mad and bored and scared stiff and ache with desire, do all such human things as these, and if our faith is not mainly just window dressing or a rabbit's foot or fire insurance, it is because it grows out of precisely this kind of rich human compost. The God of biblical faith is the God who meets us at those moments in which for better or worse we are being most human, most ourselves; and if we lose touch with those moments, if we don't stop from time to time to notice what is happening to us and around us and inside us, we run the tragic risk of losing touch with God too."

Probably all of us at some point in our life experience the tragedy of perceiving that we are losing touch with God. Another way to state it would be a season when we lack loving self-compassion. Times when negative thoughts overwhelm us, we think we are stuck, trapped with no hope for the future, our emotions turn sour, everything, even our favorite things, become joyless. We feel unlovable. God is always with us, always loving us.

I believe a primary way God enables us to perceive God's love is through the people around us. When we perceive God's grace, when we catch a glimpse of how God is making us all masterpieces, God calls us to share, to lovingly nurture those around us.

Listen again to how the Apostle Paul ended today's scripture. **Ephesians 2:1-10 God does both the making and saving. God creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join God in the work God does, the good work God has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing."**

Do you know someone battling depression, then you better be showering them with love. Do you know someone who is crushed by guilt, failure, regret or a mistake, then you better be reminding them that God has already forgiven them and will heal them. Do you know someone who is struggling, afraid, angry, broken, overwhelmed by their incompleteness, then you better be assuring them that they will be God's glorious, perfect masterpiece.

Homiletics states, "Because of God's grace, we can look at everyone around us, even those "pieces of work" who seem to be hopeless cases, and recognize that God's grace will change them into a masterpiece. If we've been transformed by God's grace ourselves, we can and should testify to that fact and help others to know and experience what God will do for them. Actually, that's a big part of the work God has prepared for us to do. We are God's "pieces of work," made so that we can work for God."

George MacDonald wrote, "To be right with God is to be right with the universe; one with the power, the love, the will of the mighty Parent, the cherisher of joy, the Lord of laughter, whose are all glories, all hopes, who loves everything."

Be patient with yourself, forgive yourself, have self-compassion for you are God's masterpiece in progress. Also, be patient with everyone, forgive everyone and have compassion for everyone. Everyone is going to make mistakes, mess up and be a mess. Everyone is going to hurt you at some point, because no one on earth is able to fully love. Everyone is going to be negative at times, because no one on earth is fully filled with God's joy. We should expect ourselves and everyone to be fools, selfish, difficult, and broken, because we are all incomplete. Our work is to see the emerging masterpiece in our self and everyone; to build up into the likeness of Christ. This includes people you disagree with, people from different political parties, people with different faith perspectives, people with different skin colors. This includes that person that always gets under your skin and your enemies. God is making you into a masterpiece by grace. God is making them into a masterpiece by grace. No one earns, deserves or contributes to the creation process. It is all a gift of God. We all will be united in wonderful harmony in heaven for eternity, so God please help us love everyone on earth, help us forgive and let go, help us compliment everyone on how they are becoming God's masterpiece, help us all celebrate that we are becoming God's perfect, glorious, spectacular masterpiece. Amen