

## Your Creation Blueprint

We're in the midst of a sermon series in which we're taking the words of some of the great Old Testament prophets and applying them to ourselves as if they were spoken directly to us and for us – because they were. This week's passage is Isaiah 45:9-13.

1. Warm up question. If God told you that you could no longer be yourself, but you could choose to be anyone else in the world, who would you choose to be – and why?
2. Many of us have mixed feelings about ourselves. Sometimes we love being us. Other times we find ourselves thinking, "If only I could be. . . ." Before jumping into today's passage, let's reflect a bit on how we feel about ourselves.
  - a. What's something you love about yourself?
  - b. What's something you wish you could change about yourself?
  - c. Which of the following statements comes closest to being true for you. If none of the statements resonates with you, feel free to create your own.

*"I love being me! I feel like my life really matters."*

*"I feel ok about myself, but think I'm pretty average. Nothing to get too excited about."*

*"Most of the time, it's hard for me to feel good about myself."*

3. Read Isaiah 45:9-13.
  - a. Verse 9 refers to God as our "Maker." Do you see God as your Maker? If so, what does that mean to you? In your understanding, how involved was/is God in deciding the details of your physical makeup and your formative life experiences?
  - b. Verse 9 invites us to imagine a Disney-like scenario where a vase being shaped by a potter starts talking back to the potter. What lessons or insights do you think we're supposed to draw from that analogy?



- c. In verse 9, the prophet uses the word "woe." Why? What are the bad things that can happen when we "strive with our Maker" about how we've been created?
- d. Take a look at the picture to the left. Do you see ugly or beauty? Describe what you see. Are you able to look at yourself the same way? If not, why not?

4. Re-read verse 13. Cyrus was the successor to the Babylonian king who first carried the Israelites into exile. The Israelites saw Cyrus as an extension of the evil that first brought them to exile. But the prophet had a different view. He foresaw that God was going to use Cyrus to repatriate many Israelites and help them begin rebuilding Jerusalem. When verse 13 is coupled with the preceding verses, it appears that the prophet is challenging his listeners to apply the lessons of verses 9-12 not just to how we see ourselves, but how we see others. Because, let's face it, sometimes it's hard to see the beauty in how God has created others. Is there someone in your life right now where you find yourself thinking, "Why do you have to be that way?" Who is it? Why do they get on your nerves? Is it possible God created them to be that way?
  
5. On Sunday, Jeff highlighted two lessons from our Scripture passage. The first being: ***Let's stop resisting our creation design and compassionately embrace those parts of ourselves we tend to resent.*** To illustrate this point, Jeff told the story of the mother in the movie "13 Going On 30." Her daughter asked her, "If you were given one do-over in life, what it would be?" She responded, "I know I've made lots of mistakes, but I don't regret any of them, because if I hadn't made them, I wouldn't have learned how to make them right."
  - a. Do you think God gives us our weaknesses? Why or why not? What positive purpose, if any, can weaknesses serve?
  - b. If God gave us our weaknesses, how should we respond to them? Should we just accept the weakness and say, "That's just who I am." Or should we try to overcome the weakness? Think about a weakness of your own. What would it look like for you to respond to that weakness with compassion?
  - c. Jeff showed a video clip of a two-legged dog thriving in life. Watching that video, what thoughts or feelings did it evoke within you?
  
6. The second lesson Jeff highlighted was: ***Learn to cooperate with your creation design; trust it to channel you into the fullness of your destiny.*** To illustrate this point, Jeff told a parable about a vacuum sweeper that wanted to be a blender. He also shared the story of how Pastor Vivian's creation design channeled her away from operating a business office to serving as a pastoral chaplain. (Reminder: For these purposes, we're defining "creation design" not just in terms of our DNA, but also the formative life experiences God gives us. Both nature and nurture.)
  - a. When you look at where you are in life right now – occupationally and beyond – do you feel you're in a place that harmonizes well with your creation design? If yes, tell us why. If no, tell us why.
  - b. If you're not yet in a place that feels like it harmonizes with your creation design, what changes do you think you might need to make? Are you ready to make those changes?

***Sunday is Mother's Day!***

***Bring your Mom and Grandmothers to church with you so we can honor them!***