

One Page- Who's Shaping Who

This piece was created from my own reflections and vision. I used ChatGPT as a tool to help shape the text from my original concepts and structure. The final form is the result of thoughtful revision, my own editorial hand fueled by my one page intent. Mike Haddorff, 2502

A reflection based on Isaiah 44:9–20

There's a story in Isaiah that's always lingered in the corners of my imagination. It's an old one, about a man and a simple wooden log.

He thoughtfully selects his log. He carves a portion of his choice into a god image. He then reverences, bows and prays to what he has shaped. The remaining chips he burns to warm his house and bake his bread. It's a bit archaic when you first read it. But it doesn't stay ancient for long.

I've lived that story more times than I'd like to admit.

There was a season in my life, more like momentary glimpses, when I realized I'd been shaping God more than letting God shape me. I had picked out the parts I liked: the God who affirmed my beliefs, who didn't challenge my assumptions, who mostly nodded when I spoke. And the parts I didn't need, well, I set those aside, burning them off to provide the warmth of self reinforcement, having it right.

It started, as it often does, with something that felt like sincere searching. But in hindsight, I was mostly pursuing comfort. I had carved a version of God that fit me, that matched how I'd been shaped by my family of origin, by culture, by wounds, by my christian tribe. So what else. Lower my head. Bull my way forward: not much interest in the bigger more truer picture of reality.

Following the bulling came the bowing—devotion to what I had made. It looked enough like God to feel reverent, but peering closely exposed cracks. I couldn't name it at first. But I could feel it: this God wasn't changing me anymore. He was agreeing with me.

And that's when I knew. I had shaped something with my hands, or maybe my preferences, and then offered my worship to it.

Those discarded shavings—provided the warmth for my own motivated thinking. God must be clapping because of course I have it right. How embarrassingly absurd, but how widely human. Quite frankly, it's everywhere: a fashioned image, just the size and shape to make me feel conveniently satisfied.

Isaiah's story, anciently strange is actually a modern mirror. And as mirrors do, it accurately reflects the truth I still must wrestle with today:

Am I the one doing the shaping? Or, am I being shaped?