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How to Become a Butterfly

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled
“How to Become a Butterfly”

written by

Jillian E. Parsons

and submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for completion of
the Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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Few could naturally imagine how a lowly caterpillar can become a majestic butterfly. And yet, God uses the very parts that make up the humble insect to form and grow it into unequalled beauty. He works with what is available; the components are already present. My goal with this paper is to inspire you to think about what goes on inside that chrysalis from a perspective of God's original purpose for humanity and how Jesus has renewed that original purpose. As you linger in these pages, try to imagine how God workshopped the butterfly and decided the transformation should come in a chrysalis using every part of a young insect. "All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."¹

God's Purpose for Humanity

God's perfect purpose for mankind was to be His eternal companion. God created everything to be in perfect communion with Him and therefore everything that He created to be in perfect harmony, lacking in nothing. He looked at what He had made and said that it was good, but God wanted a complex relationship beyond the instincts and patterns of angels and animals.

In Genesis 1:26-27 God said, "let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So, God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them."² Humans are created as complex individuals that are given the ability In the beginning God created everything. Our story begins with the creation of Adam, "the Lord God formed the

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 1:3.

² *Ibid*, Ge 1:26-27.

man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.”³ The rest of this passage in Genesis, verses 8-17, it is written that Adam was instructed to work and keep the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 2:15 it says, “the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”⁴ Within the next two verses after God puts Adam in dominion and stewardship over the garden, He instructs him of the consequences of breaking the one and only rule he is meant to keep, “the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘you may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”⁵ God gives Adam his purpose and boundary. Adam has all of the freedom within that one boundary to live his ordained purpose and be in communion with God forever. It is important to note that Eve is not in the creation story yet. God gave Adam a unique purpose and leadership role over the garden before Eve was created and given a purpose. This is the original purpose of men. After God instructs Adam of the boundary in verse 17, , “then the Lord God said “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”⁶ There is a break in this passage of scripture in verses 19 and 20 where God calls all the animals of the earth that He made out of the dirt (just like He did with Adam) and instructs Adam to name all of the animals. Verse 20 expresses that there was no animal fit to be Adam’s helper. In verse 21 Eve is introduced into the story, “so the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 2:7.

⁴ *Ibid*, Ge 2:15.

⁵ *Ibid*, Ge 2:16-17.

⁶ *Ibid*, Ge 2:18.

he made into a woman and brought her to the man.”⁷ Eve is the only living creation that was not made out of the dirt of the earth and the only woman who came from a man. God unifies their purpose together by proclaiming that Eve is from Adam and that they are one flesh as man and his wife. Eve is the beneficiary of Adam’s innate care; which is responsible for her and must take care of her in the same way he works and keeps the garden. This work was enjoyable for Adam, he was driven and made for a purpose that he could delight in and please God in doing. Taking care of Eve was enjoyable for both because there was no hardship or instability.

From the very beginning God calls man and woman to be together in one flesh and in communion with Him. The man is given stewardship over the animals, the garden, and instinctually cares for the woman because she came from his own bones. Adam and Eve had the choice to live eternity in the perfection of God’s companionship and complexity in the presence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This tree is why free will is possible. Without the presence of the tree, humanity’s choices would not be choices at all. Choosing to be in companionship with God when there is no other option does not produce a complex and deep relationship.

The concept is similar to the popular ethical question, if he were the last man on earth, would you repopulate the earth with him? This question does not usually produce a flattering answer considering there are no other options in the hypothetical scenario. God wants to be the main choice among all choices and that requires there to be the presence of a spectrum of choices. God exercises His authority by instructing Adam to choose Him and not the knowledge of the tree. Adam is given all provisions he would need so that if he were to make the choice, it would not be out of necessity or survival but the choice of deliberate disobedience.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 2:21-22.

