COVER STORY: 
Creative Leadership 
for the Non-creative Leader

FEATURE STORY: 
30 Years Later 
...and Jesus Wept

Skits • Dramas • Workshops
Imagine a world with only one fruit, one taste, one kind of bird, one breed of animal, one colour, identical people with identical personalities, one song of a single note and sound, identical sunsets, and just one type of flower and design.

Help! How mundane and deadly boring compared to the exuberance of the creativity, diversity, and variety we experience in our lives on this planet.

SEE THE MIRACLE…

How creative are you? Look in the mirror: You are an amazing artwork of God’s creativity. Cells are dying and being replaced by brand new ones right now. You are a work of creation-in-action in this moment. Exquisite design makes us living, breathing, moving, interacting, and worshipping sculptures – what works of art! The world of human society and nature is a dynamic gallery and performance venue of divine artistry and drama, filled with dancing electrons.

Human creativity is a tiny part of almost infinite miracles of creation in everyday life. Creation is more than an event in the distant past. It is an all-the-time amazing phenomenon with new life constantly being generated. New galaxies, stars, and other cosmic bodies are being born right now. Atoms and molecules continually recombine into different animate and inanimate forms. People’s lives are transformed and re-created. Life, existence, the universe: without creativity they would neither begin nor continue.

Welcoming creativity in our personal, church, and community aspects of life is welcoming the present-day work of the Creator!

SAY YES … THEN FIGURE OUT HOW!

You are inherently creative simply by being alive. We express our creativity in a variety of ways that are not just limited to music, art and performing… AND each of us can always develop that creativity in every area of our lives. My life exploded with new skills and opportunities when I learned to “Say ‘Yes’… then figure out how!” My life as a global adventurer of love, kindness, playfulness, and creativity wasn’t planned by me. It came from initially saying “‘Yes’” to opportunities beyond my capabilities and comfort zone, then discovering the skills, ideas, supportive team, and inspiration to do them. Pursuing the ways in which God made ‘my heart sing’ opened up even more opportunities. It’s been an enriching journey. The Bible is filled with stories of people hearing the call to do what they weren’t qualified to do, but saying “Yes” anyway and going on the creative adventure of being stretched and empowered beyond their wildest dreams.

Whatever you do or make from a heARTspace of love is God creating art in this world with you as His musical instrument, His brush or His pen! Enjoy exploring the creative journeys and inspiration of a variety of people throughout these pages. The Old and New Testaments tell the stories of God’s creativity on the world stage. But the stories didn’t stop when the last book was written. We are the living stories of God’s creation in this present time. Wow, what a privilege!

Graeme Frauenfelder is an inspiring storyteller, professional speaker, and team-builder. He is also known as a “minister of happiness” by his clowning and kindness in displaced-people’s camps.
For most of us, social justice is not associated with the arts, and yet, one of the most non-combative ways to bring about social change is through the arts. Whether it is music, drawing, dance, drama, or some other artistic discipline, the awareness, change, and inspiration gained can be lasting, contagious, and effective.

You might be wondering, what does art have to do with youth ministry? Well, a lot.

Artists are in a unique position to use their work, especially when done with spiritual values, to effect social change. Yes, that quiet girl who is content to put her thought on a canvas, she can become the voice of change. The young man who seems odd and sits in a corner, constantly strutting his guitar and rambling on about the change he wishes to see, he can become a voice of change. The artist in them can swing and inspiration gained can be lasting, contagious, and effective.

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You can find ways to use the talents and creative experiences of the youth among you to reach the community. You will see a difference—both in and outside the church.

Maybe, just maybe, the artist in them can swing the balance.

The Huffington Post reported the stories of eleven children who made a difference in 2011.

Read their stories and see how a simple beginning can make a huge change in effecting social change.

“As world leaders struggled in 2011 to save a famine-struck Africa, and the global water crisis and continue to research cures for devastating cancers, a host of young activists also stepped up. As young as 7, these young people who want to make a difference offered their insight, experience and commitment to resolving these plaguing issues. Meet 11 such budding activists who may just inspire you to help make this world a better place.”

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/07/top-kids-making-difference_n_1133564.html#slide=523310
The soldiers were coming! In the early morning darkness, the parents grabbed what they could, packing as quickly and quietly as possible, not expecting they would ever be able to return. Whatever they couldn’t pack or carry would be lost and they had to carry whatever they needed to survive on the run. They had a little money and a few valuable possessions they might be able to sell, but they would never receive what they were really worth. If they could make it to the border they might be safe, but they couldn’t afford to wonder how they might be received in the neighbouring nation.

As the husband packed their meagre possessions together, he kept urging his wife to hurry. “The soldiers are coming!” he whispered again to his already frantic wife. The infant child was wrapped to keep him warm against the cool night air and the couple did one more look around the bare room to see what they had forgotten. This was not a time for sentiment, but the wife-and-mother paused for just a moment. This had been their first home as a family and she expected they would never see it again.

The village seemed unusually quiet as they stepped out the door after extinguishing the light. Sticking to the shadows, they were soon out of the village and less concerned about being quiet, more concerned about travelling as quickly as possible. By daylight, they were well away from the village but exposed to the dangers of the road. There were always those ready to take advantage of desperate travellers.

She shuddered at the thought of what might have happened if they had not been warned to leave when they did. But she was still uneasy. Was there a risk of being pursued? Had anyone seen them leave? Although her husband’s family came from this region, she had never before been this far south. How long would it take them to reach the border? Would they be safe even then? Would they ever see their home again?

Nathan Brown is book editor at the Adventist Church’s signs Publishing Company near Melbourne, Australia. He is author of five books including I Hope and 7 Reasons Life is Better With God, and is currently writing monthly short stories for www spermamagazine.org. Nathan is one of the convenors of the Manifest Creative Arts Festival grew up on the is a continuing university student, plays basketball in an “old men’s league,” assists his wife with gardening, and takes his big dog for regular walks.
Amid the uproar and outrage, the horror and the grief of the next morning, no one noticed the sudden absence of that peasant family from up north. They were distant cousins somehow but they might have left a week ago. And if they were away from here, they were luckier than the rest of them.

After thirty years, their memories of that time were a blur. It had been a strange time. First there had been the census and the influx of visitors to the village. Then there were stories of some of the out-of-town shepherds seeing angels, and awhile later a group of strange foreigners came looking for a recently-born child. They seemed exotic and wealthy and quite unlike any other visitors the village could remember.

But all of these occurrences were all-but-forgotten in the sorrow of the morning the soldiers came and killed a generation other than theirs. More than two years old, but with ruthless efficiency and the taste for blood, all the boys under two years old, but with young families of their own, she might have left a week ago. And if they were away from here, they were luckier than the rest of them.

Today was Rachel’s particular day for grief. Her firstborn son would have been turning thirty today. He had been six days old that morning. She was still considered “unclean” and had not yet left the house since giving birth. Worse, her son had not yet been named. As they had watched their newborn son with justifiable pride, Rachel and her husband had narrowed their list of ideas to three, but they had two more days before he would be circumscribed and named.

In the early morning, she had heard noise coming from the street but, numb by the fatigue of early motherhood, she had not dragged herself from the bed to look out before the door was roughly pushed open and, in a blur of violence and brutality too horrible to describe, imagine, or remember, her son was taken from her. Then her son was gone. He was never named. The tree sons who were born after were given the shortlisted names. Now men with young families of their own, she loved them dearly—but her first-born was always absent.

For three decades, Bethlehem had suffered the reminder of a missing generation. They had not celebrated any 30th birthdays for a couple of years now, but this gap had been obvious at each stage of these missing lives. Each absent milestone was a reminder of the tragedy that had been sent to their village—and a time to mourn anew. Although dulled by the years, the grief was still real.

That she was not alone in her sorrow offered little comfort at first. Her grief was hers alone, too raw to share, and without having properly named her son it always seemed too difficult to talk about him. And having spent so little time with him, she had few stories to tell. Her own nine-month relationship with her son was something she was unable to share or even understand. There were so many “why” questions.

At first she refused the comfort offered by other families, but an informal “club” of the bereaved grew among those mothers over the years. It was a terrible bond but a bond no less and one that mellowed with the decades. When they acknowledged each other in the street, there was a deeper knowing between them. At times, they remembered quietly together. And they eventually became the group of women who would work together to support a family that lost a child in some new tragedy.

But today was another day for Rachel’s own grief. Not only did she still mourn her son, she mourned not getting to know him better, seeing him grow into the young man he would have become. She mourned the last years and also the lost hope. What if one of the boys from their village had been the Messiah, the king had feared? What if it might have been her son? She hardly dared think further on this. What if tyrant Herod had won? There was always talk of “messiahs”—but what if Israel really had lost their one true hope in that morning of murder? Would God have let that happen?

To add salt to the wound of her grief and insult to her dark reflections, there was a buzz around Bethlehem that morning about a new teacher—undoubtedly another possible “messiah”—who was attracting some attention and was said to be coming through their village. Being so close to Jerusalem, they heard most of the stories of new teachers and potential messiahs, but this man was becoming known for being able to work miracles and part of the interest in his rumoured visit to their village focused on this. A new messiah might make his stand or his statement at some point, but it seemed there was a possibility of a miracle today. The village waited with excitement.

Mary had told Jesus the stories of Bethlehem many times but, when He turned twelve, she told Him the story of their escape from Bethlehem in the early morning darkness and the massacre that happened behind them. She told the story with a heavy heart, remembering Simeon’s warnings to her, but also recognising the duty placed on her from the first angel announcing her miraculous child. “Highly favoured,” perhaps, but also seriously burdened with an awesome responsibility. It was a key moment in Jesus’ understanding of His identity and His mission. This story cemented His growing and sobering realisation that He must be “about His Father’s business,” the explanation He gave for His three-day disappearance at the temple in Jerusalem later that same year. While it would be years until He became publicly known as a teacher and—as was first whispered, then talked about more openly—possible messiah, Mary’s telling of this story worked
As news of His soon arrival spread through the village, Rachel joined the small crowd in the marketplace who were curious to see this teacher and supposed miracle worker. It seemed a good distraction from her dominant thoughts of the day and she was as curious as anyone. The market was winding down after the morning’s trade and she stood under the shade of a small tree with a group of “the mothers.”

The crowd accompanying this teacher was a strange assortment but, from their accents, mostly Galileans and mostly uneducated, which was strange for a teacher and his disciples. Almost all of them were dressed as common people, unwashed and dusty from the road. There was nothing to distinguish their teacher from the rest of the crowd except for the attention directed toward the one they called Jesus.

For a teacher rapidly becoming famous, she was surprised that He seemed so young, maybe about . . . thirty. He could . . . he could have been her son.

