

FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

Devotion | Week 3 Day 4

On Point

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. – 1 Corinthians 12:27

Years ago, I taught a course at Concordia University, Ann Arbor called “The Art of Teaching.” It was a curriculum and instruction class designed for elementary teachers. However, during one semester none of the students in the class were studying to be traditional elementary educators. The class consisted entirely of music and art students seeking a K-12 endorsement. That was good for me because it allowed me to include elements of secondary education – content in which I was more experienced. But it was also bad for me because I am extremely limited in my music and art skills, which is a polite way of saying I have no skills.

Undeterred, I pressed on with the course, sharing insights into classroom management and instructional design, trying my best to make it applicable to students without insulting their intelligence. In using music and art examples, I found myself struggling to remember what little I learned in my own art and music classes. I don't know why, but whenever I searched for an artistic genre, pointillism always came to mind. You're probably familiar with pointillism. Merriam-Webster defines it as: “The theory or practice in art of applying small strokes or dots of color to a surface so that from a distance they blend together.” I have always appreciated the way artists can make something beautiful out of a collection of individual pieces that in and of themselves are rather simple. To illustrate this, look at images of Georges Seurat's *La Parade* on Google showing a magnified section of the painting and also as a whole.

The magnified image will show a series of colorful, random dots. Polite art critics might call this interesting. Blunt critics would call it ugly. Wiseguys would call it pointless (I couldn't help it). There seems to be no rhyme or reason to it. It's not until you back up and see the whole picture that you see what the individual dots are creating. Stepping back provides clarity, purpose and appreciation of the beauty of the painting.

If you think about it, our lives can be compared to the painting. Imagine your life as the dots from the magnified portion of the painting. From time to time we find ourselves searching for meaning in our lives. Why am I doing this? Where am I heading? Is this it? Am I really making a difference? It's easy to look at the individual pieces of our lives: jobs, relationships, families, hobbies, etc.... and think that there really isn't much happening. The world will tell you that you are the master of your own destiny and that you will make of your life whatever you want. There may be some truth to that, but even the most driven and energetic people can only take it so far. We often find ourselves rearranging the dots but not making anything close to the work of art we desired when we step back and see the points brought together.

If our lives are the dots, we must trust God as the artist who has masterfully arranged us into the portrait of His kingdom. Just as each individual dot doesn't get to see the fullness of what it has created, we too will never see the full impact we are making in the world. How many thousands of lives will be impacted by the students I have taught over my career? When I look at it in those terms, I can see that my impact will be great but I also see that it is God who makes this possible.

In every situation, we must remember the promises that God has made to us. As members of the body of Christ, we play an integral role in what God has designed for His creation. When we come to those times in our lives where we feel ineffective or when we face a new opportunity, let us hold fast to the knowledge that God is directing our lives, leading us to the place He intends so that we will do the most good in furthering His plan. As for us, we just keep working to connect the dots!