Most people have heard the phrase, “comparison is the thief of joy” and this could not be more true when discovering and growing in a journey of finding life’s purpose. Discontentment is a result of comparison. Under circumstances where comparison exists, people look at their own circumstances and question if their life is as good as they think. Doubt creeps in and all of a sudden they can only think about what could make their life better. This desire for more causes people to look to others who seem to have the life that they want. However, most people can not help but look at the seemingly greener grass of a neighbor and either want it or hate it. There is nothing wrong with wanting more from one's own circumstances but it is important to only compare the present to the road that has already been traveled and not someone else’s forged path.

Doubt is bread through the presence of comparison and can take one’s attention away from the joy of relationships and trust. Satan came in the form of a serpent, ready and willing to attack God’s character with the venom of doubt. Satan says to Eve, “did God actually say,” you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?”⁸ He first attacks God’s command and tries to see if he can expose a weakness in Eve’s understanding of God’s only commandment. However, Eve corrects the serpent and says that there is only one tree that she cannot eat from and if she were to eat of it she would die. The serpent then says, “you will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁹ Therefore, the serpent creates a dissonance She doubts God’s love and care for her, His words to her, His provision; if God loved her so much then why was she not just like God? She was made in God’s image and likeness. She took the fruit and ate it and then invited Adam to also indulge

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:1.

⁹ *Ibid*, Ge 3:4-5.

in her sin and he ate it. “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. ^sAnd they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God.”¹⁰ The purpose of companionship with God was to trust Him with everything and to delight in Him. Purpose was shattered by deliberate disobedience and distraction from what was true. The serpent distracted her with comparison and that comparison gave birth to sin in the world. Adam and Eve could not truly hide from God in the garden, He was testing their relationship to see if they would run to Him; but they did not. Adam even blames God for what happened because God had given him Eve as a companion. Their doubt changed the dynamic and purpose of their relationship entirely.

God could not live amongst sin because He was perfect. God’s love and purpose for humanity was not enough for Adam and Eve’s sin. However, through God’s love, He makes a sacrifice and gave them a new purpose, to Eve He said, “in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”¹¹ (Genesis 3:16 ESV) Eve is no longer in an equal role to Adam. To Adam He said, “because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree which I commanded you, “you shall not eat of it,” cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”¹² God’s provision was taken away because of sin and

¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:7-8.

¹¹ *Ibid*, Ge 3:16.

¹² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:17-19.

protection was no longer a luxury, it was a necessity. Adam and Eve with every offspring that follows them must make sacrifices that take the place of their sins. There is no choice anymore. God's protection comes from this sacrificial relationship, they no longer have the choice to delight in God, they must live by God's law to be saved from their sins. The animal sacrifice was for the atonement of our actions and the religious practices like the sprinkling of blood in certain parts of the temple was to purify our relationship with God. Simply put, atonement is the apology and the religious practices are for rebuilding the relationship.

From this point on, there is no individual relationship with God. Humanity and God are on two separate sides of a chasm. When God references His people in the Old Testament, he refers to Israel as one entity and when the leader of that entity sins against God, the whole entity suffers the consequences. Everyone is treated as one people which negates God's complexity in individual relationships with His people. By God's grace, humanity could have a sacrificial relationship with God instead of complete decimation but by no means was this God's ideal purpose for humanity.

God's Delight in our Individual Purpose

In the creative process of physically making art, artists start with the first of four steps in the design process: concept. Artists define the essence . Concepts can portray an emotion, topic of discussion, topic of personal delight, topic for public consumption, etc. This is crucial to design because if an artist does not know the concept or idea then they have no direction or purpose. God's concept behind our purpose is to be in a perfect relationship with Him by loving Him and loving others. We are designed for a purpose and we are all unique in our individual relationships with God. Through God's continuous love in His creation, He created everyone to be unique and set apart, therefore we find purpose through our relationship with Him. Without

purpose mankind is left wandering, isolated, and vulnerable to the temptations of entities that do not want us to reach our full potential in our purpose; we would be too powerful as representatives in God's kingdom.

As representatives we should reflect God's love for us and His love for others. The things we align our hearts to, think about, and dwell on are a result of a relationship with God. We draw on God's creation for inspiration. As an artist, who also believes in having a God-ordained purpose, I strive to reflect that calling in my artwork. Many artists use their art as a medium to express their purpose, vision, and message. Their art can be seen as an extension of themselves, and it reflects their unique perspective and beliefs. Artists use the subject matter, style and technique, symbolism, color, and composition as a mirror for concepts that they may only know how to communicate through imagery or these various media.

