

## **THE WORK OF OUR HANDS**

**By Jim Mathis**

Several times each week I get together with men to talk about important issues, both professional and personal. In our CBMC group recently, we were reading Psalm 90. This psalm is attributed to Moses, and at the end of it the leader of the Israelites is addressing God on behalf of all people. He says, *"Establish the work of our hands; yes, establish the work of our hands"* (Psalm 90:17). In this particular case, "establish" means to cause something to become widely known or last for a long time.

This reminded me of the fact that since the time of Moses thousands of years ago, and even before that, people have wanted to do things that would be long-lasting and worthwhile. Earlier in verse 12 of the same psalm, Moses asks God to help us number our days wisely. Knowing that our time on earth is short, we desire to do something that will be remembered and make a significant difference in the big picture of our lives and the lives of people we encounter.

What "the work of our hands" means is different for each of us. To some it may be constructing a building, a bridge or a business that will benefit people for generations. For others it might be writing a book or a song that will change people's lives, or finding a cure for a deadly disease. To other people this might involve artwork – making a photograph, painting or sculpture that will touch people's hearts.

Regardless of what "the work of our hands" means to a specific individual, I think all people have a yearning to achieve some measure of immortality. We share a deep longing to do something of value, something that will outlive us and make the world a better place.

One of the reasons I enjoy the photo restoration part of my business is not only getting to practice a craft I have developed over the years, but also helping people to pass down their heritage or a piece of history to future generations. In almost every case, people will be looking at the work of my hands long after I am gone. In some cases a photo can change somebody's life – maybe even the world.

For those that follow Jesus Christ, this has even greater magnitude. During His so-called "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus referred to the eternal impact our work can have on others. *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16). The work we perform – and the manner in which we do it – is a reflection of our relationship to the God we claim to believe in and serve.

Later in the same message, Jesus talked about the perspective we should keep as we do our work. *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matthew 6:19-21).

If we truly want our lives to make a difference that endures, to have an impact that results in some measure of immortality, what better way than to perform “the work of our hands” in a manner that directs people to God and the life – eternal life – that comes after this one?

*Jim Mathis is the owner of a photography studio in Overland Park, Kansas, specializing in executive, commercial and theatrical portraits, and operates a school of photography. He formerly was executive director of CBMC in Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri.*

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*Reflection/Discussion Questions*

1. What do you consider to be the “work of *your* hands”? Why is it important to you?
2. Mr. Mathis expresses the opinion that people have a yearning to achieve some measure of immortality, often through their work. Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Do you think your work is making a difference in the lives of others? If so, in what ways? If you were to conclude it is not having a positive difference in others’ lives, what could you do to change that?
4. Is it important, in your view, to have an eternal perspective as you approach your work? Explain your answer.

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions of the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

Proverbs 12:24, 22:29, 27:18; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 3:17, 23-24; 2 Timothy 3:16-17