

LIVING  
IT OUT



**DAILY  
BIBLE  
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# How to Get Unstuck: A Creative Answer.

Monday, August 14, 2017

I'll never forget what it felt like when I finally got it. I had hoped for months that I'd wake up on that Christmas morning and open up the one thing I'd asked for, the one thing I'd hoped for: the *K'Nex Screamin' Serpent Roller Coaster*.

I was ecstatic.

I didn't know this at the time, but I didn't want the set only because it looked like an excellent toy, but because I had been created by God to create things.

It looks a little different for me now. Unfortunately, I no longer build structures out of little plastic pieces (though I can't wait for my kids to grow old enough to do so). But, I still have the drive to create.

I'd argue that we all have this drive. We may not consider ourselves creative - and that's fine - but we were created in the image of our Heavenly Father, so even if it's just a small part of who we are, we are creative.

It's interesting that even though we know this about God (that he's creative), we struggle to allow this fact about God to influence our lives. We know from the very first verse in the Bible that God is creative; however, this isn't something we consistently apply to our lives. Part of the reason we struggle to apply God's creativity to our lives is that we don't know how it applies.

This past weekend, as he closed out the series, *God Is*, Senior Executive Director of the Arts Nate Manuel talked about the concept of God's creativity.

He took us through a passage from the Old Testament book of Joshua, a book that chronicles the Israelites' journey into the promised land and their conquests within it.

We pick up the story of the conquest in chapter 6. Here, the Israelites find themselves outside of the city of Jericho; a city fortified with strong walls - ones that were seemingly impenetrable.

God had promised the Israelites this city (6:2), and since the people of Jericho were scared of the Israelites, they hid in the city and shut the gates (6:1). Because of all the movies I've seen, it's hard not to want to superimpose my vision of what happens next into the text. It would be some sort of the Lord of the Rings / Braveheart-esque battle in which the Israelites conquered the city of Jericho through incredible military prowess and brute strength.

This is what most would expect. It seems obvious.

God, however, did not give them militaristic instructions. Instead, he did something far different.

Here's what he said: <sup>3</sup>"You and your fighting men should march around the town once a day for six days. <sup>4</sup>Seven priests will walk ahead of the Ark, each carrying a ram's horn. On the seventh day you are to march around the town seven times, with the priests blowing the horns. <sup>5</sup>When you hear the priests give one long blast on the rams' horns, have all the people shout as loud as they can. Then the walls of the town will collapse, and the people can charge straight into the town." (Joshua 6:3-5)

Joshua - the commander of the armies of Israel - was to use a ram's horn and march in circles.

It's hard not to imagine how you'd respond in this situation.

Surely, thoughts of disbelief and frustration would creep in. You might think that God was joking, or that you hadn't heard him right, or that the plan wasn't for you to succeed. What's interesting, though, is that God meant every word he said.

*I am giving you this city.*

*March around the walls for six days.*

*Blow the horns on the seventh day, and shout as loud as you can.*

*Then the walls will come down.*

This was not an obvious military strategy. It wasn't anything anyone would expect. It was, as Nate said, God being **creative**.

*When we realize God is **creative**, we discover that we are **never stuck**.*

Like the Israelites, all of us have been in situations in which we've felt stuck. The proverbial walls are seemingly as insurmountable as the walls surrounding Jericho.

Like us, perhaps the Israelites wanted a quick fix or an obvious solution.

God's creativity, however, brought the walls down.

Is there an area of your life which makes you feel stuck?

God is creative, and when we understand this of God, we can know that even if he isn't giving us obvious, clear, simple, fast ways to get unstuck, he is giving us the opportunity to see things differently - to **elevate** our **perspective**.

In verse 16, Joshua tells the people as the priests blow the horn, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the town!"

Before the walls had fallen - before they had conquered Jericho - God had *given* Jericho to them.

God's creativity frees us up to **elevate our perspective**. The Israelites saw that they needed one thing and one thing only: faith in God.

No military strategy, no quick fix, no "simple" solution could have given the Israelites what God gave them that day.

Ultimately, when we feel stuck, we can trust that our creative God is working all things together for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28), and when we choose to be faithful, we can redirect our focus on him.