The choice of subject matter in an artist's work can often reflect their purpose and message. For example, an artist who is concerned about environmental issues may create artwork that addresses themes such as sustainability, climate change, or the impact of human activity on the natural world. The style and technique an artist employs can also convey their purpose and message. For example, an artist who wants to evoke a sense of chaos and disorder may use a gestural or expressionistic style, while an artist who wants to convey a sense of calm and balance may use a more controlled and precise technique. Symbolism can be a powerful tool for artists to convey their message. They may use specific symbols or imagery that have a particular meaning or association to express their ideas. For example, an artist exploring themes of mortality and the fragility of life may incorporate imagery like skulls, flowers, or hourglasses in their work. Color can also be used by artists to convey emotion and meaning. Warm colors such as red, orange, and yellow may be used to convey energy and passion, while cooler colors such as blue and

green may be used to evoke a sense of calm and tranquility. The composition of an artwork can also reflect an artist's purpose and message. They may use specific techniques such as symmetry or asymmetry to convey a sense of order or chaos, or they may use different elements such as line, shape, and form to create a particular mood or atmosphere. Through their art, artists can communicate their ideas and perspectives to the world and engage with viewers on a deep emotional and intellectual level.

When dwelling on this idea of reflecting purpose I began to think of things that could symbolically explain the idea of being equipped in Christ from the moment of existence for our purpose and to become the person we were ordained to be, I thought of a caterpillar. Somehow there is a natural process of transformation from a squishy and seemingly shapeless caterpillar into a delicate butterfly with its own unique shape and colors. Reflection and transformation are central themes in both the idea of our divine purpose and the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. In the case of our divine purpose, the reflection of our relationship with God involves looking upward to discover our true calling or mission for meaningful work. It requires us to reflect on our values, passions, and talents, and to consider how we can use them to make a positive impact in the world.

This process of trusting God and growing in Him for our purpose can be challenging and may require us to make difficult decisions, but it can lead to a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment in life. Similarly, the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly also involves a process of growth and transformation. The caterpillar goes through a period of growth and change, during which it must reflect on its own identity and purpose. It sheds its old skin and enters a cocoon, where it undergoes a radical transformation, breaking down its old body and forming a new one. The chrysalis is dark, solitary, confined, lonely, and the changes that are

happening are natural but scary at times. When the transformation is complete, the caterpillar emerges as a beautiful butterfly, with a new purpose and identity.

Both processes involve a journey of self-discovery and transformation, and they require us to be willing to let go of old ways of thinking and being in order to embrace something new. Lean into the chrysalis even when it is dark and you cannot predict when you will come through. This also reminds us of the beauty and potential for growth that exists within ourselves and the natural world around us. The journey of leaning into and embracing the challenges of transformation can be a deeply spiritual experience, leading to a greater sense of purpose, joy, and fulfillment in life.

Heroes and Butterflies

Every good hero story follows the same story structure and correlates elements. Think of the best hero story; Superman, Spider-Man, Harry Potter, Luke Skywalker, etc. Is the hero an orphan? Is the hero raised by a close relative? Does the hero have a guide that seems to be powerful and knows all the answers but for some reason cannot solve the conflict of the story? If the answer is yes, you recognize the most common themes in the five elements of the best hero stories. The story starts with the hero living life but missing a crucial element within the environment or internally. This missing element could be love, acceptance, money, peace, etc. Using the popular Harry Potter series as an example, Harry is an orphan living with his aunt and uncle who do not love or accept him. Harry is missing a sense of purpose and identity at the beginning of the story.

