

[446: Underwear for My Birthday](#)

Today I turn 60 years old - the big six-oh. I am off for two days of celebration out West with my family, but thought I would write some thoughts before I get away. I will spend the next two days doing some cool stuff, but I will also spend some time thinking about the future, and planning what I would like to do for the next ten years, with God's help of course.

MY FUTURE VISION

I have come to the conclusion, which isn't particularly brilliant or original, that it is what you do for others that will provide a legacy once you are gone. Stephen Covey's second habit for successful people is beginning with the end in mind. He recommends that you write your funeral eulogy today, outlining what you hope people will say about you when you are gone. Then you must get busy doing those things if that is how you want to be remembered.

I want to be remembered as someone who helped set people free to purpose, to know the joy of doing what they were created to do, where they were meant to do it. I want to be a person whom others sought out for wisdom and help in time of personal need. I want people to smile when I walk in a room or preach a message; if I can make them laugh, all the better. And I want to meet practical needs, wherever I may find them.

I crave writing a best-selling book, where smiling people line up outside a bookstore to get an autographed copy. I could go on and on about the future, but let me focus for now on something I want today for my birthday and that is underwear.

MY PRESENT PROJECT

No, it's not for me. It's for children in Kenya, who sometimes can't go to school because they don't have it. To date, I have collected 600 pair, but I want and need more. My sister-in-law wrote a [blog](#) entry the other day entitled, "Why I am buying my brother-in-law underwear for his birthday" and then sent me \$50. That gave me the idea to ask for more.

So how about it? Are you up for buying an old man some underwear for his birthday? While you are at it, how about adding \$5 to your contribution for the Sophia Fund to help feed widows and orphans. Next week we will resume our discussion of creativity, but for this week, it's time to celebrate my 60th by buying some underwear. Instructions on how to give are below. Have a great week!

[447: Creative Expressions](#)

Thank you so much for your generous contributions toward my "birthday underwear" fund for Kenyan youth. More than \$700 came in plus some donated underwear. That is great! It's not too late to give, however, as you can read below. And if you live in Kenya,

please check out the seminar I am coming to conduct next month. It has the power to change your life. But now, it's time to move on. Two weeks ago, I began a series on creativity and would like to resume that topic for the next few weeks.

Do you consider yourself a creative person? What creative outlets do you have, or rather how many do you give yourself permission to have? For most of my adult life, I did not give myself permission to pursue creativity and I wasn't open to the fact that I may be creative. My self-image was that of an administrator, and creativity and administration were at odds with one another—or so I thought.

Are you creative? If your answer is no, then perhaps you need to expand the way you view creativity and, consequently, view yourself. If you are open to that possibility, then urge you to read on.

ADAM'S ZOO

Adam was made by God to be creative and we are Adam's children. After God created Adam, He invited Adam to enter into the creative process by naming the animals:

“Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field” (Genesis 2:19-20).

Adam decided what the animals were to be called; it was an expression of his creative dominion in the Garden.

Too often, we have identified only musicians, songwriters, poets and writers as creative—and they are indeed creative. Those expressions, however, are only a few of the creative expressions that are available to Adam's children. Let's take a look at some of the creative expressions that are available to you:

1. **Child raising**—Raising a child requires tremendous creativity as you teach, train, entertain and discipline each child according to his or her personality and needs.
2. **Handwriting**—Do you have beautiful handwriting? Then stop using the computer. Use your creative, artistic flair to communicate with others in your own writing.
3. **Dress**—You may have an eye for color or fashion. Be creative and adorn your body, God's creation, in a manner that is distinctive and uniquely you.
4. **Repairs**—It takes creativity not just to invent or design something, but to keep it in working order. Your ability to read a manual and then fix something is an expression of your creativity.
5. **Gardening**—Do you like flowers? Enjoy raising vegetables? Then plant to the glory of God and do it with your style and grace. If you don't plant the seeds, they

won't grow! So join in the creative process and do what Adam and Eve did in the Garden. (Don't forget to pull the weeds, too!)

6. **Time management**—Can you organize your time and activities? That requires creativity. Can you help others organize? That requires even more creativity.
7. **Problem solving**—Do you face new problems and apply timeless wisdom and solutions? Then you are not just organized or efficient. You are creative!

