

Built For This

1. Summer's almost over. Did you go to the State Fair this year? What's your favorite Fair food – from this year or prior years?
2. Pastor Robert told us about a London-based street artist known as “Banksy” whose street art has become famous and incredibly valuable. Banksy can take a dingy blank wall and transform it into an artistic masterpiece. In a similar way, God takes the blank and broken canvas that is our life and transforms us into a new person with a new focus and a new direction and a new purpose. You are one of God's masterpieces! When you heard Robert say that, how did it make you feel? In your heart of hearts, do you believe you have the potential to be one of God's masterpieces?
3. Our Scripture passage for Sunday paints a devastating picture of the effects of sin on our lives, but then goes on to help us envision the dynamic impact God can have on our lives. Read Ephesians 2:1-10, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Verse 1 says that before we came to Christ, we “were dead in [our] transgressions and sins.” How would you explain that to somebody who asks what it means? What do you think that means to say, “Before I came to faith, I was dead?” Dead in what sense?
 - b. Does the concept of “being dead” before you invited God into your life resonate with you personally? Is it true to your experience? Why or why not?
 - c. For some “being dead” can be experienced as “being stuck” – stuckness. Tell us about a time in your life when you felt really stuck in a bad place.
 - d. Robert described the transformation that has occurred in the life of his barber. His barber began by working in a tiny, crowded barber shop in a shady part of town, but now works in an upscale private studio in Carmel. Robert's barber still keeps a picture of himself in his original run-down barber shop to remind him where he came from. Without memories, we are lost souls because our memories of the past help anchor us in the present, reminding us who we are and where we came from. So, using your imagination, describe for us what a picture of your life before you came to faith might look like? How has that picture changed?
 - e. Robert said, “I want to make sure that we don't just build churches that are keepers of the aquarium, but instead churches that are going out to seek fish and to reach people – to reach dead people.” How important is it to you to share your faith? Is there someone in your life right now that you hope to influence to embrace faith?
4. Although the first few verses of today's passage paint a bleak picture of our life without Christ, the passage takes an abrupt turn in verse 4, which says, “**But** because of his great love for us, **God**, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were

dead in transgressions – it is *by grace* you have been saved.” As Robert said, those two words “But God” change everything.

- a. James Montgomery Boice once said, “If you understand those two words – BUT GOD – they will save your soul. If you recall them daily and live by them, they will transform your life completely.” What do you think Boice meant?
 - b. Billionaire Robert Smith, during his commencement address at Morehouse College, announced he was going to pay off all \$34 million of the student debt of the graduating class. Students were stunned – an abrupt change from deep indebtedness to being debt free! It was a classic “but then” moment. God has that same power in our lives. By grace God forgave our debt of sin. And by grace God creates other amazing “but then” moments in our life. Tell us about a time in your life when things were bleak, BUT GOD turned everything around.
5. God’s grace wasn’t random. God saved us FOR A PURPOSE. Robert said, “Life is only at its best when we align ourselves with God’s purpose for our lives. Life brings the greatest joy when we are where God wants us to be.” So figuring out the purpose for which God saved us is critically important. Our Scripture passage doesn’t leave us hanging. It tells us our intended purpose. Verse 10 says, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance.”
- a. We are the handiwork of God created to do good works that God prepared us to do beforehand. As Robert said, “You are not here randomly. You are not here to live in mediocrity. You are not here to sit idly by on the sideline of life. You are not here to just let life happen to you. God has an assignment, God has an agenda, God has a purpose and a plan for what God expects you to do.” The word SHAPE is sometimes used as an acronym to help us think this through. Take a look at the SHAPE graph on the next page, then tell us something good that you feel God has equipped you to do well.
 - b. Throughout his sermon, Robert told us about people who were powerful “disrupters.” A disruptor is someone who takes uncomfortable and risky action to shake up the status quo, to raise awareness, and to build power. Jesus was a disrupter. Therefore, we who follow him are also called to be disrupters in one way or another. We disrupt the status quo to do something good that creates something better. What’s something disruptive God has called and equipped you to do?
 - c. As already noted, God has created and saved each one of us to do good works. Most of us are called to do good in a whole variety of different ways. That’s our overriding purpose. We need to live with that awareness. So, as an awareness exercise, think about two, three, or four good things (large or small) that God is calling you to do in your life right now. In other words, what are some ways you’re living into your God-given purpose to do good works right now?

Ephesians 2:1-10 (NIV)

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh^a and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

S-H-A-P-E = My Unique Creation Design

S = My Spiritual gifts. What are your great spiritual strengths?

H = My Hear't's passions. What are you innately passionate about?

A = My Abilities and talents. What are you naturally good at?

P = My Personality. What kind of work is best suited to my personality?

E = My Experiences. What have my experiences equipped me to be and do?