As they came to the marketplace, the local villagers were subsumed into the travelling crowd and the group came to a halt as Jesus turned to speak directly to the informal gathering. Rachel and the other women stayed in their shade and a step removed from the group but could hear what was said.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” Jesus began. His followers’ response suggested they recognised a message they had heard a number of times before.

As they walked the streets of Galilee, away from the dangerous crowds of the city, she stood under the shade of a small tree with a group of “the mothers.”

Then Jesus said.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”

Eventually, perhaps, thought Rachel bitterly. The teacher had hit a sensitive spot, especially today. She had spent so long refusing to be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth,” Jesus continued, pausing after each statement to allow responses.

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

A few villagers were still arriving but the marketplace had grown quiet as the teacher’s voice hung in the warm afternoon air.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

“Blessed are those who suffer because of Me”—and then He caught her eye, looking directly at her under the tree.

Rachel could sense the grandeur of what this Jesus was saying. He was describing a way of living and measuring life that seemed so different from what she experienced. She looked around her. For the most part, these were the poor, the mourning, the meek, even the hungry sometimes.

She had tuned out for a moment but Jesus caught her attention again.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

Then He was standing before her, like the son she had never known. “Blessed are those who suffer because of Me,” He repeated quietly.

“What . . . what do you mean?” Rachel asked, her hurt wrestling with her confusion. “I have suffered—as have many here—but not ‘because of you’ . . .”

“The Son of Man is a son of Bethlehem,” Jesus said.

“But all the stories say you are from Galilee, from Nazareth?” a bystander interjected.

“The Son of Man is also a son of Bethlehem,” Jesus repeated, still focused on Rachel. “I was born here. My mother told me the story of how my family left Bethlehem after being warned that King Herod was trying to kill Me. My mother and Joseph have no idea how Herod would do that—or they would have warned everyone.”

“Why . . . ?” Rachel began to ask the countless questions that had haunted her for thirty years but stopped as tears filled her eyes.

“I’m sorry,” Jesus said to her with a sincerity that could not be doubted and somehow an authority that seemed enough. For a few agonising moments, Rachel continued to sob. And Jesus wept.

Then God hugged Rachel until their tears subsided and He and Jesus were silent together under that tree in the village marketplace, as the crowd looked on with a strange sense of impromptu road-side reverence.

And, after thirty years, she was comforted.
In my early years of full-time ministry, I remember sitting with my new “worship” team to discuss the calendar for the approaching year and working out what we were going to do, which themes we were going to explore, and praying for where God wanted to lead our church. Our conversation turned to creativity and what we wanted to put into our worship programs to make them God-glorifying, interesting, but also sensory-engaging.

One of the challenges we faced in that meeting was resources—mainly human resources. Many church conversations about creativity revolve around talented artists. It is daunting to even think about what our communities have faced: a limited view of creativity, assuming it is only found in these few areas of giftedness. But I was also confronted with the fact that we are in a culture in which people’s distrust of religion and church affect how we must communicate when we are talking about sharing beliefs that make an eternal difference.

Some people have the knack for producing something that I would not be able to create in my wildest dreams. We should celebrate them and their giftedness. If you’re reading this and you fall into this category or you have been affirmed with these gifts, praise Jesus for you. We need you! You have something to contribute in the communication of Jesus.

But we also have been stumped by the notion that because we don’t have these people in our midst—or so we think—we have to settle for mediocrity, without thinking about or intentionally focusing on creativity.

1 CREATIVITY QUESTIONS
So what is creativity and what is it for? What difference will it make?

Does it have a place in our church community? And what resources do we need to make sure this is explored and encouraged in our church family?

We only have to look into the creation story in Genesis to see that creating and recreating brings goodness. God saw what He had done and said “it was very good” (see Genesis 1:31). Throughout Scripture, we see creative and re-creative work wherever God is involved in the hearts and lives of people.

Creativity brings joy, beauty, and life in a world where these are needed. It also allows us to communicate what words cannot fully express. In a world where godly beauty is desperately needed and we have a life-giving message to be shared, creativity plays an enormous part.

At its core, evangelism is simply sharing Jesus. But how do we do this? We are familiar with the famous question God asked Moses. But we are also familiar with the excuses offered by Moses as the excuses he could imagine. But God told him to “take your shepherd’s staff, and use it to perform the miraculous signs I have shown you!” (Exodus 4:17).

“What is that in your hand?” is an important question for our own creativity challenges. Moses only had his staff but it was something he knew how to use. God knew Moses’s limitations but He also knew what Moses could do with his leading using what he knew. For each of us, God begins with what we have in our hands. It is yet another way that He meets us where we are.

In our calling to communicate Jesus, God uses what we have to breathe life into the world. So if there is a place for creativity to be explored, it should be in our church community.

This is why we might have gotten it wrong with our assumed understanding of creativity, that our “creatives”—musicians, visual artists, actors, poets, chefs, and florists—are the only ones who have creativity in their bones. Every one of us can create and re-create to bring beauty into our community, to communicate the life found in Jesus. Someone once commented that “Creativity is life, not a hobby.” And what we are creating must communicate life, love, beauty, justice, joy, peace, and goodness.

We are all called to the work of creativity and re-creativity—a life, not a hobby—with the resources we are given wherever we find ourselves. This realization is life-changing and, in turn, a creative life assists in kingdom building.

2 A BIBLICAL EXAMPLE
In the book of Exodus, we find Moses called to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. Most of us are familiar with the story and the famous question God asked Moses. We are also familiar with the excuses offered by Moses as to why he was not the right person for the job of freeing the children of Israel. Then the Lord asked him, “What is that in your hand?” A shepherd’s staff,” Moses replied (Exodus 4:2).

The people of God were in slavery. There was a cry coming out of Egypt from the people to be saved and rescued. The solution from God is found in the man of Moses, his staff, and his brother Aaron. Moses was reluctant—to say the least—and gave God all the excuses he could imagine. But God had an answer for him.

When God calls us to bring life into a situation in desperate need of Him, He comes with ways to equip us for this calling. Moses was called by God to lead His people out of Egypt—and God’s response to his excuses—and his fears—was to ask what was in his hand. God told him to “take your shepherd’s staff with you, and use it to perform the miraculous signs I have shown you!” (Exodus 4:17).

In our calling to communicate Jesus, God uses what we have to breathe life into the world.
in our hand. In our privilege of partnering with Him to respond to oppression and injustice, God uses what we have within our reach. In our ministry of bringing freedom, creating beauty or whatever it is God wants to engage us in, God uses what we have among our resources. God always works with what we have in our hands.

Further, God brings people to assist with what He needs to achieve through us and them. God brought Aaron because Moses was nervous about speaking in front of people due to his stammer. God also used Moses’s wife to save his life when God was about to smite him (see Exodus 4:24–26). However amazing and bizarre and “creative” her action seems to us, she assisted Moses in God’s bigger task ahead, allowing him to work and continue after what we have imagined for our church.

When we keep our creativity and worship simple, it allows the Holy Spirit to do what He needs to do among our community and the people involved. It also frees us to not be so busy working for God that we forget to include God in our doing for Him! My creative faithfulness is challenged when I am busy running around thinking up all sorts of wonderful and creative ideas to put into a project, event, or program. I’ve often caught myself, realising that I have forgotten to stop and seek His guidance, His wisdom, and His creative power for the task He has assigned to me. Building God’s Kingdom needs God Himself. Sometimes our best creativity might be found in this kind of simplifying and re-focusing.

3 CREATIVITY AND FAITHFULNESS IN PRACTICE

In 2012, I was able to be part of two international short-term mission trips with my husband’s school and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). On both trips, I experienced the creative use of the resources on hand to achieve the task—because that is all we had.

In the African nation of Tanzania, for instance, we were to assist in building part of the wall for one of our schools, so students are protected from kidnappers and murder. On arrival, we had questions regarding the methods for building the wall, especially in relation to scaffolding. In one place there was a drop-off on one side of the wall, so we needed to ensure that construction would be secure and safe.

But the local tradesmen had already thought through the process. They were familiar with the project and the site and had already built part of the wall. Using what we had thought of and then, we used the bricks for the wall together with planks of wood as makeshift scaffolding, and we had a wall by the end of our time. God had prepared a team for us to work alongside, to ensure protection of those students. We had to get creative but it worked.

“Little is much”—and this is especially true when God is with us. The trusty staff in Moses’ hand—old, worn, and familiar—was pointed out to Moses as a tool to be used to bring freedom to the people of Israel. God used his staff to perform signs, to part the Red Sea and the Jordan River so the children of Israel could cross safely, and to bring water out of rocks. These were things Moses would never have imagined as he carried that stick across the desert while herding sheep.

4 CREATIVE SIMPLY

I recently visited both my birth country of Samoa and its sister island Vanuatu. I was confronted by how rich both cultures are, even amid a lack of obvious resources. They do not run “church” as we would have it in many developed nations, but their faithfulness in worship and commitment to serving Jesus is obvious.

Whatever they have is used creatively, beautifully, and simply—and I found it refreshing. Exotic flowers and plants are used to brighten the church. The fragrance of the flowers is delightful and fresh and fills the space. Colours come not from lights but by materials woven together and plastered on the front wall of the church. The statement is clear—this is something that we took time to create for God and this place is for God.

What follows is a flood of beautiful harmonies that drown the one or two guitars played during the worship service. There are no worship leaders but the whole building is filled with rich, melodious sound. At the end of the worship service, the members file outside and pray with and for each other.

My heart was filled and overflowing with an encounter with Jesus that was simple yet profound. I was again confronted by people who are creatively using what they have in their hand and in their reach to bring glory to God and bring justice and healing to a world that can seem so dark and hopeless.

FOR HIS GLORY

So what is in your hand? What has God placed within your grasp that can be utilised creatively to reflect His character? And how is this bringing life and justice into the world that so desperately needs Him? How is what’s in your hand blessing you and the community you are placed in?

Faithful creativity is not handed over only to our “artists”—it is also important as what they do can be. Creativity is most importantly about serving as we are able with whatever we have. So “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10) and “do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). ☺
If leadership is about developing a team and working with God to bring out the best in every person, how do you do that in the arts where—or like me—you may have very hidden talent?

DURING the 1970s, string art became popular. I would copy and measure up designs on a board, marking exactly where each nail would go. After painting the board and nails black, I would thread cotton between the various rows of nails like an intricate spider web and be amazed at various patterns and shapes that emerged.

At the time, I lived in Papua New Guinea and spent most of my limited skill copying other people’s designs. In a rare moment of inspiration, encouraged by my parents, I used a picture of a bird of paradise and designed a string art version. These sold in the local markets—I was a better entrepreneur than artist—as my only triumph in the art world.

