

CREATIVITY vs. UNDERACHIEVEMENT

CULTIVATING WISE THOUGHTS, PRUDENT WORKS, AND SKILLFUL ACTIONS TO CARRY OUT GOD'S WILL.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” Eph. 2:10

DEFINITION OF CREATIVITY

The Hebrew word *bara* means *to create*. It includes the ideas “to shape; to form; to fashion.” Moses used it to define God’s creation of man in Genesis 1:27. The author of Genesis used a similar word, *yatsar*, in Genesis 2:7 when God *formed* man from the dust of the ground. *Yetsar*, a close relative to *yatsar*, describes the action of a potter forming a vessel for a particular purpose. (See Isaiah 29:16). What the Creator creates expresses and demonstrates His wisdom and understanding. Not only making things requires creativity, but also making plans. Thus, the following two words help explain the meaning of creativity:

Cunning--This word combines skill, inventiveness, and cleverness with creativity. The Bible describes Esau as a “cunning hunter” (Gen. 25:27), David as a “cunning player on an harp” (I Sam. 16:16), and Daniel as “cunning in knowledge, and understanding science” (Dan. 1:4).

Subtlety--Subtlety means the ability to strategize to accomplish a goal. It means using discretion and prudence in working out a plan. Solomon compiled the Proverbs “to give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion” (Proverbs 1:4).

WHY IS CREATIVITY SO IMPORTANT?

Creativity determines the success we will achieve during our lifetime. Success comes from fulfilling the purposes for which God made us. We will fulfill those purposes only to the degree that we exercise creativity. God the Creator made us in His own image and gave us the capacity to creatively carry out the good works He purposed to do through us. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,” (Ephesians 2:10).

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF CREATIVITY?

Genuine love forms the foundation of every character quality, and we express love by doing good works.

- “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with **good**,” (Romans 12:21).
- “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every **good work**,” (II Corinthians 9:8).
- “As we have therefore opportunity, let us **do good** unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith,” (Galatians 6:10).
- “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every **good work**, and increasing in the knowledge of God,” (Colossians 1:10).
- A church should support a widow if she is “Well reported of for **good works**; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every **good work**,” (1 Timothy 5:10).
- The Apostle Paul instructs wealthy believers “to do good, to be rich in **good works**, to be generous and ready to share,” (1 Timothy 6:18-19, New American Standard).
- “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every **good work**,” (2 Timothy 2:21).
- “In all things shewing thyself a pattern of **good works**,” (Titus 2:7).
- “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of **good works**,” (Titus 2:14).
- “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every **good work**,” (Titus 3:1).

- “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain **good works**,” (Titus 3:8).
- “Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is **good**, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives,” (Titus 3:14, New International Version).
- “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to **good works**,” (Hebrews 10:24).
- “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every **good work** to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen, (Hebrews 13:20-21).
- “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your **good works**, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation;” (1 Peter 2:12).

WHAT ACTIVATES CREATIVITY?

Thoughts activate creativity. Before God created the world, He determined in the counsel of His will that He would create man, provide a Redeemer, and establish good works for believers to follow. (See 1 Peter 1:19-20, Eph. 1:4, Titus 2, Eph. 2:10). If we think God’s thoughts after Him by memorizing and meditating on His Word, then our creativity will serve good purposes. If Scripture does not form the basis for our thoughts, then our creativity will produce selfish or evil results.

Thoughts expressed in words energize creativity. After God conceived creation in His mind, He spoke the words, and it came about. “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light,” (Genesis 1:3) and “God said, Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26). God understands the power of words in the process of creativity. Thus, He warns us to carefully choose our words before speaking them. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue; and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof” (Proverbs 18:21).

HOW DOES THE WORD OF GOD ENERGIZE CREATIVITY?

The Lord Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). He also said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). In both of these instances, Christ uses the Greek term *rhema* rather than *logos*. Bible translators often render both terms as *word*, so to appreciate what Christ meant in these verses, we need to understand the difference between these terms.

