

Introduction

When my sons Moses and Aaron were infants, my wife regularly sang to them a Bill Gaither song. It's titled *You're Someone Special* and goes like this: **"When Jesus sent you to us, we loved you from the start. You were a bit of sunshine from heaven to our hearts. Not just another baby 'Cause since the world began, there's been something very special for you in His plan. That's why He made you special. You're the only one of your kind. God gave you a body and a bright healthy mind. He had a special purpose that He wanted you to find. So He made you something special. You're the only of your kind."** Those are stirring lyrics, but the question is this. Are they just nice talk, pretty words, meant to inspire us? Or are they true? Our text, Psalm 139:13-16, answers that question for us.

The Drive to Significance

There is in astronomy what is called *The Principle of Mediocrity*. That principle says there's nothing special about planet earth, including its features and location in the universe. Astronomers estimate there are approximately one hundred billion billion planets in the universe. According to *The Principle of Mediocrity*, earth is an ordinary run of the mill planet just like all the rest are. It's just **"another one of those"** in other words, one of the one hundred billion billion.

That helps us understand, by way of analogy, what many believe about humans. There's nothing special about any of us. It's estimated that 110 billion people have lived in human history. Many claim each of us is an ordinary run of the mill person just like all the rest are. Each of us is just **"another one of those,"** one of the 110 billion.

That claim, if it's true, is devastating to human life. It is because of a psychological reality that's common to us all if we're sane. That reality is what is called **"the drive to significance."** Each of us desperately needs assured that we aren't a nobody but a somebody

special instead. Each of us needs to know that we are in some way extraordinary and unique, that we are one of a kind.

This drive to significance first appears as a vital need in the small child, and later in its clamorous desire for attention. It then continues on in the adult until the day that he or she dies. It's in us all.

And there's nothing wrong with that. The drive to significance isn't a bad thing. We need to be clear about that. It isn't egotism. Egotism is self-obsession. The egotist sees everyone and everything primarily in terms of himself or herself. That egotism isn't the same thing as the drive to significance. It's a result of it. Each of us has the need to be one of a kind. Egotism is a response to the frustration of that need.

The drive to significance then is a good thing. God Himself gave it to Adam and Eve and to you and me when He made us. He made us to be held irreplaceable, without price, which is why the idea that we're just **"another one of those"** is so devastating to us.

A man bought a new car. On the way home from the dealer, he heard a rattling in the door, took it back, and complained. The dealer then removed the door panel and guess what he found – four large bolts and a note that read **"left by Ralph."** It turned out that Ralph was the assembly line worker who put the door on. He did what he did because he had grown frustrated about being just another assembly line worker, about not counting, about not being able to leave his mark on the world.

It was a stupid and even immoral thing to do but it illustrates what I'm trying to say. From every pore of our being, we scream against being just **"another one of those."** If the secularists are right and that's what we are, we might as well **"curse God and die,"** to quote Job's wife.

One of a Kind

But that isn't what we are. According to Psalm 139:13-16, each of us is one of a kind instead. Let's exegete these verses and you'll grasp why I say that.

I begin with the metaphor **"the depths of the earth"** in verse 15

and what it represents, the **“womb”** in verse 13. David’s writing about you and me in our mothers’ wombs and two things that happened there.

One is found in verses 13 and 15. Verse 13 says God wove us. The Hebrew word translated **“wove”** refers to knitting a piece of fabric or cloth. The words **“skillfully (intricately) wrought”** in verse 15 take that thought a step further. They suggest a master weaver or embroiderer creating something with complex patterns and colors. Those metaphors reveal one thing that happened in our mothers’ wombs. God Himself fashioned every part of us. You know, for instance, each of us has unique fingerprints. But did you also know each of us has a unique gait as well. Modern technologies enable us to identify a person by the specific way he or she walks. Our fingerprints and gait are just part of the unimaginable wealth of detail that makes us up. Verses 13 and 15 teach that God conceived and created every point of that detail. Simply put, each of us is the handiwork of God.

In verse 16, David reveals the second thing that happened in our mothers’ wombs. This is a cryptic verse. He’s probably saying that God mapped out the days of our lives in advance. That doesn’t mean He preordains everything we do. It does mean *He places us in a specific context to count in ways that no one else does*. That is a profound insight and I’ll say it again. *He places us in a specific context to count in ways that no one else does*. That is our destiny. It’s to do things for God and His kingdom in our life circumstance that no one else does.

So those are the two things that happened in our mothers’ wombs. God fashioned every detail of us and mapped out the days of our lives in advance. He broke the mold, in other words, when He made us. Each of us is **“one of a kind.”** Verse 14 declares the staggering implication. The Hebrew can be translated, **“I praise Thee, for I am awesomely wonderful.”** Ponder that. It’s literally true. You’re one of a kind and **“awesome”** because you are.