At the same time, I had a dream of being a guitarist. My parents bought me a classical guitar and spent a small fortune to teach me how to read music and play classically. Today, I can strum along using chords but I still cannot read music. At best, it is a “joyful noise.”

But, like all human beings, God did gift me with talents and abilities. One that He and the Seventh-day Adventist Church has given me the opportunity to exercise and develop is leadership. So what is the role of leaders in relationship to creativity and the arts? And does a leader have to be a creative artist to allow the creative energies of others to prosper? After all, God the Creator created every human being in His image. Each human being is potentially an inventor. If leadership is about developing a team and working with God to bring out the best in every person, how do you do that in the arts where—or like me—you may have very hidden talent?

BIBLE LEADERS AND CREATIVITY

According to the biblical record, the creative arts flourished in Israel during the reigns of David and his son Solomon in the 11th and 10th centuries B.C. (1 Chronicles 14–26). David was an artist. He was an excellent musician called upon when still a boy to soothe the then-king with his music (see 1 Samuel 16:14–25). He was a poet who authored many of the psalms, probably writing music for many of them as well. Writing in the desert or in the palace, his psalms express raw and vivid emotions, yet they all reflected on his relationship with the Author of life whom he worshipped—whatever his feelings. At times, David’s joy was so exuberant that he danced in worship (see 2 Samuel 6:14). Most of David’s creativity was directed to God in worship, but he also appreciated beauty and its source. His palace was made of the most precious timbers, exotic stone, and expensive timber (see 1 Chronicles 14:1, 15:1, 17:1).

David’s son, Solomon, was also a reflective writer. The Song of Songs exquisitely celebrates human love. His knowledge of nature, human nature, and governance reflected God-given wisdom in proverbs that are good advice today. David made plans to build a temple in Jerusalem for the Almighty God and devoted most of his wealth to that, but it was Solomon who worked with the world’s best craftsmen to build the temple. The descriptions of the cedar-lined walls carved with angels and flowers and covered with gold are still amazing (see 1 Kings 6–7).

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul knew contemporary poets and quoted them when trying to connect with people who read these poets (see Acts 17:28).
John is a wild man of the desert, dressed in camel skins and eating what he can find. He is such a powerful preacher with a relevant message that he attracts people from all walks of life—peasants, religious leaders, foreigners, and tax collectors to hear him in the desert. He asks them to repent, change their lives, and be baptized as a sign of that change (see Luke 3:1–14, Matthew 3:1–12). There is no record of John leaving the desert to mix with people.

On the other hand, Jesus looks like a normal person, eats normal food, and accepts invitations to eat with religious leaders as well as tax collectors and prostitutes. Like John, He does teach in the open air but He also goes to the synagogues and temple to teach and heal.

**JESUS BLENDS IN WITH SOCIETY AND CHANGES IT FROM WITHIN. JOHN STANDS OPPOSED TO SOCIETY AND CHANGES IT FROM WITHOUT. JOHN SEES THE DIFFERENCES—AND IT BOTHERS HIM. JESUS DOES NOT MEET JOHN’S EXPECTATIONS. HOW CAN SUCH DIFFERENT STYLES OF MINISTRY BOTH BE FROM GOD? AND THAT IS THE SOURCE OF HIS QUESTIONS.**

When John’s disciples relay this question to Jesus; He does not answer immediately. He just heals people. Actions always speak louder than words. His verbal reply then reminds John of Isaiah’s prophecy—that this is exactly what the Messiah is expected to do (see Isaiah 35:5 and 61:1, 2). Jesus knows the heart of John’s struggle and the difference in style of their ministry and concludes with a word of encouragement: “Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me” (Luke 7:23).

When John’s disciples leave, Jesus turns to the crowd and contrasts John the captive with Herod the captain using a series of rhetorical questions. Jesus confirms John as the prophet predicted by Malachi to come before the Messiah. Despite appearances, the captive has more power than the captain. Jesus then gives the best affirmation of John and his ministry that anyone could wish for: “I tell you, among those born of women there is no greater than John” (Luke 7:28a, NIV). John is affirmed as the forerunner to Jesus, even though their styles of ministry were completely different.

**DIFFERENT SONGS**

Jesus concludes His comparison between himself and John by quoting a common market song sung by children: “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge and you did not cry” (Luke 7:32). In the ancient marketplaces, there were no childcare centers. As the parents traded their fruit, vegetables, linen, spices, leather, timber furniture, and the like, the children were left to care for themselves in the alleys behind the stalls. When children play without adult supervision, they make their own rules and the natural leaders carry them through, but not everyone agrees with the rules or the leader promoting them and conflict usually ensues. This market-place ditty expressed this truth, suggesting that whatever music is offered, some don’t want to sing or participate. When the flute played bright music, no-one danced. When a funeral song was sung, everyone cried. Some children—some people—are just too hard to please.

John’s approach to ministry was more like the dirge. As a Nazarene, he did not eat bread or drink wine. He kept himself pure by not mixing with people and living in the wilderness. He was straight and strict—and people thought he was demon possessed.

On the other hand, Jesus’ approach to ministry was more like the song of the flute. He would dance if you had been paralyzed and could now walk; He would dance if you were blind and could now see. Jesus ate and drank with all manner of people with no thought to their social status. People thought He was too soft or lenient in lifestyle and He was called a glutton and a drunkard—hardly a description one would expect of the Messiah.

But Jesus clearly articulates His point: “Wisdom is proved right by all her children” (Luke 7:35).

We humans often evaluate ministry—including creative and artistic ministry—on the method and style, without thinking about the end result or the fruit.

**FIXING MINISTRY?**

From time to time, people come to me and share their thoughts on a recent visit to a church or ministry. I think they believe a conference will fix things with a wave of the hand. “You would not believe what that church was like,” they begin. “They only sang hymns, the worship leaders all wore ties, there were no women involved in leadership and the program was rigid. It was terrible. You ought to remind these people, that we live in God’s grace and there is freedom to try new things.” I listen carefully without making many comments. I then respond with the latest facts about the fruit of the ministry.

The church has baptized ten people this year and their time has increased by thirteen percent. The unspoken message is this: God seems to be blessing them, so why should I interfere?

Others come to me with other reports. “You would not have believed what it was like when I visited a particular ministry,” they begin. “The music was just like you hear on the radio and it was loud—just like a night club. The beat of the drums is still reverberating in my ears. People wore whatever clothes they wanted; there seemed to be no decorum at all. It was not what God would want.” Again, I listen carefully to what is said and respond in a similar fashion. I happen to know that 75 percent of young people gave their hearts to Jesus and are now in a weekly Bible study as a result of this ministry. The unspoken message: Do you really want me to close something down that God is using to bring people to Himself?

God uses different methods to reach different types of people. Jesus and John were both sent and...
used by God for His purpose, but their methods and style of ministry were completely different. God ordained the different ways they did ministry because He wanted people in His kingdom. If we are to fulfill the commission God gave to us to make disciples of all people, we need freedom to be able to reach all people where they are. Methods and style of ministry are not as important as whether a particular ministry is effectively reaching people for Jesus and His truth.

Both Jesus and John had a clear message and a listening audience. Both are needed for effective ministry. If we have a clear message but no-one listening, we have not connected and no-one’s life will be changed by Jesus. If we have many people listening, we have connected, but if there is no clear message we will not be effective and no-one’s life will be changed by Jesus.

The style or method does not matter. Jesus did not rebuff the criticism that He was a glutton, and friends with the outcasts of society. What mattered was that some of those people’s lives were changed because they met Him. He simply connected the commission He was given to people in such a way that they were changed by Jesus.

The arts in the Bible were usually used to glorify gods. Apart from Israel, most other nations modeled, carved, and drew their gods (see Isaiah 40:19-20). But the one true God is awesome and beyond human comprehension and cannot be depicted in earthly art (see Exodus 20:3-6, Isaiah 40:6-31). Yet those who worship and honoured the one true God created poetry, music, and beautiful buildings that were instruments to connect people to God. This art created the environment where the Almighty God dwelt. They revealed and portrayed a God who was mysteriously distant, great, mighty, and holy but also close, loving, and understanding.

Within a creative and accepting environment, the church can aim for excellence in the arts. I dream of more Adventist artists—poets, sculptors, photographers—who are world-renowned and invited to hold exhibitions in major galleries. I dream of Adventists producing a movie on the life of Daniel that breaks box-office records. I dream . . .

However, there are still some of us in the church who have Puritanical roots. Like John the Baptist, we do not want to be worldly in any way. We see how the creativity is used today for self-indulgence and so reject the arts rather than commit this sin.

There will be churches that still hang the fifty-year-old pictures of Jesus in the Sabbath school rooms and people will still sense the peace in Jesus’ face. There will still be churches that have a pianist who makes a mistake in every verse of a song, but those songs will be sung with sincerity and reverence.

I remember visiting a village church in the highlands of Papua New Guinea some Sabbath when I was a boy and hearing the people sing with heart, gusto, and volume. I commented to my dad that the song sounded like “Jesus loves me”—and he told me it was. It was off-key in many places and had no proper timing, but it reminded me that the Bible is correct in urging that whatever we do, we must do it with heart and do all to the glory of God (see 1 Corinthians 10:31).

In ministry, in worship, in creativity, in art, whether we are doing it is always more important than how. A creative leader encourages this faithful doing—makes space for it, defends it and urges it to be better, blesses it, prays for it, and celebrates what God is doing among us. •

Glenn Townend has been the president of the Western Australian Conference for ten years, and before this was a pastor in thirteen different churches around Australia. He is still learning to lead, listen to God, and allow freedom at the same time. Glenn is married to Pam and they have three adult children.

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TO THE GLORY OF GOD

The arts should flourish within Christian community and ministry because God is the Creator; Jesus is the head of the church, and the Holy Spirit is with us. If a leader can lead by example within the arts, they should do so. But if not, leaders must do their best to teach the principles of Scripture that allow freedom in the style of ministry, creating an open and accepting environment for creativity.

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Within a creative and accepting environment, the church can aim for excellence in the arts. I dream of more young people who can create video clips that become viral and share God’s message in a new and creative way.

I dream of more artists who will paint Jesus in modern-day scenes that we connect with, and churches and schools will hang them on their walls. I dream of more Adventists who sing in community choirs and play in community orchestras. I also dream of more local churches having a choir, a band, brass or string ensembles, quartets and trios—young and old with voice, guitar, violin, drums, and trumpets—given the opportunity to praise Jesus in song and music! I dream of Adventists winning talent shows. I dream of more Adventist artists—painters, sculptors, photographers—who are world-renowned and invited to hold exhibitions in major galleries. I dream of Adventists producing a movie on the life of Daniel that breaks box-office records. I dream . . .