*In what area of your life do you currently feel "stuck"?*

*What can you do today to be faithful to God and thus redirect your focus?*

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, thank you for your creativity. Thank you for loving me so much that you don't just give me quick fixes and simple solutions, but that you give me the opportunity to trust in you more. I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.*

# God Made You to Create.

Tuesday, August 15, 2017

Genesis 1:1-5, 26: <sup>1</sup>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

<sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

In the beginning was God. God has always been and will always be. He does not need anything to be complete, yet we see in the opening words of the Bible that God created. First, he created the world and light, the next day he created the sky and the earth, then the dry land and the sea and the plants, then the sun and the moon, then fish and birds, then the animals. Finally, he created man. Man was his crowning creation, the reason he created the rest of the world. He wanted the earth to be the perfect place for his ultimate creation to reside, and it was. He saw that it was very good. He made man in his own image. Somehow we resemble God and have characteristics that even the angels do not possess. We are divinely designed, created intentionally and skillfully by the first creator.

When we talk with those who are not Christ-followers about God, their first thoughts usually are that God is a cosmic tyrant that is more concerned with our following his rules than anything else. However, our first picture of God in the Bible is as creator. He poured out himself to create a beautiful world perfectly designed for his crowning jewel, humankind. It is not until well into the second chapter of Genesis that we get our first "rule." God's identity is first expressed as a creator, not a rule maker. How should this thought change the role of creativity in our own lives?

We are all creators. When we embrace that part of our lives and engage in creative acts, we allow ourselves to reflect God's image more fully. This compulsion to create is often strongest in children. I have paper and pipe cleaner creations, wooden "boats," and charcoal drawings all over my house both inside and outside. My children seem to have this inner drive to create something, often out of anything they can find. Then, they excitedly run to me and show me their creations. In their creative acts, they are beautifully reflecting God's image. They, like God, are making something beautiful out of seemingly nothing. My daughter recently discovered that she could pull the charred wood out of our fire pit and write with it like charcoal. The thrill of discovery and the joy of creation occupied her time, and covered my patio, for almost an hour.

Somewhere between childhood and adulthood, we lose the joy of creating. We allow the fear of our creations not being "good enough" to stop us from creating. We say we "can't draw a straight line with a ruler" or "can't carry a tune in a bucket," limiting ourselves and extinguishing part of our identity as image bearers. We don't think of

ourselves as creative people, and we say that we will leave the creative acts to those who can paint, or sing, or write. When we embrace this narrow definition of what being creative is, we do not allow ourselves to embrace part of our God-given identity. Maybe you cannot paint, or sing, or write, but can you cook? Can you take seemingly mundane ingredients and make a delicious meal? Do you have a green thumb? Can you take a piece of earth, subdue it, and make a beautiful garden, or even just make the world more beautiful by growing a flower in a pot? God designed you in his image. The first thing we learn about him is that he is a creator. Even if you don't do it "well," you are designed to create. Pick up a paintbrush and put some color on the paper. Sing out loud even if it's not pretty to your ears. Chop up a couple of vegetables and make dinner. Don't worry about the results, just create. Maybe you, too, will find out that what you make is "very good."

*When you think of the attributes of God, what comes to mind first? Have you ever thought about how being made in the image of God means that you, too, were designed to be a creator?*

*What do you do on a regular basis that allows you to express yourself as a creator? Is there something that you've been wanting to try but have not done because you are afraid of failing? Take a step of faith and try it.*

**Prayer:**

*God, thank you for showing us first and foremost that you are a creator. Thank you for creating this beautiful world especially for us, from the beauty of the sunset to the songs of the birds and crickets at night. Open our eyes to our own uniquely designed abilities and give us the courage to step forward and embrace our creativity. Amen.*

*This post was written by Julie Mabus, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# Your Past Is Your Past, How Do You Leave it There?

August 16, 2017

Absolutely incredible.

Those are the first two words that came to mind when I read this verse from 2 Corinthians 5.

Even so, when I read this chapter, I often read over this passage without giving it much thought. It says so much in such a small space. It conveys a timeless truth with eternal implications in two short sentences.

In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul writes:

*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

Think about your past - all your sins, all your mistakes, all the things you wish you could forget.

Now think about what Paul wrote:

*The old life is gone.*

Wow.

Could God have done it differently?

Could he have forgiven, saved, and redeemed us differently?

Maybe.

But there surely isn't a more poetic, beautiful, or creative way to do it.

That's our God.

Only through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus can we be forgiven. Only after his death covers our sins can we experience freedom.

Only after this can we be *recreated* into new people.

God - in his infinite creativity - devised and executed a plan that no human mind has the creativity to imagine.

