





3. According to Romans 1:18–20, how does God’s creative work provide a witness to unbelievers?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How can worship artists highlight the creative work of God in such a way that they influence unbelievers?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What role does creativity in worship have in evangelism? In your opinion, should worship services be catered to unbelievers to “meet them where they are” or should they primarily be for the believer? Defend your answer biblically.

### *A THEOLOGY OF CREATIVITY*

For creative people who also happen to be disciples of Jesus, the ability to articulate a theology of creativity is not just a good idea, but a God-given stewardship and responsibility. Here’s what I mean. Take the following questions, for example.

*Hey mother of 5, why does your house smell like peppermint and cinnamon?*

*Hey emotionally charged musician, why did you choose a droning dirge in Em?*

*Hey tech guy, why did you use a bright color pallet during that worship song?*

Questions like these are always on a deeper quest for ontological meaning (or why something is the way it is). Typically though, neither the person asking the question nor the one answering has comprehension of the deeper quest they are on—a quest inherent within human beings. What they are really seeking is a theology of creativity. With the birth



of every creative idea there is an underlying belief system and ideology that accompanies it.

A person who has put some degree of thought behind their creativity might answer like this:

*My house smells like peppermint and cinnamon because I am defusing my "happy" oils and hoping to change the atmosphere a bit so that I don't murder my raucous brood!*

*I chose a minor dirge because I was singing about my dead dog and broken Chevy. I'm depressed.*

*We chose that color pallet because we were singing songs about the resurrection of Jesus and we wanted to accentuate His majesty and glory the best we could.*

Some people are more adept at articulating the *why* behind the *what*. Others are not. However, as creative Christians, we *must* know why it matters, and we must be able to articulate it from God's perspective. So, here's why creativity matters.

1. Because the Creator made us creative.

Have you ever stopped to think about the creative nature of God? Who else could reach into His eternal imagination, dream up the universe, and then simply speak everything into existence? It's a mind-boggling thought. Creativity is inherent within God's nature, and because we were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26), creativity is part of the package deal. The problem is, because of sin, creativity has also been marred by the Fall. So, we quickly forget. We grow old, wrinkled, and sophisticated and ignore the beauty and creativity of life all around us.

Have you noticed how creative children are? They are always exploring, imagining, dreaming, creating, thinking, and wondering. They are simply connecting to God through the creativity He placed within them. They haven't grown up yet, and we should envy their appreciation for wonder.

Pablo Picasso once said, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up."<sup>14</sup>

This is our challenge. As artists and creatives who belong to Jesus, we must resist the slow fade toward a mundane existence, devoid of imagination and wonder. As image bearers of God, we have the privilege and responsibility to reflect God through creativity. We, of all people, should activate the imaginations God has given us to produce art that reflects the beauty of the God we serve.



Nathan Clark, a Christian artist and Founder of Fourth Line Films, endeavors to create art in the secular marketplace that rivals the works of any other artisan, Christian or non-Christian. He says about his work, “Ultimately, I wanted to create a piece of art that would be taken at face value, that would be judged because it's a piece of art, not because a Christian created it or didn't create it. I believe God has made us to create things—that's what I want to do. I just want to create something that causes people to stop, to think and maybe to consider their life a little more deeply. If I've done that, I'm pretty excited.”<sup>15</sup>

Creativity is important because the Creator made us creative. If we have forgotten that, let us break out of our creative amnesia once and for all. In the words of Peter Pan, “If growing up means it would be beneath my dignity to climb a tree, I'll never grow up, never grow up, never grow up! Not me!”

## 2. Because it serves as a vehicle to a lost world.

A second reason creativity is crucial for disciples of Jesus is that it serves as a vehicle to carry the message of the gospel to a lost world. Art and creativity serve as a conduit, or a medium to carry the most important message in the world. We see this throughout Scripture. Jesus used parables as his primary conduit and medium. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel used symbols and props to deliver their messages (Ezekiel even baked bread over human feces . . . God's idea actually! ☺). David used music and poetry. On and on we see it.

A few years ago, my dad and I recorded an album together called *All That Glitters*. By fusing spoken word, Scripture, and an eclectic blend of songs, the listener is taken on a 35-minute journey toward the gospel. We both still hand them out to people we meet all the time. The medium changes. The message never changes.

