

A Southern Baptist minister decided that a visual demonstration would add emphasis to his Sunday sermon.

Four worms were placed into four separate jars.

The first worm was put into a jar of alcohol.

The second worm was put into a jar of cigarette smoke.

The third worm was put into a jar of chocolate syrup.

The fourth worm was put into a jar of good clean soil.

At the conclusion of the Sermon, the Minister reported the following results:

The first worm in alcohol - Dead.

The second worm in cigarette smoke - Dead.

Third worm in chocolate syrup - Dead.

Fourth worm in good clean soil - Alive.

So the Minister asked the congregation, "What can you learn from this demonstration?"

A little old woman in the back quickly raised her hand and said,

"As long as you drink, smoke and eat chocolate, you won't have worms

In John 6:1-13 we find a very familiar story, the feeding of the 5,000. In this story Jesus takes the five loaves of bread and two small fish that belong to a young boy and performs a miracle with them.

What I love about this story is that it is a great example of the significant contribution one person can make who will allow themselves to be yielded to Jesus.

And there are a few lessons that I believe we can glean and benefit from it. . .

Lesson one is be faithful where you are, and with what you have.

This young boy was faithful to share what he had with Jesus.

A part of being faithful is recognizing that God has placed you where you are for a reason. Sometimes it is hard to see the hand of God in our lives in the moment. However, his hand is always there.

Esther had to learn this as well during her time, as Mordecai reminded her that God had placed her "for such a time as this." (Esther 4:14)

With this comes one of the most important things that we need to understand church and that is the need to not underestimate our value. One person, at Jesus disposal, can be used for great things.

You need to understand that our society loves to define who is and is not "worthy" and "special" and "important."

And church they way it does that usually isn't the way that God would define it.

What you need to understand is that our worth is connected to our Creator.

Which brings me to lesson two.

And that is to share what you have. Sometimes we may feel as if our talents, our abilities and our contributions are insignificant. However, those gifts we share with Christ will bear significant fruit when placed at His disposal.

Poem. . .missionary to India

It All Depends on Whose Hands It's In

A basketball in my hands is worth about \$19.

A basketball in Michael Jordan's hands is worth about \$33 million.

It depends on whose hands it's in...

A baseball in my hands is worth about \$6.

A baseball in Mark McGuire's hands is worth \$19 million.

It depends on whose hands it's in...

A tennis racket is useless in my hands.

A tennis racket in Pete Sampras' hands is a Wimbledon

Championship.

It depends on whose hands it's in...

A rod in my hands will keep away a wild animal.

A rod in Moses' hands will part the mighty sea.

It depends on whose hands it's in...

A sling shot in my hands is a kid's toy.

A sling shot in David's hand is a mighty weapon.

It depends on whose hands it's in...

Two fish and 5 loaves of bread in my hands is a couple of fish sandwiches.

Two fish and 5 loaves of bread in God's hands will feed thousands.

It depends on whose hands they're in...

Nails in my hands might produce a birdhouse.

Nails in Christ Jesus' hands will produce salvation for the entire world.

It depends on whose hands they're in...

As you see now it depends whose hands it's in.

So put your concerns, your worries, your fears, your hopes, your dreams, your families and your relationships in God's

Hands.

Because, it depends on whose hands they're in.

— Paul Ciniraj (a missionary in India)

Though our contributions may seem insignificant they may be the very thing other people need. The multitude needed food. The boy had food. He shared his food and Jesus used it to feed the multitude.

Nelson Mandela: "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."

I believe part of the problem we have is that we really don't see ourselves as God sees us. So when the culture has told us because we don't do this, have this, feel this way, look that way we think less of ourself, because the enemy has deceived us into believing the lies.

So let me ask you a question, when you think of yourself, do you worry that people will reject you if they see the "real" you? That people will think you're silly, loud, or even

irritating?

I can't pray for that person in public because if I do and nothing happens they will think I'm weird. Let me pose you this question then, if you do and they are healed then then they will think you what?

So, church let me say this who you think you are is not who you are, unless you look in the mirror and see Jesus,

Who the culture tries to tell you you are is not who you are.

We need to see ourselves the way God does.

How does God see us. . .

FORGIVEN. ACCEPTED. WANTED. CHERISHED.
UNDERSTOOD. UNCONDITIONALLY LOVED.

Several centuries ago, a Protestant scholar named Morena was forced into exile in Italy. Forced into poverty, Morena fell seriously ill. He was taken to a paupers' hospital where physicians, assuming the wretched-looking patient was uneducated, began conversing in Latin among themselves at his bedside.

“This worthless creature is going to die anyway,” they said.
“So let’s try an experiment on him.”

Morena, however, knew Latin almost as well as his native language. Summoning his strength, he raised himself up and said to the surprised physicians, “How can you call ‘worthless’ someone for whom Jesus died?” Morena clearly understood, our value is not determined by what we have or do. We are valuable simply because God says we are.