He - in his incredible artistry - has made us new creatures and called us to live in freedom. All we have to do is live in freedom knowing that our creator God has made us new.

*How should knowing that you are a new creation affect the way you live?*

*What can you do today to allow God's creative plan to change the way you think and live?*

***Try praying this short prayer every morning:***

*God, thank you for making me new. In your infinite wisdom, love, and creativity, you have made me a new person. Help me to live this new life the way you want me to. Help me to live as the new creation that I am. Amen.*



# God Can Give You a New Heart Each Day.

*Thursday, August 17, 2017.*

Yesterday, I fell short of what God wants for me.

Yesterday, I acted like the me I was before I found new life in Christ.

I lost my temper with people I care about, believed lies about myself, ignored ways I could've helped those around me, and probably messed up in a hundred other ways I haven't even realized yet.

Seeing as none of us are perfect, you can probably relate.

Yes, God makes us new creations when we accept Jesus Christ as our savior, but sometimes we don't feel "new." We all fall back on bad habits. We all have bad days. So what do we do about it?

We get up and try again, leaning on God's guidance.

Becoming Christians does not make us perfect. We are new creations, but also works in progress. As Paul writes in Philippians 1:6, "... he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Creation and creativity are messy, especially when you're working with an imperfect art medium. And humans are as messy as it gets. Fortunately, we are far more like clay than stone; God can mold us however he likes, so long as we let him. We are never beyond hope.

The important thing to remember is that we have to let God change us by letting go of yesterday. Although it's important to learn from our mistakes, carrying the guilt and shame will only keep us from moving forward.

God is willing to forgive our sins and renew our hearts. He will erase yesterday's errors and smooth out our rough edges. We only have to ask.

Psalm 51:10 says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me." Speaking as someone who falls short of God's desires regularly, I recommend making this part of your daily prayer. Because no matter how messy our lives get, God is always ready to renew us, continually molding us into the beautiful creations he made us to be.

Yesterday, I messed up.

But today, God has given me a chance to start anew. In fact, he guarantees that he will continually make me new.

I treasure that gift.

Take some time and read Philippians 1:6

*And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.*

*How should this promise affect your day-to-day life?*

*How can you live in the freedom offered in that God is going to complete the work he started in you?*

**Prayer:** *God, thank you for making me like clay: moldable and changeable. Thank you for never giving up on me. I need your help every day to become more and more like you. Help me to do this. I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.*

# The Creativity of the Gospel

Friday, August 18, 2017

The gospel is creative.

It is nothing like any other religious belief/philosophy.

Only God could create something like it.

Romans 5:8 says, "But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."

God is creative! He created the heavens and earth, day and night, earth, sky, and seas. God created plants and animals including us humans, both male, and female! He created us alike and different! We are all different colors, shapes, and sizes. We speak different languages and live in different lands. But the one thing we have in common is love. God so loved us that he gave his only Son so that we might have eternal life.

Other religions/philosophies have prophets, leaders, religious teachers and literature, but none have affected the world as the words of Jesus Christ.

No other religions have the same offer that Christianity does. Pastor and Author Tim Keller explains this when he says, "Buddha's Final Words: Strive unceasingly. Jesus' Final Words: It is finished." In Christ, we are offered eternal rest. We do not have to do *anything* to earn God's favor and forgiveness, in fact, we can't do anything! Instead, the gospel frees us from the traps of legalism and welcomes us into a relationship with our heavenly father.

That's creative.

God created us in his image; in that way, we are all the same. Yet we are all different, in physical appearance as well as gifts, talents, and passions. Imagine if everyone in the world were a math teacher. Who would be the student, the principal, the lunch lady, or the bus driver? Who would write the curriculum? Who would build the schools? Who would clean up and make sure the buildings were in good repair? Who would make sure there were enough funds to pay for the utilities and salaries? And if everyone were a math teacher, how would we learn to communicate? How would we learn to dance? Who would grow our food, heal our sick, or entertain us? Who would govern us?

Only God could be so creative - to give us each unique gifts, talents, and desires, and yet fit us together with our own passion and purpose.

*Have you ever thought of the gospel as creative?*

*How can thinking about the creativity of the gospel lead you into deeper appreciation for it?*

*Take some time today and reflect on the creativity that is the gospel.*

**Prayer:** God, thank you for your creativity. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your gospel. I am lost without you, and I know this. Help me to appreciate the creativity of your gospel today. I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.