

Title: God's Handiwork**[Slide 1]****Text: John 1:1-14****A New Creation Story****Lego creations:****[Slide 2]**

It's amazing what an 8 year old kid can do when he puts his mind to it. I remember visiting my grandson when he was right smack in the middle of building the Millennium Falcon out of Legos. He started out with over 1200 Lego pieces of all different sorts and sizes. He also had a really impressive set of instructions! Piece by piece the Millennium Falcon came together. No short cuts, no improve. Just follow the manual!

Of course, my grandson could never have built the Millennium Falcon if there hadn't been a team of Lego engineers and designers that came up with the original. They were the Creators, with a capital "C." But they built the Millennium Falcon in such a way and with such detailed instructions that a pre-teen could build it for himself. They enabled my grandson and untold thousands of over people to become a *creator*, with a small "c."

The Lego Millennium Falcon could never exist without a Capital "C" Creator. But the one on my grandson's shelf could never exist without him becoming a small "c" creator. Only when he completed his Millennium Falcon did the vision and goal of the Lego team truly come to completion.

Creator/creators:

The same is true of the wonderful world in which we live. God created the world and everything in it. He is the Creator with a capital "C"! But He created human beings to carry forward His creation work:

[Slide 3]

Genesis 1:27-28 NIV

*So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

He created us to be creators with a small "c." To subdue and rule the earth and its creatures did not mean to exploit destroy God's good creation. Instead, it means that we were put here to bring God's order and purpose to the world so that it functions as He intended – a place of life, beauty and blessing. Most of all, it means creating a space in His world where He dwells with us.

He even gave us detailed instructions to guide us every step of the way!

A new Creation Story:

We humans are notoriously bad at following those instructions and have made a mess of our world and our relationships. But God didn't give up on us. Instead, He promised to one day restore His Creation to its intended purpose. That is why the Gospel writer John begins with a new take on the Creation Story:

[Slide 4]

John 1:1-3 NIV

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

John begins with the very same words that introduce the Genesis Creation Story: "In the beginning..." We discover that Jesus, God's Son, here

described as simply The Word, was God's Agent in creating the world. He embodies all that makes it ordered and functional. As Paul writes:

[Slide 5]

Colossians 1:17 NIV

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

He designed the world. He made its bits and parts. And He wrote the instruction manual. That makes Him Creator with a Capital "C"!

A New Humanity

Light for humans:

John tells us that Jesus, the Word, came as Life-giving Light to restore us and conquer the darkness of sin and death:

[Slide 6]

John 1:4-5 NIV

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

He shines His Life like a spotlight into the darkness of this world to set us free. In other words, John is telling us the story of God's long-awaited New Creation, coming to pass when the Capital "C" Creator came to His world and began to make all things brand new.

So this isn't just a New Creation Story. It is the Story of God's New Creation.

Born of God:

And the first thing that God re-creates is you and me. Listen to how John puts it:

[Slide 7]

John 1:9-13 NIV

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not

receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

When we receive Jesus, by putting our trust in Him, we become God's children – born of God. That is New Creation! It isn't something we can do for ourselves. It isn't something a small "c" creator can make happen. It only happens when we let the true Creator take over our lives and bring us into His family. We are finally able to do the creation work God made us for.

A New Humanity:

God's New Creation in the here and now is nothing less than a New Humanity: people who are finally able to be what they were meant to be. And that New Humanity is God's Church – with a Capital "C." We – the Church – are God's children united around Him as our Heavenly Father. He birthed us through the power of His Holy Spirit. He *created us* brand new. We're the first installment of His New Heavens and New Earth – living right here in the middle of a world that needs repair! As Paul tells us:

[Slide 8]

2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation: the old has gone, the new is here!

A New Dwelling for God

Creation's Ultimate Purpose:

God's Creation is such a wonderful and captivating thing that it's all too easy for us to focus on it instead of the God who made it. John Walton points out that God's ultimate purpose in creating the heavens and the earth was not just to make a beautiful world; it was most of all to create a place in which He would dwell. Creation was designed to be God's Temple.

The key word for God dwelling in His Temple is the word "rest." Remember how the Genesis Creation Story ends?

[Slide 9]

Genesis 2:2 NIV

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.

The original readers of this story would have recognized two very important things in this verse: (1) God "rested," meaning that He took up residence as King and Ruler of all, and (2) this happened on the 7th day, the day on which Temples were inaugurated in the ancient world. On that day it was presumed that the god would come to dwell in the temple.

So Creation with a "C" is all about God and His determination to dwell with us!

Word made flesh:

John picks up this theme when he writes:

[Slide 10]

John 1:14 NIV

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

When Jesus came, He revealed the glory of Heaven itself, just as God's glory filled the ancient Tabernacle and Temple. This was proof that God had "made his dwelling" with us. God came to "rest" and rule in His world *as one of us – the image-bearers*. It was the only way that He could effectively rescue us. It's as if my grandson got royally stuck in building the Millennium Falcon, and the original designer – the Creator with a capital "C" – showed up at his house and helped him finish the model. That's what Jesus did for you and me.

A new dwelling for God:

God created His Church – all of us who by faith are part of His family – to be nothing less than the first installment on His New Humanity. We're meant to become a community that functions the way He always intended humans to function.

But even more importantly, He created us to be His dwelling place, His Temple. Paul asks the Corinthians:

[Slide 11]

1 Corinthians 3:16 NIV

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?

Note: he is speaking to them as the Church – you, plural. Church is God's Creation – created by Him to be His dwelling place where He rules, where He rests. Our role is to be small "c" creators, building the Church through His strength and according to His plan. Church is never to be our "creation." We serve in His house. We're to be the place where God's glory shines. We're to be the place where God's Spirit brings life and healing.

Ask yourself, what am I building? What am I creating? Am I trying to do it as Creator with a capital "C"? Or am I a member of God's New Creation, building a dwelling place for Him, creating with a small "c"?

In what ways do I need the Creator to be here alongside me to help me create wisely and effectively? What does He want me to create for Him?

The same questions are just as important for us as God's Church. What does He want us to be building? How can we be together His dwelling place? What do we need to do for God to say:

[Slide 12]

Psalms 132: 14-16 NIV

*"This is my resting place for ever and ever;
here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.*

*I will bless her with abundant provisions;
her poor I will satisfy with food.*

*I will clothe her priests with salvation,
and her faithful people will ever sing for joy."*