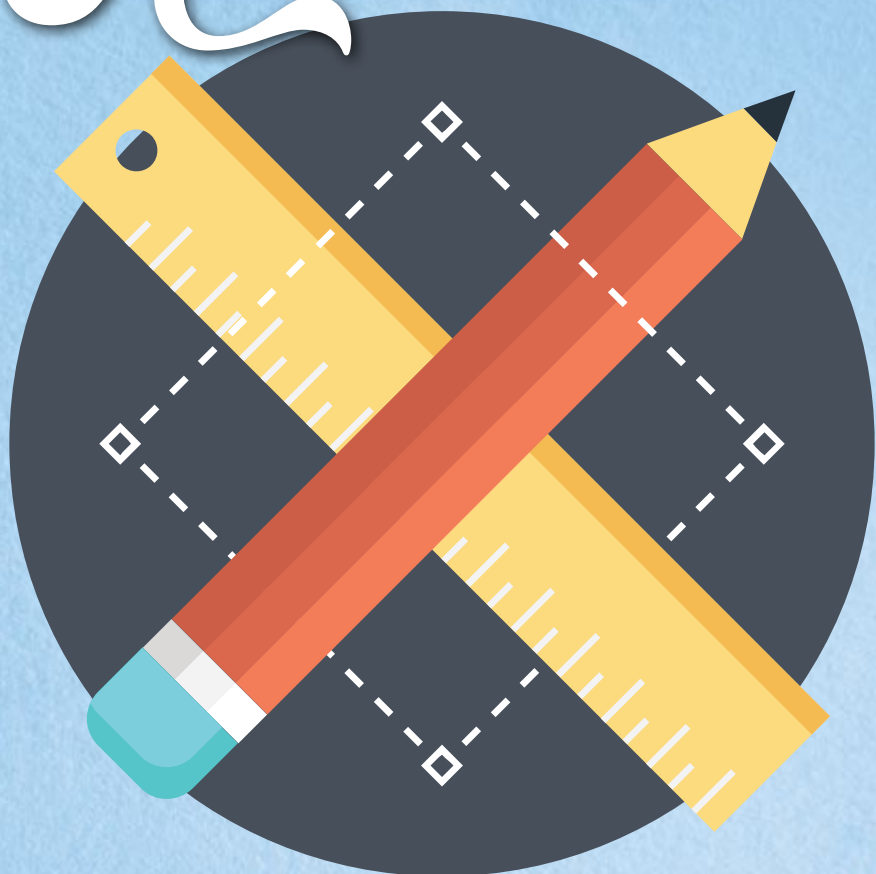


Devotions for Men

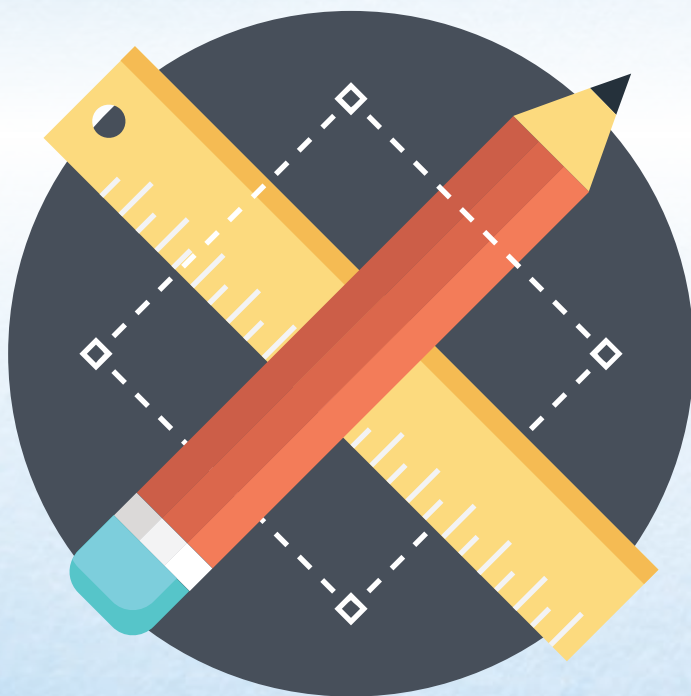
God's Handiwork



Mark Zimmermann

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

EPHESIANS 2:10 (NIV)



Introduction

God has created you with special skills and abilities for you to use in whatever role God has in mind for you as a man of faith, be it as a father, a husband, a friend, a brother, a son, an uncle, a coworker or a neighbor. If you look closely, you can see the hand of God at work in your life, as he crafts it into the masterpiece that he has envisioned. It is no accident that Jesus was raised by a carpenter. Joseph likely taught the young Jesus the tools of the trade. Father and son may have even built things together. The art of physically constructing something for someone points to the joy God must have felt in uniquely designing the person you would become spiritually—a beloved child of his to work for him in his kingdom for the building up of the people of God. So let's get to work, in him and through him.