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And I Don’t Even Like the Word. by Joanna Darby

Creativity. I don’t even like the word.

Well, actually that’s not true at all—I love the word. But I hate that the meaning of creativity has been distorted, and the mishapen perception of what creativity is (and isn’t) has often resulted in debate about the value of creativity. Nevertheless, I believe creativity is central to my faith and—despite what you may have heard or experienced—central to our Adventist identity.

To help us determine the significance of creativity we could simply ask, “Does it matter to God?” The answer is a resounding yes. He spoke matter to God?” The answer could simply ask, “Does it matter to God?” The answer is a resounding yes. He spoke

He spoke

He spoke

He spoke

He spoke about the value of creativity.

Time and again, we see our God acting in the most unconventional, unheard of, revolutionary, innovative and creative ways. Beyond Genesis, we see miracles, healings, transformation and resurrection. And we look forward to an earth made new where the creativity will continue for all eternity. Clearly, creativity matters to God.

The centrality of creativity to the character and nature of God therefore becomes very important to my faith, my understanding of His heart, and His purpose for this world.

And, if it matters to God, it matters to me. We most fully live in our purpose when we live as the creative beings He designed us to be. The concept of God partnering with humanity to achieve His will is astounding, unexpected, and a creative idea in itself. We see it recorded all throughout Scripture—Adam names the animals, Bezalel crafts all sorts of wonder for the tabernacle, David writes music, Solomon writes poetry, and still today God partners with us— with you—to achieve His will.

Every time you partner with God and He works through you, it is an explosion of possibility the world has never seen before. We are expected to nurture our God-given creativity, just as we pursue other godly qualities like humility and compassion. When we acknowledge the creative ways in which Jesus built relationships and interacted with the world, we follow His lead to do the same. In doing so, we not only nurture our own spiritual creativity but the creativity of those around us. It’s another way of loving our neighbour and helping our brothers and sisters live the life God intended.

Most importantly, each of us has the opportunity to personally experience God’s most creative work—grace. He makes beauty out of ruin, light where there was darkness, and life where there was death. Daily, He makes all things new. Clearly, creativity matters to you.

When we understand that we are all creative and our creativity is important to us and to God, the possibilities for creative input and involvement are endless—and include everyone. When we rightfully value creativity, our churches can become centres for creativity and creative influence in our communities.

This is why I want to encourage churches and groups to organize creative arts festivals. Based on this understanding of the significance of creativity and the arts in our churches, these event can explore, encourage, and celebrate faithful creativity with a particular focus on the arts. Creative arts festivals can also help create a supportive community of creative artists in which creative arts are awarded, recognised, encouraged, celebrated, and enjoyed. The programs can include competitions, workshops, performances, showcases, exhibitions, worship, and many conversations and interactions.

Creativity is a way of living and believing, not just something we do. And it is certainly not something just for the few. Creativity allows us to invent and re-invent, asking questions and looking at things differently. Creativity allows us to serve in new and exciting ways, offering an alternative to the themes of this world.

You might not have considered creativity as significant to your faith or to who you are and your purpose on this earth, but it’s worth reconsidering. A fuller understanding of the significance and value of creativity will almost certainly result in a richer experience of God and a greater appreciation of your place in this world.

Joanna Darby is co-editor of a new book on creativity called Manifest: Our Call to Faithful Creativity (coming soon), and a co-convenor of Manifest Creative Arts Festival held in Avondale, Australia (Fall 2012). She is a mother, artist, teacher and preacher from Newcastle, New South Wales. Like “facebook.com/jodarbyministry” and “Joanna Darby (artist)” on Facebook.
Tip-toeing down the stairs in an effort not to wake the rest of the house, Ifurtively crept toward my goal. The massive “ON” switch made a deafening “CLICK,” followed closely by a loud humming as our huge black-and-white TV began its laborious warm up. I literally trembled with anticipation as the congealed mass on the monochrome screen gradually resolved itself into a test pattern. For a kid growing up in the 1960s, school holidays were the best time of year, especially since at least two of the four available TV stations started broadcasting an hour earlier than normal.

Finally, the awaited moment came—“10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 . . . THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO!” As the mighty strains of the Thunderbirds anthem shook the house, I was now oblivious to the noise, being swept away into a captivating world of adventure, resourcefulness, heroism, and wondrous machines seemingly designed for every contingency under the sun.

For those of you unfamiliar with the world of Thunderbirds, the show uses a vast array of beautifully constructed models, miniature sets, and puppet characters to tell the story of International Rescue, a service dedicated to saving human lives. Spawned in the fertile mind of creative genius Gerry Anderson, the scenes are complex and elaborate. You don't just board your rescue craft, you stand with your back to a life-sized panel with your picture on it. The panel revolves, then tilts, shooting you headfirst down a chute where your slide is arrested, you again rotate, the panel reshapes into a chair while an articulated arm carries you to your rocket and places you in the cockpit. Fantastic stuff—and the real adventure hasn't even begun yet . . .

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The the next fifty minutes would inevitably pass by all too quickly. As the final scenes were replaced by a dying white blip on the screen and the call to breakfast would come—dragging me from my reverence—my mind would be filled with an unquenchable creative spark. The rest of the day would be spent with cardboard and sticky-tape, texta colours and glue, re-creating the scenarios that had been played out before my receptive eyes and absorbed by my fertile mind. The scenes I re-created were just as elaborate, the models just as detailed, no part of the house was spared—stairsway, landings, every square inch was covered with my own carefully constructed miniatures. The panels rotated, the chutes shot, the turntables turned, even the palm trees learned over at the appropriate time (if you’ve watched the show, you’ll know what I’m talking about), as all the while I hummed along to the theme running around in my head.

Then someone gave me Lego! It’s no exaggeration to say my life changed that day. Through those little coloured blocks I was swept into a love affair with the three dimensions that has never entirely left me. The cardboard and sticky-tape were replaced with a more sophisticated set of building materials, but the underlying principle remained: whatever it is, you can make it. If you can picture it in your mind’s eye, you can create it! In many ways, this has been my mantra throughout life and, now, long into my ministry.

The GOD of CREATION

Not long after this, I experienced another one of those life-changing “tight-bulb” moments that many of us experience from time to time. The difference here was that I was still a child, constructing some bizarre new Lego creation, and the thought was philosophically profound, at least more than normally profound given my early years. The thought was this: “The world only works because things can’t go through other things!”

You might chuckle at this naiveté of this and think “Obviously!” But to me as a five year old, this was a watershed moment. Holding the two Lego pieces in hand and putting them together and apart again, considering gravity and the fact that we don’t sink through the earth but stand upon it, that our clothes hang from our shoulder rather than passing through our bodies, and our stomachs hold in our hurriedly eaten breakfast, all this was a new way of looking at the world.

But where did the thought come from? How did a five year old come to this conclusion by himself? And how does he know how to fold the paper like this, cut it like that and place the sticky-tape here and arrange the blocks in that fashion according to those colours in that scale to create the replica of the things he has seen only once on a flickering screen a few moments before? Or perhaps not at all—things he has conceived all by himself! And where did the creative spark come from that inspired the scriptwriter, director, artist, or author of whatever TV show, painting, poem, photograph, play, or story it was the child had just seen or heard or read?

I have no doubt in my mind. With the same clarity and certainty that allowed me to “know” and “understand” certain physical laws operate, I also “know” and “understand” that the creative impulse originates with the Creator God. This too has become my mantra: “I am creative because He is creative and I am created in His image.” In my life, this belief goes yet a step further as I consider how deep the creative urge runs in my life: “Because He creates, I too MUST create!” When I consider this, I become aware of another profundity: “I am never truly happy unless I am creating something!”
The Image of God

When I make a statement like this, I am often greeted with responses like “Well, that’s OK for you, you’re a creative person!” The first thing to hear—good for the ego, flattering even, as if it sets me apart somehow from lesser mortals. But it isn’t true. If I read Genesis 1 correctly, I discover that when God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into Adam—and later Eve—His own breath, He imbued not just a special few but all of humanity with qualities and characteristics that are His alone as part of the “image” we reflect. Male and female, we were created in His image, gifted with the ability to live, reproduce, think, choose, and create. As Paul put it, we have the “mind of Christ” (see 1 Corinthians 2:16; Ephesians 2:5), and that creative spark within is part of that special gift.

It is little wonder that Satan hates humankind with such a passion. Himself a product of uncontrolled blind ambition, he arrived on planet earth with filled with hate for the Son of God and determined, not surprisingly, to make as his special points of attack the very things God created and gifted to humanity in that sinless world. Various descriptions are given: as a dragon or serpent, and as a deceiver, persecutor, killer, murderer, and liar; it would appear he possesses no creative ability of his own.

Where God creates, Satan can only destroy or “de-create.” God creates life; Satan works to end it. God creates His image; Satan seeks to disfigure that image. God gives us marriage and the family unit; Satan seeks to ruin the divine pattern through lust, adultery, violence, abuse, addiction, and infidelity of every type. God gives us a wonderful world to live in; Satan persuades us to destroy it through greed and ambition. God gives us the Sabbath as the memorial of His creative work; Satan sets up alternate forms of worship or persuades the followers of Christ to defile the Sabbath in any way possible. God imbues us with creativity; Satan has us use that creativity to invent ever more elaborate ways to degrade, wound, and destroy ourselves and others. Jesus offers us life; Satan delivers death.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

So what does this have to do with ministry? Everything! Simply stated, the God who spoke the world into existence (see John 1:1-5; Genesis 1:1) and created us in His image is the same God who calls to ministry (see Matthew 28). As collaborators with Satan in the fall, we are all now invited to work with Christ to share the good news of redemption to this damaged world. Just as all we have is the fall short of God’s glory (see Romans 3:23), so to all is offered the opportunity to be a part of the royal priesthood (see 1 Peter 2:9), personally commissioned by Jesus to go into the world to make disciples (see Matthew 28:18-20). Paul calls us to join with him in the “ministry of reconciliation,” a term that implies a bringing back together or a restoration of the way things once were. To put it another way, we are invited to use our creative impulses to counter the destructive impulsion of Satan through the power of the Creator God.