The second element in the hero story is the point of no return where the hero is confronted with something that prevents them from continuing to live as they were before. This turning point starts the journey of transformation of the character into the hero. Harry is invited

to receive an education at Hogwarts and cannot continue to go about life as it was before; he has to accept that invitation. The third element in the hero story is the introduction to the guide and supporting characters. Ron Wesley is one of Harry's closest companions but Professor Dumbledore is his guide. The fourth element is the pressing conflict that affects everyone which is conveniently attached to the hero's original conflict. Harry is introduced to the prophecy of his battle with Lord Voldemort. Voldemort is a conflict to everyone in the story but only Harry can defeat him. Professor Dumbledore seems to be powerful enough to resolve the conflict but only Harry can fulfill the prophecy.

The fifth element of the story is the hero fulfilling the prophecy while also resolving the personal conflict. Harry defeats Voldemort while also discovering his identity as a wizard and gaining a sense of purpose with the legacy of his parents. A unique element of this story is that Harry is psychologically attached to the main conflict, Voldemort, and defeating him could result in his own death. Harry is willing to make that sacrifice which makes him the only savior of the people in his story and his death would fulfill his unknown identity from the beginning. However, Harry lives. All these elements make up the hero story, and the additional element of the prophecy can be correlated with the divine purpose given to mankind. Mankind needs a hero but cannot fulfill its own prophecy.

While the hero story archetype and the process of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly are two different concepts, there are some similarities between them. One of the key similarities is the notion of transformation. Both the hero story archetype and the process of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly involve a profound transformation. In the hero story archetype, the hero undergoes a journey of self-discovery and personal growth, which often involves facing and overcoming significant challenges. Similarly, the process of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly

involves a radical metamorphosis, in which the caterpillar completely transforms its physical structure and emerges as a beautiful butterfly.

Another similarity between the two concepts is the notion of a transformative journey. In the hero story archetype, the hero embarks on a journey or quest that takes them through a series of challenges and obstacles, leading to personal transformation. In the process of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, the caterpillar goes through a journey of its own, from hatching from an egg to eating voraciously and molting multiple times, to forming a chrysalis, and finally emerging as a butterfly. Additionally, both the hero story archetype and the process of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly involve a sense of purpose or destiny. In the hero story archetype, the hero is often called upon to fulfill a particular mission or destiny, and their journey is driven by a sense of purpose. Similarly, the caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly is driven by an innate sense of purpose, as it prepares to fulfill its role in the ecosystem as a pollinator and a vital component of the food chain. In summary, while the hero story archetype and the process of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly are distinct concepts, they share some fundamental similarities related to transformation, a transformative journey, and a sense of purpose or destiny.

Jesus's Hero Story

Following the hero story structure, the first part of mankind's story is in perfect relationship with God and the turning point was exercised by taking the fruit of the tree and eating it; dividing the perfect scenario and creating a relational gap between God and mankind. After this turning point, mankind cannot go back to the perfect garden and must work to be in favor of God. The next element in the story is the introduction of the guide. In this story, God is

the guide that continuously reigns over the kingdom of Israel, appoints leaders, and provides for His people.

This hero story introduces Jesus after the conflict has already entered the scene. However, a prophecy confirms that Jesus is the savior and Messiah that has come to deliver the world of sin. The fourth element of the typical hero story is that the main conflict is attached to the hero's conflict. Jesus's conflict is directly attached to him and his calling to save the world because he is God. The conflict is between God and mankind. The key difference in this story is that the entity that created the conflict could not do anything to atone for the division with God. God only accepts the perfect and blameless sacrifice and there is no one among them who could be that offering. Therefore, God sent Himself in the form of a man that would live with freewill in the same world as His creation, to be blameless and teach among them, and to die. God created a covenant that only He could fulfill as Jesus. The Messiah, being fully God and fully man, knows the pain and suffering he will endure when on the cross, yet he exercises his free will to do as God instructed him. The hero dies and the covenant is mended, "Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split."¹³ Jesus fulfilled the law that prevented mankind from being in a relationship with God. No longer will any man do virtuous deeds out of obligation to God or to atone for sins. Now, mankind can be in communion with God and virtuous deeds are done to show gratitude for God's love and sacrifice. Typical heroes die but mankind's hero lives. Jesus conquered sin and rose from the dead in victory, fulfilling all previous prophecies. His message to his followers set the next prophecy in motion, "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the

¹³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 27:50-51.

Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”¹⁴

Jesus is an extension of God and our ultimate example of how to live our purpose. Jesus trusted God fully for everything. He spoke with God daily and sought His wisdom. His sacrifice allows us to have access to all the same things he had access to, God’s infinite wisdom, His love, His protection, His provision, etc. Jesus equips us to execute the second step in the art design process; creativity. Being made in God’s image makes us naturally creative because God is the Creator. We are designed to create. The things we can create come from the concept that God ordains to us, the individual mission in which we base our life’s purpose. Our free will and freedom of expression is a tool to express, live out, and fulfill our individual purpose every day. As we fulfill our individual purpose through our relationship and trust in God, we also fulfill God’s intended purpose for everyone in His kingdom.

Jesus’s sacrifice shifted God’s relationship with us from justice and judgment to pure and true love. This is why our identity in Christ transcends beyond our actions and sins. Jesus died so that God could only see us in love. The greatest commandments are to love God and love others. When Jesus fulfilled the law through his resurrection, he knew that all commandments fall under these two commandments. As God’s children, we now have the choice to follow our purpose instead of living for the hope of salvation because Jesus is our salvation. This is the reason we can delight in God’s purpose for our lives instead of viewing it as a job. Jesus commands us to go out and spread the good news; this is our great commission. The search for purpose begins here.

Leaning into the Chrysalis

¹⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 28:19-20.

In a perfect world we would not have to question what our purpose is or where we fit in; we would just be told our mission outright and live every day according to that mission and never face any adversity. However, in a world full of God's creation, finding our purpose is complicated. We all start out as a caterpillar. The transformation between a caterpillar and its transition into a butterfly is a perfect example of the third step in the design process: construction. God designs and ordains a purpose into the caterpillar to eat and grow, developing and graduating into a mature caterpillar. Once the caterpillar is equipped for the next stage, it forms a chrysalis. This chrysalis acts as protection for the caterpillar as it transforms through adverse circumstances, changes, rest, silence, isolation, etc. Once the chrysalis has served its purpose and the caterpillar is done growing, the caterpillar emerges as a beautiful, unique, and colorful butterfly.

The butterfly stage is the last stage in the design process, culmination. The butterfly is the culmination of the growth and transformation inside the chrysalis. The concept was to be beautiful and to fly. The creativity is the colors and elements that make the butterfly unique. The construction is how all of those creative elements when met with a transformative process were formed and woven together. The construction is how all those creative elements were formed and woven together when met with a transformative process. Caterpillars have a purpose just like we do. As you grow in your moments inside your chrysalis, know that even when you think you are alone and it is dark, you were chosen and are being woven in that moment. The chrysalis equips us to fulfill our purpose. From the moment of our conception, God is weaving us. The womb is our first chrysalis. Our soul receives a body and a heartbeat designed by God's own hand. The images that follow the end this thesis are examples of how the design process a transformative process through the lens of human fashion. These images are from my senior

exhibition bachelor's degree in graphic design from the fall of 2022 titled, "Chrysalis." Just as a caterpillar has hatched with all the elements that will one day culminate and fulfill its purpose of being a butterfly, so are we born equipped with all the elements that will allow us to fulfill our life's purpose.