YOU ARE OH SO CREATIVE!

I hope you get the picture. Like Adam, you are creative and God wants and needs you to express your creativity in every day life. Stop saying you aren't creative—you are! I have assembled a list of creative expressions from past studies on creativity and that list is posted on my [website](#). Take a look at that list and see how many expressions are present in your life and then settle once and for all your attitude toward your own creativity.

Perhaps then you will see yourself as creative, which is just how the Lord wants you to see yourself. Once you see yourself as creative, you will then give yourself permission to pursue and release creativity in ways not possible up to this point in your life. As you do, I know you will have a great creative week!

[448: Creator God, Creative Man](#)

We've been discussing creativity these past few weeks and in that context I've been thinking about Jesus. Jesus was a creative man. If we attribute Jesus' creativity to His divinity, we can't gain much help or understanding that will assist us in our own creativity. If we see, however, that Jesus was a creative *man*, there may be things in His life to help us be more creative. You probably know what I think about this issue, but to make sure you do, you had better read on.

A TEACHING CARPENTER

We know that Jesus was a carpenter, so He made things from wood with His hands. One second-century bishop reported that wooden yokes that Jesus made in the first century were still being used 100 years later! That tells us that Jesus wasn't only creative, He was committed to excellence—He did good work.

There's also a good chance that Jesus, as the oldest son, ran a carpentry business that supported more than just Himself. His brothers could have been in business with Him and that meant He also expressed His creativity by running a business, making payroll and managing inventory, accounts and customer service. He also would have supported His widowed mother from the business as well.

But Jesus' creativity didn't stop there. At the age of 30, He changed careers, starting an itinerate ministry through which He continued to express tremendous creativity. He was creative in building and equipping an effective team of men and women who traveled with Him.

When Jesus performed miracles, He did so with flair and distinction. One time He spit on the ground, made mud and smeared it on a blind man's eyes. Another time, Jesus put His fingers into a deaf man's ears and touched the end of the man's tongue with His spit. Jesus answered His critics with creative retorts that delighted the crowds. His insight into Scripture held people's attention for days on end and He impressed the crowd with His fresh approach to God and the Word.

Perhaps Jesus' greatest creative expression, however, was in His teaching. When He taught, He used parables—stories from everyday life that imparted truth. Where did He get those stories? He made up those stories. They came from His creativity, perhaps the same creativity that He learned and perfected as a carpenter. Jesus used parables with lessons drawn from agriculture, business, current events, family life, and gardening. He was such a creative teacher that the people would walk for days to listen to Him for days. Mark reported: “The large crowd listened to him with delight” (Mark 12:37).

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR YOU

Why is this important? First of all, Jesus' creativity did not come from His divinity only. He was and is the Creator God and creative Man. On earth He expressed His creativity as a Jewish man who observed life and saw God in all of it. Secondly, if Jesus the man was creative, then He can help *you* be creative. And finally, you will fulfill your purpose as you carry on the creative legacy that was handed down by the Son of God and continued in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are not here to maintain; we are here to creatively advance the kingdom of God. Your creativity is how you will help fulfill the mandate given to Adam to subdue the earth and rule over it.

This week, I have an assignment for you. Take some time to read Proverbs 8. Do you see wisdom speaking there? That “wisdom” certainly sounds a lot like Jesus to me. Pray through this Proverb and then ask the Lord for creative wisdom. Ask Him to help you use the ordinary lessons of daily life, just like Jesus did, to create something extraordinary. Don't see your creativity as an exception or something that you use from time to time. See it as a powerful source of daily inspiration that will help you both to fulfill your purpose and do great things. As you do, I know your life will be changed as mine has been these last few years. Have a great week!

449: Timing and Seasons

I hear many people say they are concerned about timing or the right season to do this or that. They don't want to miss or get ahead of the Lord, so they watch and wait for God's timing. This is an important issue when it comes to acting on your creative ideas, so let's look at it more closely. When I am asked about timing, I usually give the same response; “Timing is pretty much *irrelevant!*” You will have to read on to see in what context I make this comment.

TIMING IS IRRELEVANT.

Perhaps I should say that timing as a planning tool is overrated. I maintain that it is *impossible* to know what time or season you are in until you are in it. So why waste any time, or allow the thought of timing to slow down what you are going to do? Let me explain it another way.