I find it curious that many seem to feel they need permission to be creative in ministry. I would suggest that creativity in ministry is an expectation, even a requirement. Jesus’ delivery of the parable of the talents (see Matthew 25:14-30) and its positioning immediately before the sheep and goats judgment scene (verses 31-46) seems to declare His intention that we should use all the gifts at our disposal in the faithful delivery of our mission to the world—and more so given how close we are to the end of the story. It is a divine imperative that we keep in step with the Spirit (see Galatians 5:6) in every part of our lives, including the creative impulse so unique to God and consequentially to us. To deny use of this faculty, especially in ministry, would be to deny God’s special gift to us above all other creation.

Creative Ministry

For reasons only to be marvelled at, the Creator himself has set in place to put us to work in his kingdom. He gifted us for the task, provided us with a “Comforter” to be our guide along the way, and provided us with a blueprint of how it all looked in the beginning. A study of God’s creative process reveals four powerful and overarching creative ministry principles: illumination, empowerment, excellence, and diversity.

Let There Be Light!

A quick read of Genesis 1:1-3 and John 1:1-3 reveals a clear ministry principle—that light drives out darkness, light is good, and that the true creative process that produces an environment illuminated by the light of the Word. Every creative ministry effort must be subjected to scrutiny under the clarifying light of the Creator’s Word, the only reliable “lamp to guide our feet” (Psalms 119:105). We ignore it to our peril. The tests of Scripture should be applied to all our efforts. We must never set aside the counsel of the Word for the sake of “creative license.” We should “fix your thoughts on that which is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise” (Philippians 4:8).

Your Turn Now!

Once He had a well-illuminated workspace, God gave us the opportunity to creating the perfect environment to sustain, inspire, and nurture His later creations, us included. He provided everything necessary for us to thrive and grow, to learn from it, to walk and talk with him. Then He provided a weekly memorial for us to be reminded of His creative energy in providing this place for us. Interestingly, He then He set us loose, inviting us to name, create, care, nurture, care for and husband this place. In other words, He provided the raw materials and the creative spark. Then He stepped back to see what we would do with it all.

And It Was Very Good!

After each major step in the creative process, God stood back, had a good look at what He had done, and declared it “good.” At the end of the entire process, Genesis 1:31 tells us that God looked over all He had made, and it was “very good.” There was only one time when God noticed a flaw in His creation, something that was “not good” (Gen 2:18), and He immediately set about rectifying the problem. The result was the creation of Eve. As a creative ministry principle, this is an instructive precedent. God did it and the result was excellence. We would do well to follow His example, striving for excellence in every aspect of our ministry. Let’s not get so caught up and single minded about our creations that we are not prepared to see flaws wherever flaws exist. Creative people have been known to fall into this trap.

Same But Different!

One of the things I love most about Legos is that I can use the same basic pieces to create millions of different things. I can make a car or a rocket or a house or a dinosaur from the same components and I can do it in a thousand different ways. Someone builds a hundred different houses. Some would argue that we only need one kind of house—a functional one that provides warmth and shelter and a place to raise the kids. In the same way, we could argue that we only need one kind of dog to be our friend, one type of cat to ignore us, one type of bird to fill the skies, one type of fish to inhabit the oceans, and...
The Theos of the Trade

I said earlier that I like to make things. In fact, for a number of years I made a living from making false teeth. Experience has now taught me that the principle of Scripture is diversity—in creation, in giftedness, in ministry, in creativity.

God created us to experience true joy in our lives, delighting both in His presence and in the wonderful world He had created for us. Jesus declared that He had come to restore all things. “The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life” (John 10:10). It is no exaggeration to say that I thank Him daily that He gives me this opportunity and—even more than this—that He considers it the highest praise when I use His unique gifts to me, joining with Him in sharing the good news.

1. Illuminate your work area—allow every idea, plan, and dream to be measured against the Word.
2. Empower others without micromanaging the results. Gather the resources—both people and things. Bring them together, inspire them, spark the flow of ideas, nurture them along the way, but let them have a go. This is God’s way.
3. Recognise that there are many different ways of approaching a problem or achieving an outcome. There can be great strength in diversity.
4. Evaluate every step of the way. Strive for excellence in all things.

The rationale for this initiative was based on the need within the Seventh-day Adventist Church to:
1. Maximize the interest and passion of the Seventh-day Adventist youth for mission and to graduate from short-term to long-term mission.
2. Provide greater opportunities for our youth to directly engage in leadership, decision-making, and in the proclamation of the Everlasting Gospel.
3. Integrate youth projects within the framework of the church’s wider initiatives.
4. Redirect the best energies of the church away from peripheral issues onto the real reason for its existence: Mission.
5. Respond appropriately to the growing disengagement of alarming numbers of young adults from the life and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In order to address these needs, every world Division, the Greater Middle East Union, and Israel was invited to choose a representative to form part of the first pilot volunteer task force in New York City during 2013. Their essential tasks will comprise leadership in community service, evangelism, and communication. When the volunteers return to their respective divisions, their inspiration and insight will be widely and strategically utilized to motivate all other entities of the church to create OYIM opportunities for their young people.

Please pray for this exciting and important initiative. Together, we can change the world!
“The art of our lives is primarily God’s work, made possible by our collaboration with Him.”

But there is also a deeper truth, perhaps not intended by some of the artists but hinted at in some of the other self-representations I viewed that afternoon, that the artist’s life is an important work of creativity in its own right. And this is even more true in the faithful life of the other self-representations of the artists but hinted at in some.

LIVING CREATIVITY

One of the recurring tasks of this collection of perspectives has been to reflect on the meaning of creativity. But the call to faithful creativity gives this term the widest possible meaning: creativity is primarily a way of living life, it is never only on the page, canvas, musical instrument or stage of whatever kind. It is first about the home, the community, the workplace, the school, the office, the church, and the street. Wherever we have a choice as to how we live, respond, and react, we can choose creativity or not.

Our most important acts of creativity might never be awarded, framed, published, performed, sold, or even recognised. Large or small, they make a difference in the lives of those with whom we have influence. At times, this may call for artistic creativity within our skills and abilities but, perhaps more often, it might be about simply showing up and doing our part—but doing it well, doing it thoughtfully, doing it creatively.

Jesus was quoting from Deuteronomy when he explained the greatest commandment as loving God (see Mark 12:30), so this command was first given in the context of the larger laws that encompassed all of life, worship, annual festivals, care for health, and all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength (see Mark 12:30).

TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Such creative living will be focused on the most important values, including truth and beauty. But our first instinct might suggest that beauty does not belong among the cardinal values of faithfulness, demonstrating our need for a larger and deeper understanding of beauty. True beauty is not the province of salons, fashion, or gossip magazines—the “beauty” industry—rather it is the appreciation, sharing, and creation of what is true, good, and pleasing in so many ways.

In the beginning, God created a world that He described as “very good” (see Genesis 1:31), expressing a contented, justified, and healthy pride in not just the function but also the beauty of all He had created. This beauty is a recurring cause for praising God and something God points to in responding to questions about the true nature of life in our world (see Job 38:40). In God’s explanations, beauty is an important factor in a proper understanding of His creation and our lives.

We can be tempted to view faithful living as a succession of grim and dull tasks, but that is not the world God created or the way of living Jesus taught: “He has surrounded you with beauty to teach you that you are not placed on earth merely to delve for self, to dig and build, to toil and spin, but to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love” (Ellen White, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing). Again, this is a call to faithful and beautiful creativity.

RESISTING DESPAIR

However, we cannot and should not try to deny that we live in a lost and despairing world. “So much around us is broken. So many people are hurt. Violence and power grab the headlines. The problems and tragedies seem overwhelming. We can succumb to compassion fatigue and the paralysis of repeated pain. We are tempted to despair.

Paul responds: “Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good” (Romans 12:21, NLT). This is a call to faithful creativity and imagination. Art in all its forms can confront the brokenness and despair around us and within us, as well as creating beauty as an act of profound and hopeful resistance and hope in the face of seeming hopelessness. We reject the voices that tell us that what we see and feel are all that is and all that can be. Instead, we offer alternative and hopeful acts of imagination that begin to transform the world around us today, as well as pointing to our ultimate hopes about what our world will be and how our Creator will re-create.

And, as we have seen, this is not only about art but about the faithful art of living well. We resist despair in our choices, actions, engagement, love, and creativity, always seeking to overcome evil by doing good, by creating beauty, by practicing hope.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS

One of the romanticised images of art and creativity is that of the lonely artist working feverishly in a cluttered studio or remote location, but the art of the creative faithful is best lived in collaboration. The tasks of creativity are difficult, requiring our best efforts and a healthy balance of ego and empathy. It is more difficult still when practiced as resistance against evil and despair.

The Christian’s life is a thing of truth and beauty—our great call to creativity—needs a community of collaboration and support. In the contest of the hope we have, the writer of Hebrews urges, “Let us think nothing to motivate one another to acts of love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24, NLT). We are not expected to do this on our
The art of our lives is primarily God’s work, made possible by our collaboration with Him. Our best lives, our best creativity, are based on the grace, hope, and love He offers us. The most profound truth and beauty we can imagine are found in His acts of creativity and re-creativity. Our invitation—and our most significant creative act—is to choose collaboration with the kingdom-building creativity of God in our lives and in our world.

Remarkably, our creativity is one of the ways He is at work in our world. Our most authentic and faithful creativity—in all its forms: life, relationships, good works, art, imagination, and so much more—springs from our Creator, as do we ourselves as His masterpieces of creativity. And when we acknowledge this inspiration and this source, the self-portraits our lives create become acts of art instead of acts of worship.

Collaboration with Our Creator

But even this creative role, together with all the other creative calls on our lives, is built on a deeper and greater collaboration with the Creator Himself. The call to live our lives as our greatest work of art is daunting—until we recognize that even this work is one collaboration with the Great Artist: “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago” (Ephesians 2:10, NLT).
FOCUS: Helping young people see how the visual arts can be encompassed in witnessing

Central Bible Truth: Jesus calls us to reach out to our community with His Word and truth, using the talents He has given to us.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:15

Program Target: Creativity in worship and witness are called for in the days we live.

Cast: Karen, a museum tour guide, and several people who are taking the tour with the host. If your group is large enough, include a few with non-speaking roles.

Props: Most of the scene will be portrayed by the actor’s words and imaginations. You could put up a cord between two poles as if it were keeping people back from getting too close to the work of art.

Setting: Museum setting. Since it would be very hard to construct this setting, most of it will have to be brought out by the actors in their describing what they see.

(Karen and the group enter the stage as if they had just brought in the art. They stop at the first piece of art. They must have been looking at a work of art. They stop and pretend to be hearing it.)

Karen: (Frowns) It’s just a picture of a baby. He’s crying and his fists are all balled up. He doesn’t look very happy.

Karen: Jordan, what do you see?

Jordan: Kareem is right. It’s a baby. He isn’t happy. But why? That’s the real question, isn’t it?