Logos conveys the idea of a message or discourse. When the Apostle Paul and his companions attended the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, the rulers spoke to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a message [*logos*] of encouragement for the people, please speak,” (Acts 13:15, New International Version). At the end of the New Testament book of Hebrews, the writer states, “But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly,” (Hebrews 13:22, New American Standard). *This word [logos] of exhortation* refers to a book of thirteen chapters! Some English-speakers use the term *word* in this sense. For them, to give a word means to preach a sermon. When the Apostle John, in the first chapter of his gospel, calls the flesh and blood Jesus of Nazareth *the Word*, he implies that Christ represents the message of God to us. Everything the Father wanted to communicate to His children, He summed up in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. John used the term *logos* because he wanted to emphasize the idea of Christ as the message or discourse from God.

By contrast to *logos*, *rhema* refers to the exact words spoken or written. After Peter had denied Christ three times, he “remembered the word [*rhema*] of Jesus, which said unto him, ‘Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.’ And he went out, and wept bitterly,” (Matthew 26:75). Peter remembered the exact words that the Lord Jesus spoke to him. On the first day of the week after Christ’s crucifixion and burial, certain women went to His tomb to prepare the body with spices. At the tomb, two men in shinning garments surprised them, and asked them, “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, ‘The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’ And they remembered his words [*rhema*],” (Luke 24:5-8). The two men quoted the exact words that Jesus spoke, and the women remembered His exact words. In Acts 10, Peter goes to Joppa, to the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius, and preaches the gospel to a crowd of Gentiles, who responded with faith. When Peter returns to Jerusalem, some Jewish believers questioned the advisability of having contact with Gentiles.

Peter simply rehearsed the leading of the Lord to go to Cornelius, the response of the Gentiles to the gospel message. Peter contended that the Holy Spirit worked among the Gentiles just as He worked among the Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost. Peter told the Jewish believers at Jerusalem that, "...as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word [*rhema*] of the Lord, how that he said, 'John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.' Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? (Acts 11:15-17). Peter used the term *rhema* because he remembered and quoted the Lord's exact words.

The *rhema* of God contain enormous power. God created the entire universe by simply speaking His *rhema*! "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word [*rhema*] of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear," (Hebrews 11:3). The *rhema* of God creates saving faith in the receptive human heart. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word [*rhema*] of God, (Rom 10:17). Thus, when the Lord Jesus said, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words [*rhema*] that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life, (John 6:63), He stressed to His disciples that the power of Holy Spirit in their lives depended on their connection with His very spoken words (cf. Luke 4:4). These verses suggest that to know the power and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives requires that we memorize and meditate on His written Word. The *rhema* God gives to us provide the direction for the good works He wants to accomplish in and through us. The Holy Spirit guides us in understanding God's Word and He takes an active role in our creativity. "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth" (Ps. 104:30).

HOW CAN WE INCREASE OUR CREATIVITY?

Wisdom expresses itself through wisdom. "I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions" (Prov. 8:12). Every believer can receive more wisdom by simply asking for it. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). God also lays down the conditions for acquiring wisdom. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:6).

If we truly want to increase our creativity, we should not only ask for wisdom but also cry out for it. "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom; out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:36). The ultimately wisdom comes from the Scriptures. The more we study, memorize, and meditate on them, the greater foundation we will build for true creativity.

HOW CREATIVE ARE YOU?

- Do you cultivate wise thoughts by meditating on Scripture day and night?
- Do you find creative ways to encourage members of your family?
- Do you spend time in planning strategies to effectively explain the Gospel?
- Do you seek to motivate others to carry out good works?
- Do you look at obstacles as hindrances or as opportunities for creative solutions?
- Do you conquer boredom by finding new and challenging ways to do things?
- Does a lack of results motivate you to try a new and better method?