

## FOREWORD

Once long ago, an earth-moving event changed humanity forever. A humble Jewish carpenter walked up on a mountain and told stories to thousands about how God wants us to live and pray. Just think how inspirational it would have been if we could have heard him speak on that fateful day.

In a real way, *The Master Carpenter* captures that teaching moment by putting imagination into words that Christ embodied in his ministry on earth. Short of the second coming, our daily walk in this world needs inspiration. You'll find such inspiration here.

Hugh Poland is the master of parable. His words are brilliant, connected, and timely. His stories captivate the mind and inspire sleeping questions about Jesus and how he can grace our lives each and every day.

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This book will draw in everyone with a spark of faith in their spirit and an ounce of sawdust in their past.

Every library and woodshop should have this book! Keep *The Master Carpenter* close at hand for daily reflection and inspiration as you seek to apprentice yourself to Jesus.

—Scott Phillips  
Woodworker of *The American Woodshop* on PBS

## P R E F A C E

In the opening scenes of the movie *The Passion of the Christ*, Jesus is hard at work crafting a chair. I vividly remember the excitement he showed as he explained to his mother that they could sit in chairs at the table rather than recline. While this is purely conjecture on the screenwriter's part, it nonetheless reminds us right away that Jesus—the son of our Creator—was being a creator himself. And he's still a carpenter today—a Master Carpenter—and I consider myself to be one of the many tools in his toolbox. As a disciple of Christ Jesus, I give my life to him to use for whatever he wants to build on this earth.

As the tools editor for the world's largest woodworking magazine, I can instantly relate. Hugh Poland does an exceptional job of connecting faith

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and life in Christ to every aspect of woodworking. From planning out your next project, to choosing, using, and maintaining your tools; from selecting the best material for the job, to machining it and joining it together, and finally bringing it to a finish, Hugh walks us through each phase of our “project development.”

Just as when we work with wood, Hugh shows that in working out our faith we need to experience the bad times (does anyone *really* like sanding?) as well as the good times (like when a dovetail joint slips together perfectly) in life to condition us fully according to God’s master plan. God takes each of us from the rough lumber of our sinful lives apart from him, and then shapes and molds us with his Holy Word, joins us to other believers for strength and support, and then refines us with joys, sorrows, love, peace, happiness, and trials until we are as he envisioned us.

Woodworkers will appreciate Hugh’s creative and thought-provoking approach in providing daily lessons that lead us, as apprentices to the ultimate master, as we strive to become more like the one and only Savior, Jesus.

—Bob Hunter  
Tools & Techniques Editor  
WOOD magazine

## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK those at Judson Press who have greatly encouraged me throughout this process. Rebecca Irwin-Diehl and Kim Shimer have not only been a tremendous help, they have been wonderful friends as well. The staff and worship teams at my church, Woodridge Baptist Church of Kingwood, have blessed me with much love and support. And of course, my wife, Karen, and daughters, Kayse, Jayme, and Ally, have created a place of love and laughter where anything can happen—and often does. We may not live in a castle, but let's continue to build our dream home together.

## INTRODUCTION

A survey of the garage on this chilly December morning points out my deficiencies and raises the notion that my name and “Master Carpenter” don’t belong on the same piece of paper.

The workbench is crowded with extra screws that don’t fit any project, but I’m too cheap to throw them out. An extra lightbulb sits in its box on top of a radio, and a garden hose reel lies haphazardly on a table, waiting to roll off and fall on my foot when I least expect it. A woodworking magazine is opened to the plans for a cherry sleigh bed, mocking my best intentions and my lack of abilities. Bicycle handlebars catch my shirt in almost any direction I turn.

But what keeps me coming back to the bench and its surrounding tools are the stacks of wood on the other side of the garage. There’s enough walnut for

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a nice tabletop, if I get my courage up to make the first cut into it. There's some cedar for those outdoor planters I've been promising my wife. Cherry sits waiting, harvested from a tree my mother used to climb as a small girl. Small pieces of oak and ash hover around the lathe, waiting to be chosen for a special task. Clear cypress is bountiful, and even some pieces of mesquite and purpleheart are in supply. Long pine boards from a sinker log, harvested from the Neches River where my grandfather worked for a logging company almost 100 years ago, definitely qualify as "old growth." (This also explains why we park our cars in the driveway!)

Does the smell of sawdust seduce you? Do you enjoy going to the "tool and drool" store? Is your TV permanently switched to the Home and Garden Channel? Is each piece of lumber in your shop like that one good shot in a round of golf that keeps a duffer coming back for more? If you're just one accurate measure, one smooth cut, one patient sanding away from a satisfying project, then you have a lot more in common with the Master Carpenter than you think.

One of the reasons many of us get into woodworking is so that we might build something that will say to the rest of the world, "I was here"; to construct something that will outlive us and be treasured by another generation. The wise King Solomon once said of God, "He has set eternity in the hearts of men" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Do you see this truth in your own life?

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Do you burn to create something that outlives you, something that will have an impact on your descendants, something that points them toward ultimate truth? Don't we long for our children to grow up and accomplish greater things than we ever dreamed possible?

Well, with human beings these things are impossible, but with God all things are possible. And that's what this book is about.

There are tons of how-to books out there. This book isn't one of them. If you're like me, you don't need another book of woodworking plans or instructional manuals. You already know what to do with your tools.

Instead, think of this book as a collection of life plans you can read in the next couple months. You do not need another book telling you right from wrong—you already know that—but you may need a Master Carpenter to come into the shop of your heart and demonstrate a few useful life techniques, give you a little correction here and there, and inspire you to do what you already know to do.

You may want to reach for this book as you grab your first cup of coffee in the morning. Take a few minutes before the wood chips start to fly. Pull up a stool next to your workbench, and read one of the short chapters. You just might find yourself learning at the feet of the Master Carpenter himself. You might also see that your name *does* belong next to his.

And if it helps you fall in love with Jesus a little bit more, it will all be worthwhile, won't it?