Chelseia: I don’t think he is happy because it looks like he is laying on straw. That must not feel very good. It’s probably pricking him.

Karen: Why would a baby be laying in a straw bed?

Marcia: (Pretending to look intently into the picture.)

It’s not just straw. He’s laying in some kind of... that’s a wooden... oh, I get it, that’s not just any baby is it?

Karen: Look at the name plate and read it to us, would you please Marcia?

Marcia: It says, Gift of God. It’s Jesus, isn’t it? I get it now.

Karen: What looks ordinary can sometimes be quite fooling. Yes, it’s a depiction of Jesus as a baby. Now what do you think of it?

Kareem: He still looks angry. His fists are still balled up.

Karen: Do you think He understood that He was God’s Son when He came from the womb and was laid in the straw, Kareem?

Kareem: No, I suppose not. He was... vulnerable.

Chelseia: He was just a baby. He was tired and hungry and helpless, just like us, wasn’t he?

Jordan: He was a baby. A real baby. I never thought of it that way. He was helpless, yet He was the Son of God. That puts it in a whole new light.

Karen: Does it? Or is it just a picture? (Karen starts to move off to the next portrait, but the group stays and keeps examining the picture, pointing quietly to different details and continuing to talk among themselves. She stops and watches them and gets a big smile on her face.)

The End

Discussion Questions

1. Can using visual art be a source of witnessing? How?
2. Can an audience see the faith of an artist in their work, without using words?
3. How can we learn new things from how an artist portrays a subject?
4. Why was Karen smiling as she was watching the group at the end?
**PSALM 150: WORSHIP**

**FOCUS:** Using the creative arts in ministry to reach young people.

**Central Bible Truth:** All that we do should be done with excellence. That includes our worship of God.

**Scripture:** Psalm 150:1-6

**Program Target:** To help young people see that they can use creativity in their worship.

**Cast:** Rachel, Seth, Beth, Nathan: members of the youth group in the age that you are presenting to. Mr. Barkley, the youth pastor who leads the group discussion.

**Props:** Chairs for each member of the cast and a few others if you have a large group. (See note in Setting.) Bible for each person on stage.

**Setting:** Youth classroom. Chairs are arranged in an open circle (a U-shape with the opening toward the audience.) The five named characters are seated as listed in the skit. (There can be some members on stage who don’t have a speaking part other than to nod in agreement or disagreement, if you have a very large group.)

(The skit opens with the members of the group seated as described above.)

**Mr. Barkley:** O.K. Let’s open our Bibles to Psalm 150. Each person can read. (Allow time for everyone to open to the right page.) Rachel, why don’t you start for us, then Seth, and so on.

Rachel: Praise the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens.

Nathan: Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

Mr. Barkley: (Looking around at the class, he asks,) What does that tell you about how God loves for us to worship Him?

Seth: Sounds like He isn’t afraid of a little noise. (The others laugh.)

**Mr. Barkley:** Sound like it, doesn’t it Seth?

Rachel: Is that how He always wants us to worship Him?

Nathan: Doesn’t Psalm 46:10 say something about, “...be still and know that I am God?” Could there be different ways that we can and should worship?

Beth: So, are you saying that we can use different talents to worship with, including different methods?

Mr. Barkley: (He looks around at the class, waiting for someone to jump in, then says) Class, what do you think? Are there many forms of worship that are acceptable to God?

Seth: Well, Beth read about a lot of instruments that we don’t use as much in worship. Why do you think that is?

Rachel: Yeah, the verses even mentioned timbrel and dancing. Is that like a tambourine? Man, can you imagine a tambourine and dancing in worship today?

Seth: We’d have to have paramedics standing by. (He laughs and the others join him.) I know David danced before the Lord, but would that ever be appropriate for today?

Mr. Barkley: Well, why don’t we open our Bibles and hearts and see what we can find out. Let’s begin our study with prayer. We always want to do that, right? (The group nods and bows their heads.)

**Discussion Questions**

1. What did the group do at the end of the skit that is important when studying God’s Word? Why is it important to always begin any study with prayer?

2. What does Psalm 150 tell us about God’s character? (Answer: That He wants our worship.) Why is worship such an important part of our walk with God?

3. Does the Psalm explain what some of the worship at the time of David was like?

4. Why don’t we worship with that same exuberance today?

5. Can we add some elements of creative worship to make our time with God have more meaning and experience a deeper relationship with Him?

**THE END**

**BREAKING NEWS Probation Closed!**

**FOCUS:** A short play about hope in Jesus

**Setting:** If you have multiple live cameras running on the day and showing on the screen, have one pointing at the news desk and another at each ‘location’ that is crossed to — so the big screen shows the news program as if on TV. Have the actors speak into the cameras also.

Two are seated at a news desk (or one, if you haven’t the actors) and the other actors appear elsewhere for their live crosses, then leave.

(Some ‘newsy’ intro music is played as the lively news readers begin to talk.)

**Desk 1:** Welcome to Universe Network News. (UNN)

**Desk 2:** Coming up in today’s bulletin: Andromeda galaxy begins roll out of a galaxy wide broadband network.

**Desk 1:** Horse-head nebular government to fund construction of rest of horses body

**Desk 2:** and Pleiades wins the rights to host the 14 billionth universe Olympics. (music stopped by now)

**Desk 1:** But first up, some breaking news: probation has just closed on the troubled planet Earth of the Milky Way galaxy. We now cross to Alex, who is on the scene.

Alex, what’s the mood down there?

(Alex is standing with two earlings – Chris and Althea — on either side.)

*(Scene ends as Alex is heard speaking on the news program)*
Alex: (wait two seconds and nod as if listening - pretending there is a delay in the live cast) Yes, I'm here on Earth where the news has been received that probation has indeed just closed. This means God has now ended Earth's decision making time of whether to follow Him or not, and it's now time for Jesus to return. Now this news has been received with mixed reactions. Here I have a long time Christian with me, Chris, what does this mean for you, and why the excitement!

Chris (excited): Well, it means Jesus is returning sooner than we expected. We're all very excited to be able to finally meet Him and be taken home We're all very excited to be able to...

Gabe: So this is the much awaited Second Coming?

Jesus: That's it. And no more eagerly awaited than by me.

Gabe: Any clues as to what we'll be seeing in the Second Coming?

Jesus: I can't say too much, just be prepared for the brightest, most colorful, fragrant and surround sound experience ever performed in the history of the universe. Not much really. (sarcasically)

Gabe: Looking forward to it.

Jesus: Thanks, Gabe. (Starts to quickly walk off) Love your work!

Gabe: Looks like this will be the show of all shows. I'm off to get my seat. Back to you in the studio.

Desk 2: Thanks, Gabe. That's exciting news for Heaven and Earth alike. Stay tuned for coverage of the Second Coming, live as it happens.

Desk 1: Sorry, we've just managed to get Jesus before He leaves home. Let's cross to Gabe. Gabe, what's happening in Heaven?

Gabe: Hi guys, I'm here with Jesus who is perhaps more excited than Althea. While Chris clearly has hope for a future, on the contrary, there is no hope for Althea whatsoever.

Althea: I'm not worried at all. This is just another stunt by the guy at the end of Earth's decision making time. But even if Chris was right this is just another stunt by the guy at the end of Earth's decision making time—do either of them have any hope in being united with Jesus for an eternity?

Theo: (a sedate brainiac that does not get excited) In Chris' case, yes. Having put his faith in Jesus has given him a clean slate, even though he has a worse behavioral past than Althea. While Chris clearly has hope for a future, on the contrary, there is no hope for Althea whatsoever.

Desk 1: Sorry, we'll have to cut you off there, Theo. We've just managed to get Jesus before he leaves home.

Jesus: Well, there you have it, split screen news.

Empty 1: Me neither. Maybe we can go to the footy on Saturday.

Empty 2: (sarcastically) Much really.

Empty 3: I'll chat later.

Jesus: (relieved) Right, see you in the studio.

Empty 2: [Trumpet sounds.] Juice proudly pulls out his full bottle of Jesus in your life. He's probably looking down on me now if the Christians are right, eh.

Empty 3: Oh no.

Empty 3: Oh well, he's happy now. He's probably looking down on me now if the Christians are right, eh.

Juice: Right, umm, I'm not sure that...

Empty 3: Well, gotta run.

Jesus: [relieved] Right, see you later.

Empty 3: (Trumpet sounds.) Juice proudly pulls out his full bottle of Jesus in your life.

Empty 1: (start short music play out)

THE END
THE COMPLETE DISCIPLE

Cast - Jesus, Eager Disciple 1, Scholarly Disciple 2

Scene - Jesus sits on a chair (or stage rise) facing audience. Disciples sit on floor facing Jesus, backs to audience.

Jesus: I am the vine…

[Disciple 1 jumps up and walks to the audience and begins to preach]

[Disciple 1 slowly returns and sits down during the following dialogue]

Jesus: …now go and share this knowledge.

Disciple 2: No, Master, just tell me more. I must know more.

[Jesus stands still as they go, looking out proudly]

Both Disciples: “Learn the ways of Jesus. Love Him as He loves you. Share this message to your family and friends.” (Repeat until you’ve left the room.)

THE END
What Is Creativity?
Creativity is essentially inventive problem solving. Most often it is used to combat two opposite problems:
1. Boredom – the need to make a familiar situation unfamiliar and interesting
2. Confusion – the need to make an unfamiliar situation familiar and easy

You Try: Which problem category do the following challenges fall into?

a. You’d planned to cook a meal for a family arriving soon and discover that some of the ingredients you thought you had are missing. You have no time to go and buy more.
b. You’re in an airport, luggage is checked in, your flight is delayed for five hours and you have little money at your disposal. You have young children in your care.
c. You need to make an ad to convince more than 50 percent of your church’s members to attend a business meeting.
d. You want to create a drama that communicates God’s love to people who have never grasped the concept before.

How to find Creativity

Step 1: Define
The best place to begin in solving a challenge with creativity is to be clear about two things:
1. What the current situation or challenge is
2. What the desired outcome or solution is

As well as speeding up your journey to a solution, knowing where you are and where you need to end up will give you a more focused solution. Unfocused creativity can take you off track and you could end up using a “solution” that doesn’t actually solve the problem. So before you get too creative, be clear on where you are now and where you want to be.

You Try: With the four earlier examples, what search engine keywords could you use to find existing solutions to the challenges?

Step 2: Create
There are four main methods that help deliver a creative solution, which we’ll look at now.