God couldn’t care less how much cash is in your bank account, or the label on our car or clothing, because our efforts and accolades aren’t what get us into right relationship with Him or heaven.

1 Peter 1:18–20 (NIV): 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake

Jesus died for everyone; there is no argument there.

Amen.

But church if we fail to grasp that He would have still willingly died for just one of us, His sacrifice will fail to deeply impact our heart, soul, and mind.

The culture may say you don't matter, they may say this church being small doesn't matter, your pastor because I'm not speaking at some conference this week doesn't matter.

But God doesn't see a sea of humanity when He looks at the world. He sees You. Me. Every freckle on our face, every sorrow in our heart. Every thought we'll ever have.

You and I are not just some number in the vast amount of people, no, He knows my name, He knows your name.

And He has called us His kids.

If we refuse to see ourselves as God sees us, we will continue to try to "earn" our relationship with Jesus.

Think you're not valuable? Well, then, how do you explain the fact that the Creator of the Universe, left His

throne, came to earth as a man and willingly suffered excruciating pain and humiliation to redeem your sin? So that nothing would ever be able to separate you from His love.

What other King leaves His throne?

See you won't pay more than something is worth and heaven came down and gave its best, so that we could be reconciled back to God.

Isaiah 1:18 - "Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

God sees every part of you — every thought you've ever had or ever will, every action you've ever made and ever will — and says, "I see you forgiven, loved, redeemed."

God wants a relationship with you and you were worth His sacrifice. He loves you that much!

If God views you that valuable, then you do Him a disservice by allowing anybody to tell you otherwise. May I

say you do yourself a disservice as well. God's opinion of you is the only one that matters.

Listen church, Ain't Nothing Ever Good Come From Comparison!

God did not put us you and I in this place to be constantly comparing ourselves to others. He put us here to partner *with Him* because you are unique, you are one-of-a-kind creation. When he made you He Brooke the mold so only you can do what He's called you to.

People can be cruel let's face it, we come across people all the time that are more than willing to remind you and I where are faults are. And every time we hear the comments they can cause you to doubt your self-worth.

But hear this church when you know your worth, there is no one that can make you worthless. And because God loves you and me we are already valuable.

So why do we feel so not loved from time to time? I purpose to you it's because we want to try and get what we all need from places that won't satisfy.

Church I realize that we all want and feel like we need attention.

We all need people to think about us show interest in us, show some concern for us. We all want to be noticed for the good in us. Unfortunately, some of us have only been reminded of our mess-ups and imperfections. If we hear enough times that we are lacking, that's what we start to believe.

But hear this church God is always near, all we need to do is reach out to a Him and He will answer.

We have another issue engrained in us, we all want acceptance.

We're all dying to be accepted, birth marks and all. The problem with seeking acceptance from people, however, is that we allow others to determine our worth.

Maybe you have noticed that when you're around people who affirm and praise you, you feel worthy. On the other hand when when you're around critical friends, family members, or co-workers, your sense of self-worth can soon diminish. And if that is the case may I suggest you are enslaved to the opinions of others.

And the only way to break these chains is to accept that God accepts us just the way you are. No matter what! Your worth, my worth to a Him is never based on our performance.

And the opinion of you from others doesn't change His opinion of you.

Then we have another issue and that is this need to be appreciated.

We all want people to communicate to us that they appreciate us and are grateful. But our need for being appreciated can cause us serious problems if our expectations for how others should show us that appreciation is unrealistic.

What can you do when you feel unappreciated? Allow God to remind you that He totally digs you.

Another struggle that some have is this need for approval.

We want the approval of those around us, and so we align ourselves with those who make us feel that we're okay, just as we are.

If you got the message as a child that nothing you do was good enough, you probably view yourself in a negative light.

The problem is that people who don't feel loved, assume they are unlovable.

Christians who can't grasp God's love become legalistic in their worship, thinking if they pray longer, attend more services, read the Bible more, it will help to "earn" God's approval.

But what we all need to remember that God unconditionally loves us—apart from whatever we accomplish or contribute. No matter whatever messes we bring Him. Or how messed up you may be.

Kevin DeYoung said it this way, Looking in a comments section for edification is like sticking your head in the toilet looking for gummy bears.

Chew on that for a moment. . . Maybe chew was the wrong word.

At Calvary, God declared to heaven, hell, and the whole world that you are worth the gift of Jesus, God sees you as lovable, and valuable! And that is the end of the story.

So why, then, do so many of us live as if we don't believe God views us as lovable and worthy?

Because we don't view ourselves the way God does.

We're like paintings hanging in a dimly lit art gallery. And all we notice is the outlines of our frames, but it's impossible to make out the details of our features.

But then God shines His spotlight on us.