CHRYSALIS

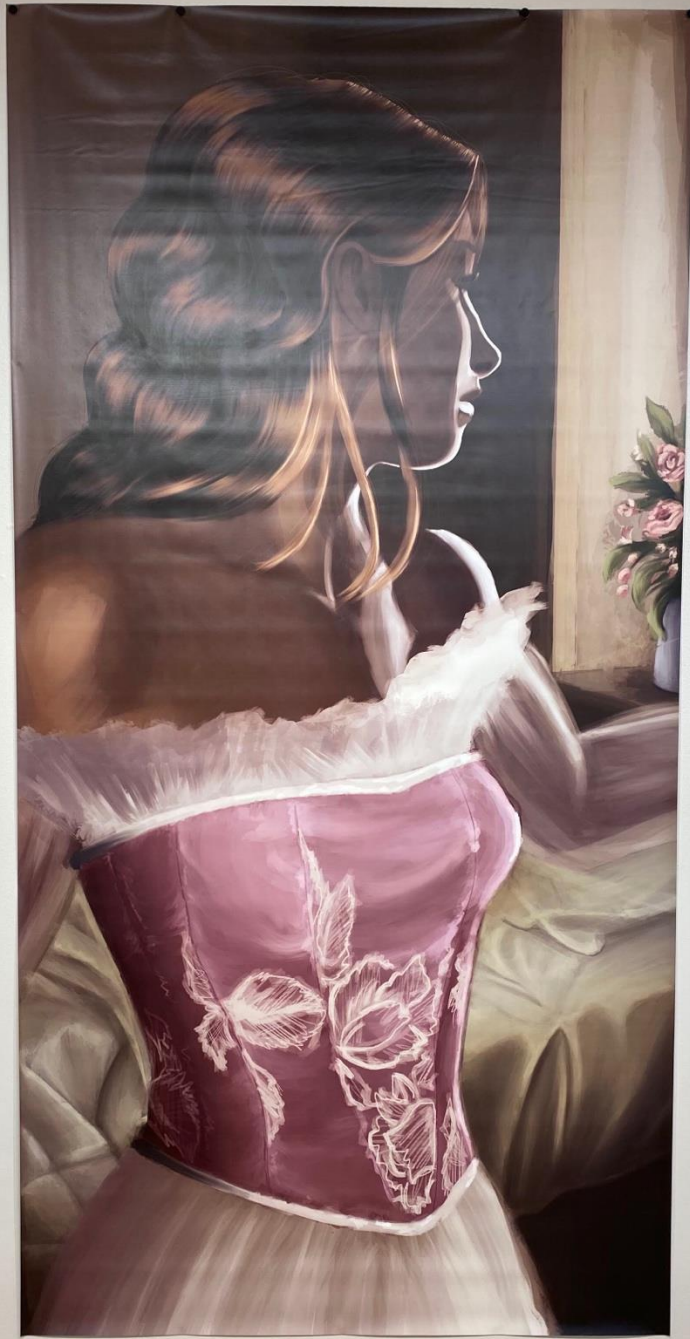
Senior Exhibition by Jill Parsons

EXHIBITION STATEMENT

Few naturally imagine how a lowly caterpillar will become a majestic butterfly. And yet, God uses the very parts that make up the humble insect to fashion it into unequalled beauty. He works with what is available; the components such as unique colors, patterns, and textures are already present in the caterpillar's identity. My goal with this exhibit is to inspire you to think about what goes on inside that chrysalis from a perspective of human fashion.

You will observe the transformation of taking components we know and applying them to the convergence of graphic design and the fashion world much like how I observe the pinning and fastening of God's design exhibited in my identity. Graphic design is the catalyst of transformation that God has used to shape my experience in the chrysalis. As you linger in these images, imagine how God workshopped the butterfly and decided the transformation should come in a chrysalis using every part of a young insect.

{John 1:3} All things were made by Him; and without him was not anything made that was made.



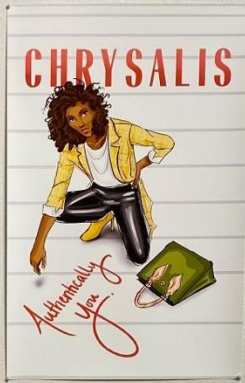






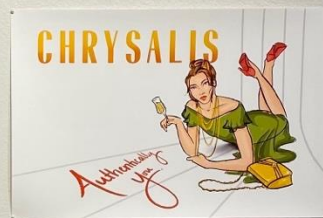
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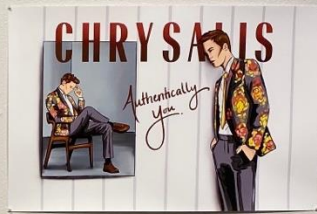
MODELS COLLECTION





BRUNO MAGLI
DRESS
100% COTTON
100% WOOL





WET
WASHING





Bibliography

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016.