A. DETECTIVE METHOD
(Great for: games, activities, and plays)
For some, this will be the first port of call, especially when there’s a tight deadline to meet. Others will use this as their last resort when attempts to come up with their own creative solutions fail. The mantra for the detective method of creativity is: “Go online or get living examples” (or G.O.O.G.L.E.).
Whether to save time or to help when you’re stumped, seeing what already exists will often create a solution for you. Using the internet or asking friends or experts for their creative solutions for the challenge ahead of you can really give you a kick start, if not provide a complete solution. Sometimes the foundation of an existing solution can be adapted to better suit your specific needs.

Example:
Make an ad to convince church members to attend a business meeting.
1. List the attributes we have to work with.
2. Explore how each listed attribute could be substituted with a variation.
3. Experiment with different combinations of substituted attributes and see what you end up with.

This is a somewhat methodical way to go about being creative. That might sound oxymoron, but these three steps are what’s happening in the mind of many of the most creative people—usually at amazingly fast speeds.

B. STOCKTAKE METHOD
(Great for: unexpected challenges, activities with few resources)
The stocktake method consists of three basic steps:
1. List how many different attributes exist in the current situation.
2. Explore how each listed attribute could be substituted with a variation.
3. Experiment with different combinations of substituted attributes and see what you end up with.

You Try: Define the specific problem elements of the four earlier examples and also the specific outcomes you hope to achieve for each.
2. **Explore** the variations of each of the listed attributes.
   - The ad format: A bulletin paragraph, a printed bulletin insert, posters, a promotional video clip, an email out, up-the-front announcements, an acted drama, a song, a sermon, personal phone calls, text messaging, Facebook posts, PowerPoint slides.
   - The tone: stern, friendly, mischievous?
   - The church members who need an incentive: food, giveaways, concert, games, trivia, craft, child minding, linked to some other activity or event?
   - The meeting agenda: boring, critical, entertaining?
   - Time: weeknight, Sabbath afternoon/evening, Sunday morning/afternoon/night?
   - Location: Church hall, parking lot, parkland, restaurant, forest, beach?

3. **Experiment** with the variations we came up with for the attributes of our challenge.
   - It could be: a drama that promotes a fun afternoon in the forest, with trivia games intermingled with the business meeting.
   - It could be: personal phone calls regarding the critical nature of the upcoming meeting and free pizza to all those who attend.
   - It could be . . . so many other variations! (Although clearly not all will be practical solutions.)

   **You try:** Use the stocktake method to find a solution to the following challenge:
   Being stuck at the airport with some children you need to entertain.
   1. List what’s available to work with. Let’s start with our personal inventory: A pen, box of mints, and wallet/purse (and its contents).
   2. Explore what can be done with these items individually.
      - Pen: Write, draw, colour, spin, drop, catch, balance, pull apart.
      - Box of Mints: Put mints into your mouth.
      - Wallet/purse:

3. **Experiment** with what activities you can do with individual items on their own and then by combining with another item. Come up with ten activities and then decide on your three best activities to solve the problem by using the ‘stock’ of items you have.
   a. ________________________________
   b. ________________________________
   c. ________________________________
   d. ________________________________
   e. ________________________________

   NOTE: That was just our personal inventory explored. We could also look at the attributes of the building around us, our clothing, the signs, the people, or make a small purchase to add to our inventory.

C. **BRAINSTORM METHOD**
   (Great for: finding ‘far out’ ideas, titles, and advertising)

   If the above method seems a little too regimented, or you just can’t put your figure on a unique enough solution, it might be time to set your brain’s rational governor to ‘off’ and let your thoughts roam unrestricted for a moment.

   Brainstorming is the process of listing idea after idea as they come to mind, no matter how random they might be. It can be done individually, but a group brainstorm will usually get more ideas flowing and take you to concepts you’d struggle to ever invent yourself.

   But despite the whole point of the process being “free thinking,” here’s some structure to guide the freedom into something useful:
   1. Define the issue and desired outcome first.
   2. List the known or obvious solutions, even if they don’t completely solve the challenge or problem.
   3. Start listing “crazy” variations to these solutions.
   4. Continue on with any ideas or concepts that come to mind, without stopping to discuss good or discount bad ideas.
   5. When all the ideas come to an end, spend a minute or two exploring each idea:
      a. Is it worth exploring further or ignoring?
      b. Are there any elements to the idea that mean it won’t work? If so, explore what would be needed to make it work with that inhibitive element or how it could be replaced.
      c. Are there any elements to the idea that mean it won’t work? If so, explore what would be needed to make it work with that inhibitive element or how it could be replaced.

   Sometimes a great idea or two will become obvious during a brainstorming session; sometimes it will still be hard work, with a solution possibly coming to someone in the group days later.

   **Example:**
   Here’s a real brainstorm’s result when trying to find an interesting way to begin a workshop about creativity (perhaps you’re in the middle of it now). The list developed as follows:
   - Famous quote twisted, story, example, joke, song, puzzle, different language, web address, GPS directions, ten commandments, analogy, metaphor, wrong topic, creativity for dummies, creativity 101, light bulb, apple fall on head, flash back, quiz, cartoon, school, blackboard, detention, driving test, personal trainer, gym membership, poem, point form, fanfare, infographic.

   There are several good ideas and the rest probably not. But essentially it helped me choose an opening to this workshop.

   And how many creatives does it take to change a light bulb?

   **Answer:** Who says it has to be a light bulb? (And there’s a nod to the stocktake method.)

   **You try:** Go through the brainstorming steps listed to come up with an enticing title for a youth trivia night.

   **D. INSPIRATION METHOD**
   (Great for: long, unsolved challenges)

   Finding a creative solution is not always easy. As well as trying the other methods, sometimes creativity just appears in random moments.
For some, creativity comes in a quiet or uninterrupted place like in the shower, in bed at night, watching the ocean or clouds, or driving a car. Other times, you might find inspiration as you see or hear different things or interact with different people. And sometimes inspiration comes from experiencing a movie, song, artwork, or simply seeing someone else’s solution to a similar problem.

Given its fickleness, this is a difficult method to use if you need quick results (or as an activity to try in a workshop). But being still and letting inspiration strike is another important method for finding creative solutions to long term challenges.

**Share:** Where are you when you come up with your best/craziest ideas?

**Step 3: Evaluate**

Once you have your creative solution, evaluate it with your initial brief to see if it is an acceptable, workable or worthwhile solution. It’s also a good exercise to evaluate how well it worked after the solution has been implemented. If it is not working as you envisioned, maybe it’s not too late to implement some of the variations you thought up along the way.

*You try:* the solutions you came up with for the children at the airport, get those items and try out the activity on some kids – evaluate what activity they liked the best. See if they have any ideas.

**Finally, the first thing**

All said and done, the ultimate source of inspiration for creativity comes from God. The ultimate thing you can do before you even attempt to be creative is pray for inspiration, then delve into one or more of the methods suggested. God has more creativity than we can handle.

When inspiration does strike and it’s an outstanding success, even if you didn’t pray, give Him the glory. Without God and the abilities He’s given us, we wouldn’t have any creativity!

**Ponder:** God was creative with His design of earth, but how much more creativity has He used in Heaven and the other worlds?

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CREATIVE ARTS as MINISTRY

HOW DO WE BEGIN TO RESTORE THE PLACE OF THE GOD-GIVEN ARTS IN WORSHIP?

Exercise #1
- Materials needed: Bibles, a white board and markers or other means of recording.
- Time: 5 minutes

Read aloud together Exodus 31:1-11. Have the group name all the kinds of artistic work represented by the text. Have a scribe record the list on the white board and markers or other means of recording. Read Exodus 35:25-35. Materials needed: There are two ways to do this. The leader may provide at God's command. The leader may provide at God's command. The leader may provide at God's command.

Introduction
- Time: 5 minutes

In Genesis 1, the Bible tells us that human beings were created “in the image of God.” It is doubtful whether humanity fully understands (or will, on this planet) all that this means, but one thing it certainly means is that we were created to be creative, like God. One of the clearest demonstrations in the whole Bible of how strongly God feels about our ability had reached, but they were for one purpose—glorifying some human being who believed he (and occasionally she) was greater and more important than all the subjects who did the actual work. Sometimes Pharaohs were even seen as gods. In essence, this was art put to the use of worship—of a human being.

It is possible that Bezalel and his peers had already been jewelers, woodworkers, silversmiths, and so on in Egypt. If so, their gifts (given them by God alone) had been twisted to the use of cruel and powerful overseers. Ellen White says the people had almost forgotten the worship of the one true God (see Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 258.) It would also be true, then, that they had forgotten the true use of their artistic talents. No doubt many were not even using any gifts they had—may not have even known they had them. They were working endless days in hot sun, making bricks and building monuments to human greed and power.

Once God had completed the rescue of the Israelites and the downfall of Pharaoh’s armies who had chased them, one of the first things He did was settle them in the plain near Mt. Sinai for about a year to build the tabernacle. He was going to teach them the basics—what His law was all about, what worship really was, and how and when to do that. After giving the Law from Sinai, God kept Moses on the mountain with Him for several more weeks while He gave detailed instructions on the building of the tabernacle. While He was doing this, what were the Israelites doing? They were once again using their artistic ability for false worship! They brought some of the jewelry God had given them (see Ex. 3:22) to Aaron, and he (certainly not by himself, but with the work of skilled goldsmiths) made them a calf idol. As if that weren’t bad enough, he then told them, “This is your God, who brought you out of Israel” (Ex. 32:4!).

God had a very different plan for their use of the gifts. He had given them both gifts in the sense of talents and abilities and in the temporal sense such as the clothing and jewelry the Egyptians had provided at God’s command.

Exercise #2
- Materials needed: There are two ways to do this. The leader may collect as many objects as possible prior to the class, or the class may take a few minutes searching inside and outside the building where they are meeting to collect absolutely anything that might be used to creatively construct something: Paint, paper, crayons, markers, clay, building sets, popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, glue, glitter, cloth, ribbon, nicknick and other trims, flowers, grass, seeds, stones, “gems,” water, paper cups and plates, paper clips...

• Discuss the differences in what people perceived, what they learned, how they felt during the first exercise in comparison with the second one.
• Did some feel they learned more this way, working with their hands, or felt closer to God?
• Did some feel more comfortable with just talking about art in the earlier exercise?

Also Discuss what reasons people may see for the differences, if any. (If the leader chooses, he or she may go on with the presentation while people work, unless what they are doing requires a lot of discussion and problem-solving. This way they may have a longer time to create something.)
Main presentation

Time: 30 minutes

Art, Music, and Drama in the Old Testament

What did God consider true worship?