Mark Zimmermann



Getting Things Done

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

God does not leave things incomplete. He finishes what he starts. And that is true of you, his handiwork. Sometimes when we reach a certain place in our family life or in our careers, we may feel that there is no more work to do on who we are and what we can learn. But that is never the case with God. In his kingdom we are always being called to discover new things and grow in our faith in the places where he has put us in the world. Our God is working hard to mold and shape you all the way until your time on this earth comes to an end, and God welcomes us into his kingdom above as his perfectly formed and forgiven creature. Each day is a new day to keep letting God work on the project that is you however he sees fit. We may not understand or comprehend the final outcome, but God knows where this life of yours is going and what it will accomplish to his glory. Jesus never stopped letting God work in him as he journeyed to the cross to save us and uttered the famous words, "It is finished" (John 19:30). We look forward to the day when we can say by God's grace, "It is finished," and God says to us, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." Stay willing to work with God until that day.

Dear God, you never give up on me. Keep working in me until the end. Amen.



Second Chances

Then [Jesus] told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the man working the vineyard, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.'"

LUKE 13:6-9

If you have ever planted a fruit tree, then you know all the work that goes into keeping it alive and growing and eventually producing a crop. We feel for the man in this parable tending to his fledgling fig tree.

"Give it a second chance," the man says, in essence, and it is implied the vineyard owner gives the tree (and the man tending to it) one more opportunity to accomplish what the tree and man were designed for. What a blessing it is to know that our God gives us, as his handiwork, second chances (and more) to put our heart and soul into nurturing our faith and our spiritual life that we might bear good fruit for the Lord. Working for the Lord does not come easy all the time. We need to put in the hours of prayer and Bible study and reflection to let the branches of our spiritual life spread out and blossom and bear fruit. We need to stay rooted in the fertile soil of his Word and remain planted in Christ Jesus, who forgives us again and again that we might expand into our best selves, manifested by the sunshine and rain of God's nourishing grace. With each chance given to us, new life can come to pass in us.

Continue to motivate us, O Savior, to take advantage of every chance we are given to flourish for you. Amen.

Seeking Answers

Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”

JOHN 3:9

Nicodemus, a man of faith, had questions for this Jesus he had been hearing so much about. He wanted to understand better what was happening to him and what his future held in a world where Jesus dwelled. There is hope and promise in the answers Jesus gives to this man—and that he gives to us today as men of faith by extension. Being born again, for instance, is not literal, Jesus explains, but something that happens inside of our souls when our lives start again fully supported by the Spirit, no longer dominated by human desire and the things of this earth. Our new life in Christ is not about our love for ourselves but God’s love for us through the death and resurrection of his Son. The work that Jesus did for us to die on the cross for our sins is not something we could ever do but something that benefits us eternally without us even lifting a finger. Our work in Christ, then, should not be seen as a way to salvation, but as a response to his supreme love for us. We cannot help but speak and act in ways that honor him because we love him and want others to know and love him too.

Work in my heart, dear Jesus, to help me understand more fully what you are doing in my life. Amen.



Just Say the Word

The centurion answered, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed."

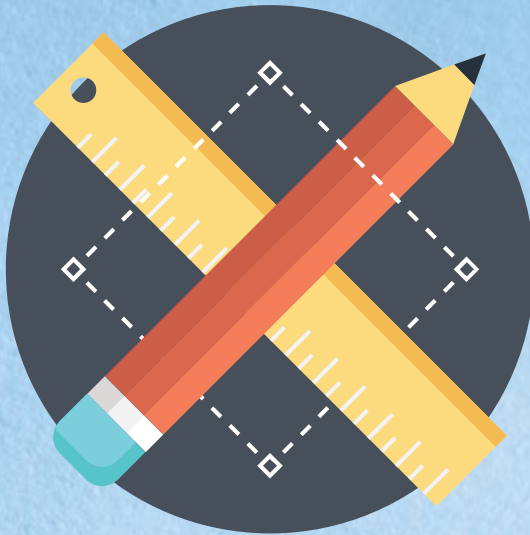
MATTHEW 8:8

The centurion whose servant was sick knew what his place was in comparison to Jesus. He knew that even though he had a high-power job commanding a large group of soldiers, Jesus had the even higher power job of overseeing the whole world. The centurion knew that his request to heal his servant was minor in the big picture of Jesus' kingdom. But Jesus took the time to listen to the centurion. He recognized the centurion's faith. He brought healing to that servant immediately. So many times in our lives, we may wonder if Jesus is listening, if Jesus has the time for us and even if Jesus is there for us at all. But this passage from Scripture reveals that all those things are true for each and every one of us. Jesus listens, takes time for us and is there for us always. All we need to do is trust in this word of love and caring and kindness. We are the work of his hands, and he will never abandon us in any hour of our need. Our coming to him in prayer is something that Jesus welcomes and enjoys.

Listening Lord, hear my cries for help, and come to me in my distress. I put my trust in you. Amen.



This booklet of devotions reflects on the fact that men of faith are God’s handiwork, divinely designed to serve in a Christlike manner in their roles as fathers, guardians, uncles, coworkers, neighbors and friends.



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