How do you know for sure that you have a good idea? Is it *before* or *after* you implement the idea? It is *after* you take steps to carry out the idea. So if you are waiting for the right time to apply any good idea, you may never take action. That is why I say timing is overrated as a consideration when you look to move out and do something.

Perhaps two passages will strengthen my case. The first is found in Ecclesiastes 11:4-5:

Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let not your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.

The second is from the story of the four lepers in 2 Kings 7:

Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, "Why do we sit here until we die? "If we say, 'We will enter the city,' then the famine is in the city and we will die there; and if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they spare us, we will live; and if they kill us, we will but die" (2 Kings 7:3-4).

WHAT'S TIMING TO A LEPER?

The four lepers saw their condition as critical. They were less concerned about looking bad or "missing God" than survival! It is *not* faith to want to know the timing and steps you will need to take to succeed. It is presumptuous! God does *not* owe you a full explanation before you take the first steps in obedience. To think that He does is to expect more than God gave Abraham. God told Abraham to set out. When Abraham wanted to know where he was going, the Lord basically responded, "I'll tell you when you get there."

If you don't identify with the lepers, you will say that you can "wait on the Lord." If you identify with their situation and see yourself in need to act and have faith, then you will act today on your creativity, ideas, goals and dreams. Have you had enough of being where you are? Then step out and be less concerned about timing and more concerned about finding fulfillment and creative expression.

Let me close with one more thought. I hear people say, "I don't want to get ahead of the Lord." I say, go ahead and try! If Ephesians 3:20-21 is true (and it is), there is ***no way*** you can get ahead of Him:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

So dream big and then step out to see what happens. Be free to move out and about, knowing that you can't get ahead of God and you won't fully please Him ***until*** you act in faith, faith that your time is now to do the will of God. Have a great week!

450: If He Can, You Can

A few years ago I read a book entitled [*The Best American Spiritual Writing 2006*](#). One of the essays in that book, entitled *Into the Wonder*, was about C.S. Lewis, the famous Christian author and apologist and one of the great creative minds of the last century. I thought the article had merit for our discussion on creativity.

AN UNLIKELY CANDIDATE

The essay began by describing a particularly trying time in Lewis's life when he was living with his brother and an elderly woman. The woman was bedridden and increasingly used Lewis as an extra maid to help meet her needs. Meanwhile his brother, who helped him with correspondence and filing, drank himself to insensibility and ended up in a hospital. The pressures of this situation, along with his work load at Oxford, drove Lewis to the point of collapse and he was eventually hospitalized for exhaustion.

It was shortly thereafter that Lewis had a friend over to read him a portion of a new children's book that Lewis was writing. This book became *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, which was the first of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, which to date has sold 85 million copies in 30 languages.

What is so interesting to me about this scenario?

First, Lewis wrote perhaps his most famous work at a most inopportune time in his life. I often feel like I can't be more creative or productive until certain things change, until my life is free of worry, anxiety or mental clutter. Lewis didn't wait for the best time. In fact, in a time of suffering and professional busy-ness, he began to write fiction for children, a most unusual exercise for a man known more at that point for his theological rather than fantasy work.

Second, Lewis was not married at the time and had no children (he had two stepsons from his marriage to Joy Gresham and maintained a relationship with the boys after his

wife's death). I think it remarkable that Lewis could write so effectively for children when he had none of his own.

Finally, Lewis was a loner as a child. His childhood, while not sad or abusive, wasn't filled with the kind of childhood joys upon which he could draw to write his stories.

NO MORE EXCUSES

Lewis produced creative work in spite of his personal difficulties. You must learn to do the same. You can no longer *not* create because circumstances in your life aren't quite right. Neither can you dismiss your creative ideas because you don't see yourself as qualified or fit. Lewis was neither a happy child nor natural father, yet he wrote children's books that changed the world. What could you do if you stopped hiding behind excuses and limitations and just did it?

It seems that Lewis's hardships prepared him to create; his suffering somehow fueled his drive to write. If you can see that your suffering is preparation and not a hindrance, you will find new freedom to produce when it may not seem like a good time to produce. And please don't tell anyone that you don't have the time to create. You have all the time in the world - 24 hours every day. It's not that you don't have time; you aren't using it creatively to create.