Stephen Miller, worship pastor at The Journey Church in St. Louis reminds us, “But for the worship leader, the medium is not our message—it is the vehicle for our message. In the church, art is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. While we strive to use art to communicate the glory of God, the art is always subservient to its intended purpose; namely making Jesus famous—to glorify and honor Him in the sight of all who hear and see.”<sup>16</sup>

Miller gets to the heart of the matter. As artists and creatives, we must constantly ask ourselves whether our particular medium is enhancing the message, or becoming the message.



Bob Kauflin, Founding Worship Leader for Sovereign Grace Ministries, echoes Miller's assessment of art. He says, "Remember that creativity is not something we *do*; it's a way we do *something*. That 'something' is magnifying God's glory in Christ."<sup>17</sup>

Chad Johnson, Founder of *Come & Live*, a nonprofit mission organization for "musicianaries," views creativity as a means to connect the gospel with people who have been disconnected from God or the church. He says, "The focus is asking how we can connect the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people in the world who have been burned by the Church or burned by their Christian experience or burned in some way. What's the smallest way of us going: 'We want to treat you with so much honor. We want to treat you with so much respect and so much love'? It's an opportunity to remind somebody they are loved by God."<sup>18</sup>

Art and creativity are God-given vehicles to carry His life-giving message to the world. Will you choose to harness this amazing medium?

### 3. Because it serves the Church.

Finally, creativity is important because it provides a tool to bless and serve the Church. Nowhere is creativity more evident than in the diversity of gifts and functions laid out so beautifully by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. He says:

"For as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ ... Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it" (1 Cor. 12:12, 27).

This is the beauty of the body of Christ. There is diversity among its members, but there is unity as well. Not all of us can preach. Not all of us can sing. Not all of us can teach, but we can all serve in the individual capacities for which God has created us and designed us. We can all function with a particular level of creativity within this divine mosaic called the "Church" that God has so brilliantly crafted. That's why no job is too small.

No part of the body is too small or too insignificant either. If I lost my left thumb I'd never be able to play the guitar again. The same is true for the body of Christ. No part is less important than another. That was Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 12, and that's the connectedness that we all have as the body of Christ. We are individual members, intimately connected to one another, striving for the same goal, to make Jesus famous.

Though the Church is made up of a divinely crafted, extensively diverse mosaic, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't put forth any effort in our creative endeavors. No, art is hard work. Fostering a culture of creativity will not happen on accident. We must do the hard work of cultivating it, but how do we do that exactly?



In *The Church Creative*, John O’Keefe suggests six ways to foster a culture of creativity within your church or ministry team.<sup>19</sup>

- a. Place – Have a set aside place for brainstorming, white-boarding and free thinking. A place that will help to stir the senses and imagination—an incubator for creative thinking.
- b. Fun – Individuals must have free license to enjoy what they do. It must be a fun environment, carefree and exciting.
- c. Stuff – Creative people need stuff to think creatively. They need things that will stir their imaginations. Props. White boards. Colored index cards. String. You name it.
- d. Show – Creatives need an avenue to share their creations. Message boards, Facebook, an easel, Dropbox, or a boardroom are all simple examples. They need an outlet to “show and tell.”
- e. Feedback – By showing their ideas, creative people can receive feedback on their work, which is a crucial part of the creative process.
- f. Avoid Stereotypes – This simply means that creatives refuse to be boxed in. They refuse to succumb to the status quo. They think outside the box and are unafraid to dream and imagine the impossible.

As you begin to imagine greater levels of creativity in your own life, both outside the Church and inside the Church, ask the Holy Spirit to infuse you with fresh ideas and innovations. Ask Him to help you dream God-sized dreams that will reflect Him, point people to Jesus, and encourage His Church.

Questions from the Article:

1. What challenged you the most from the article?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Do you agree or disagree with Picasso that as we get older we have to work harder to maintain a childlike sense of artistry and wonder? Why or why not?



3. Stephen Miller says, “In the church, art is a wonderful servant but a terrible master.” In what ways can artistic elements in the worship service threaten to overwhelm the purpose of worship—to bring glory to Jesus Christ? Have you observed this at Seven Marks? If so, explain.
  
4. Describe a time when you observed artistic elements enhance a worship service and accomplish the goal of making Jesus famous?
  
5. Describe a time when you observed artistic elements serve as an effective medium to communicate the good news of Jesus to a lost world?
  
6. How do you define excellence in art and music? Is excellence biblical? Why or Why not?



7. List 2–3 ideas that will help us effectively foster a culture of creativity on the worship team? Discuss them as a group.