

TAKING CARE OF OUR 'HANDIWORK'**By Robert J. Tamasy**

From time to time we hear of someone described as a “self-made man” or “self-made woman.” The implication is that all they have become and all they have accomplished is the direct result of their own initiative and hard work. Perhaps you regard yourself as one of them.

What is wrong with using that term? After all, many people have come from disadvantaged backgrounds, or overcome various obstacles to achieve their levels of success. They have “beaten the odds” to reach the heights they have attained. Even people who did not confront great adversity often consider themselves “self-made,” given the time and energy they invested in their careers.

When I graduated from high school, although I was regarded as a good student, I doubt that anyone was envisioning me as “most likely to succeed.” But somewhere along the way I learned the value of hard work, discipline and determination. Work weeks that far exceeded the 40-hour standard were my norm; I worked as hard and as long as required to fulfill my responsibilities and succeed.

However, I never regarded my accomplishments the result of being self-made. Although I had learned how to write and edit, and honed my skills through time and experience, I did not start from ground zero. I had loved reading and had an innate proficiency in writing. These abilities and talents were natural, not store-bought, or manufactured by me. I possessed them from the birth. Once I realized what I had and discovered I enjoyed using these gifts, I pursued an education and opportunities for using them.

A truth from the Bible confirmed my conviction that any sense of being “self-made” would have been a great misconception. Ephesians 2:10 states, “*For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*” This says that we – not what we do – are God’s “workmanship.” Another translation uses the term “handiwork” instead of workmanship, and in some respects gives the passage even more profound meaning.

In a recent meditation, writer Elisa Morgan explained the term *handiwork* “denotes a work of art or masterpiece.” Have you ever perceived yourself as a “work of art” or “masterpiece,” just as we regard artistic creations on display in some museum? That is how the Bible describes us.

This brings to mind another passage that presents a similar idea. King David of ancient Israel wrote, “*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well*” (Psalm 139:13-14)

Reading this makes me feel both humbled and amazed. And I believe it should evoke similar feelings in each of us. Can you imagine the God of the universe, who created the wonders of nature as well as the universe, being so personal that He divinely conceived each one of us as works of art, masterpieces He is proud to display in His “exhibit hall”?

What kind of “handiwork” are you? Perhaps your forte is leadership, or administration. Maybe you excel in sales, or possess entrepreneurial vision. Or have unique artistic abilities or capabilities as a craftsman. You may have invested countless hours, sweat and tears getting to where you are now. But you have been using what God gave you initially. You are his “masterpiece”!

© 2019. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today’s Workplace; Tufting Legacies; coauthored with David A. Stoddard, The Heart of Mentoring, and edited numerous other books, including Advancing Through Adversity by Mike Landry. Bob’s biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.*

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Who do you know that considers himself or herself “self-made”? What about yourself – to what (or who) do you attribute whatever success you have achieved to this point?
2. Do you believe that, perhaps even in the womb and certainly from birth, God imparts to each of us certain abilities, talents and skills? Why or why not?
3. When you think of the term “handiwork,” what comes to mind?
4. How does it feel to be told that to God, you are a work of art, a masterpiece? Does it excite you? Humble you? Challenge your comprehension, leave you incredulous? If this is true, that we truly are His handiwork, what should be your response?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Isaiah 43:7; 1 Corinthians 3:9; Ephesians 1:3-9; 2 Timothy 2:20-21, 3:16-17