And when He shines on us we see ourselves as the beautiful portraits God sees—free of the shadows of guilt and shame.

See church you need to understand something. And if you hear nothing else today hear this. We are not trying to become children of God, we are children of God trying to become like Christ.

Believing it doesn't make it true, it is true whether you believe it or not.

We don't make anything true by our experience. We choose to believe what God says is true, then we live accordingly.

So what does God say.

- He says He delights in you
- His thoughts towards you are always good and numerous
- You are His treasure
- You are valuable
- You are a new creation
- You are accepted, redeemed, forgiven, and loved
- You are the temple of God and His Spirit dwells in you

- You are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus
- You have been set free from the law of sin and death
- You sit in Heavenly places with Christ Jesus
- You are a member of His body and a partakes of His promises
- You have been made complete in Christ
- Chosen by God

Let me close with a story from Jenny the jewel:

“I was born with Down syndrome over 30 years ago. This makes some things very difficult for me. When I was younger, I spent a lot of time asking God, Why did you make me with Down Syndrome? Why can't I be normal like other people?

I told Him all the time that I didn't like having Down syndrome. I kept thinking that if only I didn't have Down syndrome I would be happy. I thought that somehow God made a mistake when He made me. My Mom and Dad always told me they loved me so deeply, and that they could not love me any more, but somehow down deep in

my heart I always wondered if they would love me more if I didn't have Down Syndrome.

When I was in high school, the kids on the school bus were very mean to me. They laughed at me, and mocked me and they called me all kinds of bad names, and told me that even my parents couldn't love me. That hurt me so deeply!

When I got off the school bus in the afternoon, I would be crying. My Mom met me at the door, and we would talk and pray every day. She told me that people used to say bad things about Jesus and call Him names too, so He understood exactly how I felt.

She told me that real truth is only found in God's Word, and not in what other people say about you. She told me that if I could find anywhere in the Bible where God calls me bad names, or said I was a mistake; she would pay me \$5,000. I spent a lot of time reading in the Bible to find out what God said about me. All the Scriptures I found said just the opposite, so I never did get the \$5,000!

Some of my favorite Scriptures are: Psalm 139:14 where God says, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." God tells me in Psalm 17, "I am the apple of His eye." In Deuteronomy 7:6, God tells me that I am "His treasured possession." In Philippians 4:8, God tells me to think about whatever is "true, noble, right, pure, and lovely." I like to think about the truth that God tells me and spend my time thinking about what God says is true. The last Scripture I want to share is Psalm 119:114, "You are my refuge and my shield. I have put my hope in your Word." My confidence and hope is in God. I know now that instead of being a mistake, I am the Lord's treasured possession.

I like to memorize Scripture and fill my mind with the truth of who God says I am. This understanding has made all the difference in my life. Now I recognize that God has a plan for my life, and He created me just the way I am for His special purpose. I may still have Down syndrome, but now instead of saying "if only" I didn't have Down syndrome, I say, "So what, I will glorify God just the way He made me." I know He loves me and cares for me with His whole heart.

The Lord showed me that I am not a mistake, but I am a precious gift ... His treasured possession. We have a choice to believe and fill our minds with God's truth, which will change our hearts, or listen to what other people say and be sad. It is a choice we must each make. In Exodus 4:10, Moses tells God that he can't do what God told him to do because he was slow of speech and tongue. In Exodus 4:11, the Lord said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go. I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." He made me just the way He made me for just the special purpose I was created for. There is special work He has for me to do that can only be done by me, just the way He created me.

If I spend my time wishing I was different, I will never get around to doing those things God wants me to do.

Sometimes Satan tries to put thoughts into my head and tell me that I am no good and stuff like that. That's when I remember the Scripture in John 10:10 that says, "The thief comes only to steal, and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it to the fullest."

When Satan tries to put lies into my head, I beat him over the head with the truth of God. I do it over and over again as long as I have to. I know God has given me special gifts and talents, and my desire is to use them for His glory. I say it often and I mean it...I love my life!

God does not make any mistakes, and that's the truth ... no matter what we sometime may think. As Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding." Jesus is my best friend, and I love Him with all my heart, and I am fully His. There is nothing more important in my life than pleasing Him, spending time loving Him, reading His Word, talking to Him, and sharing His love with other people. His joy fills my heart!

If your heart is sad because you wish God had made you different, read in His Word the truth of what He says about you, believe it, and let Him change your heart. Nothing is impossible with God. He certainly did change my heart."

Jenny said, Jesus is my best friend, and I love Him with all my heart, and I am fully His. There is nothing more important in my life than pleasing Him, spending time

loving Him, reading His Word, talking to Him, and sharing His love with other people. His joy fills my heart!

I love that so let me close with this. . .

It is not what we do that determines who we are. It is who we are that determines what we do.