Let’s go back to our analogy again. *The Principle of Mediocrity* is wrong. Earth isn’t just **“another one of those.”** The peculiar features

of it that make life possible are staggering – so staggering in fact that there’s probably not another planet in the universe like it. Eugene Shoemaker, who was called **“the godfather of astrogeology,”** once ran calculations to estimate the likelihood of the right conditions for life existing elsewhere. Based on mathematical probabilities, he concluded, **“Only one planet in the universe is likely to bear intelligent life.”** Since earth bears intelligent life, it is that **“one.”** God broke the mold when He made it. It is literally **“one of a kind.”**

And so are we. In the same way that earth as a planet isn’t just **“another one of those,”** neither are we as human beings. God fashioned every detail of us. He also mapped out the days of our lives in advance. We are, therefore, unique and awesome. Each of us is literally **“one of a kind.”**

Follow Jesus

That’s the truth and we need to live consistently with it. We live consistently with it by following Jesus. Dallas Willard shared what is just a decisive insight in that regard. People’s hunger for significance is the basis of humanity’s enduring response to Jesus. There’s a reason so many different people in so many different centuries and places have chosen to follow Him. It’s because of what He does. He takes each of us as seriously as our uniqueness demands. People usually don’t. He always does. That’s why, for instance, He knows and cares about every tear we shed (Psalm 56:8) or every hair on our heads (Matthew 10:30).

But He doesn’t just take us as seriously as our uniqueness demands. He also carries through with how He takes us. He and He alone in fact has the resources to do that. He does something no one else can do if we follow Him. He empowers us so we can become the one of a kind God fashioned us to be – so we can count in ways that no one else does.

I once talked with a nurse who excelled at what she did. She was an angel to her patients and they loved her. That’s what made what she told me so remarkable. She had been a professional prostitute before

being a nurse. Hearing that, I asked her how a prostitute became a nurse. To which she simply replied, **“I met Jesus.”**

Her answer is so instructive. If we hunger for significance, we should follow Jesus. He takes us seriously. He also carries through with how He takes us. He empowers us so we can become the **“one of a kind”** God fashioned us to be – so we can count for Him.

Competence

Now, His empowering is directed to two aspects of us, both of which I'd like to explain.

One is competence. Competence refers to our giftedness. When I say giftedness, I mean our cognitive abilities or intelligence and our talents, both of which are part of the wealth of detail with which God **“wove”** or **“wrought”** us. If we follow Jesus, He develops our giftedness. He also works with us in using it so that we end up achieving the best we can and sometimes even more than that (enhancement).

But as always, we have a part to play in that. We must cooperate with Him by identifying and using our giftedness. Corporate executive Cloyce Box shares a valuable insight in that regard: **“Stay with the things that you can do the best. Too many people waste time trying to do things that they can't do.”** That's sound advice. When it comes to competence, we need to focus on our areas of giftedness not our areas of non-giftedness. We should move out of our comfort zones but not our gift zones. We should do what our cognitive abilities and our talents equip us to do.

My wife Jill, for instance, has a B.A. degree in Biology that she used for several years at a Hess and Clark research facility. She was very good at that but there's something at which she's better – working with children. So that's what she's done with her life and is still doing. She is, I believe, an unexcelled mother, grandmother, and children's worker in church. She identified and is using the giftedness God gave her. As a result, she counts in her context in ways no one else does.

Character

Jesus' empowering is directed to a second aspect of us – our character. Character refers to our nature, to the condition of our inner dimensions. If we follow Him, He transforms our inner dimensions into the image and likeness of His.

But we have a part to play in that. We must cooperate with Him by nurturing our inner dimensions. We nurture them by doing four things. First, identify our inner dimensions. Second, learn their nature or order. Third, based on their nature or order, determine what is necessary to nurture them. And fourth, do what is necessary.

I've preached many sermons over the years to assist you in doing that. I've identified our inner dimensions: our mind with its thoughts and feelings, our heart or will, our soul and our bodily habits. I've also explained their nature or order and how we nurture them. We need to take what we've learned and do it. I've explained, for instance, that nothing enters our mind without affecting it for good or ill. So, we guard what enters it. Or I've explained that our feelings often aren't rooted in reality. So, we reason with our feelings. Or I've explained that God's written word restores our soul (Psalm 19:7). So, we devote time and concentration to the Bible. You get the idea. We nurture our inner dimensions. That's how we cooperate with Jesus in transforming them.

Conclusion

There is in baseball card collection what is called a **"one of one"** card. Part of a set of cards, it has a **"1/1"** stamped on it. That means that only one of those was printed, which makes it more valuable. We've learned today that you, metaphorically speaking, are **"one of one."** So, live like it. Follow Jesus, identify and use your giftedness, and nurture your inner dimensions. You'll be the one of one God made you to be if you do.