- The Tabernacle
  First, He was closely involved in the creation of the tabernacle itself. It required the best of all materials and was so resplendent with gold, embroidery, woodcarving, and brilliantly colored cloths that it would be astonishing to the eyes of many worshippers today.

- Priests
  Second, God set aside the entire tribe of Levi and all its descendants for two main divisions of service: priests and Levites. Priests were responsible for the actual sacrifices that went on morning and night. Their clothing, too, was carefully made according to God’s patterns and, in particular, the clothing of the high priest was nearly as resplendent as the tabernacle, with bright weaving and embroidery, gold, and precious stones.

An important point to be aware of today is that the sacrificial system was drama: nothing more, nothing less. The Bible is clear from beginning to end that the blood of animals had no power to cleanse from or atone for sins (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 1:11; Hebrews 12:1-4 and many more). We use various words like "foreshadowing," "symbol," or "type" (Hebrews 8:5) to mean that sacrifices were a representation—an acting out—of the Great Sacrifice of all time: the selfless life and death of the Unique Son of God, which alone would truly atone for and cleanse all the sin of the whole world, subject to the acceptance of each individual repentant sinner.

The burnt offerings were a visible passion play, acted out every day in front of the eyes of people who had been so used to seeing physical idols to represent supposed gods that it was difficult for them to understand an invisible Being who had created them, rescued them, and would make them whole through His Word. Showbread, incense, and olive oil lamps all were symbols of something greater than themselves, which is what drama is at heart.

The yearly festivals, too, were full of excitement and drama, along with solemn repentance, tasting, and listening to readings of the law. In Judges 21:19-21, when the Benjamites were told how to get the ark, they were a representation—an acting out—of what drama is at heart.

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Music

There was a great deal of music in Old Testament worship, and some of it might not sound very pleasant to our Western ears. In 2 Samuel 6, when David brought the ark from the farm of Abinadab, whom he had been taking care of for some years, to "the city of David," there were lyres, harps, tambourines, and cymbals, not to mention shouting and trumpets, being used to praise God. David himself was "leaping and dancing before the Lord" (verse 16) to the point that Michelle "despised him in her heart." But later in the chapter, it is clear God was not displeased with David, but with Michelle, for her condemnation.

Later still, when the remnant of faithful Israel were set free from their long captivity in Babylon, they rebuilt and dedicated the wall of the new temple. Ezra and Nehemiah oversaw the reinstallation of the offices of priest, Levite, and musician "as on the day of the former temple, when the priests of the high priest's office and the division corresponding to division" ( Nehemiah 12:24). This appears, from the rest of the story, to have meant what we would call antiphonal choirs, and thus the temple was a place of the division corresponding to division.

In 2 Chronicles 20, the prophet Zedekiah made a great Festival of Worship, and everyone was asked to bring what they could—five loaves of unleavened bread, and a seah of wine. In the actual ceremony, the dedication of the day, the 1 Chron. 24:1-38 lists all the various offices and places they were charged with. The service was dedicated to the Lord, as shown in verse 21, with harps, tambourines, and cymbals, and sang and rejoiced so loudly that they could be "heard from afar" (verse 24). Music has power.

In fact, 2 Chronicles 20 tells the wonderful story of a time when God used nothing but singing and praising as a means of delivering the people from an invasion force.

Prophets

The prophets often used drama and acting out scenes in ways of teaching the people with the words of God—especially rebellious or ignorant ones who might not listen to or understand preaching in words. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah used the imagery of a potter to show God’s power over His creations (Is. 29 and Jer. 18). Isaiah actually went naked and barefoot for three years as a picture of a particular prophecy of God (Is. 20). Jeremiah used such devices as a linen waistband (Jer. 13:1-11), an earthenware jar (19:1-13), and bonds and yokes (27:1-11) to make object lessons. Ezekiel made a toy city and siege machines and played out a war with them. Then he lay on his left side 390 days (longer than a year!) and on his right side 40 days to show God’s judgment against Israel (390 years of wickedness) and Judah (40 years of wickedness). During this time he was instructed to make a certain kind of multigrain/legume bread to live on. He was asked by God to cook his bread over a fire made of human manure, but when he objected God let him use animal manure instead (Ezek. 4). (There is a recipe for this “Ezekiel Bread” on tripregs.com. You can bake it using gas or electricity thought.)

Poetry, Words, and Songs

The books of Song of Solomon and Psalms, as well as some of the prophets, show us that poetry, whether read or sung, was a wonderful and lasting way of teaching the worship of God, both in praise and thanksgiving and also in lament, questioning, and anguished. The 150 Psalms we have today have given vital support to God’s children in any and all conditions and emotions for millennia. These songs often contain injunctions to raise voices, shout joyfully, clap hands, prostrate oneself, and show in other creative, artistic, and embodied ways how we feel before God at any given time in our lives. One vivid example is the very last Psalm, number 150, which lists specifically trumpet, harp, lyre, timbrel (tambourine), dance, stringed instruments, pipe, and cymbals as ways of praising God.

The Psalms also use what we today would call fantasy imagery to express God’s power and creativity. They frequently describe the earth and its creatures either as praising God or as teaching us about Him, as if these trees, birds, stars, and even the weather actually understood and knew anything about their Creator. A good example is Psalm 148, which calls on sun, moon, stars, heavens, “sea monsters,” “trees and all birds,” “all you land and sea,” and even the “wonderful story of a time when God used nothing but singing and praising as a means of delivering the people from an invasion force.”

In fact, 2 Chronicles 20 tells the wonderful story of a time when God used nothing but singing and praising as a means of delivering the people from an invasion force.
before even mentioning that human beings should do the same! Certainly we know the creatures and elements of the earth don’t praise God in the sense in which we do, but it is true that there is a great deal humans can learn from the earth—so much so that Paul says in Romans 1:20 people have no excuse for claiming not to know God because they can learn about a Creator just from studying creation.

We can also learn what it means to live according to our natures. A dog or a rose or a fish or a snail never try to be what they are not. An apple tree doesn’t try to produce figs, and a lilac doesn’t complain because its flowers only bloom for a week or two while marigolds bloom all summer. Our human artists, whether painters, writers, singers, dancers, actors, woodworkers, metalworkers, or any other kind of artist can clarify those silent lessons for us more than any scientific lecture ever could.

Art, Music, and Drama in the New Testament

Jesus was a woodworker before He was a preacher, teacher, and healer. We don’t know exactly what kind of woodworking He did—likely small things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did—likely small things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did—likely small things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did—likely small things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did—likely small things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did—likely small things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did—likely small things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did—likely small things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did. W e can be sure, just things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did—likely small things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did. W e can be sure, just things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did. W e can be sure, just things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did. W e can be sure, just things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did. W e don’t know exactly what kind of woodworking He did—likely small things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did. W e don’t know exactly what kind of woodworking He did—likely small things like cradles, yokes, perhaps woodworking He did. W e don’t know exactly what kind of woodworking He did. W e don’t know exactly what kind of woodworking He did. W e don’t know exactly what kind of woodworking He did. W e don’t know exactly what kind of woodworking He did. W e don’t know exactly what kind of woodworking He did.

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but the very word “dance” carries such negative connotations that they couldn’t even try it. They taught a simple praise dance to the children, and when the congregation saw what it was really like and that it was true praise, they began to accept that it might be okay for some people.

Some people—that’s important. Each person is different. Not all will respond to the same things. That’s the whole point.

**Learning Styles**

Here is one popular way of categorizing people’s abilities and interests:

**Visual**

A visual person (some studies, as well as informal surveys, indicate that this includes most women) learns best and expresses best through something he/she can see.

**Auditory**

Auditory people are in the minority and are understood to be about equally divided between the genders. These are the ones who learn best through hearing and who express themselves best with words.

**Kinesthetic or Tactile**

Kinesthetic people (this may include a majority of men, as well as most children, including those who will grow up to be largely visual or auditory) learn by doing.

Everyone needs all of these ways of learning and expressing oneself. But most people have one they prefer and can learn and express most easily. The artistic skills of a person are affected by which category they use most easily. Painters might be visual; dancers are probably kinesthetic.

**Which of these groups are your services created for?**

- Could this be one reason we have more women than men in our churches, and many creative and artistic people simply stay away, considering church an irrelevant place full of “talking heads”?

**Building Bridges**

A large church in Ohio has a Sacred Arts Committee and a mission statement that says something like this: “We seek to rediscover and return the arts to their proper place in worship and exaltation of God. We also seek to reach out to artists and make our church a home where they feel welcome and comfortable.”

What if all of our churches had something like this? We know that events like a “Journey to Bethlehem” draw large crowds. Some people tend to dismissively say things like, “All people want these days is to be entertained.” But Jesus drew large crowds. Probably some did come out of curiosity or hoping to be entertained or see a miracle. But most came because He spoke their language directly to their hearts.

To fishermen, He told fish tales. To a rabbinical scholar, He talked highbrow philosophy. Children and the sick, He most of all touched. And hugged. Jesus, being the one complete, whole, perfect Man, was a fully-rounded, fully-grounded visual, auditory, kinesthetic Person. He paid attention to which person was which. He paid attention, period!

For all of the ages of the earth so far, all of life was experiential and visible. You watched your food grow and prepared it yourself, or knew who did. You understood how things like wheels and wagons and harness and tools worked because they were simple and visible. After the Industrial Revolution in the late 1700s, everything got a lot more complicated. Machines had parts inside parts inside parts, like Ezekiel’s wheels within wheels. You had to be an expert to know if something was wrong, let alone be able to fix it. Now we live in the Information Age. Sometimes it seems all the knowledge of all the ages, not to mention all the art, all the music, and all the corruption, is instantly available on the smartphone in your pocket.

Jeremiah 6:16 says, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls.’” Perhaps those ancient paths include making spiritual life more experiential and visible again. Perhaps our neighbors will find rest for their weary souls in our churches when we reduce the number of words and give them spiritual life they can see and touch. Maybe the artists will come back to church, and when they do, maybe others will be able to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8).

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What does your church do to reach out to the visual? The auditory? The kinesthetic?
2. What do you think your church does best?
3. What do you think it needs most?
4. What changes would you, personally, like to make?
5. Share three ways you will try to integrate the arts into those parts of the services where you have influence.
6. Don’t forget—you could make answers to these questions instead of talking about them!
The Pan-European Adventist Youth Congress (AYC) is a large gathering of Adventist youth throughout Europe. It is a memory event, the purpose of which is to share and celebrate our common faith, to strengthen our Adventist identity and to make a positive impact in the host city and surrounding area. The theme for AYC 2013, “Power of One”, signifies that all we do and are comes from the “One” who is Jesus Christ. We invite you to come to AYC 2013 to discover and be part of the Power of One.

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