

Creativity: The Jailhouse Preacher
Adapted from *Hero Tales, Volume II*, by Dave and Neta Jackson

John Bunyan preached the Gospel in England even after he was told to stop. Therefore, he was arrested and imprisoned, but used that time to write many articles and books. His most well-known book was Pilgrim's Progress.

In prison, there were not many pots and pans for a tinker like me to repair. And the jailor certainly wasn't going to allow a prisoner to make or sharpen knives. So what could a tinker like me do with my time?

"You know, there is a need for more laces in the clothing business," a visitor told me one day. "All the fancy clothes makers in London need them. If you could make me some good, quality laces, I would sell them for you. It wouldn't bring much money, but it might help support your family."

I was delighted. I was good with crafts. Finally, here was something that used my skill with my hands.

I got a bench to work on and set it up in the corner of the prison's common room. Then I asked the jailor to allow me to order some thin cord and small pieces of brass. I cut the cord to its proper length, and, with a pair of pliers, squeezed the brass tabs onto each end of the cord so the tips of the cord wouldn't unravel.

Over and over again I did this task until I had piles of the laces. These I bundled and sold for a few pennies to give to my family. The work also gave me a creative way to use my skill with my hands even in prison.

But what about my gift for preaching?

Sometimes I preached to the other prisoners, and sometimes I stood at one of the barred prison windows and preached to people on the street. But God had called me to share the Gospel with all people. I needed a better way.

The apostle Paul had written books or letters from prison—why couldn't I? So I began writing sermons and sending them out to be published. In one of the first ones, I explained why I was in prison. In another I talked about heaven, and in another about hell. As I wrote, I got an idea for a story that would interest young and old alike. I could perhaps try out my stories on my children when they came to visit. *Pilgrim's Progress*, as the story was called, became my most popular work. People all over the English-speaking world would read it.

My story is about becoming a Christian, the struggles we have with doubt and fear and other problems, and our reward in heaven. But I didn't just talk about these truths like I was preaching a sermon. I tried something more creative. I imagined this was the journey of a young pilgrim traveling through dangerous country, fighting dragons, fleeing giants, and escaping swamps. Along the way, the pilgrim met faithful companions and cowardly fakers, but he kept safe from harm whenever he put on the armor of God. The exciting journey ends when Pilgrim at last arrives in the heavenly city. The adventure of *Pilgrim's Progress* is still loved today.

By using the creativity God had given me, I made my years in prison useful. Not only was I able to support myself and my family, but I also continued the ministry God had asked me to do: Preach the Gospel!

Creativity is using the abilities and gifts God has given us to do the work He has assigned us.