



## Grace-Built People

*You have been spiritually assembled for heavenly purposes.*

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ  
Jesus for good works, which God prepared  
beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Ephesians 2:10

### Grace-Built

We build things for a purpose. Any manufactured or produced item has an intention behind it. Its maker has in mind a use for it.

Take the Lamborghini—a modern supercar built for speed and perhaps status. Contrast this with the minivan, which is built for practical everyday transportation. Or take even the Ford F-150 Raptor, which seems intended to make the guy driving the minivan jealous, because while it is not as expensive as the Lambo, it is slightly out of reach for the minivan guy. Not many country songs mention driving a minivan, which is disappointing. I can haul as much, if not more, in the back of our family van than most trucks—including a dog who long outlasted his life expectancy. We don't just drive a minivan—we rock it. You could say that is its purpose.

We too are built with a purpose. On one hand, our ultimate purpose is to be in a right relationship with our Creator. On the other hand, when it comes to other people, it is multifaceted and dynamic—like a diamond reflecting heavenly light from many angles, beaming toward all the different relationships we have and the roles we play, even when we are unaware of our illuminating presence. But God does make one targeted purpose clear for all of us when it comes to our relationships with our neighbors.

The phrase *grace-built* is not a term you will find in the Bible, but you do see the idea take shape in the apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesian church. In the beginning of chapter 2, Paul described the spiritual reality of human souls that, in the words of Jesus, need to be “born again” (John 3:3). He explained the natural-born state of people as being spiritually dead and separated from God. But then, good news burst onto the scene, as God rescued those trapped in despair, the spiritually dead, making them alive in Christ. After this hopeful declaration, Paul emphasized that this salvation is not activated by our earning it, but by our receiving it as a gift (Eph. 2:8–9).

All of this sets the stage for this declaration: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (v. 10).

In other words, Paul said that followers of Jesus are like a manufactured product, crafted like a poem, perhaps even a masterpiece. *Workmanship* means “literally, ‘a thing of his making’; ‘handiwork.’”<sup>1</sup> The big idea is that we have been rebuilt spiritually, from the inside out. Here is another way to look at it:



Now that we have rolled off the assembly line of grace, the question remains: What is our purpose as His handiwork? Is it for practical transportation? Blistering speed? To be adored by country singers everywhere? The answer is in the same verse: to do good works.

It turns out that being practically and intentionally kind, thoughtful, caring, compassionate, and loving, among other things, is the great intention of God for our rebuilt lives. In other words, grace-built people are meant to grace bomb people. All of your good works may not fall into the category of a surprising Grace Bomb; but every Grace Bomb is the good work of an intentional act of love, and every good work is an extension of the immeasurable grace by which we have been reconstructed and with which we have been supplied.

It's not only in Ephesians that God's Word spurs us on to exercising grace practically. In other places, the Bible tells us to "abound" in every good work (2 Cor. 9:8), to be "bearing fruit" in good works

(Col. 1:10), and to be “zealous” for good works (Titus 2:14). It reports that our good works are like “sacrifices” to God (Heb. 13:16), and they become a testimony to the onlooking world (1 Pet. 2:12).

Even Jesus Himself had some powerfully personal things to say about good works.

## The Light of the World

Every morning, all around the planet, the sun rises, casting an illuminating net of warmth and reality for all of us. My mind is blown by the fact that photons blasted out of the sun about eight minutes ago flew through space at the speed of light and arrived here at this moment to allow me to see, and even to live. And that is just from our star—only one among billions of other stars, spread out over billions of other galaxies. The universe really is quite spectacular, and light itself is a wild thing.

When Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12), He made a bold claim, but not an entirely shocking one. It was bold, as He claimed to be the source of true life itself, but not shocking, because, well, He is Jesus, whose miraculous works continually confirmed His truthfulness. What is really shocking is that Jesus also called *us* the light of the world.

In His famous discourse, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives

light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 5:14–16)



Children become familiar with this text as they learn the song “This Little Light of Mine.” Jesus called His followers “the light of the world.” As He rebuilds a soul that is alive to God, an eternal flame is lit. His light blasts out through us, similar to the sun, bringing warmth and reality—not in theory, but practically, through good works. Jesus defines the phrase “Let your light shine” as good works that others practically see and feel. When you are intentionally loving someone, that person will know it, see it, and feel it.

Beyond enabling the mechanisms of life to function, light also gives warmth. And warmth is an invitation to get closer. The Linnell family are members at a community pool here in Maryland that overlooks the narrowing end of the Severn River, a branch off the Chesapeake Bay. Late in the season, this part of the river is usually brown and muddy, and it’s also warm. So when the kids have the option to hop into the cold, crystal-clear pool or the warm, sketchy, brown river water, they typically choose the river. That’s where you’ll find them splashing around and spitting brown water out of their mouths like fountains—because the warmth invited them in.

The love of Jesus is like this, minus the potential for flesh-eating bacteria. It is the secure, comfortable place of unconditional love that you just want to splash around in. So when your light shines, it will feel really good to your neighbor. Grace feels good.